From Santiago to Sydney: Manuela’s excellent adventure

Manuela Nielsen was one of 140 Chilean students who travelled to Australia this year to study at a TAFE institute as part of the BECAS Chile Technical Scholarships program.

Manuela described the feeling of being awarded a scholarship as “amazing”.

“I had completed a tourism management course with DUOC in Santiago and heard about the scholarships on the local news. I had to wait almost 12 months before finding out I had won a scholarship and couldn’t believe it when I was told”.

From a list of over 200 courses, Manuela chose a Diploma of Tourism with TAFE NSW Sydney Institute. “I wanted to improve my English language skills and was really impressed with the way Australia promoted tourism. I also wanted to be in a safe environment because I came out here with my ten year old son.”

When Manuela arrived in Sydney, the first few weeks were a real challenge. “It was horrible! I couldn’t believe how expensive everything was and I found it really difficult finding suitable accommodation for the two of us. Fortunately I had some friends in Sydney who we stayed with for the first month and the TAFE institute really supported me in settling in”.

Manuela finally found an apartment in Newtown, sharing with a local student. “I must have visited ‘Gumtree’ about thirty times before I found this place”.

Now she has finished her studies, Manuela looks back on a fantastic experience. “I loved the course. The teachers were so professional and up to date with the travel industry. They had excellent teaching materials and I was able to mix with many students from around the world.” The teachers shared Manuela’s enthusiasm and commitment to her studies by awarding her a TAFE NSW International Student Certificate of Excellence.

Apart from her studies, Manuela really appreciated the beauty of Sydney and the many activities you could do for little or no money. The Royal National Park in southern Sydney was a favourite destination.
Manuela found the locals a little more distant than the people back in Chile but her young son had a great time. “He attended a local public school in Sydney and his reports were really good. He really got to learn and practice his English and has become fascinated with aboriginal culture”.

“He even had one of his photos selected for the City of Sydney’s Art and About competition and the photo was proudly displayed in Hyde Park”.

So what’s next for Manuela?

“I’m currently doing an internship with a local tourism marketing company. I plan to head back to Chile in March where I may go back to a company I worked with before I left. No matter what happens, I now have many more contacts and opportunities than before”.

Manuela spoke with TDA’s Peter Holden. The scholarships were fully funded by the Chilean government and TAFE Directors Australia provided program management support in Australia.