

International Student Spotlight Interview



NAME: Stephanie Coombes

YEAR AT K-STATE: 2nd Year
Graduate Student

MAJOR: Communications and
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HOME COUNTRY: Australia

What was it like coming to K-State? How did you decide to come here?

It was exciting and scary to come to K-State. I chose it because it was centrally located in the US and had a good reputation for my area of study. I wanted to be somewhere semi-rural and within a reasonable distance to all the places I wanted to visit during my stay.

What has your experience been like so far?

I've had lots of different experiences, both good and bad. There's been excitement followed by periods of homesickness, then more excitement, then more homesickness.

What were some of the big differences when you first arrived (social, academic, weather, etc.)?

Without a doubt- the weather. Think of the coldest place you've ever been, then imagine it being twice as cold- that's Manhattan in the winter, although I'm used to living in a very hot climate! Socially, being in the mid-west, people are certainly more conservative, I've had to try and watch the language and expressions I use.

Was K-State what you expected? Was Manhattan what you expected?

K-State is close to what I expected, but all of my expectations were born out of watching movies! Manhattan is a great place to live, it has all the conveniences of a big city but isn't so big that you get lost or stressed in traffic.

Is classroom culture a lot different here?

Yes and no, I think that's partly to do with being a graduate student though. The classrooms are pretty "old school" here. Back home almost all lectures are video recorded and available online, so if you miss class or just want to review a lecture you can, but here I don't know anyone who has a class that is recorded. Most lectures are given via PowerPoint back home too and the PowerPoints or some form of notes are available online, but that's not the case for any of my classes here- attendance is a must if you want to know what's going on!

What do you like about being a student at K-State?

I like the college culture that America has, even if it is a bit over the top sometimes. Back home we don't have as many colleges, we don't have college sports and mascots and all that sort of stuff, so there aren't any huge rivalries between and loyalties to colleges. I like that just by being a K-State student I am automatically a "Wildcat" and I'm a part of this community. I like the big deal they make about college sports and attending the games, it's such a novelty because we don't have anything like it back home. In saying that though, because I didn't grow up with the hype, it's pretty easy to get over it fairly quickly!

What kinds of things are you involved in on campus?

Graduate school keeps me pretty busy but I try to do as much as I can on campus, there's always something going on. There's free yoga each day, bake sales, parties, events, so many student organizations doing something throughout the year, if you make the effort to be involved you'll find plenty to do.

What do you do for fun in Manhattan?

I found a local place to go riding at as I'm a horse rider. I also bought a pass to the Tuttle Creek State Park so I could go swimming and hiking and camping. Of course there is always plenty to see and do in Aggieville too. I bought a car soon after being here so I try and get out and explore as much as I can.

If you could have known one thing before moving here, what would it be?

The restrictions for international students to work and volunteer. I was really disappointed to learn that I couldn't accept an offer to be an unpaid intern during my first year here, but those are the rules.

Do you have any advice for incoming international students?

Have a really realistic, thorough budget before committing to coming over here. Make sure you will have enough to not only live on, but to be able to enjoy your time here and have the experiences you deserve! Look into the scholarships available and ask your professor or college staff for help to make sure you know about them all.

What would you like others to know about being an international student at K-State?

K-State is a great college, with a supportive International Student Center, but you are in the Midwest and unless you have a car or money to travel, you might not have all of the experiences that you've been thinking of, especially if your idea of America comes from TV and the movies.

Would you mind sharing a phrase from your native language and what it means?

One that I say which confuses all of my friends is "Old mate". Australian colloquialism. A replacement term for a person's name within a sentence. Usage stems from the idea that a person need not be named during a statement or anecdote, but that his or her

identity can be deduced by the context of the message.

We generally use it if we don't know or remember someone's name.

"What did Old Mate say?"