



Visiting Brisbane, Australia, post-COVID19

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There is no doubt that Japan's push to become a more globalized nation has taken a hit since the COVID-19 pandemic started last year. The number of foreign visitors entering Japan has not been so low since 1998. According to the Japan National Tourism Organization, the total number of foreign visitors in 2020 stood at 4.11 million, down 87.1% from 2019 (as cited in "Japan-bound Statistics - Tourism Statistics," 2021). The Immigration Service Agency of Japan also states that the number of Japanese people traveling overseas decreased by 98.1% during the same period (as cited in "Japanese Outbound Tourists Statistics - Tourism Statistics," 2021). With a large percentage of international borders remaining closed and strict quarantine procedures in place, it is understandable that many Aichi university students have decided to postpone their overseas travel plans indefinitely. For many would-be Adventurers though, this can be heartbreaking.

However, hope should not be lost! The preliminary rollout of vaccines in early 2021 has boosted optimism that things may soon return to normal. For many of you - young Aichi university students - the time to travel and experience life overseas is now. For those of you wishing to practice your second

language (English, French, German, Chinese, etc.) but are not confident, the one-month study seminars offered during the summer and spring holidays provide an excellent opportunity. For the past five years (excluding the 20/21 school year), I have had the pleasure of accompanying a number of students back to my hometown of Brisbane, Australia. It is one of the more popular study seminars, with an average of around 20 students applying each year.

What makes Brisbane such an attractive city to so many international students is the fact that it is so cosmopolitan... and safe! With a population of around 2.3 million people, nearly 33% of its residents are born overseas, with 18% of them speaking a language other than English at home ("Facts and Figures About Brisbane," 2017). This makes it very easy for foreign students to blend in with people from the local community, who (for the most part), are used to interacting with second-language English speakers. The diversity within the city creates a safe and welcoming environment for young international students who wish to study and live there. It also provides vast opportunities to try authentic international foods sold at supermarkets and restaurants alike.

Brisbane is Australia's third largest city, and one of its fastest growing. It is the capital of Queensland, which is also known as the sunshine state. As table 1 shows, although Australia is renowned as being a hot country, the average temperatures around the coastal areas where most people live, usually does not exceed 30 degrees. This makes it ideal weather for trips to the beaches or mountains.

Table 1.

Average temperatures in Brisbane (“ Facts and figures about Brisbane,” 2017)

Month / Season	Average Min. Temp	Average Max Temp
Dec – Feb (Summer)	20° C	28° C
Mar – May (Autumn)	16° C	24° C
Jun – Aug (Winter)	10° C	21° C
Sep – Nov (Spring)	15° C	25° C

One thing students always tell me they are amazed about when they first arrive in Australia is how green everything is, and how much open space there is. On your first morning in Brisbane, you will most likely be struck by the sound of a variety of bird calls right outside your window, in any number of trees in your homestay host’s garden or lining the footpaths. Although Brisbane is a fairly large city, there are countless parks and facilities that are free for public use. The picture below is of New Farm Park, one of the oldest and most popular parks in the Brisbane area. It is located right on the riverside and is very close to the center of the city. It is common now for parks such as this to have BBQ facilities available for anyone who would like to bring along some food and have a BBQ picnic there with family or friends.



Photo 1. New Farm Park

For those of you who like the idea of venturing outside the city on the weekends and traveling around, Brisbane is also perfectly located between the Gold Coast (South of Brisbane) and the Sunshine Coast (North of Brisbane). These two spots make excellent destinations as they are each accessible by train: 45 minutes to the Gold Coast; around 2 hours to the Sunshine Coast, and both offer very different experiences. The Sunshine Coast (I recommend Noosa Heads), has a very relaxed, small beach town feel to it, with no high-rise buildings and a very laidback atmosphere. On the other hand, the Gold Coast is much more like Waikiki in Hawaii. It offers



Photo 2. Noosa Heads



Photo 3. Gold Coast

a lot of excitement, with lots of shops, theme parks, nightclubs, and even a casino. If you are looking for adventure, you should go to the Gold Coast, but if you want some relaxing downtime, you should go to the Sunshine Coast.

Although we continue to live in a time where it is important to take steps to safeguard our own health and the health of those around us, it does not mean that we must give up on our hopes to experience the amazing world beyond our borders. We just have to be smart about it. Please consider Brisbane as an option for your first post-COVID 19 adventure.

References

Facts and Figures About Brisbane. (2017). Choose Brisbane. https://www.choosebrisbane.com.au/study/why-choose-brisbane/facts-and-figures?sc_lang=en-au#:~:text=well%2Dknown%20organisations.-,Population,third%2Dlargest%20city%20in%20Australia.&text=The%20

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Photo 1. New Farm Park

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brisbane_CBD_seen_from_New_Farm_Park,_Queensland.jpg

Photo 2. Noosa Heads

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sunset_in_Noosa_Heads,_Queensland_02.jpg