

jenwalker

Wollongong, Australia

JEN'S MAJOR(S): biology

YEAR/TERM ABROAD: fall 2003

REASON YOU CHOSE THIS PROGRAM: I wanted to be able to take science classes, which I knew that the University of Wollongong offered. I figured Australia is so far away, when else would I have a chance to go again? I also liked that it was a smaller city and close to the beach.

DESCRIBE THE HOUSING SITUATION: I lived in the dorms: Campus East College. I had my own room and five of us shared a living room. We ate at the dining hall there. I liked where I lived; it was nice to be back in the dorms again where you didn't have to cook.

BEST MEMORY: We took a trip out to Whitsundays Islands and went to Whitehaven Beach. It was one of the whitest beaches in the world; we went scuba diving and saw a sea turtle and sharks. It was very exciting. Also, every Monday night, we went and played bingo at the local frat club with the older Italian ladies. They loved having us there.

WHAT I WISH I KNEW BEFORE I LEFT: There needs to be more preparation for coming back. You don't expect that it will be so hard to leave, so just be prepared for it.

EXPERIENCES WITH CULTURE SHOCK OR REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK: Reverse culture shock was harder than culture shock. You've been in this amazing

environment with these amazing people and after coming back, it's hard to hang on to the lifestyle that you got used to.

GOING ABROAD VS. STAYING ON CAMPUS, DISCUSS: For me, it was nice to have a break from IU. It helps to do something different and to have a different perspective when you return. It's nice to have time here before you go, time while you're there, and time here after you get back. You also can't get this independence any other way; it was the best thing I could have done for myself.



Jen Walker and Adam Schau, another IU student, stop to reflect on the city of Wollongong, pictured behind them. Walker commented how the pace of life in Wollongong is so much slower compared to the U.S. "The second I got back to the L.A. airport, I could tell," she said.

"Go there with an open mind. Try to step out of your comfort zone. Try not to stick with Americans. Be a part of the Australian culture. Be spontaneous. *Love every moment that you're there.*"

WHAT YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE GOING ABROAD: How small the world is and how similar we all are. I now have friends in Denmark and Sweden—it makes the big world seem smaller.