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Introduction

Since my admission in ESITC Caen, I wanted to spend my second year end linguistic training period in Australia. Although I had little information about my trip, I was sure of my choice.

Why did I choose Australia?

Although international careers are possible for young graduate engineers, I was aware it was a real opportunity for me living far away and for quite a long time.

English-speaking western countries list is summary : Great Britain, USA, Australia & Canada. In my mind, I would liked to go the most far away possible and Great Britain seemed to be too close. I'm certain I will have the chance to go there soon for holidays because of its proximity with France.

The only symbols I knew about Australia were the Australian flag, its rugby team (Wallabies) & kangaroos, beaches & surf, aborigine people & didgeridoos.

As my generation grew up with the small screen, I couldn't avoid Sydney 2000 Olympic Games & its Sydney Bay famous theatre as *Hartley Coeurs à Vifs* TV series which described the high school life in Sydney suburbs.

During my scolarity, the only linguistic trip I had was in Portugal in 2003. Before, I spent one week in Spain for holidays with my family. I was dying to discover southern hemisphere & tropical climate.

My trip preparation

Beginning my research on internet, I discovered Working Holiday Visa & fruitpicking.

WHV is a visa which permits young people between 18 and 30 years old, from some countries including France, to spend twelve months maximum for holidays and/or job. During this period, if we work more than three months in sectors which need a lot of labour force, we can apply for a second WHV.

Fruitpicking is the fruits and vegetables harvesting.

Before the training period was changed, the period of time students undertook their linguistic training period was four months. I began talking with former students about fruitpicking who spoke highly of it as a very hard but lucrative job.

On Internet, I discovered harvest fruitpicking PDF, a document published by Australian government intended for young workers. Its lists region by region, according to year's months, cities which need workers. I selected all the cities along Australian East Coast (from Cairns to Melbourne) at 200 km maximum from the sea. I sent emails, either at temping agencies or at tourism centres, at selected cities to obtain employer and accommodation addresses.

Answers I had were various. Sydney told me there are no jobs because of hinterland winter temperatures. They advised me to go to Queensland in north east of Australia because of its warmer winter.

Beginning of TC2, I imagined my four months trip (from July until October) with fruitpicking professional experiences along Australian East Coast. After I spoke with students who had undertaken their training period in Australia, I decided to do wwoofing.

Indeed, if I can they advised me to live both accommodation experiences, backpacker hostel for fruitpicking, total submersion in host family for wwoof. They explained to me in the backpackers exists an international, young and festive atmosphere whereas in wwoof, it's more quiet and favourable for my English improvement.

Except for bananas harvesting near Cairns, my first email series was a failure. I decided to get in touch directly with backpackers hostels which provide workers transport to farms.

I was disappointed with the answers that came back. Either there were any jobs or they couldn't predict future manpower needs a couple of months before (because of unknown weather).

Meanwhile, the training period was shortened to one month. As I hadn't found any job at the approach of second semester exams and as I didn't want to look it for one when I get to Australia, eventually I decided not to try for paid work and to do only wwoofing.

Indeed, I had done a labourer job, working physically in Brittany. Usually, fruitpicking days last between 9 and 10 hours, 7 days a week. The job is often paid by productivity. For more fast and efficient workers, you can earn \$1000 to \$1500 per week.

Whereas working as a wwoofer, I favoured leisure time for example to visit the country.

After obtaining my passport and my WHV, I made a plan to arrive in Brisbane and depart in Sydney ten weeks later : 1200 km between them. So I decided to take time advantage of my trip staying the longest possible.

I left France Tuesday the 23rd of June and I came back Friday the 11th of September. In Australia, I would buy a 2000 km Greyhound coach pass.

I selected wwoof hosts near famous national parks mentioned in my Lonely Planet Book, which is as *Le Guide Du Routard* in France

I got in touch with farms explaining who I was, what I will do in Australia and how long I will stay. This stage turned out to be a real brain-teaser. Primarily to choose cities as there are plenty of wonderful areas, then to determine the length of each wwoof stage.

If the wwoof host answered yes, I sent them a CV, a text to introduce myself more clearly (school career, family, hobbies) and photos.

For each wwoof stage in an area, I always found at least two or three farms which would like to host me except in Noosa where only Janine answered me positively. Unfortunately I couldn't find any wwoof accommodation in the Blue Mountains National Park, a famous NP near Sydney.

Finally, this was my schedule week per week :

End week 26 in Brisbane in a backpacker hostel

Week 27-28 wwoof in the Noosa hinterland

Week 29 one week at Gaelle's home, the Gold Coast Frenchie

Week 30 wwoof in Murwillumbah (Byron Bay hinterland)

Week 31 wwoof in Clunes (Byron Bay hinterland)

Week 32 wwoof in Bellingen (Coffs Harbour hinterland)

Week 33 wwoof in Hilldale (Barrington Tops NP)

Week 34-35 wwoof in Gloucester (Barrington Tops NP)

Week 36 and beginning week 37 at Australian friends' house in Sydney

By word of mouth around me, I succeeded in finding two host families in Australia. Gaelle is a 27 years old French girl who lives in Australia for several years. She lives in the Gold Coast with her Australian boyfriend. She's my aunt's friend's daughter.

My parents have English correspondents with my twin city in UK. Those correspondents have friends in Australia, Tim & Belinda. How did they know them?

25 years ago, Belinda's sister, Nicole, was travelling in Europe. She arrived in London train station and didn't know where to go. She had only one telephone number given by a friend. When she rang it, the owner's house didn't answer. The man who rented the house, Nigel, answered. Although they didn't know each other, he suggested to Nicole to come home.

I was hosted by Tim and Belinda because they are great people who love take care of travellers as others took care of them.

The aircraft journey

This aircraft journey was a novelty for me. First, because I have never stayed in an English-speaking country. Second because I have never caught a plane. It isn't usual to travel almost 24 hours for a first flight.

I wondered about the stewardess' nationalities : Arab, Asian and Eastern European. However, they all spoke English. It's definitely the business and international language.

In the aircraft, I was so excited I couldn't sleep. I spent my time speaking to my neighbours or watching movies in the original version.

Between Paris and Dubai my neighbour was a South African girl who was travelling from an European trip to London and France. Although she didn't speak French, she helped me during meal choice. She worked in a restaurant in Toulouse and she knew the meat translation.

Between Dubai and Brisbane, my neighbours were a little boy and his kangaroo daddy. It was difficult to understand the child because he spoke quickly when he commented on the video game which he was playing or the cartoon he was watching.

Anyway I succeeded in speaking with him about sport. He was fan of rugby league and footy, two sports only played in Australia. I tried to explain to him that European football (called soccer) isn't the same as the Australian football (called footy).

During the transit stop in Dubai, I didn't know if I had to retrieve my luggage and register them again. So, I asked two Arab airport employees. It was hard to explain my concern and to understand them because we both had strong non-English accents. Eventually, it was a French man who helped to give me the solution.

I felt it was hard to understand non-native English-speakers because they still speak with their native accent. It's clear it was easier to improve my English level speaking with native speakers instead of non-native speakers.

While I was reading an English newspaper in Dubai, a Fiji man advised me to read a lot of texts in English to make progress. It's true sometimes when I listened to conversations, I recognized known words because I had looked for the translation in my dictionary.

My arrival in Brisbane

When I arrived in Brisbane, I took a shuttle from the airport to my hostel. It was more convenient than taking public transport because I was jetlagged and carried 25 kilograms of luggage on my back! I arrived in the Bunk Brisbane at 9 AM.

It was really hard to understand what the hostel employee explained to me because he spoke quickly, with a strong accent and with words I didn't know. I had to wait until 12 AM to have my room swipe card. I put down my luggage in the laundry, took a shower in the shared bathrooms and went to the supermarket the employee showed me.

This first stage turned out to be harder than I expected. Indeed, my first exchanges in English during my journey weren't as difficult.

I met an Irish man in the Brunswick precinct area and I was reassured about my English. I succeeded in understanding and in being understood because he was aware of my English level. When I didn't understand, he tried to use synonymous.

After doing shopping, I came back to the hostel and my swipe card didn't work. I went to the reception and the woman tried to explain to why the card didn't work. Resigned, she wrote on a paper :

Wrong room 307

Right room 310

Easy to understand! In fact, they placed 2 people in the same bed. In compensation, I received one free Internet hour.

The first two days in Brisbane were hard because I suffered from jetlag. For example, the first day, I went to bed at 6 PM and I got up at 11 PM. Then, I went to the hostel bar and I met two Canadian boys and two English boys who were in the same room as me.

First, I spoke with the Canadian boys and I could understand them because they spoke slowly. But, when they began to speak with the English boys I couldn't understand them because they spoke normally.

I sometimes understood a couple of words. Although I didn't take part in their discussion, I practised my oral comprehension because it was a weakness for me.

That night, I went to bed at 3 AM and got up at 8 AM because of traffic noise and my flatmate's noise. That morning, I went for a run through Brisbane parks along the Brisbane river. It was funny because I saw a lot of people wearing sport clothes but just walking and not running.

When I checked my emails, I realized that Janine, my first wwoof host thought I arrived Sunday whereas I arrived Saturday. I sent her an email to warn her and nevertheless I booked my trip for Saturday.

This second day in Brisbane, I went to bed at 6 PM to wake up at 1 AM but I didn't get up to go to the bar. Eventually, I got up on Saturday at 7 AM.

During this first stage in the Bunk Brisbane, I met a lot of young French people travelling. They recognized my French accent and unfortunately we spoke French together.

At the hostel, I bought a VIP pack which included a 500 km Greyhound pass, an Aussie SIM card and a telephonic card for \$37 (instead of the pass alone costing \$100).

I registered my pass in the coach station before leaving Brisbane to go to Noosa. Because of this 500 km pass, the Greyhound employee explained to me I only needed a 750 km pass to go from Brisbane to Sydney with a Noosa round-trip.

This stage was still hard because I didn't understand fully the Greyhound employee and I couldn't easily explain what I wanted.

The landscapes on the road between Brisbane and Noosa were wonderful, different to those we see in France. At last the sun brightened! Since my arrival in Brisbane, the sky was overcast and it rained a little bit.

When I arrived in Noosa at 5 PM, I went to the Information Centre. Women employees helped me and called Janine for me. I was lucky because the Information Centre was closing.

Janine said she would pick me up but she called me again on my mobile phone and asked me to spend one night in Noosa and she would pick me up on Sunday morning.

The YHA Halse Lodge was totally different from the Bunk Brisbane : two wooden chalets with two levels against two six-floor towers near the CBD. The YHA was surrounded by lush bush and in the morning birds woke me up.

Janine's wwoof place

Before giving my room key back, I went for a run in the Noosa National Park. Janine picked me up in a Mitsubishi van with two of her small dogs. She has six small dogs and they followed her everywhere.

Janine is a 50 year old Australian woman. She is single and she is a former wwoofer who has travelled all around the world. She lived on an eight acre property near Cooroy in the Noosa hinterland.

To reach her property, we had to snake along a non-asphalted road surrounded by bush and koalas. Her property is situated 4 km along the road on a hill side. It consists of two houses (the main one and the wwoofer's one) and two garages.

The woofers house has a lot of modern facilities : shower, toilets, kitchen, washing machine, hifi system.

A German 27 year old wwoofer boy, Paul, was already there when I arrived and an Irish 30 year old wwoofer, Matthew, arrived the two last days before I left. I shared a bunk bed with Paul. We ate our breakfast in our cottage and we shared lunch and dinner with Janine in the main house.

Janine owned a lot of animals : horse, a cow, llamas, chickens, ducks, geese, dogs & a cat. A carpenter built a wooden shed in her property for her.

Works carried out

Janine left the wwoofers alone so I always worked with Paul and then with Paul and Matthew.

Janine wanted to install a fence on her property to prevent the dogs from going on the road. First, we had to uproot a stump. We excavated around it with shovels and crowbar. We cut strong roots with a chain saw. Then we used Janine's van to pull up the stump.

Kevin is Janine's neighbour and a forestry developer. He provided her with wooden building materials such as posts and beams. . It took three round-trips with the van and the trailer, between Janine's and Kevin's houses, to collect all the materials. On the same day, she received a new water tank, we used the delivery six wheels-pickup truck to collect more wood.

We helped Chris the carpenter to build the shed. The shell was finished (concrete slab, posts, beams, timber frame-work, roofing, outside partition walls). All that remained was to build the mezzanine floor, inside partition walls, electricity and plumbing. We put the two main mezzanine beams in place.

Everyday, I helped Janine to feed the animals and to fill drinking troughs.

One day, we cleaned a garage floor and threw away useless items. Another day, we applied bleach to the walls inside the shed with a long-handled scrubbing brush and then we rinsed them. It was perilous because we had to climb up a four metre ladder.

Problems and comments about the English

Janine was very nice because she tried to speak without accent and to slow down. But as she used a lot of unknown words for me, it was hard to understand her. When I didn't understand something, she didn't try to explain it or use synonyms.

It was very hard to understand Paul because he spoke with his German accent. Furthermore, he wasn't aware of my comprehension difficulties. When I didn't understand Janine's instructions, he explained to me by yelling it.

The English during the job

During the stump root operation, it was hard to explain the methods to each other. When it was necessary, we used gestures.

The tank company employee ate his lunch with us. He was the typical Outback Aussie : a moustache, an akubra (Australian hat worn by bushmen), a tanned face, a dirty pair of jeans and shirt and a strong accent. I couldn't understand his stories but I enjoyed the melody of his voice. It was like waves with ups and downs.

When we helped Chris for the shed building, as I didn't know all the names of the tools, it was hard to understand what he wanted.

Although I had two days off, twice a week, we finished at 3 or 4 PM without a break for lunch. When I spoke about this to Paul he seemed to think it was normal.

One day, I cooked one of my specialities : lasagne. Although it was my recipe, Janine wanted to cook the tomato sauce of her own making. She gave me instructions to follow. I misunderstood and made mistakes. After two or three mistakes, she said I understood the instructions but I made mistake because I wasn't focused. False, I just didn't understand what she said.

The next day we helped Chris, Janine said me I could stay only one week instead of the two initial weeks planned.

The reason was because I didn't have enough building skills. So, I had to arrive a little bit earlier on the Gold coast. I decided to spend three nights in a Noosa YHA to avoid spending two complete weeks at Gaelle's home.

I didn't get on well with Paul during the job because he wasn't very friendly to me. Although his English was better than mine he never tried to help me.

We always had to help Janine cook, to set and clear the table and wash the dishes. The only moment of the day where I could practise my English was after work. The atmosphere was strange because there was only one native English-speaker. When Matthew arrived, Janine found someone who understood her.

Activities

The first day off I had, I went with Paul to do kayaking in the Noosa River. In the harbour, we rented two kayaks for four hours. At the beginning, we paddled toward the Pacific Ocean, it wasn't very deep and there were a lot of small islands where heaps of crabs lived.

After having my first bath in the Pacific Ocean, I paddled alone toward the river upstream. The landscape was wonderful and free from human activity. The bird's song was the only music which surrounded the mangrove and the lush bush.

As we worked a lot, Janine let us have a second day off and we could choose between the beach and bushwalking. I chose the beach while Paul preferred to work. I spent the afternoon at the beach and Janine picked me up at 5 PM. After shopping in the supermarket, we picked up Paul and Matthew and then we went to an Irish pub.

The second time in the Noosa YHA

I found myself back in the Noosa YHA for three nights. I went to do the shopping so I could cook my own meals. Indeed, since the beginning of my trip, I got into the bad habit of eating a lot in restaurants.

The first night, I spent the evening with Irish people. They didn't know each other before arriving in Noosa. We went to the beach and they never stopped singing songs such as national anthems and songs which dealt with independence, IRA or exile in the USA.

I couldn't understand the lyrics but they surprised me because they knew practically all the lyrics by heart.

Among those Irish, there was a 24 years old girl who spent three months in Quimper to study Beaux Arts. She taught French to beginners and I gave her grammar lessons.

The next day, I borrowed a surf board and I went with an Irish boy and a French girl attacking the waves...which were nonexistent. So, we came back to the YHA and I met a new flatmate, a German girl. I spent a long time with her to introduce her to Noosa and to explain to her how the YHA worked.

On Janine's computer, I tried to book my next trip from Noosa to the Gold Coast but I failed. In reality, I was on the US Greyhound website! As I didn't know this, I believed there was a mistake in my booking number or my PIN number. I asked the reception if they could call the Greyhound hotline for me. It turned out that there wasn't any problem.

In Australia lives a kind of wild bush turkey. A specimen invited himself onto the veranda during my breakfast. He climbed onto the table and as I was trying to protect my food, he bit me twice. I stood to scare him away. Then, he crapped twice on the table scoffing at us.

The third and last night, I met two female French business students who were in Australia for six months. They rented a flat and they spent time with a French boy they had met a couple of months ago.

This boy worked as a fruit picker and his English was really bad. Two Dutch boys never stopped mocking him when he tried to speak English.

Then, a French man living for thirty years in New Zealand arrived. He was totally bilingual and I stayed with the Dutch boys and him to practise my speaking. The Dutch spoke English fluently. I felt it was hard to participate in their discussions because my level wasn't as good as theirs.

In the Gold Coast with Gaelle and Clark

When I arrived at the Gold Coast, the weather was very sunny but the temperature wasn't scorching. Gaelle picked me up at the coach station and set out straightaway the rule : no French, only English. I was hoping to take advantage of Gaelle's English experience.

She lives with a 37 year old Aussie man, Clark, in a block of residential homes (terraced/row houses) in Nerang. Their small home had two floors and I had my own bedroom. I slept on an air bed in my sleeping bag.

Clark had a full time job in a furniture shop. Gaelle studied accounting and worked at Mc Donald's. At the beginning of the week, she was at school and at the end of the week, she worked. She often worked at night.

I shared my dinner time with them. During the week, I often took my breakfast and lunch alone because Clark was working and Gaelle was sleeping because she had worked the night before.

I took advantage of not working to sleep in. We often watched movies in the evening either on the TV or rented from the video store. Although the subtitles were always displayed, I felt it was hard to understand all the dialogue. Fortunately, the frames helped me.

Aussie TV is very strange because there are heaps of advertisements during movies. I counted one every ten minutes. I don't know how the Aussie people can tolerate that.

As Gaelle never worked in the afternoon, I helped her to do the shopping at the supermarket.

Activities

The first Sunday, we went to Tamborine NP to bushwalk and to eat at a park where there was a public barbecue. There were people of all ages : young teenagers, families with children, retired people...The rainforest landscape was awesome : a creek, waterfalls and wild bush turkeys.

The first Monday, I went by bus to Southport to spend the day. The waves were so big I didn't dare to swim. I ate my snack near the lifeguard post before doing shopping in the Australia Fair shopping centre.

When I bought a bus ticket, I had to tell the driver where I wanted to get out off. In France, you buy a bus ticket which is valid one hour and it doesn't matter where you get off.

I bought a theme park pass in order to go on Wednesday and Friday to Sea World and Movie World.

As Sea World specialises in sea wildlife, I saw dolphins, polar bears, sea lions and heaps of colourful tropical fish. There was also a jet ski and water-skiing show. The only fun I had

were on the two roller-coasters : Jet Rescue and Corkscrew. I felt the Gold Coast was very tourist orientated because there were heaps of Asian and Arab people.

Around Brisbane in Queensland, the public transport system is very well planned out : train and buses are run by the same company. The ticket costs \$ 2.90 and you can use the network over two hours.

On Friday, I get to Movie World. I took a train from Nerang to Helensvale and then I caught a bus to Movie World. It was school holidays so there were heaps of families.

I had a lot of fun on the fastest roller coasters. The most awesome was Superman Escape. At the beginning, we were hurled up thirty metres high. Then, it was like we fell into emptiness, we reached eighty kph in a couple of seconds and we were subject to positive and negative forces of gravity about 3G forces.

The metal structure and concrete foundations were complex. The first time, I prayed that the car wouldn't come off the rails. Hopefully, the engineers and builders worked well.

In the theme parks, you can't bring your own food and drink because of merchandising. At the entrance, the officials discovered my food. I explained to them that I was French and therefore didn't know about this rule. They let me take my food in.

The last Sunday before my departure I went to Surfers Paradise, the Gold Coast's most famous city. Building contractors have considerably modified the sea front by building heaps of hotels skyscrapers. The highest, the Q1, towers at 322.5 meters.

I hadn't too much time to visit Surfers Paradise because I arrived at 12 AM and I had to leave before sunset at 5 PM. Anyway, I had time to play tourist by doing some shopping. Some young Asian girls asked me to take a photo of them. One of them recognized me because we visited Movie World on the same day.

During those outings, I didn't have the opportunity to stay talking for a long time with the people I met.

Problems and comments about the English

I think Gaelle wasn't as beneficial as I had hoped because she tended to translate in French when I didn't understand something.

Furthermore, her family came to Australia the next week while I was there and she hadn't seen them for two years. So, she was really excited to talk French with them.

Clark made an effort to slow down and articulate but he got used to speaking normally with Gaelle.

In reality, Clark and Gaelle didn't have a lot of time to dedicate to me because they both worked. When they came home, they preferred relaxing by watching TV or playing videos games.

In Murwillumbah with the Thomas Family

I finished my holidays and started the six weeks of wwoofing. My second wwoof farm was in Murwillumbah in the Byron Bay hinterland. My hosts were Phil and Lindy who were both 55. They have six children from 12 to 27 years old : Zac, Alice, Max, Katie, James and Ben. James and Katie don't live at home anymore because they work in the city. The family have lived there for seventeen years and hosted wwoofers for eleven years.

A creek crosses their big and hilly property. There are heaps of bridges over the creek, with the oldest being 27 years.

The wooden home like the property is huge. Each child has their own bedroom, there are two bathrooms and a big living-room with an open-plan kitchen. It is built on a concrete slab with a hanging balcony around it. A lush rainforest surrounds the home.

There are heaps of wooden sheds as workshops and garages. There are many cars but they are only Subaru or Morris Minor, a 50's British brand.

I lived in a fitted out wooden shed which was built in a circle, like a flower, from the central post. To enter, I had to go through the famous Doctor Who's police box. Doctor Who was a 70's British TV series character.

Near the shed, are situated the hutches and henhouses. They have heaps of chickens and they sell free range eggs. They also have a dozen of cows, three sheep and ducks.

There were heaps of jobs and I was never bored. Usually, I started working between 8 and 9 AM and finished between 4 and 5 PM with many breaks including tea time and lunch time. Everyday, my jobs were different so which made my time on the farm interesting.

My shed had electricity and a washbasin. Bathroom and toilet were in the main house. I shared all my meals there with the family. They had two dish washers so cleaning the dishes was easy.

My shed was near the henhouses. So, every morning at 5 or 6 AM, I was woken up by the cock-a-doodle-do noise.

Works carried out

I dug a hole to put down a wooden post to support an electric fence.

The main bridge was at the property entrance. The two main beams were 27 years old and the owners decided to change the top beams of the bridge. Throughout the week, we spent many hours working on this job. When I arrived, they had already changed two thirds of the top beams.

Phil had a mechanical shovel, a cement mixer and a generator to help us. We concreted the waysides before covering them with small gravel. All the family worked on the bridge except Alice who was working at the supermarket.

Lindy loved the visual effect of dead leaves. After weeding, I spread them on the waysides. Then, I built a concrete wall with Zac. One other day, I cleaned the henhouses by scraping the floor. Then I mixed the bird shit with topsoil to make compost.

The top of the bridge had fifty beams. We changed the last fifteen with the mechanical shovel. The next day, we nailed them down and concreted the bridge entrance.

In order to do bush regeneration, we went to pick up young trees to replant them at the property entrance. I picked up dead leaves with a rake and carried them with the trailer before spreading them on the waysides. I watered the garden and cleaned the wire fencing of the henhouses.

Problems and comments about the English

Throughout these activities, I was practically never alone. Zac was still on school holidays and was really happy to help me. Anyway Phil and Lindy didn't have a paid job and took care of the property full time, They were always there to tell me what do. When I worked alone, it never lasted more than two hours so that I was always stimulated with English conversation.

When we worked around the bridge, all the family was there. This family cohesion was funny. Zac liked passing on messages between his parents and me. He liked crossing the property with his BMX or running barefoot.

As I worked a lot, I never had any time off or took advantage of the sunlight because it went down at 5 PM.

I had to pay to use the Internet and telephone. So, I checked my emails only once a week.

In Murwillumbah, the nights were freezing and I had to sleep in my sleeping bag and two extra blankets. The last night was the worst because of a strong wind. Loose roof pieces never stopped slapping. In the morning, we noted the damages and collected gutters and drainpipes which had fallen during the storm. A job for the next wwoofer!

One day, Phil and Lindy hosted their new neighbours and I cooked lasagne. They were glad to host them and to talk with them. They had heaps in common. For example, they both had a child after turning 40 years old. The male neighbour seemed to be very funny and everyone laughed at his jokes except me who didn't understand them.

On Sunday, they had a party to celebrate Zac's, Lindy's and James's birthday. The grandparents, uncle/aunt, children's boy/girlfriends were there. A total of 18 people!

Near the dam, we burnt wood that had been stored for a couple of months to make a big fire. For lunch time, we had a barbecue. At sunset, we returned home to eat a buffet meal cooked by the women. Gifts were opened, we laughed a lot and drank kind of Aussie champagne.

Nobody tried to talk to me for quite a long time. As I didn't understand fully, I became a little bit bored. Lindy's sister's husband seemed to be very funny but like the neighbour I didn't understand his jokes.

Alice, Max and Ben were studying and had to work as well. They were rarely in the house during the day. When they were there in the evening, I didn't talk to them because they watched TV or were in their bedroom. Zac was the only child with whom I spent time. Phil and Lindy were very busy with their property but they tried to spend time with me.

During dinner time, the only moment of the day where we were gathered, the children told us how their day was. They spoke normally so I didn't understand them and it was frustrating.

In Clunes' coffee plantation

Neil and Stephany lived in Clunes, on the side of the main road between Byron Bay and Lismore, the two main cities in this area. Before coming, we concluded by email to meet in Lismore. In reality, the coach stopped in Clunes near their house.

I went into the Byron Bay Information Centre to ask them to call Neil. There were no more worries and we agreed to meet at 6 PM.

Their property and their home are smaller than at Murwillumbah. The home is all built in brick and is supported on piles. A 29 year old English wwoofer boy, Tim, was there for one week when I arrived. We shared the same bedroom. We slept on an air bed and a sleeping bag.

Neil and Stephany both work in Lismore and they take care of the property a couple of days a week. So, I often worked with Tim during the day.

They have three children : Dain (15), Lara (17) and Aaron (19). Aaron moved out into Brisbane because of his studies. Tim and I occupied his bedroom.

We shared all the meals together. Steph dealt with all the household duties : cooking, washing the dishes, cleaning and washing our clothes. After each day Tim and I could really relaxed. She was like a second mum.

They live there for ten years and beforehand lived in Sydney. Neil has a small coffee plantation for hand harvesting. He has a small henhouse with six chickens and also three goats, a dog and a cat who must stay inside because of the proximity of the road and to protect the wildlife.

Works carried out

The main job we had to do was weeding. The first day was the only one when Neil was present. So, he took advantage of his two wwoofers to clear a bush area.

Throughout the day, Neil cut up and Tim and I picked up the wood and made a huge fire. At the beginning the flames were seven meters high and if we approached under five meters, we felt a burning heat.

Practically all the other days, we took care of the coffee trees. We weeded around them with a trowel. It was hard because we stayed on all fours, sitting down or lying down with our face in the leaves. It wasn't interesting to do the same thing all day without ever seeing anyone else.

I cleaned a gate by brushing away the moss because Neil wanted to paint it. Tim weeded a lot with a saw. I helped him to carry the waste to make a large pile for burning.

Usually, I worked from 9 AM to 12 AM. Lunch time lasted one hour and I finished at 3 PM.

Problems and comments about the English

In the home, the atmosphere was wonderful because the parents and the children took an interest in me. For dinner time, if Steph thought I didn't understand something, she explained

the story to me. During our work-time, Tim helped me. As he was a native English-speaker, he understood Neil's instructions perfectly.

Dain was an excellent ping pong sparing partner. When we played quietly, we talked about sport and the differences between French and Aussie school. I tried to teach him a few French words and to describe my feelings about English.

Journey

My next wwoof place is in Bellingen in the Coffs Harbour hinterland. As both the parents worked, I had to take public transport from Clunes to Byron Bay to catch my Greyhound coach. I could only arrive in Coffs Harbour at 9.30 PM, 45 minutes away from Bellingen. Bruce, my next wwoof host, told me he couldn't pick me up so late and asked me to spend a night in Coffs Harbour. The next day, I would have to take a coach from Coffs Harbour to Urunga which was closer to Bellingen.

To be picked up by my wwoof host, I definitely had to take the 10 AM Greyhound coach in Byron Bay to reach Urunga which was 20 minutes away from Bellingen. The problem was that there was no public transport to go to Byron Bay before 10 AM.

Kindly Steph offered to take me there by car on Wednesday because she didn't work. Beforehand she proposed to go to Cape Byron, the most easterly point of Australia. By email, I asked Bruce if I could arrive later. He gave his approval to this change.

The trip from Bellingen to Dungog promised to be epic because I had to take a Greyhound coach and a Country Link train. I first thought to take a coach from Urunga at 00.30 AM to arrive in Taree at 3 AM. Then, I would had to wait until 11 AM to catch the train to Dungog!

When I explained this to Neil and Steph, they felt really concerned and wanted to find a better solution. I went with Steph to the Lismore train station to get information. I obtained the Taree Information Centre's telephone number to find a hostel for the night.

As I didn't want to spend money unnecessarily, I decided to stop in Newcastle at 6.30 AM and then take a train from the suburbs at 9.30 AM

On Wednesday morning, I went with Steph to visit Cape Byron and to see its lighthouse. During winter in the southern hemisphere, whales and dolphins go north along the Aussie East Coast to find warmer waters. Although I didn't stay a long time in Cape Byron I saw them.

In Bellingen

In Urunga, Samantha's dad, Bob, picked me up forty minutes late. I was surprised when I discovered their property : seven acres of hilly river rainforest.

Bruce, Sam's partner, is in the middle of building their wooden home. For the moment, they live a Spartan life style in several caravans and a small 20 square metre main room which serves as a kitchen and living room.

There is a wood-burning stove to provide heat because the nights were freezing. Their goal is to live as self-sufficient as possible. They have an outdoor shower with a small gas heater, dry/compost toilets, solar panels and the boys have to pee in the bush.

They have a pump to fill a water tank with the river water. We drank rain water which was filtered and mineralized again. What a change for me!

They have a dog, a small henhouse and a white rabbit which runs free around the property. They have a six month old baby girl, Keishia. Sam's parents, Bob and Irene, were there for a few days.

To use as little gas as possible for the shower, we switched on the gas a couple of minutes before. I succeeded in having only thirty seconds of warm water.

I slept in an old caravan a little bit far away from the main ones. The nights were so freezing that even hidden under one sleeping bag and two blankets, I needed a hot-water bottle.

As there isn't TV, I came back in my caravan around 8 or 9 PM to be ready to get up at 7 AM to face the cold.

During our first email exchange, Bruce sent me photos from his home and the river. On these photos, Bruce didn't specify the river was flooded because of diluvian rains. When I arrived, I was surprised to see the river level so low.

The property is surrounded with lush rainforest and very high trees around forty meters. The sun was always hidden by the top of the tallest trees. We had to wait until the sun went up very high in the sky to take advantage of sunlight.

Bob was amazed that nobody had told me the story about the Southern Cross on the Aussie flag. When he showed me it in the starry sky, he explained to me that you couldn't get lost in the Aussie bush because the Southern Cross always showed you where the south is.

When we shared a meal or when we were together, I realized I had to focus myself to understand the discussion. Sometimes, although I was focused, I couldn't understand fully. In that case, Irene or Bob summarized the situation for me.

In the evening we had our dinner at 6 or 6.30 PM. After having appreciated a lovely dinner, we stayed around the fire to talk. The host's behaviour was wonderful because they always tried to incorporate me and to help me take part in the discussion by asking me questions.

Works carried out

The main job during the week was to renovate an old flooded caravan. Bob and I began to brush the walls, the ceiling and the cupboards with sugar soap.

Then, we painted the ceiling in white and the walls in sky blue. We used paintbrushes for the corners and a roller for the main surface.

I worked with Bob for a few days until he left. So, I applied the second layer of paint to the ceiling and I painted the cupboards in white. It was very long and tedious because there were heaps of corners. Furthermore I had to be meticulous because I had to leave the cupboard's gold band untouched.

Meanwhile, Bruce was making wooden windows for the home. It was impressive to see all the machines he owned in the workshop.

Activities

I couldn't come to Australia and not try one of the national sports, surfing. One morning, I left home at 7 AM with Bruce who had been surfing for more than thirty years.

The waves weren't big enough for him so he decided to have a walk along the beach with the dog. When I watched professional surfers on the TV, it seemed to be easy. In reality, it wasn't.

I couldn't stay sitting down on the board when a wave arrived in front of me. I knew I had to get through the wave by ducking under it but I didn't succeed. That was even before attempting to stand up on the board : mission impossible!

Journey

I hadn't a wet suit so I didn't spend a long time in the water because I was freezing. Despite the fact that Bruce's advices weren't useful, I had fun.

The trip from Bellingen to Dungog was very long. After dinner, Bruce dropped me at 8.30 PM at Urunga. I had to wait four hours until the Greyhound coach arrived.

I went to the forest to wait and to shelter. Meanwhile, I thought about what I would do once to improve my daily life back in France.

When the coach arrived, I succeeded in sleeping a little bit until I got off in Newcastle at 6.30 AM. There were railway works on the network and a bus service was provided instead. Heaps of Country Link employees were helping the customers.

I arrived in Broadmeadow, in Newcastle suburbs. When I wanted to buy a XPT train ticket, the employee said to me the national XPT train didn't stop in Martins Creek, a small rail station near Dungog, where I would meet Trish.

So, I had to take a regional train from Hamilton, in Newcastle suburbs, to Martins Creek. I was lucky because my train left Hamilton at 8.30 AM to arrive at 9.30 AM.

Trish had planned to pick me up at 10.30 AM in Martins Creek but I hadn't any credit on my mobile phone to ring her and to warn her I would be arriving earlier.

In Jaccob's Ladder wwoof place

Trish and Brian are a 60 year old couple. Trish takes care of the property full time while Brian lives in the Sydney suburbs during the week.

They have an eighty acre property at the top of a hill surrounded by lush bush, wonderful lookouts above the valley and heaps of wildlife such as kangaroos or colourful and noisy birds.

Trish runs a real business because she employs a manager, Rob, to help her full time. She has cattle for meat, chickens for free range eggs, bees for honey and heaps of gardens to sell organic vegies, herbs, jams and marmalades.

The watering system was automatic because they have plenty of underground water pipes on the property. They sell their products in Maitland and Newcastle.

Brian never takes care of the business, he deals with bush regeneration and builds bridges and tracks in the property.

The wwoofer house, the Ruin's Cottage, is a renovated farm house and is about ten minutes walk from the Big House. There is a dry/compost toilet, a TV, solar panels, wood-burning stove, three bedrooms, and a kitchen with food.

When I arrived, there were two wwoofers, a 27 year old German girl, Rike, and an English boy, Andy. I never met him because he was in Cairns with friends. Rike was working there in order to obtain her second Working Holiday Visa. She worked full time without being paid.

Works carried out

Trish asked us to work four hours a day. When I started at 9 AM, I finished at 1 PM or 2 PM . This gave me time to write my report, to play sport or to cook *crepes* with the free range eggs.

I often worked with Rike and sometimes with Rob and Trish. We weeded around carrots and snow peas. As there were lots of weeds around carrots this job was very long. Then, we spread out waterproof fabric between carrot lines to prevent the weeds from coming back. We helped Trish to cook osso bucco for the dinner.

Lantana is a small and non-native thorny shrub which resists the dryness and heat of the Australian climate. It grows everywhere and it's a real scourge. Rike and I removed as much lantana as possible from a paddock.

Everyday, we collected the eggs, cleaned them and tidy them up in packs of twelve ready to be sold.

Mulch is very widely used in Australia, the driest country in the world. It's used for regulating the soil humidity, for preventing the growing of weeds and for obtaining better harvests.

We mulched around young potatoes plants using straw biscuits. Because of my pollen allergy, I always sneezed and I stopped mulching to begin weeding the nettles around the potatoes.

On this day, Rob forgot to shut a paddock gate and the cows went to graze on greener turf. So, Trish asked us to play cowboys.

Rike and I had to guide the cows into the right paddock. Unfortunately, one of them escaped in the bush by following one of Brian's tracks. The entire herd followed the stray cow and they ended up in the wrong spot. We had to follow them all around the property and force them to go to where Trish wanted.

The next day, we played cowboys again. A neighbour's cow disappeared into the bush through the fence which divided the two properties in order to rejoin her cow cousins. We enticed them home with food and the neighbour's stray cow followed the others to a gate where we picked her up.

On Sunday, I worked with Brian on his wooden bridge above a very tiny creek. His goal was to build a track on the other side of the bridge by digging the road from the bottom. Before, we needed to reinforce and widen the bridge in order to permit his tractor to drive over it.

We lifted heaps of logs and we used shovels to dig and adjust the log's level. Brian wasn't easy to understand and he had trouble understanding me. For example, how he explained the putting down of the log. A lot of action names were still unknown to me such as draw, push, lift, spin, lever up with the crowbar...

He was aware of my difficulties and we often communicated with gestures.

On Sunday, because I had a day off, Trish asked me to start working later and for only one hour. I dug a trench for a watering pipe.

On Monday, with Rike, we cleared lantanas which were across the road Brian was building. Although we started early, it was already hot because we were right in the sun.

Then we picked snow peas until 1 PM. It was hard to see them because it was green on green. Furthermore, the snow pea lines were so lush sometimes I couldn't work because of my allergy.

Problems and concerns about the English

I felt Trish was very glad to host us. She always smiled at us and had a nice word for us. Twice a week, we ate in the Big House for a big dinner. Otherwise, the other evenings, we ate in the Ruin's Cottage.

We always shared our lunch times in the Big House with Rike, Rob and Trish. The discussion was often about the property business and it was hard to get everything.

I got on well with Rike. Unfortunately, after the workday, I didn't spend so much time with her. She tried to make up as many hours as possible in order to obtain her three months of work which would allow her to get her second visa. So, she started early and finished late.

Her boyfriend studies in Sydney and she rang him every evening and spoke for two or three hours. We never ate our breakfast together and we sometimes ate our dinner together.

I felt I wasn't enough at ease to understand foreigner's accents when they spoke English. It was the same with Rike because she had a strong German accent.

For example, I didn't understand when she wanted to say orange juice or water pump and I asked her to repeat.

As for me, the native English-speakers didn't understand when I pronounced very simple expressions such as bees and word.

Activities

On Friday, we didn't work for the afternoon. We went to Newcastle to meet Brian, Trish's husband, and a couple of friends.

We left the car at the Paterson train station. We met Brian, Caroline and Chris at an art gallery. It was the opening night for a Margaret Olley exhibition so there were a lot of old people wearing their Sunday best.

The inaugural speech was so long and boring I went upstairs. I met a young auburn girl who worked there. She chatted me up and I gave her my email address hoping to see her again before I left Australia.

Then we went to a restaurant, the atmosphere was nice and I succeeded in communicating well despite the noisy music which forced us to speak very loud.

This restaurant was Bring Your Own alcohol and we brought some wine. As Brian wanted to drink and as I was staying sober, he asked me to drive home when I told him I had an international driver's license.

It was the first time I drove on the left side of the road. In France, we drive on the right side of the road but in Australia, they drive on the wrong side of the road! Fortunately, it was an automatic car but it was an Audi allroad 4WD, with a 230 horse power turbocharged petrol engine: four times more powerful than my own car in France.

The first feelings came from the automatic gear. In the Drive mode, the car got speed even though I didn't push the accelerator, it was totally disturbing compared with a manual car.

Trish who was sitting behind me was terrified because at the beginning when I was getting used to the car, I got speed and then broke quite strongly. Brian who was sitting near me was a little bit drunk and he assured me I was a good driver.

It was disquieting to change my habits. For example, before coming to a roundabout, I had to look to the right instead of the left. Eventually, we arrived alive at the property.

In the Gloucester's BOAC

Brian and Naomi live in Gloucester and run the Barrington Outdoor Adventure Business that specialises in outdoor activities such as canoeing, kayaking, mountain biking and bushwalking.

Their home is a big shed on a two-acre property. The shed is a split-level design. On the lower level, are the bikes, canoes, kayaks and workshop. On the upper level, there is the kitchen living-room, wwoofer's bedroom, bathroom, office & Brian and Naomi's apartment. The apartment was off-limits.

They have a huge material stock, about 25 mountain bikes and 80 canoes and kayaks. The business has been operating for 23 years and Brian has been the boss for 15 years. Naomi, a former chemical engineer, has helped Brian for 3 years.

The property looks like an industrial estate because it isn't very green. Nevertheless, there are two kitchen gardens. One of their employees, Shane, is a former gardener. He built with Brian a terraces garden. It remains only to put topsoil to be ready to grow plants.

They have three 4WD cars, a minivan, a minibus and heaps of trailers to carry canoes, kayaks and mountain bikes. They have a family of dingoes : the dad is so old he didn't move so much and the mum was always hidden in a car. The son Junior was the only one out and about.

Naomi worked in the office while Brian took care of the materials. Shane brought the customers to go paddling in the river. Actually, it was the low season because of winter and there were only customers during the weekend.

When I arrived, Brian didn't put me at ease : he introduced me to the place very quickly and didn't tell me that Naomi was his girlfriend. The first day, during the dinner, they spoke as if I wasn't there.

Work carried out

On the first day, Brian had to go to Sydney to promote his business to a famous and wealthy High School. So I had to wash his 4WD car inside and outside before he left.

The following day, Brian was still in Sydney and Shane asked me to plant young beetroots in the vegetable garden. Then, I carried topsoil to spread it in the new terraces garden. It was hard because it was hot. The topsoil heap was so dry I had to break it with a pickaxe. As I used a wheelbarrow, to go up the steps near the new garden, I put a narrow plank across them. Every time, the wheelbarrow threatened to flip over because it was overloaded.

The next day, I made concrete with Shane to reinforce the rock edge which formed the terraces garden. He asked me to collect the sand with the wheelbarrow. Then, we spread the concrete with a shovel and a trowel.

At midday, three builder's mates and a concrete mixer truck arrived to build a concrete slab at the workshop entrance downstairs. It was finished in three hours. We retrieved the extra concrete to continue reinforcing the terraces.

On Friday, before the weekend and the arrival of customers, I washed the minivan car inside and outside. In the afternoon, I went with Brian's friends to cut up trees that lay across the river. The operation was tricky because the worst one had a 50 cm diameter. Brian cut up the trees in many pieces with a chain saw and we cleared the area collecting the wood pieces.

On Saturday morning, I went for a run. I didn't work in the afternoon because I left for a trip to Newcastle. When I came back on Sunday evening, a new German 21 year old wwoofer girl had arrived.

On Monday, the new wwoofer, Katie and I took care of the new garden. Finally, I was able to finish carrying topsoil after Shane let me use the trailer instead of the wheelbarrow. Meanwhile Katie mulched the areas with topsoil using green manure. She used paper to prevent weeds growing and to eventually add to the mulch. We had to hose a lot between every step, to prepare the area for the plants.

On Tuesday morning, I went with two French customers kayaking on the river. When I came back, I helped Katie to take care of the kitchen garden : weeding, adding topsoil, paper and mulching.

On Wednesday, we continued mulching the kitchen garden. On Thursday, we took care of the citrus trees : again weeding, paper and mulching but no need for topsoil. We continued on Friday morning before going kayaking in the afternoon.

On Saturday, Katie had a day off and went to Gloucester by bike. I finished the mulch around the new garden and I added more mulch around the citrus trees. I didn't work in the afternoon and went for a run to the city with the dog Junior.

Although Brian and Naomi were practically always there, we never worked with them. They left Katie and me alone and never gave us any work times. So, we took our lunch time when we wanted and stopped working when we thought we had worked enough.

After finishing the work day, I often borrowed a bike to go to the Gloucester library to go on the Internet. Indeed, we couldn't use the computers in the Centre.

Every day, we washed the dishes at lunch and dinner time. As Naomi was vegetarian, she always cooked because she didn't eat any meat, sea food or dairy products. Furthermore she didn't eat wheat because she was allergic so no pastas or bread.

In the morning at 9 AM, we sometimes shared the breakfast with Brian and Naomi. For lunch time, we took a snack around 1 PM. We never saw them because they had their snack at 2 or 3 PM. For dinner time, we sometimes shared the meal when Naomi wasn't working in her office or Brian watching sport on the TV.

My trip in Newcastle

Over the two weeks, I kept in touch by email with Grace, the Aussie girl I met at the art exhibition. During the week, she worked as a teacher in a kinder-garden and on the weekend, she worked in the art gallery. Although she was really busy she could meet me on the first Sunday.

My first plan was to take a train to Newcastle and come back the same day to Gloucester but there weren't many trains. So I had to leave on Saturday and spend a night in the Newcastle YHA to see Grace again on Sunday morning near the art gallery.

We went to the beach to talk, and then we went to the harbour. This day was really boiling around 28°C and we wore casual clothes : a pair of jeans, smart shoes and sweat shirt. We couldn't continue to walk and we rested in a park until her father picked us up to go and chill at her house.

For our first date, it was a little bit funny to meet her family. Although they mocked my French accent, they were very nice with me telling me about their French trip and asking me heaps of questions. It was like they were a new wwoof family.

Then I went by car to the Blackbutt Reserve to see koalas, wallabies and birds. I took a quick meal with Grace's family before taking my train at 7 PM to Gloucester. Her parents were very glad that we met each other because Grace will spend two years working in Manchester, England. We should see each other again in Europe, either in France or in England,

Grace studied French in High School and at University but we spoke English. It was a wonderful day to improve my level of English. Grace listened to me so attentively and always tried to explain to me when I didn't understand. We didn't use a lot of my dictionary to look for translations but we succeeded to discuss many different subjects.

Katie's arrival

The first work week wasn't so interesting because I was often alone. My second work week was completely different with Katie's arrival. We spent heaps of time together : during and after the job, and during the meals.

She was in Australia for three weeks and would like to spend seven months for fruitpicking and wwoofing. She took English courses over two weeks in a Sydney private school. She hadn't had English courses since she was 16 and her English was very bad : she didn't know how to build a correct sentence, she always mixed up present and past tenses...It was sometimes hard to understand each other.

Straightaway, I shared my small two months experience with her to give her heaps of information about coach and train transport, fruitpicking and my last wwoof places. During the job, we often spoke together and one time, Brian even told us to stop talking.

As she couldn't understand easily, I had to try to articulate and to speak slowly and with an English accent. It wasn't always easy because I got used to speaking English with my French accent.

On Monday, her first work day, we went to Gloucester because she needed cash. She had an Australian bank account and didn't want to use the Automatic Teller Machine from another bank. A woman explained to us if Katie bought goods in a supermarket, she could ask to have cash.

We don't have this kind of system in Europe so for me, it was hard to understand. As Katie didn't understand anything, I acted as an intermediary between her and the woman.

Katie was looking forward to learning English. During the job, as we used a lot of tools, she always asked me to repeat or spell the unknown names for each tool. Sometimes, we didn't have a dictionary at hand so I had to explain to her directly. It was a very good exercise for me.

Kayak experiences

On Tuesday, Naomi suggested that I go on a kayak trip with two French customers. Constantin and Louis were 19 and from the suburbs of Paris. They are law students and on holiday travelling around Australia for one month.

Because of winter, the water was very low. Although the rapids weren't quick and high, they were dangerous because there were plenty of rocks just below the surface. We flipped over many times. The second time was the worst for me. I flipped over in a narrow rapid with rocks on either side. Trying to soften my fall with my hands, I hurt in the thumb. I believed it was broken because it was very painful.

Constantin flipped over in the same spot and his kayak became full of water. As Louis and Constantin were struggling to empty it, I was waiting for them with my sore hand in the cool water. Eventually my hand felt fine and we continued. Despite all this drama, it was a wonderful morning. We spoke French together and we had a lot of laughs.

On Friday afternoon, Brian's sister, Carrie, her friend Elizabeth, Katie and I went to paddle on the river. Brian, Naomi and Shane who were more experienced than us took off quickly and left us in their wake.

Elizabeth and Katie had already paddled but weren't very good and often flipped over. With Carrie, we had to rescue them. The kayak trip was over 10 km and we left at 3 PM. As we were very slow, we arrived at 6 PM.

It was very scary because it became dark at 5 PM and we couldn't see anything on the river. Furthermore we were completely wet, freezing and exhausted. Brian, Naomi and Shane came back home by bike at 5.30 PM and left their kayaks for us to bring back home.

Problems and comments about the English

Brian didn't make any efforts to spend time with Katie and me. He always spoke to us quickly. Mostly during the job, I was so busy we couldn't speak to him. Two or three times, he said me "Ask Shane" when I had a question about the job.

Only Shane spent a little time with us and tried to explain things to us such as the names of tools or how to do the job.

Heaps of Naomi's and Brian's friends came to the Centre during my stay but I wasn't introduced to them. Although I said hello quickly, I didn't know who they were : friends, family, workmates. So I felt disturbed and not at ease.

One time, a couple of friends ate at home. Katie and I didn't have an aperitif with them in Brian and Naomi's private apartment. We met their friends at the beginning of the meal. Katie and I didn't understand the discussion and as they never asked us a question, it was impossible to join in the discussion.

Generally, Brian and Naomi acted as if we weren't there. For example, when we shared a meal, they spoke with each other and ignored us. Brian spoke to me during the dinner time only twice. These were :

“Close your mouth when you eat, you make too much noise.” In this case Naomi had cooked a very spicy Thai dish and I had to cool it myself.

The other comment was :

“In the civilised countries, we eat slowly. If you eat too quickly, you can go outside with the dogs.”

The second Saturday, Naomi warned me that I had to leave the next day. Although we had agreed I could stay for 2 weeks which ended on the Tuesday. As the library was closed on the weekend, I used Katie's computer to send an email to my next hosts, Tim and Belinda in Sydney, to inform them that I would arrive earlier than planned. As I hadn't any mobile credit, I couldn't call him.

I left on Sunday from Gloucester hoping that Tim had read my email and would be there to pick me up. Hopefully, Tim was wonderful and called me on Sunday at 11 PM when I was in the coach to ask me if I would be late. To help us to recognize each other, we described what we were wearing. When I got off the bus, Tim wasn't there and I started to walk along the street. Fortunately Tim recognized me as he was driving by looking out for me.

In Sydney

Tim and Belinda have been going out for 6 years and will get married next year. They live in Sydney in the Glebe neighbourhood, 15 minutes walking from the CBD. They have a 3-floor house. Lucky them because they also have a garage and a small garden.

They have a young cat. Tim has 2 children from a previous marriage : Ben (18) and Myles (17).

Tim worked as a researcher for Sydney University and set up his own business to sell a chemistry patent. Belinda worked for Qantas Empire Airways in administration.

Although I never met them before, they welcomed me very well. I had my own bathroom and bedroom on the top level near the terrace. I slept in a Japanese bedroom. I could borrow a bike and a computer when I wanted.

We had many parties because Ben will spend 6 months in Europe. He wants to travel before starting architecture studies at University. He left on Friday the 4th of September so to celebrate his departure, we ate many times in restaurants with friends and family.

Furthermore, Tim and Belinda bought a holiday home in the Central Coast. On Saturday, friends came with trailers and cars to help them move the furniture and cupboards.

Tim assured their lives weren't as fast-paced, I was just there in a very busy period.

Ben would like to come to France and I suggested he comes to Caen in my share flat.

Conclusion

What the internship provided me with :

Linguistic improvement

Cultural and human experiences

Linguistic improvement

In Australia, I travelled with a 3 kilogram-2000 page dictionary. I felt it was necessary to write my report.

When Grace read my texts, she said to me : "Your vocabulary is very wide but your grammar still needs to be improved." I would like to continue to improve my English grammar by reading many English texts.

Before the trip, I had never stayed in an English-speaking country, so I didn't get used to English pronunciation. My oral comprehension improved a lot by listening to native speakers.

I'm not able to understand normal discussions but I can understand if the person I'm talking makes an effort to communicate.

Before the trip, it was hard to express myself in English because of my limited vocabulary and bad grammar structures. Now, I can have a sensible discussion without looking for a translation in my dictionary every minute.

In Caen, I would like to meet British students studying there. We can do a linguistic exchange, speaking both languages to each other.

Cultural and human experiences

I could travel in an Anglo Saxon country whose culture and food are different. It's also a strong immigration country : European and Asian.

During my trip, I had eight different hosts so I could meet heaps of families and houses either in city or bush. It was interesting to work as a farmer gardening and looking after animals.

Spending three months far away from France, family and friends permitted to me to think about my life and to reassess. I really would like to become a better person and do new activities.

I became aware of my luck to be French. Every place where I stayed they often went to France and knew French culture. It was funny to listen to them speaking French and to tell me how their trip was.

Although France is a quite small country with quite small population, its cultural and commercial influence is global.