



Summer Study Tour to Australia 2011:

*Explore Cairns —
an experience that changes life*

*Ada Iao

From chopsticks to forks and knives; from rice to barbecued food; from high-rise apartment living to ground-level house accommodation and from Macau waters to the Great Barrier Reef. Changes remodel life.

I was brought up in Macau. When I was a child, I was strictly taught to be self-disciplined and I seldom had fun. My days were packed with all kinds of extra-curricular educational activities, therefore, my time was limited and playing outdoors could only be considered a dream. To my delight, during my one month study tour programme in Cairns, I have been given the freedom to jump wildly with my host sisters on the trampoline in the backyard and to draw with chalk on the road out the front of my host family's house. Australian treat enjoying life as essential and give equal attention and time to themselves, family and friends. They are close to nature and prefer outdoor recreational activities. Australian kids can play in the fields without wearing shoes, run with their dogs, make a mess whilst eating ice cream, in general, get themselves dirty.

Education in Macau is more theory-based and electives are not popular. In Cairns, however, besides a few compulsory subjects such as English and Mathematics, students are free to choose from a wide range of practical subjects such as manual arts, drama, and media studies, all of which are rare in Macau. This encourages students to search for their interests and to explore their potentials. During science lessons on electricity, we built and wired a 3D model house instead of only drawing circuits out of

imagination in our practice books. During English lessons, we made up stories, watched movies and filled in cryptic puzzles instead of completely focusing on our textbooks. Learning through daily life circumstances enhances the application and integration of knowledge into students' lives. Also, Australian students are more responsive and enthusiastic during their discussions with teachers. I also had a chance to observe interactive lessons that were a balance between theory and practice.

My favourite parts of Cairns are its extensive greenery and rich biodiversity. Swimming in the large lagoon, sunbathing on clean beaches, or even just taking a little walk outside the house are excellent mental refreshments. In addition, a lot of endemic animals can easily be found here, such as platypuses, kangaroos, dugongs, cassowaries, emus and salt water crocodiles. For instance, when I went jogging along Red Arrow, I saw three ducks, many brush turkeys, a tawny frog-mouthed owl and a wallaby. I am passionate about nature.

Immersion in the Australian culture has provided me with a totally different perspective on life. I have a new definition for success: being physically and psychologically healthy. Therefore, starting from my last year in high school, I will try to balance between learning and relaxation. Last but not the least, I have become more courageous to follow my heart to achieve my dream and to bear risks. I am now ready to walk out of a routine lifestyle to explore the wonders of the world.

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