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The Training Partnership Ltd,

Torbay Innovation Centre, Lymmington Road, Torquay, TQ1 4 BD
Tel. +44 1803 321210 Fax +44 1803 321211

Info@thetrainingpartnershipltd.com

www.thetrainingpartnershipltd.com



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Contact: +44 (0)20 7440 4026 / nicola@hothousemedia.com

PAID WORK EXPERIENCE IN AUSTRALIA



PHOTOGRAPH: AUSTRALIAN INTERNSHIPS

WHETHER UNDERTAKEN TO EARN MONEY FOR FURTHER TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES OR TO FURTHER FUTURE CAREER PLANS, PAID WORK PLACEMENTS IN AUSTRALIA ARE A GROWTH AREA FOR MANY PROVIDERS IN THE COUNTRY. **BETHAN NORRIS** FINDS OUT MORE.

Working in another country is a good way to learn the language, connect with the locals and also fund travel plans. Language schools, as well as specialist providers, report that demand is strong: Sheryl Jackson from Kaplan Aspect NZ & Australia says of their paid work placement programme, "Our Opus programme has been very popular since its inception, [and] our unpaid professional internships are still equally strong." She says demand is steady, mainly attracting Western European markets to date, "but there is definitely growing interest from Brazil, Japan and Korea".

WORKING HOLIDAY VISAS

Working holiday visas are a popular option for visitors between the ages of 18 and 30 years wanting to travel, work and study in Australia for a period of up to 12 months. Under the conditions of the visa, visa holders can undertake paid work with a single employer for up to six months, study for up to four months and leave and re-enter the country an unlimited number of times while the visa is still valid. Therefore, the visa is an ideal choice even for those language students who do not intend to work or travel in Australia as it lets them change their minds and stay in the country after their language course has finished. Eligible nationalities can be found on the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship website, www.immi.gov.au.

Applicants who have completed three months or more of specified work – paid or voluntary farm work, mining or construction – in a regional area of Australia can also apply for a second working holiday visa, either while in Australia or from another country. They must, however, still fulfil the criteria for this visa. Holders of a second working holiday visa can return to work for an employer that they worked with during their first visa for a further six months.

The motivation of students undertaking a paid work placement rather than an unpaid internship is often financial, although not always, as Diana Pilling from Australian Internships in Queensland explains. She points out that their paid hospitality programme is more than just a paid work placement – "it provides career development opportunities in our beautiful country."

The paid work programme focuses on the hospitality industry and offers international students paid work in a number of four- and five-star hotels throughout Australia. Pilling says that for many candidates, such a placement is essential for their future careers. "There will be continued growth in hospitality internships as it is almost becoming mandatory for those wishing to gain senior positions in major hotels and resort to have had at least one international experience," she says. "Australia is recognised as a quality provider in the tourism and hospitality sector and our [hotel] properties welcome talented young professionals."

While some students undertake paid work placements in Australia in order to add valuable experience to their CVs, many others are simply looking for work opportunities as a way to earn more money before travelling further around Australia or on to other countries as part of their extended travel plans. This trend is supported by the number of working holiday visa agreements Australia has with countries around the world (see box), making it a good destination for young travellers wanting to see the world.

David Scott from the English Language Company in Sydney says that offering paid work programmes to students has been a natural progression from the language programmes available at their school. "For more and more students, it is essential that they have a job to support themselves while they study. We have always recognised this fact and developed our work programmes accordingly," he explains, adding, "Agents in many countries highlight the quality of our work programmes as a key selling point of the school."

The English Language Company has teamed up with a sister company called Work and Travel Company, which has adjacent premises, to offer three different types of paid work placement for students, depending on their visas. Working Holiday visa holders can undertake paid work placements that last for between one week and six months, according to Scott. "The work is all over Australia in hotels, resorts, factories and

warehouses, restaurants, bars, farms, offices etc," he says. "Last year, nearly 5,000 working holiday makers joined this programme and many took a preparatory English course at English Language Company." Student visa holders at the school have access to a free job service where two full-time members of staff help them find part-time work in Sydney, while an internship service is also on offer.

When it comes to sourcing paid work placements, providers report that they have no shortage of interested host companies. Rick Jones from Professional Pathways Australia in Melbourne says that they offer one paid work programme in the hospitality sector, alongside other professional internship programmes. "We have a team of placement consultants who are tasked with locating suitable host companies," he says. "As the concept of internships has developed, we have had more interest from host companies wishing to be part of the programme."

"It is almost becoming mandatory for those wishing to gain senior positions in major hotels to have had at least one international experience"

Undertaking paid work overseas can also be an adventurous decision for some students. Real Gap Experience, an international company providing gap year experiences worldwide, offers a number of work packages in Australia where clients are given accommodation and an airport pick-up when they first arrive and guaranteed paid work after a certain length of time. "For something a little different, I would recommend our Outback Ranch [programme]," says Kate Allan, Reap Gap's Australia Programme's Manager. "It's a working holiday where you learn how to be a cowgirl/cowboy and work on ranches throughout outback Australia. [It's] also a great opportunity to save hard-earned cash as food and accommodation is almost always included with the job."

When it comes to recruiting new clients, paid work providers point to education agents as key partners in this field. Jones says, "We market placements almost entirely through agents overseas. We find this the most suitable method," while Jackson at Kaplan Aspect concurs, "Agents are our prime source of bookings to the Opus programme and we market to them via our broad global sales network."