

Exchange Testimonial

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As I was sitting in Brisbane Airport's departure lounge, nervously checking the gate number for my flight, I could not help but wonder how my study abroad experience was going to unfold. After all, I had just left behind everything that has been an integral part of me: my parents, my friends and life as I know it in general. I was slightly anxious about spending an entire semester in a completely new country, but on the other hand, I was also excited about expanding my horizons, meeting new people and seeing the world from a whole new perspective. In the end, it was this positive outlook that materialised into my actual experience of studying abroad and the time I spent at the University of Nottingham was priceless.

As a 3rd year civil engineering student, my choice of courses on exchange was largely dictated by the requirements of my faculty and included modules such as "Concrete Structures", "Steel Structures", "Hydraulics" and "Waste & Wastewater Management". My degree also offered me the flexibility to pick one course from any faculty, so I thought I'd mix it up a bit and do a history course, "Contemporary World since 1945". My engineering subjects gave me an insight into some of the construction practices in Europe, while my history course allowed me to pursue my area of interest. Overall, I enjoyed studying all my courses and I found the teaching system not so different compared to UQ, but be warned, there are fewer assignments throughout the semester, so it is easier to fall behind.

While on exchange, I stayed on campus, in Ancaster Hall. Even though this meant constant fire alarms (at 12:00, 2:00 and 5:00 on one of the nights), study distractions and the food that we all complained about, the social life was amazing, with organised nights out, fierce inter-hall rivalry and a good mix of international and first year British students. Constant contact with so many students has enabled me to forge many lasting friendships and I am already looking forward to travelling to our planned reunions. Of course the social life is not only limited to halls – the university boasts nearly 200 societies so I was determined to try at least a few of them out. Visiting the Lake District and Snowdonia with Explorers or skiing in the amazing French Alps with NU Snow are some society events I participated in. There are also numerous Athletic Union Clubs, offering pretty much every sport you can think of such as caving, skydiving or my favourite, ultimate frisbee.

Set in a park, complete with a lake and numerous gardens, the university campus offers a great surrounding to live and study in. Nottingham itself is a very pleasant city with a large student population and a great nightlife. Due to its convenient location in the Midlands, I was able to get some friends together and see some fantastic places in the UK during my weekends. Edinburgh, Bath and the nearby Peak District are just some of the places I visited. With many cheap flights on offer from the nearby East Midlands Airport, I was also able to fly to Dublin, Krakow and will shortly be heading to Barcelona to celebrate the end of exams.

Overall, I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience at the University of Nottingham. It has allowed me to grow as a person and to broaden my views by exploring new places and meeting new people from around the world. The fun times and priceless moments I experienced during my time here will stay in my memory for a long time to come. So, if you are having any doubts about leaving and going on exchange, my advice to you: do it while you have the chance! You will have the best time of your life!



Exploring Nottingham in our first week, from left to right: Brittany and Louise (American exchange students), myself and Francesco (Italian exchange student)



Hiking in the Lake District



During a walk around campus



Lots of snow during our weekend in Edinburgh

Top 5 tips:

- Best Investment: Railcard – gives you 1/3 discount on all rail fares, a must if you're planning extensive train travel around the country.
- Best weekend trip: Dublin – Very close, yet in another country – a city with a great vibe and amazing atmosphere. Ticket prices are as low as 20 pounds return in autumn. During your stay do the New Europe free tour of the city and get out to see the Irish countryside – many nice places, such as the Wicklow Mountains are within easy reach of the city.
- Best party: I really enjoyed the El Mundo nights organised by the Nottingham University Student Exchange Society in conjunction with the uni's Hispanic Societies. About 3 per semester, usually on a Wednesday – popular with exchange students and European Erasmus students.
- Don't miss: International Welcome Week – I would be lost without it; it gives you a gradual and friendly transmission into life in the UK and university, helping you with all the paperwork and opening up of bank accounts. There's also a fun event organised every evening and the accommodation and food are free throughout the week.
- Best websites for travel deals: <http://au.skyscanner.com/> (searches all airlines, days and routes for the cheapest flights), ryanair.com (the airline which generally is the cheapest), eastmidlandstrains.co.uk (buy train tickets with no booking fees, many special fares available to London), nationalexpress.co.uk (coach company, 1 pound fares to Liverpool, Leeds and Newcastle during autumn).