Alice Song came to study in Sydney after a short Australian holiday in 1995. She completed her Higher School Certificate (HSC) in 2007 at Burwood Girls High School and received a University Admissions Index (UAI) score of 99.5. Alice was also a recipient of the Premier’s Award for All-Round Excellence for scoring more than 90 in every subject.

“When I visited Australia in 2005 I decided it was a really nice place to stay. It was a very big decision for me to come and study here but I’m quite happy with everything so far. I am now in my first year of a Bachelor of Pharmacy at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga because I’ve been interested in health-related studies since I was very young.”

Sydney is a great study destination for international students. It has been voted the world’s best city* in 2007 and 2008 for its beautiful landscape, climate, friendly people, affordable accommodation, and quality education and training. It also ranks as one of the top three global cities for employment and business opportunities, alongside London and New York.

“My school teachers were great and helped me to achieve my high mark. I had no idea what kind of exam questions to expect in Australia and it was quite difficult as I had to complete the exams in English. In my English as a Second Language (ESL) class we talked about the “Aussie” way of life in class and identified Australian colloquial terms. It is not easy to adapt to a new culture and fit in to a foreign community and my school played an important role in helping me feel comfortable in Australia.

There are many differences between school in China and school in Australia. In China, there are much longer school hours and all subjects are compulsory. In Australia, you are required to think critically rather than copy everything from the textbook and most teachers won’t chase after you for not handing in your homework. In Australia, you have to organise your studies by yourself.

What I enjoyed most about school in Sydney was the practical part of chemistry and physics where we performed hands-on experiments. In China, practical experiments are usually demonstrated by the teacher but, in Australia, I could do them myself. Burwood Girls High School had fantastic, well-equipped chemistry and physics labs and also great computer facilities and a library where the collections are continuously enriched by the dedicated library staff.

I made a lot of Australian friends at school. I think it is important for international students to make friends with Australians because friends are the best teachers to help you understand the culture and the language. They also help you fight the loneliness and overcome your homesickness.

Attending Burwood Girls High School was an enjoyable and memorable experience. It was my first step to get to know Australia and it benefited me both academically and in broadening my horizons on life. I would recommend other students to come to Sydney and NSW to study so they can experience the great opportunity like I did.”

*Anholt City Brand Index (2007-2008) and Conde Nast Traveler 2007

Published: January 2008