

# Welcome to Sydney

## Pre-departure and arrival guide

### A. Documents

You should prepare a folder of official documents to bring with you to Australia, including:

- Valid passport with Student Visa
- Offer of a place / admission letter from GISS
- Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) from GISS
- Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation issued by Ozhomestay
- Receipts of payments (e.g. tuition fees, Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC), bank statements etc.)
- Insurance policies
- Other personal identification documents, e.g. birth certificate, driver's license, if applicable
- Medical records and/or prescriptions

If you are travelling with your family you will need to include their documents as well. Keep all documents in your carry-on luggage. In case you lose the originals, make certified copies that can be left behind with family and sent to you.

### B. Weather (seasons)

In Australia, the seasons are the reverse of seasons in the northern hemisphere. For example, summer is December, January and February while winter is June, July and August.

Pack clothes for Australia's four seasons:

Spring/autumn: light jumpers/sweaters, light jackets, trousers, sports/covered shoes

Winter: Woolen jumpers/sweaters, thick jackets, trousers, raincoat, thick socks, scarves, sports/covered shoes

Summer: T-shirts, cotton shirts/blouses, dresses, shorts, light sandals, sports/covered shoes.

### C. On your flight

Wear comfortable, layered clothing so that you are able to make adjustments according to the local weather. Remember – if you are flying from a northern hemisphere winter into the Australian summer it will be very hot so wear light weight clothing underneath, and have a pair of sandals or lighter shoes in your hand luggage if you need cooler footwear.

Before landing in Australia passengers are given an Incoming Passenger Card to fill in. This is a legal document. You must tick YES if you are carrying any food, plant material including wooden souvenirs, or animal products. This includes fruit given to you during your flight. If you have items you don't wish to declare, you can dispose of them in quarantine bins in the airport terminal.

Don't be afraid to ask airline staff if you have any questions.

#### **D. Customs (quarantine)**

The Australian Government restricts food, plant and animal products brought into the country. Please check the Australian Quarantine website for items that are banned and for items that must be declared and inspected.

#### **E. Preparing your finances**

Arrange a bank card with your financial institution before you leave home. Have approximately **AUS\$200-AUS\$300** in cash when you arrive, but do not carry large sums of money on you or in your luggage. Please note that Australian law limits the amount of cash you can bring into the country. If you are bringing **AUS\$10,000** or more (or the equivalent in foreign currency) you must declare this to customs officials on arrival in Australia.

#### **F. Cost of living**

In addition to paying course/tuition fees, the Australian Government estimates that the average living cost for an international student is **AUS\$450 - AUS\$550** per week. This pays for accommodation, food, telephone, transport, sport and spending money.

Your living costs could be higher or lower than this, depending on where you study and the lifestyle that you live. It usually costs more to live in Sydney than in other cities or towns in New South Wales.

#### **G. Banking**

There are a large number of local and foreign banks and other financial institutions in Australia.

When you open a bank account you must bring identification with you (passport or visa). If you are under 16 years of age, your parent or guardian must accompany you to the bank and bring their driver's license or passport with them.

When choosing your bank and bank account:

- The Deutsche Bank is the partner bank of Westpac bank and the withdrawal with a German bank card is free of fees at any Westpac bank ATM. Most overseas students also open a local bank account with Westpac bank.
- If you choose a different bank, compare interest rates, fees and charges at different banks. Some banks provide students with accounts where fees are not charged.
- Ask whether you can transfer money from your home country directly into your bank account by telegraphic transfer.
- Ask what fee the bank charges for transferring or receiving funds.

After you open a savings or a cheque account at the bank you will be issued with an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) card. You can use this to get money from ATM machines or use your ATM card to pay for goods purchased in shopping centres and supermarkets. You can arrange money from your home country to be transferred directly into your bank account. A bank transfer takes 1 to 4 working days to be deposited into your account. Your Australian bank might also charge a fee of between AUS\$5 - AUS\$10 for transferring funds.

Banking hours are usually Monday to Thursday, 9.00am to 4.00pm and Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm. Many banks have ATM machines which you can use 24 hours/day to withdraw cash.

Most banks also provide:

- telephone and internet banking
- savings and cheque accounts
- credit cards and debit cards

## H. Shopping

Supermarkets sell fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, frozen foods, canned goods, bread, paper products, stationery, personal needs and some non-prescription medicines. The majority of stores open from Monday to Saturday, 9.00am to 5.00pm; Thursday, 9.00am to 9.00pm and Sunday, 10.00am to 4.00pm. Many supermarkets have extended shopping hours and are open until late in the evening.

Department and variety stores sell products including clothing, furniture, gifts and shoes at a fixed price. Compare price and quality and look out for store sales when goods are discounted.

Large shopping centres are located in the centre of Sydney and suburbs as well as larger regional cities and towns.

Large shopping centres usually contain:

- Major department stores: David Jones, Myer, Target, Kmart, Big W
- Supermarkets: Coles, Woolworths, Aldi

- Specialist stores selling books, clothing, computers and software, telephones, sportswear and music
- Banks
- Cafes and fast-food outlets
- Movie theatres: Event Cinemas, Hoyts, IMAX Theatre

Markets sell new and second-hand goods. There are a number of weekend markets.

You can bargain at some stalls. Some well-known food and clothing markets in Sydney are:

- Paddy's Markets in Haymarket and Flemington
- Paddington Markets
- The Rocks Markets
- Glebe Markets
- Bondi Markets
- Balmain Markets
- Sydney Fish Markets
- Palm Beach Markets
- Narrabeen Markets
- Narrabeen Organic Food Markets
- Frenchs Forest Organic Food Markets

## I. Telephone

Some country areas in NSW and interstate numbers require an area code before the telephone number. The NSW code is 02.

If you are making an international call from Australia to another country you will have to dial 0011 + country code + area code + telephone number. Overseas phone cards are also available. These offer cheap call rates. You can buy overseas phone cards at newsagencies.

### Public payphones

- Local calls are untimed. They cost **50c** from a pay phone if you use coins. Long-distance and international calls are charged by the minute.

### Home (landline) phones

- Calls from a home phone cost **25c - 30c** per local call.
- Interstate and international calls are timed and are usually charged by the minute.

### Mobile phones

- Mobile phone services are available from several telephone companies. The telephone companies offer a wide range of phones and payment options.

- Depending on the network in your home country, you may be able to connect your existing mobile phone (don't forget to unlock it at home) to an Australian network by installing a new SIM card. Mobile call costs may be more expensive than fixed line calls.
- Many students find it easier to buy pre-paid mobile phone packages which also help to budget for telephone costs.

## Internet and email

- GISS provides their students with free internet at school.
- Internet cafes providing internet services at low rates are easy to find in city areas.
- Your internet access in your homestay family is regulated through our Homestay Agreement or any other agreement arranged by ozhomestay.

### J. Postal services

- Australia Post is the national postal service. Australia Post delivers letters and cards to your home letterbox Monday to Friday.
- Small and large parcels addressed to you are usually held at your local post office. The postman leaves a card in your letterbox and you take the card to your local post office to collect your parcel.
- Australia Post offices and shops also sell postage stamps, envelopes, packing boxes, cards and other stationery items.
- You can also pay bills with cash or debit (EFTPOS) cards at any post office.
- Australia Post offices and shops are open Mondays to Fridays from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Many post offices are also open on Saturdays from 9.00am till 12.00pm (noon).
- It is easy to send letters or packages to your family in your home country. Australia Post delivers letters and parcels by airmail to most countries within one week.
- Letters and parcels sent within Australia usually take 1-2 days to be delivered.

### K. Money

The Australian dollar (AUD) is based on the decimal system with 100 cents to the dollar. Australian currency is available as plastic notes and coins in the following values:

- Notes: \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100
- Gold coins: \$1, \$2
- Silver coins: 5c, 10c, 20c, 50c

### L. Health issues

Health insurance is compulsory for international students studying in Australia. Your Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) generally does not cover any pre-existing medical conditions. Serious medical problems should be taken care of before you come to Australia. OSHC covers only certain conditions. You should check your policy carefully and think about whether you will need Optional Extra Cover.

If you are taking prescribed medication please check with the Australian Diplomatic Mission (ADM) in your home country to confirm what medicine you are allowed to bring into Australia. Ask your doctor to write a letter (translated into English) stating why you need the medicine. This will be useful if you need to see a doctor about the same condition in Australia. You may even need to show this documentation when you pass through customs at Sydney Airport.

### **M. Australian Slang**

Much common word usage or 'slang' may seem strange to people new to Australia. Slang words start from many different sources. Some words are shortened versions of longer words. Many were expressions already used by migrants who came from the north of England. If you are unsure what an expression means, it is all right to ask the person who said it to explain.

### **N. Electrical sockets (plugs)**

You will need an adapter to use electrical items brought from your country. Voltage in Australia is 240 volts with a 50-Hertz frequency. Australian electrical plugs have three flat angled prongs.

### **O. Airport pickup**

If ozhomestay has arranged airport pickup, a representative will meet you at the airport in the Arrivals Hall, holding a sign with your name on it. You will enter the Arrivals Hall after you clear Customs. There is no need to worry if your flight is delayed as the representative will wait for you and take you directly to your host family. In other cases your host family will be picking you up at the airport.

### **P. Transport**

Sydney has a good public transport system including trains, buses and ferries. There are also bicycle paths as cycling becomes more popular.

You can travel around Sydney and NSW on trains, buses, ferries. Since 2014, Sydney is using a new travel ticket system called Opal card. The Opal card is a smartcard ticket that you load value onto and keep for travel on all public transport in Sydney, and the Blue Mountains, Central Coast, Hunter, Illawarra and Southern Highlands. You can buy your Opal card from the newsagency or order it online: [www.opal.com.au](http://www.opal.com.au) . It is cheaper and more convenient to pre-purchase an Opal card if you use public transport every day. Some buses are "Pre-Pay" which means you must have a valid Opal card before you travel.

International students are eligible for half price concession. Free timetables are available from bus and train stations and ferry terminals, or on the NSW transport website: [www.131500.com.au](http://www.131500.com.au) or [www.transportnsw.info](http://www.transportnsw.info) .

GISS will issue you with a student concession card which is proof that you are eligible for concession tickets.