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## And So It Begins . . .

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And so it begins...  
02/24/2013



*Our first trip to the beach with Zane's roommate! (Pictured left to right: Andrea Snyder, Shelby Hollenbeck, Zane Carey, Lyi Okunlola)*

Well, we finally made it! After months of anticipation and planning, we have finally arrived in Cairns, located in Queensland, Australia. Getting over here was rough – 18 hours of flying – but was it worth it? I sure hope so! We arrived at the student lodge, checked in, and were immediately shown to our rooms. I have to be honest and say that when the manager left my room, I felt completely abandoned and out of touch. I didn't know what to do; I didn't know where to start. I didn't know which room anyone else was in, no one had explained the phone system here so I couldn't use the phone located in my room, and I wasn't sure I could find my way back to the office to ask questions even if I wanted to. I was so overwhelmed that I just had to sit down and breathe. I had to take it all in and realize that this adventure had begun...whether I was ready for it or not.

Getting used to life in Cairns was hard. It was an adjustment. But I wouldn't describe it as culture shock. First, the weather is certainly different than the weather we left behind in Oregon; upper 80's/low 90's, sunshine, no clouds, with humidity around 90%. As a result, you wear the least amount of clothing that you can because it's so humid and you're always sweating. No matter what. It hasn't rained much since we've been here, which is very unusual since we're in the middle of the wet season. Another aspect of life here in Cairns that has taken some getting used to is having to rely on public transportation. Whether you want to go to the beach, the shopping center or downtown, you have to take a bus (unless you've made friends with someone who has a car). The bus system is really confusing at first and takes a while to understand. But once you get it down and remember which bus line goes where, it's the easiest thing in the world. Most of the

drivers are nice and can help you, give you directions and let you know where your stop is. However, there are a few that we now know don't really appreciate the new students/tourists that arrive and try to ride the bus without knowing precisely how it works (Andrea and I found that out the hard way). A third aspect of life here that is still hard to get used to is simply the beaches. They are amazing. You will find the sunshine, blue sky, soft sand, 85 degree water, and of course, stinger nets. This time of year is stinger (jellyfish) season and it is crucial that you swim inside the nets in order to avoid the risk of severe burns that are caused by these creatures. This is all very different from the Northwest, where the beach days consist of clouds, water that you can barely put your toes in without squealing, and wind.

This past week has been orientation week for freshmen and international students at JCU. It's geared mostly towards freshmen, with optional workshops that were about things such as the changes you'll face in college, how to manage your money, academic writing, reading, speaking, etc. Because it was geared mostly towards freshmen (aside from the mandatory introductory session), none of us that came from Linfield felt that it was necessary to attend the other sessions. So instead we took advantage of this extra time and explored Cairns; we went to the beaches, explored downtown, hit up the lagoon, and got a taste of what the night life was like here. We were also able to explore the city with the help of the James Cook University Student Alumni Association. They had social events set up throughout O Week and we were able to take advantage of many of them, including a trip to Crystal Cascade, a pub crawl, and a free beach trip.

So far life here is great. We've adjusted (for the most part) and now we're getting ready to start classes. Hopefully we'll be able to stay focused on school and make it to class every once in a while...it'll be hard with this bright sun, blue sky, and 85 degree water that looks oh so inviting!

## Reflection: A week and a half later

### The Honeymoon Stage: 03/05/2013

In the information session that took place in the beginning of O week, our international advisors explained to us the many emotional stages that international students go through when studying in a different country. One of those stages was the honeymoon stage – and that's definitely where I am. I am falling in love with everything here. While it was a little overwhelming at first, that feeling has subsided and all I can say is “bring it on!” I can't wait to go exploring, venture into the rainforest, sail out to the reef and go scuba diving, and drive inland and see the Tablelands.

Everything here is so different than anything I'm used to. But at the same time, it's so green here that I kind of feel like I'm at home. Everywhere you look, it's green; the green sugar cane, the green bushes, the green trees, even the massive “mountains” that we are surrounded by are green (what they call mountains, I call hills). There are, of course, chain fast food restaurants that also make it seem like I'm not in a completely different country: McDonalds (“Maccas”), Burger King (“Hungry Jack”), KFC, Subway, and Dominos. I guess no matter where you go there will always be a part of home that goes with you. But that's a good thing, because it keeps me grounded. It's a constant reminder of where I come from and helps me realize all that I have and how lucky I am. It's a reminder that I'm on a trip of a lifetime, one that many people won't get to experience.

It is finally hitting me that I'm in Australia...that I'm halfway around the world from anything familiar to me, and I'm surviving. Not only am I surviving, I'm enjoying myself and having the time of my life. I've never liked change. But this change, this is good.