

Australia isn't all Bondi and Byron

What Marine wishes she
knew before moving overseas



Before making the move from Belgium to Australia, Marine had a very particular image of what her life in Australia was going to look like.

"This might sound silly, but basically I expected that everywhere in Australia was like Bondi or Byron Bay, so just beach vibes."

This wasn't an unreasonable expectation, and she definitely wasn't the first international student to have those expectations. The media likes to paint a very clear picture of Australia as postcard-perfect beaches and endless sunshine, but in reality, life here offers a whole lot more than that.

Instead of a laid-back lifestyle by the ocean, Marine spent her first year living in the Hunter Valley, which, while very beautiful, is very much not coastal.



Watch 2025 SOSH In Their Words: Marine



YouTube: Allianz Partners Australia



FINDING HER PLACE IN A NEW HOME

Fortunately, Marine had already organised a place to live and a job as an au pair before coming to Australia on a working visa, but that still didn't prepare her for the uncertainty and the isolation that comes with moving to a new place.

"My first few months here weren't easy."

"I definitely underestimated what it's like taking care of children. Before that I had been living on my own for four years, so I think moving in with people or sharing spaces was a bit of an adjustment as well."

Without her own car and living far from town, getting around was difficult. Public transport options were limited, there was little to do nearby, and the time

difference between Australia and Europe made staying connected with family and friends harder than expected.

"I would wake up in the morning feeling sad or unhappy and had to wait until 5pm here to talk to someone about it."

Looking back, Marine says the emotional toll the isolation took on her was one of the most challenging parts of her move. While homesickness is definitely a common topic when discussing a big move like this, she says it was the exhaustion of having to make all the decisions on her own that really weighed on her.

LEARNING A WHOLE NEW NORMAL

Aside from managing loneliness, Marine also had to learn all the systems that every resident takes for granted. Things like healthcare, taxes, registrations and renewals are just a part of life for most of us, but for newcomers who are used to their own systems back home it can be really complicated.

"The healthcare system, the tax system, registering the car and getting all the green slip, pink slip and all that," she says. "If you don't have someone to help you, it's definitely difficult."

Healthcare, in particular, is often a large source of confusion for international students. It wasn't until

Marine had been in Australia for a year that she found out she was eligible for subsidised general healthcare due to an agreement between Australia and Belgium. Before that, she believed she would need to pay out of pocket for GP appointments and tests, and so she avoided seeking medical care whenever possible.

"I was afraid to go to the doctor simply because of the cost."



FINDING HERSELF AGAIN

After a bit of a rough start to her Australian adventure, Marine moved from the Hunter Valley to Sydney, now as an international student, and thankfully, that's where she really started to feel at home.

"When I moved to Sydney, I found my spark again. Even my friends from home told me they could see the difference."

"I found a routine, I met some people, I was going to class and work and using my free time to explore the city," she said.

Although the cost of living is higher than living inland, Marine says for her overall health it's been more than worth it.

"Even though it is more expensive here, I much prefer to be here now. The cost of living is expensive but salaries are higher than in most European countries so it's possible to make it work," she says.

Marine's advice to other students struggling with isolation and connection is simple.

"You have to put yourself out there," she says. "Join clubs, use apps and go to meet-ups. Make sure you don't get stuck in your comfort zone and forget to explore different areas of Australia."

She also suggests doing research on things like healthcare and the cost of living before moving.

"I didn't really do any research on all of this before coming here, which I probably should have. I just didn't think I would be eligible for anything. My main tip for new students would be to definitely research everything you can beforehand," she said.

Although she struggled a lot in the beginning, and could have prepared better for certain things, Marine's story is a good reminder that some of the situations you face when building a new life are simply not things you can feel ready for.

"Sometimes it is all about how you react to unexpected situations."

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This article is part of the Allianz Partners In Their Words series, where five international students share their experiences of living and studying in Australia.

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