

Manuela Nielsen

Country: Chile

Course: Diploma of Tourism

Institute: TAFE NSW - Sydney Institute

Scholarship: BECAS Chile Technical Scholarships



Manuela Nielsen was one of 140 Chilean students who travelled to Australia in 2011 to study at a TAFE NSW Institute as part of the BECAS Chile Technical Scholarships program which is fully-funded by the Chilean Government.

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 to Australia with my ten-year old son.”

When Manuela arrived in Sydney, the first few weeks were a real challenge. “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 NSW institute really supported me in settling in.”

Manuela found an apartment in Newtown, and shared the accommodation with a local student. “I must have visited ‘Gumtree’ [an online shopping website] 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 and awarded her a TAFE NSW International Student Certificate of Excellence.

Apart from her studies, Manuela really appreciated the beauty of Sydney and the many activities she could do for little or no money. The Royal National Park in southern Sydney was a favourite destination.

Manuela found the local Australians 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 became 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 doing an internship with a local tourism marketing company. When I finish, I plan to head back to Chile and 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.”