Exchange Report

For my Summer 2015 exchange, I chose to go to the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. The summer exchanges are different from the Fall/Spring in that they are much shorter – my program was just under four weeks long.

I arrived in England on Saturday June 26, 2015 and classes began on the following Monday. On the Sunday, there was a useful orientation, which I would recommend attending if you can. This is where you begin interacting with the other students and making new friends, while touring around the campus and town. (If you think you would enjoy exploring a historic, small, charming city, you love it in Norwich!)

In terms of preparation, pack for Vancouver summer weather. It is essentially the same. Other than this, I would recommend getting power adapters, so you can use your phone charger and other electrical appliances there. Also keep in mind that town is only 15/20 minutes away, so if you forget something, you can always buy it there. I ended up bringing 200 pounds with me, and took out more from the ATM on campus as needed. I am with Coast Capital, and for me it was a 5-pound charge every time I did this.

I was incredibly stressed about what type of Visa I needed, and whether or not I would need to get one prior to leaving. There did not seem to be clear answers about this anywhere. I ended up just getting a Visa at the airport once I arrived. (However, I’m not sure if the policies around this have changed).

In regards to housing, I was very happy with the dorm rooms there. Since it is a summer exchange, the housing is chosen for you. Everyone in the Summer School Program stays in the same building. They arrange everyone into different flats of about 8-10 people. You get your own bathroom and bedroom, which is locked from the rest of the flat – but you all share a kitchen. I was very comfortable in this arrangement.

I took the ‘Plague and Disease of the Medieval City’ module with Joy Hawkins. I absolutely loved it. The class sizes are small, and relaxed. Some of my friends in other modules found the workload to be intense for a 4-week exchange program; however, Joy was very reasonable. She mixed up the course structure by taking us on a variety of fieldtrips, and planning
different activities in class. Of course, there were lectures, but I found them to be well thought-out and interesting.

Overall, I had an amazing time during my exchange. If the only thing holding you back from exchange is the time commitment (Fall/Spring exchanges can be up to 6 months), you should definitely consider a summer program. You can always go on a Fall and Spring exchange after if you really enjoy it. (I would’ve done this but unfortunately I applied to the exchange program too late in my degree.)

The biggest challenge for me was actually deciding to go through with the exchange, and the deciding when to do it (i.e. semester) and where to apply. I know that process can be incredibly overwhelming, since there are so many countries and schools to choose from. I was almost sure I wanted to do the summer semester first and my heart was always set on England, but I still looked at countless different schools and countries. Although it is helpful to discuss this with the exchange advisors, this is a decision you have to ultimately make on your own. Just do your research and remember there is really no wrong decision. All of your choices will give you a different, however, probably equally valuable and enjoyable experience. In my case, I ended up going with my first option... even after many and many hours of research! And I ended up being very happy with my choice 😊

To sum up, this is a once in a lifetime experience – and I am so incredibly glad I did it. At first, I was homesick (don’t worry this is completely normal, especially if its your first major vacation away from home). But after the first couple of days, I enjoyed every second of the experience and was very sad to see it end. I know it sounds cheesy, but it was a memory I will cherish forever. On top of the thrill of exploring England (I visited different cities throughout England – such as London and Oxford - on the weekends) and living on my own for the first time, I ended up making a couple of amazing friends. One of them lives in Australia, and I still keep in contact through messaging and Skype. If nothing else, this lifetime friendship I created made the whole experience worth it. There is nothing like bonding with people from all over the word in a new city. And just a heads up, you will definitely have the travel bug once you come back! This exchange just proved to me what I’m capable of in terms of travelling, and I am already planning my next big vacation.
These are some shots of Norwich. These were both taken in town, which is about a 20-minute bus ride from campus. There is a huge marketplace, shops, a mall, movie theatres and pubs (pretty much everything you would possibly want/need).
These are from one my weekend trips. Both of these were taken in Oxford.