

News Release

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BRINGING AMERICA TO THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Are you interested in hosting an American student for a weekend and at the same time get paid to be a proud ambassador of the Southern Highlands?

Tourism Southern Highlands has formed a relationship with The Institute For Study Abroad – Butler University to provide American University students that are studying in Australia with a real Southern Highlands Farm Stay experience. The development of this relationship forms part of Tourism's Southern Highlands current Agri-tourism strategy of providing local farmers and producers with opportunities to diversify their core business and participate in the local tourism sector.

Tourism Southern Highlands, Executive Tourism Manager, Steve Rosa said "this is a great opportunity for our rural industry to test the water with their entry into Tourism by opening up their doors and showing off their property, family, local experiences and becoming a 'My Southern Highlands' host. Currently these experiences are offered in the Bathurst region but the Southern Highlands with its easy access from Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong Universities can offer a more favourable country experience."

The Institute For Study Abroad – Butler University is an organization that supports students who study in Australia for 1 or 2 semesters. Their average age is 20 yrs old. During their time in Australia they learn about and appreciate a new country, its people and customs. Through study at the major Australian universities, these students make lasting and true friendships which often bring them back to Australia after their studies are complete.

As part of the study programme, The Institute runs a series of events, all of which assist in their mission of sharing and experiencing cultures. One of the events is to offer a Farm Stay. It is through a Farm Stay weekend that students studying in the city have the opportunity to travel to the country, spend a weekend with a family, learn about the running of a farm, enjoy animals, country events, hospitality and sample home cooking. For many it is a major highlight of their stay in Australia. Hosts are paid for their weekends. Following is an article written by a student who attended University of NSW last year. She describes her experience on a Farm Stay.

An unforgettable experience...

Months have past since my time in Australia, and it has been even longer since the Farm Stay. During our trip to Bathurst a group of students were welcomed as if we were part of the family and there are certain things we will never forget.



Arriving at our host's century old home, John, our host, pointed to the sky and showed us the Milky Way. There it was before us! Never in my life had I seen such a beautiful constellation and John's family was lucky enough to have it as their everyday view. I remember lying on a picnic blanket at night, looking up at the Milky Way while the truck radio played and the host family's daughter, Molly, was toasting marshmallows on a stick. The family knew how to detect dead trees threatening to fall and how to properly fell them, so this wasn't just any campfire...they burned an entire tree! The toasted marshmallows were much more enjoyable this way. The home cooked meals were spectacular!

The next day I was greeted by a clan of kittens that followed me to the main house where we ate breakfast and were greeted warmly by our host family. Shortly after, we started our day helping out on the farm. We wandered the grounds – our host family had cattle, sheep, sheep dogs, a house dog (named Barry...a small dog with a big character), horses, a peacock, chickens, cats and their many kittens that continued to follow us around as we worked on the farm. We fed the horses and watched our host farmer and his sheep dogs round up the sheep. Our host's farm became the central point of all the action for that day and other IFSA-Butler students staying in the area all came over with their families and we had a picnic together. We all then watched and even got to help sheering the sheep!

Speaking to my other friends, we all had very different experiences at our Farm Stay but everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. I now have an even deeper respect for the jobs of farmers and their families, the land, and the animals that live on it.

Many of the Institutes students study at the University of Sydney, University of NSW, Macquarie University and University of Wollongong. Tourism Southern Highlands and The Institute are looking for interested parties in the Southern Highlands that would like to host students for a weekend on the 15th October 2010. To this end, an information evening will be conducted on Wednesday 25 May at Wingecarribee Shire Council Civic Centre Moss Vale starting at 6pm.

We invite you to come along, meet representatives of the Institute and Tourism Southern Highlands to learn about this opportunity. RSVP to Tourism Southern Highlands Tel. 4871288 or email tourism@wsc.nsw.gov.au

About IFSA-Butler:

The Institute for Study Abroad, Butler University (IFSA-Butler) is a non-profit premium service provider for North American undergraduates seeking to earn academic credit through study abroad. Our primary goal is to provide quality study abroad opportunities, academic and personal support services, for qualified Universities. IFSA-Butler is organized to assist our students from the time they apply in their host country until after they return to the U.S.. Our staff in Indianapolis prepare the students for the academic and cultural changes that await them, and our offices around the world provide on-site support to help students make the most of their study abroad experiences. IFSA-Butler currently operates programs in Argentina, Australia, Chile, China, Costa Rica, England, Egypt, India, Mexico, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Peru, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

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