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Australia Study Abroad Pre-Trip Reflection

We leave for Australia in a few days and I am beyond excited! I have never been outside of the country before. In high school, in my junior year, I was supposed to travel to Spain through the Spanish Club. Our Spanish club had our flights booked for our 10-day trip to Spain. Which quickly got canceled because of Covid. We tried to do this same exact trip the next year and yet again it got canceled. Feeling hopeful that the maybe next year 2022 would be my year abroad, I applied for an International Agricultural FFA trip to Costa Rica. Yet this also got canceled and changed to a domestic trip where we traveled to California learning all about its diverse agriculture. The fourth time's a charm, right? I am beyond excited to begin the journey of a lifetime. However, this journey has already begun! We started the first few chapters of our Australia journey these past few weeks. As we dove deep into the research world learning all about Australia. We learned all about Australia's culture, government, climate, economy, education, hobbies, tourism, and of course an immense amount about Australian agriculture! What surprised me the most is just how diverse Australian agriculture is. Some of the sectors of Australian agriculture that we learned about that I found the most interesting were the cotton industry, the seafood industry, and the mining industry.

We learned how Australia can be a dry country, challenging the cotton industry and many others because of moisture issues. The Australian cotton industry combats this problem by utilizing various irrigation systems. One successful system is utilizing a pivot which is a piece of equipment in a field that rotates around a pivot and crops are watered by sprinkles. I was surprised to hear that there were over 1,500 cotton farms, but I was even more surprised to hear that each farm averages 576 hectares. Which in the United States is over 1,400 acres per cotton field. I was shocked that the number of average fields almost matched how many farms there were in total. The cotton industry is recovering from record-low prices from the pandemic and I'm excited to travel to Australia to see the prices of cotton materials there. Along with that, I'm excited to learn more about the production of cotton firsthand while there.

The seafood industry in Australia was very intriguing to me as well. This was my presentation topic. I was blown away by how big aquaculture is in Australia. As a country

surrounded by water, I figured fisheries would be a huge hit, however, it was very much so the other way around. I'm also excited to try an Australian prawn. A prawn is one of Australians' favorite dishes for holidays you can almost always find Australians eating them or BBQing them. Prawns can be both fish-farmed and wild-caught. There are also a variety of kinds. I would be interested in trying a king prawn since it is one of the most popular, bigger, and sweeter prawns. Along with that, I am looking forward to touring the Sydney Fish Market. I learned in class from the class discussion that this fish market does its live auction of the fish Dutch style. Meaning they start at the highest price and work their way down until someone makes a bid. I have never seen this style of the auction before and would love to be able to watch one live in Australia while we are there. It truly amazes me how that process would work.

The mining industry is not necessarily entirely a part of Australian agriculture, however, I found it very intriguing as well. More specifically I found the Australian gold rush very astonishing. I learned all about the California gold rush in high school and how people traveled from all over in the hopes of finding gold and becoming filthy rich. In Australia, they found gold in the 1850s roughly the same time as in America. I also found it interesting how big the mining industry grew in Australia because by the late 20th century it was the largest market segment in the Australian economy. The most shocking part though about the Australian economy and mining is that the mining industry is founded by various foreign groups and without their funding, the country would be in financial disarray. I find it outrageous that they depended so heavily on the support of foreign countries.

These past couple of weeks we as a class have learned an immense amount from strong class discussions, asking poignant questions, informative presentations, and doing lengthy amounts of research. I am not done learning yet though. We have only nearly scratched the surface. I cannot wait to physically be in Australia and embrace myself into the culture embarking on the journey of a lifetime. I'm excited to see firsthand the importance of Australian agriculture in its economy while also learning and hearing stories from their production agriculturalists. Along with that, I'm excited to tour and visit some astonishing places learning all about Australian culture. Most importantly I'm excited to hear firsthand some Australian accents paired with Australian lingo. Maybe even pick up on some fun slang terms. As we close the chapter on the pre-trip process I cannot wait to turn the page beginning of the next chapter

which is actually being in Australia. This story is not done being written, but I have a feeling the next few chapters will be amazing and the entire story itself will be extraordinary.