

Secondment Experience: Perth

One of the benefits of being part of an international network is the opportunity for an international secondment. Bernard Lee, an Assistant Manager in our Audit & Assurance Division shares with us his secondment experience in Perth, Australia.



1 What made you decide to take a secondment to Perth?

I have always wanted to find out what it was like to work in a “Western” setting and I was curious about the differences in our work culture. I also wanted to experience the winter season as well. So, the opportunity to go to Perth on secondment was like a dream come true for me!



2 What type of work were you doing while on secondment?

I was given the opportunity to be involved with some really interesting assignments. As Pitcher Partners has a lot of publicly listed clients with June year ends, I was assigned to be a part of the statutory audit engagement team for these portfolios. Simultaneously, I was also handling several special audit engagements for Pitcher Partner's clients that are trust entities, and that was really exciting!



3 What was your first day and last day of work like?

First Day

Honestly, before I arrived at the office, I was extremely nervous as it was my first time working abroad. Everything was new to me - the city, the firm, the people. However, my uneasiness quickly dissipated when I met the HR Director, who warmly welcomed me on board. I was then brought around the office for a mini tour and introduced to everyone in the office. There was a lot of introductions, a lot of handshakes, a lot of faces and a lot of names to remember. Can't say I aced my first day, but I'm proud to say that your lad here certainly did not disappoint!

Last Day

Aside from the farewell lunches and dinners, my colleagues showered me with gifts and souvenirs. The best of them all was the farewell card that they gave me. I still read the words written on the card from time to time. Yes, I felt a pang of sadness saying "farewell" to my new friends in Perth, but I left with a heart full of gratitude. I am really grateful that I was given the chance to work with these beautiful people and I really look forward to seeing them again soon!

4 What did you discover was different or similar in terms of work culture between Malaysia and Australia?

One main difference that stood out for me was the emphasis on work-life balance in Australia. It is something that is ingrained in their culture. In Malaysia, we are still playing the catch-up game in this area, and for the most part, for most people, work-life balance is still a luxury. In Australia, there is a "Everyone can go back on time" kind of feeling. We still have quite a bit of way to go in Malaysia.

Apart from that, you would be surprised how similar we are in our philosophy of working hard and playing hard. I guess it is the same everywhere within the Baker Tilly group. We are a family. We work hard, we play hard!

5 How has this secondment opportunity impacted you in terms of your career?

I am generally a shy person. However, through this experience, I have discovered that, given the opportunity, I am actually more open to challenges than I thought I would be, and I am actually pretty good at networking with people. I feel that this secondment opportunity has really thrown me out of my comfort zone, or at the very least, expanded my comfort zone. I feel like I can now take on greater challenges in my professional career.

6 Tell us something that has been edged in your mind about Australia.

COFFEE!

Coffee is serious business in Australia. The country is reputed to serve the best coffees in the world. At any given time, you will see someone holding a cup of coffee. No one rejects coffee in Australia. Here, instead of cigarette breaks, people have actual coffee breaks during office hours! THREE COFFEE BREAKS to be exact! Can we implement that in Baker Tilly Malaysia too, please?

7 What did you enjoy the most out of your secondment experience?

The whole secondment experience have been so amazing that it makes it really hard for me to choose just one specific experience to share. But if I were to name one, that would be my opportunity to travel around Australia. From whale-watching in Rottnest Island to snapping a selfie with the Quokkas, all of these are experiences that I will always hold dear to my heart.

8 If you could bring back one thing from Perth, what would that be?

The Quokka! To me, it's one of the cutest animals alive on this planet. My colleagues in Pitcher Partners can attest to how much I love this creature. They actually bought me a Quokka plushie! You can just imagine how this gift made my day!

Thank you Baker Tilly for giving me this experience. It would be something that I will always treasure and remember fondly.

