Andrea McHenry
Major: Integrated Supply Management
Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia
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From August to December 2011 I lived in Melbourne, Australia. During this time I studied at Swinburne University of Technology (Swinburne Uni), made friends from all around the world, and traveled throughout Australia and New Zealand. I can truly say that I had the time of my life!

At Swinburne Uni, I took classes that related to my major of integrated supply management. I also took classes that would fulfill general business requirements. All throughout my schooling in the United States I would have many different assignments and exams that would make up my final grade. This was not the case in Australia. Swinburne Uni believed in the “hurdle system.” The purpose of this system is to test whether a student can handle the pressure of a large project. With this system, one project or exam would determine the majority of my grade. One class required that I write a paper worth 50% of my grade. A final in a different class was worth 50% of my final grade. Another class’ final was worth 60%. Before studying at Swinburne Uni I would get stressed out if one assignment or exam made up 30% of my grade. Needless to say, one assignment making up 30% of my grade does not seem as big of a deal as it used to.

During my five months in Australia I traveled the country and visited New Zealand. I traveled with people from Australia, different countries in Europe, South Korea, and America. Even though people were from all around the world, everyone got along extremely well and had the same goal: to experience Australia in every way possible. In September, I did a road trip
around the South Island of New Zealand during spring break. I spent eight days there and went to Christchurch, Queenstown, and Franz Joseph. During my eight days in the country I snow skied, white water rafted, rode in a helicopter, hiked on a glacier, kayaked in Milford Sound, visited hot pools, and jumped off the world’s second highest bungee jump. New Zealand is now my favorite trip I have ever taken (not taking into consideration the entire time I was in Australia). I also went on a road trip down the East coast, from Cairns to Brisbane. I was told that this is one of the trips that many Australians dream of doing. In addition, I was able to visit Sydney, Ayers Rock, Adelaide, Kangaroo Island, and travel the Great Ocean Road.

I further submerged myself in the Australian culture by attending two of the country’s favorite sports: Australian Rules Football (Footy) and Rugby. Both of these games are fast-paced and intense. The die-hard fans made the experience even more amazing. The stadiums would erupt in cheer or disapproval depending on how well their teams were playing; all while many flags were being waved throughout the stadium to further show team pride.

Upon my return to the United States, I have realized that I adapted more than I thought to the way of life in Australia. Among many things, I found that driving on the right side of the road was challenging at first. It took several days for me to get used to where the different parts of the car are. For example, instead of turning on my right blinker, I would turn on the windshield wipers because I became accustomed to how the cars in Australia were set up. Also, when I tried to turn on my bright headlights, instead I ended up washing my windshield with the windshield wiper fluid. I also discovered that the Australian easy going attitude became the norm for me. I proved this to myself upon my first trip to the grocery store after coming back to the States. The simple task of shopping for groceries was much more hectic than I was used to in Australia; it was extremely congested and everyone seemed to be in a rush. I have even caught
myself using the Australian spelling for words, such as writing “analyse” instead of writing “analyze.” It was a fantastic experience and I cannot wait until I have another chance to go back to Australia!