

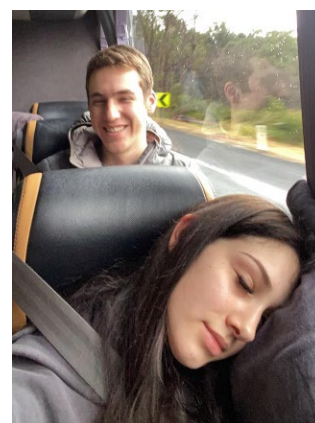
GERMAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL SYDNEY, SENIOR SCHOOL TRIP 2021

School ski trips are notoriously fun, but rarely are they ever as simultaneously productive as our senior school 'CAS Class Trip' of 2021.

German International School Sydney (GISS) is a truly international learning community attended by students and teachers from Germany, Australia, and many other countries. We learn in an English/German bilingual and international environment, which is perfect for the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (IBDP) studied as an alternative to the HSC, by our seniors. At our school, years 11 and 12 participate in a component of the IBDP that includes Creativity, Activity and Service (CAS). This is a defining element of our senior studies, so we're very fortunate that GISS creates incredible opportunities for teachers and students alike, to make the most of our CAS programme.



In late June, our senior school of approximately 44 students and 5 teachers headed off with our friendly and super safe driver Jeff, in our luxurious *Crowther's* coach from *Unearthed Tours*, to drive 400km south from our school campus in Terrey Hills to Bermagui, our first destination before heading up to the snow.



Upon our arrival, we were divided into two groups to participate in a myriad of team building activities, socialisation and liveliness that unfolded over two days. Each of the two groups spent one night at *The Crossing Sustainability Camp* and one night at the seaside town of Bermagui; two full days learning about specially designed practices and infrastructures for sustainable living, such as learning how to grow and prepare organic food, use energy-efficient appliances, and recycle

furniture and materials for multiple purposes. In our time at *The Crossing*, we learned to see it as a self-sustaining organism built on thoughtful and innovative design. Thanks to the affable and pragmatic staff, we learned about various practical solutions to both global and local environmental problems. For example, a detailed information session taught us of human impacts on ecosystems and natural global functions; the most prevalent of which contribute to climate change. We participated in efforts to conserve water and energy by building waste systems that can develop into fertiliser for the orchards at *The Crossing*.

Another method of conserving energy is to grow food locally so that reliance on vehicular transport of foods can be eliminated, and carbon emissions can be reduced. Students and staff prepared meals together, using ingredients straight from the gardens of *The Crossing*. We shared our meals together with everyone seated around a large table, and our chatter grew to lively and passionate levels as we discussed what we'd learned, while we ate. The chorus of conversation that surrounded was a symbol of all the achievements of *The Crossing*, and the benefits of living a truly sustainable lifestyle.



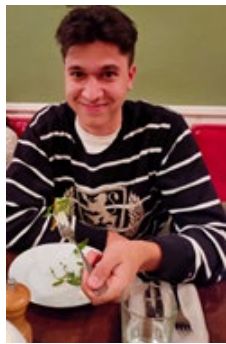
Unfortunately, in the Bermagui area, koalas are an endangered species. Much of this is due to the extremely harmful bushfires of 2020. *The Crossing* has dedicated time, effort and planning into nurturing and monitoring the possible restoration of koalas in the area. We were more than happy to contribute by planting fire retardant trees. This process will take many collective years and people, but it was rewarding to be even a small part of something so meaningful. Construction and gardening were just some of the many activities the students helped with to further the sustainability efforts of *The Crossing*. Though the teachers did not help so much with all the physical labour, they must have also learnt a lot



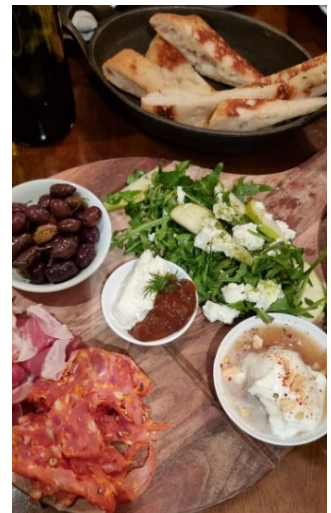
from watching us work! 😊

All this outdoor recreation was not only fun, it felt overwhelmingly rewarding. We truly could not have asked for a better opportunity to develop our skills and mindsets for an environment-conscious lifestyle.

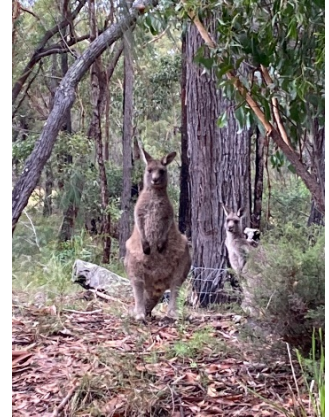




After *The Crossing*, we had a night in Bermagui where we enjoyed a social dinner outing to // *Passaggio*, a picturesque restaurant overlooking the marina, serving stylish Italian dishes based on locally sourced, seasonal produce. Our teachers thought it was the best food of our whole trip and we all enjoyed the tasty share plate entrées, and then delicious pasta and fish mains.

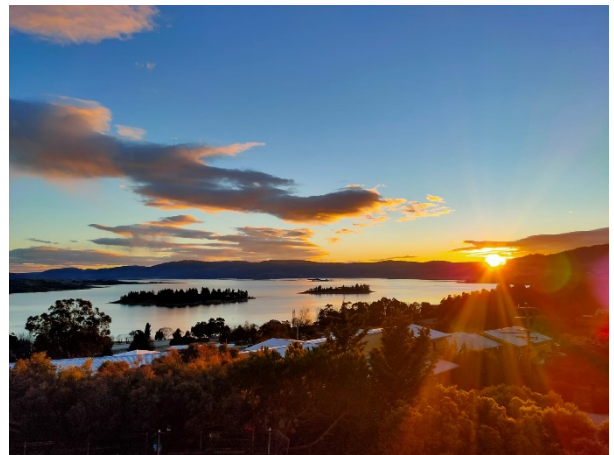


The next day, after self-catering our own breakfasts and preparing picnic lunches, we packed up our cabins and headed off to the *Montreal Goldfield*, where we took an informative walk with a guide through this historically significant area and learned how to pan for gold.

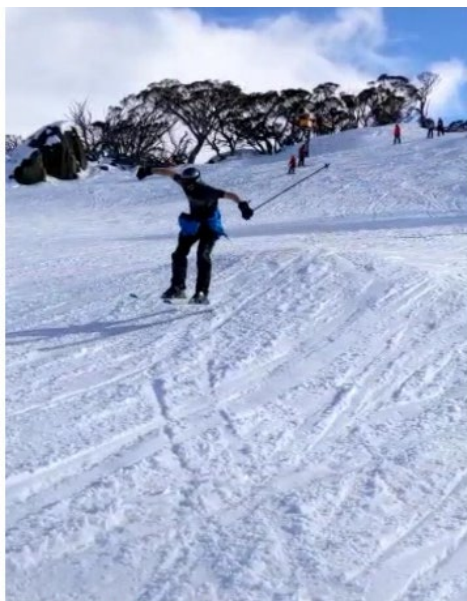


This was only a small break on our bus trip out of Bermagui, but it was intriguing and time well-spent to learn about the early European settlers of this area and to gain an understanding of the life and times of gold-rush miners. We all then piled back into the bus, as it was time to take our newfound knowledge to the snow!

While our comfortable accommodation at *Panorama Lodge* was in Jindabyne -a quiet and chilly town by the lake- our most valuable time was spent on the slopes of Perisher. The skiing and snowboarding capability of our senior school cohort varied from complete beginners to experts. And though some of us struggled at first to gain our bearings, falling over again and again, we could always count on our peers to be just a little further down the slope, waiting and encouraging. The ski trip brought out the tenacity, teamwork, and diligence of GISS students and teachers.

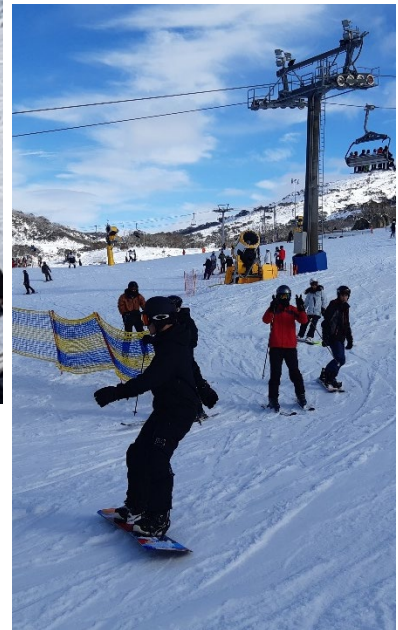
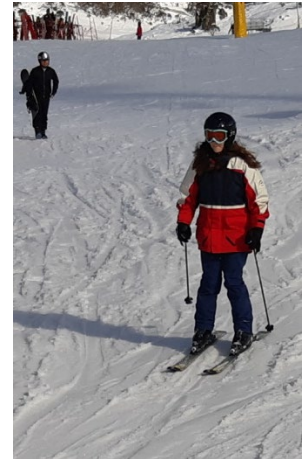


The students who excelled at skiing or snowboarding adopted a leadership role, helping students as well as some teachers to learn and make the most of their time skiing. It was especially impressive to see some of us, starting as



complete beginners on the first day, pick up our new snow skills so fast, that we could then help others on the second. Regardless of our abilities when we first arrived at the slopes, upon leaving, everyone had pushed themselves to better their skills in one way or another.





After two days of skiing and snowboarding to our hearts content, we came together for a picture by the snow and wished it goodbye as it gleamed through the bus windows, under the warm late afternoon sun.



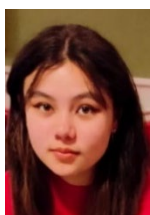
While Perisher and *The Crossing* were the highlights of our trip, we also visited various other destinations along the way. One such destination was the *Australian National University* (ANU) in Canberra. Here we were treated to lunch in residence while attending a presentation about university pathways from Johann Wagner, a GISS alumnus and Dux from the Class of 2018 who highlighted the value of our CAS experiences as important elements of our university applications, and was joined by another GISS alumnus, Mira Robson, also from the Class of 2018 in leading us on a tour of the campus and facilities, to learn more about student life and learning at ANU. Johann is studying a double degree in Mathematical Modelling and, Quantitative Environmental Econometrics, while Mira is completing a double degree in International Relations and, Languages, majoring in German & Linguistics. Later that evening, we also visited *Mount Stromlo Observatory* and partook in an engaging tour and information session detailing the astronomical and astrophysical research of ANU academics and scientists.



After a comfortable stay at *IBIS Styles* in Canberra, we packed up and checked out early, to head off to enjoy our last day on tour with one final change in scenery, when we got to think critically and work tightly as a team to collaboratively puzzle our way out of escape rooms before our time was up, at *Riddle Rooms Canberra* and *Escape Rooms Canberra*, utilizing both venues to accommodate all our escape teams. All our teams managed to crack the clues and codes, solve the puzzles, and escape our rooms well under the time allowed and this fun activity, generated excited chatter on the bus on our drive home, as we compared our escape rooms and shared how we cracked our clues.



The CAS Class Trip of 2021 was truly a tour that took us all over the place, but in the best way possible. By the end of the week, having travelled down to the far reaches of south-eastern NSW, up into the mountains of *Kosciuszko National Park*, and back through our national capital, we all felt flourished with new experiences, new knowledge and skills, and hours of team-building and personal growth activities. We needed time to digest and reflect as we returned to Sydney to ponder on the life-lessons gained from the trip. The key takeaways, reached by consensus between all students and teachers, is the value of living a sustainable, creative, active, team-oriented lifestyle while balancing the stresses of life with mindfulness to build resilience and wellbeing, by always leaving plenty of time for good-hearted fun!



Mia Chen
Year 11

