When I was planning my exchange what I found really valuable was the knowing how much I wanted to travel while I was abroad and then accounting for that. Budgeting out how many countries I could go to and getting to know what climates they had made it easier for me to handle my money and knowing what I needed to pack.

Packing is really hard to do because you don’t really think about what the weather will be like not only in the country you’re studying in but other countries you may want to travel to. I would make sure to bring an umbrella and some clothes for warm weather if you’re studying in England because when it heats up it heats up quickly and gets pretty hot. Make sure to have really comfortable shoes for walking and a lot of socks because there were plenty of days where my feet ended up sogging wet and it made for lots of uncomfortable walking.

They have three month bus passes that are really great. That covered the majority of the time that we were there, the last two weeks we just bought on a day to day basis and it wasn’t that expensive maybe 150 pounds to get around for four months. The only thing is that you have to take a train to the airport so everytime you want to fly somewhere you have an extra fee to pay. There are railcards I would recommend buying. The 16-25 railcard is for students and saves you about 5 pounds each time you have to buy a train ticket so the card eventually pays for itself if you take 6 train trips.

Brighton takes both cash and cards so you don’t have to worry too hard about transferring all your funds. I didn’t even open a bank account over there. The living cost over there I found to be about the same as Vancouver, but the groceries are much cheaper than they are over here in Canada. So if you are on a strict budget if you make the majority of your meals I think that you would be surprised at the amount of money that you actually end up spending.

Orientation was a week long of both academic and social events that were a mixture of mandatory and optional. All of the other international students were at all these events so you get a good chance to make solid friendships before school starts. I lived with another girl visiting from SFU and we were about a 45 minute bus ride from campus.

Grading is super weird in the UK – for them a 40 is a pass and anything above a 70 is an A+. Their grading is also only based off of two assignments. My business class was a presentation and an unseen exam whereas my two communications classes were graded off of two papers that made up my entire grade.

Brighton is a really special place to study because the city has three universities in it and it isn’t a big town so there are a majority of students. The weather is really cold in the winter and than a pretty hot spring so it makes a weird leap, I would actually say it’s similar to Vancouver as it gets pretty rainy but is also on the water. Seven sisters is the main attraction to go see, it is seven cliffs up along the beach and makes for quite the picturesque viewpoint.

The university offers a clubs day where you can go check out all of the clubs. I personally didn’t really get involved in anything because I only had class two days a week and didn’t want to go up to campus that often because we lived far. The nightlife is really good though because as I said the city is primarily students. One of their bigger clubs Pryzm is made up of 4 rooms, each with a different theme so you can
almost experience multiple nights out in one night. There are also a lot of really nice pubs so if you want to go out just for a drink that is also an option and makes for a nice casual evening.

Coming back from exchange I wish that I would have made an effort in maybe getting more involved in one of the clubs on campus because the majority of my friends were all other international students so I didn’t hear a lot about what the British culture was like from other youths my age. A second regret would be to see more of the country that I was actually studying in. I got consumed in trying to see as many countries as I could that I didn’t really try and see that much of England. When people ask me how studying in England was I sometimes am left dumbfounded at what to say because I really don’t know much about the country that I was living in.

I also wish that I would have realized that it is okay to do trips on my own. I only went on one or two trips by myself, but I really enjoyed getting to do everything that I wanted rather than worry about what someone else wants to see. I think that is the biggest advice I would give to students who are going abroad. Don’t be afraid to do things on your own. You want to see as much of the country that you can. Sometimes other people’s schedules won’t line up to yours, and that’s okay. That makes for an opportunity for you to go explore and see things YOU want to see.