**PRE-DEPARTURE**

After finding out that I had been accepted to do an Exchange at the University of Glasgow I immediately booked my flights. I used my parents Aeroplan points to book a round-trip flight from Vancouver (YVR) to Glasgow (GLA).

I over packed. I brought two large suitcases and a carry on. My clothes were in vacuum sealed bags and seriously overweight. I wanted clothing and shoes options. I, mistakenly, brought clothes that required special washing, which was impossible to do in residence. I also brought a pillow and my hair products which I could have just bought in Glasgow for a reasonable price. Your hair straightener may seem like a good idea but mine broke after two uses, even with an adaptor.

Glasgow is one of the best shopping cities. The fashion there is amazing. Leave room in your suitcase and your budget for shopping. Rethink bringing ‘fashion’ items from Vancouver as the fashion is different in the UK. Just bring the essentials.

The most important things I packed were:

1) My unlocked phone (the mobile plans are so cheap in Glasgow)
2) My Kindle (books are heavy, Kindles are not)
3) Different types of jackets
4) A backpack for day trips
5) All-weather boots (I barely wore any other of my many shoes because it was always raining)

Schedule
August 30, 2016| Flight YVR to EWR | 9:05am to 5:05pm
August 30-31, 2016 | Flight EWR to GLA | 7:45pm to 7:30am
September 3, 2016 | Accommodation Move
September 5-9, 2016 | Orientation
September 19, 2016 | Classes Begin

I planned to arrive early so that I could visit with my family in Scotland. It was great to get over jet lag and get familiar with the city before classes began.

DURING EXCHANGE

Accommodation
I stayed in Student Residence arranged through the exchange program. With the University of Glasgow it is extremely important to list multiple choices. I got my 5th choice. I was in a three bedroom flat with a shared bathroom and kitchen. The other two girls, who were my flatmates, were international students. The rooms were spacious, with a desk, an armoire and a single bed. The bathroom shower was absolutely tiny, at 6’ I barely fit in it.

There are no meal plans in most of the residences so it is important to consider the cost of buying kitchen and eating utensils. I recommend taking advantage of the Accommodation arranged IKEA trip at the beginning of the term. If you are need of blankets or a mattress toper, Argos offers a good price and you can arrange delivery.

My Residence was in the West End of Glasgow, near the Kelvingrove Art Museum. It was a 15 minute walk to the centre of campus. Around the campus is the famous Ashton Lane, the Botanic Gardens and lots of food options.
Transportation
The main transportation in Glasgow is Bus, Taxi, Subway and Train. The buses are owned by different companies monthly passes are much more expensive than they are in Vancouver. I tended not to use the bus system and instead just walk everywhere. It was about a 30 minute walk from my Residence to the City Centre. I never took the subway, but I can tell you it goes in a circle so if you miss your stop you can just keep on going.

Everybody seems to use taxis in Glasgow. They are very professional and easy to use. Be careful, though the prices add up. A trip to the City Centre from my Residence was about 7 pounds. I tipped every time, but my Scottish family said you only tip in Scotland if the service was exceptional. If you have bags and you are traveling to or from Glasgow Airport book a Taxi; it is incredibly difficult to maneuver your bags, understand the Glaswegian accent and no what stop to get off at as they are not called out.

I used the trains a lot on my trip to travel to neighbouring cities or to visit my family on the coast. The train system is phenomenal. I recommend getting an 18-25 rail card as soon as possible because it gives you 1/3 off your ticket prices. If you take any short trips to other parts of the UK or continental Europe, I recommend looking at budget airlines such as EasyJet or Ryan Air. The seats are uncomfortable but flights can be as cheap as 20GBP.

Adventures
During my exchange, I took 5 coach trips to different parts of the UK. I highly recommend doing them. The two companies (ISUK and Gary’s Student Tours Scotland) I used were geared towards students and relatively cheap. They were structured so you had a lot of free time to explore and suggested what you could do. I tended to take advantage of the beautiful hikes. You meet great people. One of the friends I met went on many trips with me.

I also did a few solo trips. I took the train up Aberfeldy in the Highlands, and had a spa day then a hike through the famous Birks of Aberfeldy. I splurged on a trip to London in December. It was the best part of my
UK Adventure. I went to the National Gallery in London and spent hours looking at some of my favourite artists including JMW Turner. I also attended the English National Ballet’s production of the Nutcracker which was a magical experience. I spent the majority of my days wandering around Hyde Park.

When I was in Glasgow, I window shopped and attended quiz nights at the local pub. The University of Glasgow has two excellent student unions.

**Academic**

The academic structure is significantly different at the University of Glasgow. You are only in class six hours a week at the most (with a full course load of three Upper Division classes). I took three classes: two 400 level Politics classes and a 400 level Philosophy course. I did not know what my class schedule would be until orientation. This is apparently normal. However, I was unable to get into the classes I needed because they were full. If the classes you put on your application are offered you will be automatically enrolled if you meet the requirements. I recommend putting all the classes you would like to take (don’t just limit to three) in the application. It is easier to drop then to have to wait to enroll.

For my 400 level courses, I had one to two major assignments that were worth the entirety of my grade. During the semester it is reading intensive, but with limited contact hours you can do your readings while you travel around. In the final two weeks of the semester it gets insanely busy. It is nearly impossible to get an extension and all assignments within each discipline are due
on the same day. Start your papers early, they are worth a lot. If your course offers an exam during a different semester then you are attending for than you will either get another paper or have the exam moved. This can make the period even busier for you.

The grading scale is a 22 point scale divided into first honours (A1-A5), upper second honours (B1-B3), lower second honours (C1-3), third (D1-E3), and fail (F1-G2).

**REFLECTION**

By the end of my four month exchange, I was getting quite homesick. Christmas was coming up and I had planned to travel Europe over Christmas. After Exam period, I just wanted to be home and celebrate Christmas with my family. The problem was that my flights weren’t until January. If I had thought about how lonely it would be to be by yourself at Christmas I would have booked an earlier flight. I ended up paying nearly a thousand dollars to cancel my old flight and rebook a new flight/hotel through London. I got home on Christmas Eve and was able to celebrate with my entire family. It was an unexpected expense that I had not prepared for and I am still paying it off, but it was worth it.

Overall my exchange was great. I learned that I could be truly independent and adaptive. I determined that while I enjoyed Scotland, I would not move there to do my Masters. The University of Glasgow is beautiful but its style of instruction does not suit what I want from my education. I wish I had been able to save more money so that I could have traveled more. Money was really tight and non-existent by the time I was finished. After I save up some money, I will head back to explore Europe. The best advice I can give is prioritize what you want to do. You will run short on money and on time. Don’t try to do everything, but be open to new experiences with new people.