

Name: Arron Thind  
Medical school: University of Oxford

Country visited: South Africa  
City: Cape Town  
Hospital: Groote Schuur Hospital  
Dates visited: 05/02/2018 – 09/03/2018  
Supervising doctor: None

Country visited: Australia  
City: Melbourne  
Hospital: Royal Melbourne Hospital  
Dates visited: 19/03/2018 – 13/04/2018  
Supervising doctor: Anand Ramakrishnan

**Please give an overview of what you saw / did (200 words max)**

The first half of my elective was Trauma and Orthopaedics in Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town, an environment for any budding surgeon unlike anywhere in the world. Its contrast between cutting-edge 'first-world' surgical techniques, yet unfortunate 'third-world' levels of violence and deprivation, provided a unique opportunity to learn how to manage complex cases, such as bullet wounds and road traffic accidents. I also spent some time in the Trauma unit, mostly managing assault victims and suturing lacerations.

As I am considering working in Australia as part of my F3 year, this placement was ideal opportunity to get an idea of life as an Australian doctor. My Plastics placement in the Royal Melbourne Hospital was less adrenaline-fuelled, but equally inspiring and educational. Here, the surgeons were very keen to teach me different suturing techniques, which they let me practice on patients.

**What were the best things about the visit? (120 words max)**

The teams in Cape Town and Melbourne were welcoming and keen to let you get involved. A particular highlight of my orthopaedic placement was the opportunity to use power tools such as drills and saws for a variety of elective cases. In Melbourne I sutured surgical wounds whilst the consultant observed my technique and gave me helpful tips.

Both cities had excellent sights to offer. During my free time in Cape Town, I tested my physical endurance and climbed the mountains overlooking the city. . Just 50 miles south east of Melbourne is Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park, an award winning wildlife-park, where I fed wild Kangaroos and Koalas.

**What problems did you encounter? (120 words max)**

Although I felt Cape Town was quite safe overall, there is a very high crime rate and it is important to be safe, particularly during the night. I would recommend taking Ubers (even for short walking distances) as the drivers know which areas to avoid driving through. Avoid travelling to or going to areas near townships, as these are where much of the crime in Cape Town takes place.

**What accommodation was provided?**

No accommodation – I stayed at a nearby hostel in Cape Town, and an AirBnB in Melbourne.

**Would you recommend this to someone else? (explain if necessary)**

I would highly recommend both Australia and Cape Town for elective placements. They are, however, very competitive placements and it's worth applying very early (I applied nearly a year in advance for Groote Schuur).

**Are you more likely to choose a career in plastic surgery as a result of this experience?**

My placement in Melbourne gave me a useful insight into the life of a plastic surgeon and the level of technical skill required. Although I still have a lot of skills to improve, the experience has strengthened my interest in plastic surgery as a future career.