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Experience report Scotland – University of Aberdeen

'Fit like?' was the first phrase that I learnt in Scotland, which is slang for 'How are you?'. What influenced my decision to choose Scotland? Well since I am studying to become an English teacher, I considered it important to spend my Erasmus in an English-speaking country. The beautiful nature was one of the main reasons that I chose Scotland, plus the University of Aberdeen looks like Hogwarts!

During my time on Erasmus I was not disappointed, it was the best time of my student life. I made friends with so many international people, of which who I am still in contact with. My English improved and I got to explore a new country/culture while doing so.

University of Aberdeen

Upon arriving in Scotland, the first thing you do is meet with your go-abroad tutor. You discuss the courses which you will be taking and get your relevant documents signed (learning agreement). Once the boring parts out of the way, you talk about the important information for example, what activities there are to do in Scotland and where you get the best BUT cheap beer from! I felt at home from the first moment I arrived! My go-abroad tutor was called Mary, she was always there for me and had an open-door policy any time that I needed her.

I chose four courses while in Scotland, the first two being biology, education and I also took an English course which helped me improve on the language. Be careful when you pick your courses, as on paper they sound easy and exciting but they can be difficult and time consuming. This happened to me with my Biology course, as although I enjoyed lab practice, there was a lot of theory work, mainly statistics.



Every once a week we had lab class and after each one we had to write up a scientific paper on our findings. The two main challenges for me were, working with statistics and then writing in English, it took a lot of coffee but it was worth it in the end as it all improved. For me to pass the course I had to write papers weekly and take short tests during the semester, then at the end I had to take a long exam and write a scientific paper.

A fact to bear in mind is that, during the first two weeks you can change your courses if it is not what you thought it would be. Despite everything, I do not regret the courses I took because I learned so many things and improved in many sections. My favourite place to study was a library located on campus called the Sir Duncan Rice library.



The University of Aberdeen is huge and you call the professors by their first name. Regardless of its size, the professors still made the effort to know their students and when I told them that I am an exchange student they went the extra mile to check up on me and make sure I understood the course and assignments. At first

a barrier for me was the Scottish accent, my education professor was so strong that I had big difficulties to follow the lectures. However, the English and education course had a lectures/workshops which were helpful. In the workshops, you would repeat what you learned in the lecture and prepare for your exams or paper.

So where to go when you are hungry? THE HUB, which is a building at the campus which consists of cafes, restaurants, shops etc. The Hub was our main meeting point as the price-performance ratio was absolutely ok and you could get whatever your heart desires for example vegan, vegetarian, Mexican, Chinese, salad bar, fried, ice cream, Subway and English breakfast. The main place on campus which is definitely worth a visit is **Shakes 'N' Cakes**.



Stonehaven

If you have too much free time on your hands do not worry, Aberdeen University has loads of societies (sports, languages, hobbies...). I joined the Whisky and Volleyball society, it was a great way to meet other people and not just the exchange students. If you are into sports then you should definitely register in Sportsvillage.

The student association organised many events every week which was great and every time you would meet new people. We would constantly go on events such as, a pub crawls, pub quiz, debates and occasionally do tours of Scotland.



Accommodation

On the homepage of the University you can find all the student accommodations with relevant information about costs and what it includes. I thought that it was too expensive and too far from the campus, so I found a private home instead next to

the campus. The rent cost 400 pounds per month with en-suit including all bills. Flat sharing is a popular thing in Scotland, you can check out www.spareroom.co.uk or www.easyroommate.com for a full furnished flat and it's a great way for you to meet people outside of the University. I would recommend you living in the centre (Union street) or between University and city centre as it is just a 15-min walk from the campus to the city. I bought a bike which I would recommend however it is not necessary as the public transport is advanced in Aberdeen and you can walk everywhere easily.

Living in Aberdeen

I thought Scotland would be expensive but it wasn't, the rent was a bit high but if you go shopping to Lidl, you will see that the prices are like Austria. Going out for dinner or drinks is absolutely affordable as well, you can find great restaurants in the city centre like, Old Blackfriars, Yatai Izakaya, Madame Mews, Prince of Wales or Archibald Simpson (good and cheap beer).

What I really enjoyed most was the cooking nights, we usually met in one place and everybody cooked something and afterwards we went to our favourite

pub for some dart games. It is called **St Machar Bar**, which is located at the campus. If you are in the mood for dancing you can visit clubs like Underground or Institution and if you prefer a nice cosy bar then visit Brewdog or 99Bar.

Since Aberdeen is not far away from Cairngorms National Park, we rented a car several times and went hiking and horseback riding. The national park is huge, the nature there is beautiful and you find some nice distilleries on the way. Make sure that you don't miss the highland games, it was a great experience to see true Scottish culture!



Isle of Skye

Which places I recommend: Edinburgh, St. Andrews, Dundee, Lunan bay, Stonehaven (best fish and chips and best ice cream), Newburgh seals beach, Spittal of Glenmuick, Ballater, Aviemore, Spittal of Glenshee, Inverness, Lochness and my most favourite place is the Isle of Skye! We took the car and spent 3 days there. We drove around the island (Old man of storr, kilt rocks, Portree, Fairy Glen, Uig for a boats tour to see puffins, Claigan coral beach, fairy pools).



Newburgh Seals Beach



Boat trip Uig



Kilt Rocks



Claigan coral beach

If you want to visit the Shetland you can take the ferry from Aberdeen. I did not go there but I heard it is lovely and in the summer, you can see orcas if you are lucky. If you want to see basking sharks then you need to visit the west coast, I highly recommend Isle of Mull.

Car rental is cheap if you are 26 years old, Thrifty car rental is what I used and it is not far from the University.

Scotland was the most beautiful country I have visited and my exchange there was the best time of my life. I made really good friends, explored the most amazing places and shared many happy moments. To everybody who is thinking about an exchange -> Just do it, you will not regret this decision!