

University of Bath, England (Spring 2017)

Before

Before going abroad there are multiple steps to take to understand the simple but long process. The study abroad counselor are very helpful in answering any questions you may have, but the most important event to go to before the trip is the SFU orientation. It was extremely helpful and informative. They cover all the general information you will be needing as well as, to be able to ask question to a former university student, about all the unanswered questions you may had before going. The questions I had were: when to expect the acceptance from the host institution and when the housing application usually open. They are both quite late into the season, which caused me some panic, but it is only because of their semester is formulated differently. You will receive the information between November and December. The SFU orientation was also a great place to met people who will be going to the same University as yourself, which will provide a chance to create connections with people from the same home University before leaving. This is where I met one of my best friends, who made my time in Bath much more enjoyable and returning home much easier because we have shared the same experiences. For a social science student going to a mostly science and business related school it was hard to have specific information regarding what course I could take. It took a lot of digging but I eventually found what course I would enjoy doing.

It was a longer process in figuring out what to pack for English weather. My advice is to pack for every type of weather possible, especially if you are going from winter to summer. If you have room in your budget, I recommend investing a parka or a really warm jacket, because layers are key!! It is cold from January to mid April but will start to warm up after that, which then requires for more summery clothing. Also, if you are planning on traveling to many other countries around Europe think about their weather during the time you will be visiting. Bring a mixture of clothing!

For the dorm itself it all depends on what you want to bring to make it comfortable. The dorms provide a pillow and a duvet. You have the option to purchase sheets from the housing accommodation or you can go to any home store in the city and find some sheets. I also brought pictures with me and food I could use on the first couple of days. Everything else I purchased.

England is a combo country. You can use cash or credit card throughout the country. You use the type of payment you are most comfortable with, however, I do recommend to always carry around some cash with you. There are many free cash withdraw ATM around the city. Personally, I mostly use cash and only used my card for online purchases and I found that process quite easy.
**During**

I arrived with my parents into Heathrow airport. We took the Heathrow express, to Paddington Station in London, then caught a train to Bath. This is a time consuming process and also a little more expensive (which we didn't know at the time). The other option, which is much cheaper, is a direct bus from Heathrow to Bath. Coming from Gatwick there is also the option to bus or to train. Once in bath it is pretty easy to get around; walking, taxi or bus depending on your destination.

I arrived a week earlier to have a feel for the city. I thought I would be able to get many things done for school, such as to purchase a bus pass or to open a bank account. However, you MUST have your student ID, without it you will not be going anywhere. The student ID is provided to you after orientation. You go to the library to get the card printed. Your student ID is your key to everything in the school, so don't lose it!

Nonetheless, I enjoyed getting to the city early it provided the chance to see and visit the city before school started and to become more excited for spending 4 months in this beautiful city.

You can move into your accommodation at anytime in the first week of school. You are provided a key and your student ID card becomes your FOB to enter your building. All residence are different and are in different locations but they all share either a bathroom or the kitchen with your flat mates. This can be difficult, so plan your times wisely to not have to deal with too many people in a small kitchen or in the bathroom. Also, try to make a spot for yourself in the fridge in the first few days, which will save you a lot of trouble throughout your stay. You have your room cleaned every 6 weeks, however in between if you need to clean your floor the accommodation office provides a vacuum. This is helpful since the rooms get dusty really quickly. The accommodation office is there for you so if there is anything you need, feel free to ask them.

Most accommodations have easy accessibility to a bus stop that does directly to campus. You can get the app call FIRST BUS TICKET and FIRST BUS, to help with your travels up the mountain. They run every 5-10 minutes. Walking up is a workout but very rewarding.

The city is full of life and things to do. There are a lot of restaurants and cafes allowing for a wonderful cultural experience. Bath is a city because of its abbey and it is defiantly a beautiful Abbey. There are museums, the royal crescent, the circuit, Pulteny Bridge and the Romans baths are must see places. Bath is not far from multiple beautiful towns that are only a bus or train ride away, as well a the famous Stonehenge just an hour out. For the best views, go to Alexandra Park or walk the skyline walk. Take a walking tour to have a fuller understanding of the city you are living in because it is quite an important one in England. If you are planning to travel around England quite a lot, I recommend to get a trust card or an English heritage card, which ever one will work better for you. Enjoy the city because it has so much to offer and will feel like home very quickly.

Bristol airport is the nearest airport, as well was not being too far from international airports around London. If you are planning on travelling check out these apps, Skyscanner, GoEuro and Trainline, they are quite useful to plan trips. Also, it is very useful to get the apps of the airlines.

The first week of course planning was extremely stressful. It is not a very clear process, which makes it difficult to maneuver. First you must go through passport check, this is how they know you are a student and have the proper paper work. Then you go to orientation. Afterwards, to figure out your schedule you go
know you are a student and have the proper paper work. Then you go to orientation. Afterwards, to figure out your schedule you go to a website that helps you plan for your courses. Then you have a meeting with your faculty supervisor. They will ask you what course you are interested in and will then put you in the system. This can take up to day. Check your Moodle page (similar to Canvas) regularly to see if the courses have been uploaded. Once you have the course on Moodle you are set. This took over a week, which mad me appreciated the SFU system because it is very organized compared to Bath’s system. The lectures are very interactive, lost of discussion as well as student presentation. Pay a lot of attention to the student presentation because they are usually a great resource for essays or exams. Some classes have exams or essays that define your whole grade, this was an aspect I did not enjoy very much. Nonetheless, the professors are nice and helpful. They are really there for you.

The Student Union provides a lot of fun activities throughout the semester. I recommend taking advantage of them because you get to go to awesome place, like IKEA or awesome event like the summer ball or quiz night.

After
It is very difficult for me to sum up this experience, since it has been one of the best experiences of my life. I have met the most amazing people and had the best adventures. It is a time of my life I will hold in my heart forever. The friends I have made are now a family who are so special to me. I learned to be more independent and trust in my decision. It was a time to reflect on my future and where I want to go. My advice is to not be scared to put yourself out there and to not worry about everything, somehow things end up always working out. I am sad this experience is ending, but I'm so happy it happened!