

**Semester abroad – winter term 2021**

**Glasgow – Scotland**



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Scotland is the most beautiful country in the world. (Rough Guides)

I would advise anybody to study a semester abroad. It was one of the greatest adventures and times in my life. Never before have I seen so many castles, lakes, sheep, and cows as while traveling through Scotland.

## 1. My motivation for my Erasmus+ semester

Since I study English to become a teacher, I thought about studying in an English-speaking country from the very beginning. For this reason, I started to inform myself about the possibilities in winter 2020. I chose the PHOÖ as my "partner" and had my first meeting with the office. After thinking about the various options, I chose the University of Glasgow as my destination. The Scottish landscape is breathtaking and the people are extremely friendly and attentive.

There are several advantages of studying abroad for some time. Even though it is different for everyone, my biggest benefits are definitely personal as well as cultural development, finding friends for life, broadening my horizon while experiencing a new way of life in a foreign country.

## 2. Information about the University of Glasgow

### 2.1 Learning agreement and my courses:

LV an PHOÖ	LV an Partnerinstitution
Spoken Academic Production	EAP 2 – Advanced Academic English and Skills for International Undergraduates – Semester 1
Written Production II	
English for Specific Purposes	
Systemic linguistics	
Communication and Culture	Celtic Civilisation 1A
Anglophone Cultures in the Classroom (LIT)	
Seminar in English Studies (CULT)	
Schule und Gesellschaft	What's the point of Education? Constructing an Educational Mindset.
Gender, Diversität und Inklusion: Vielfalt (in) der Schule	
Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung – Methoden und Analyseverfahren	
Freies Wahlfach	

Finalising the learning agreement is a requirement before you are able to apply for a university. I was lucky enough to have had a learning agreement from a friend who studied a year before me at the University of Glasgow and so I was able to take the same subjects and get the same credits as she. I attended the subjects Advanced Academic English and Skills for International Undergraduates, Celtic Civilisation 1A, and which had each 10 ECTS-points and therefore I got 20 ECTS-points in English at my home university. What's the Point of Education? Constructing an Educational Mindset. was also a 10 ECTS-point-course and I got 10 ECTS-points in didactics at home.

## 2.2 The University of Glasgow

"The University of Glasgow is a public research university in Glasgow, Scotland. Founded by Papal Bull in 1451, it is the fourth-oldest university in the English-speaking world and one of Scotland's four ancient universities. High educational standards, strict entrance requirements (4th highest in the UK) and a strong international research reputation have made the University a competitive destination for students worldwide. Glasgow is a World Top 100 university so that the institution is positioned at the top 1% of world universities." ([Wikipedia](#)).

Concerning my experience while studying at the University of Glasgow, I know where the ranking among the World Top 100 universities is coming from. Even though the number of emails we got were more than at home, they were not without good cause. The professors always made sure that we felt confident with the content of the course, tried to include everybody and were always open for various improvement suggestions.

## 2.3 University practices – Why to choose the University of Glasgow!

The university of Glasgow does a brilliant job when it comes to taking care of their students and administration of lectures. In my case, there was a nice combination of distance-learning-lectures and on-campus-lectures. On the one hand, I had two on-campus-lectures per week which I really enjoyed and on the other hand, I had three online lectures which I also liked. According to my experience, the University of Glasgow handled distance learning outstandingly. There were "Online Anytime lectures" which were pre-recorded and could be watched at one's own speed and time and there were "Online Live lectures" which attendance was mandatory. If there was a problem concerning your attendance, the professors always found a way to make it work for you.

During my studies, the University of Glasgow put a special emphasize on providing the students with a variety of types of assessments. I had four essays, two worksheets, one group artefact and only one 24-hour open-book-exam.

For the essays, the professors gave us a decent time frame in which we could work on it and provided us with sources and books needed for the task. If some students did not manage to write it within this time, they could fill in a "good cause form" and always got an extension. While writing the essays, you learn how to engage with materials. In my opinion, this way the university prepares the students best for their future life. Certainly, there is some information students have to know by heart, but there is even more information to be obtained and reviewed from new sources.

In the group artefact, the focus was to learn how to work collaboratively. As I will be confronted with this task continuously in my future job, I could take away new ideas and experiences.

I specifically liked the exam-structure in the University of Glasgow. As mentioned above, I had only one 24-hour open-book-exam. It was well organised and rather encouraged you to use materials than gear the learning process by heart.

One point which needs special emphasise is the fairness of the university policy. Every written assessment, essays as well as exams, are always corrected and marked by two people. What is more, students have to use their student number instead of their names when it comes to exam or essay documents. All of these precautions are done in order to avoid preoccupation or injustice.

### 3. Accommodation

When I got my letter of acceptance, I felt really lucky. All the work had paid off and I could not believe that I would soon live in a different part of the world. Immediately after being accepted, the university reached out and provided us with the information we needed. Now the hardest part was finding an accommodation. Due to Covid-19, all the students who did not come in 2020 would come in 2021. Consequently, nearly all student accommodations were booked out, so my boyfriend and I got an offer from a man who let us have a room in his house.

When we arrived, the room was not quite what we expected so we immediately started searching for a different room. Again, due to the pandemic, all the rooms were booked out. Luckily, my friend Alina (who was also studying in Glasgow for the semester abroad) lived in a student accommodation and told us that a girl decided to move out again, so we got the room. Alina and we lived in the student accommodation called "Newton House". It is a private student accommodation and offers it all: either a room in flat, where you share the kitchen and bathrooms with 4 other people or a studio where you have your own kitchen and bathroom.

I lived in a flat with four other girls which was really nice. The kitchen was big and well equipped and the bathrooms had a decent size. What is more, the student accommodation had common rooms including a big cinema room, a gym, and two rooms with a pool table and a ping pong table. I can warmly recommend this accommodation, not only because of the given facilities, but also due to the location. It is located on Sauchiehall Street – on one of the busiest streets in Glasgow. You can shop in this street, sit in cafes of restaurants, but there are also various pubs, bars and clubs to have a fun night out. The University of Glasgow is a 20-minute walk away but there are also great bus connections at the doorstep of the accommodation.

For this accommodation, I paid 150 pounds per week which was 2400 pounds for the whole semester. The full amount must be paid in advance in order to be allowed to move in. It is not cheap but definitely worth it. I was glad I found the accommodation that late. Other students looked at "Gumtree", "Spare room" and "Facebook marketplace".

## 4. Social and cultural activities

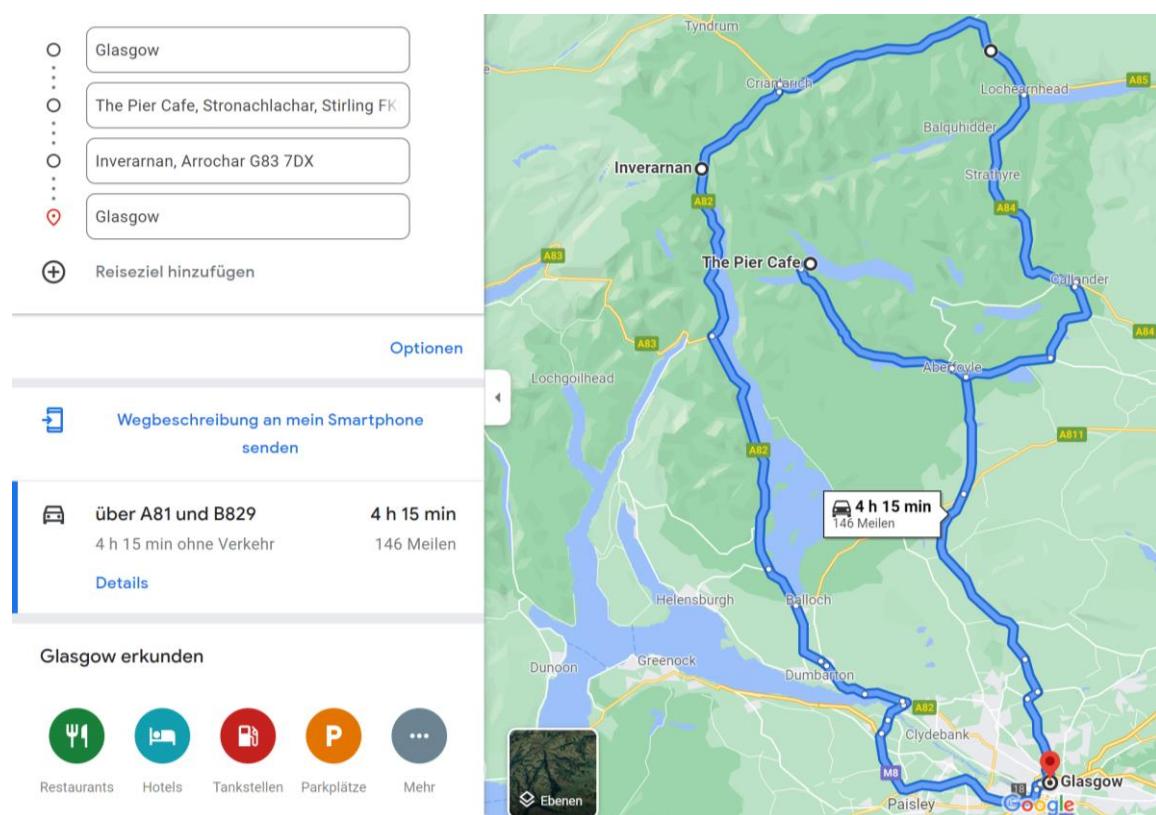
### 4.1 Travelling in Scotland

My boyfriend came to Glasgow by car in order to be able to travel as much as can. Sometimes Alina would come with us, friends from home, or we also made a road trip with friends from here. We went to Edinburgh several times and spent some time in this gorgeous city.

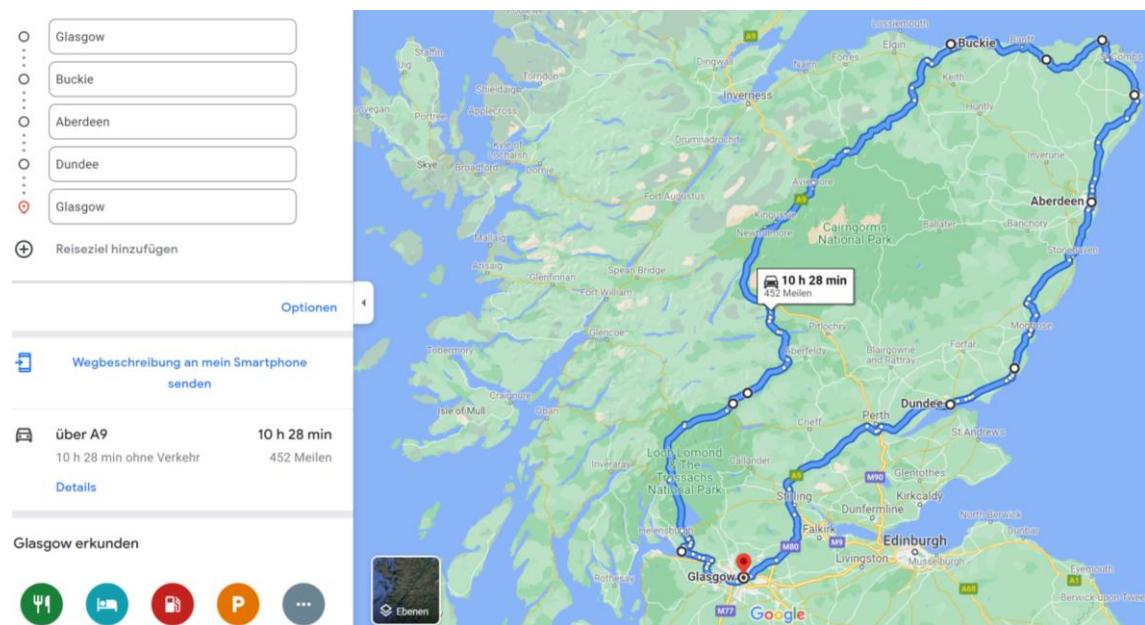
But for people with no car there are also great bus-travel-options. There are good bus connections from Glasgow to get to Edinburgh, Aberdeen or Dundee. There is also a Facebook group which organises trips to several destinations in Scotland for not too much money.

Here are some map screenshots of our trips:

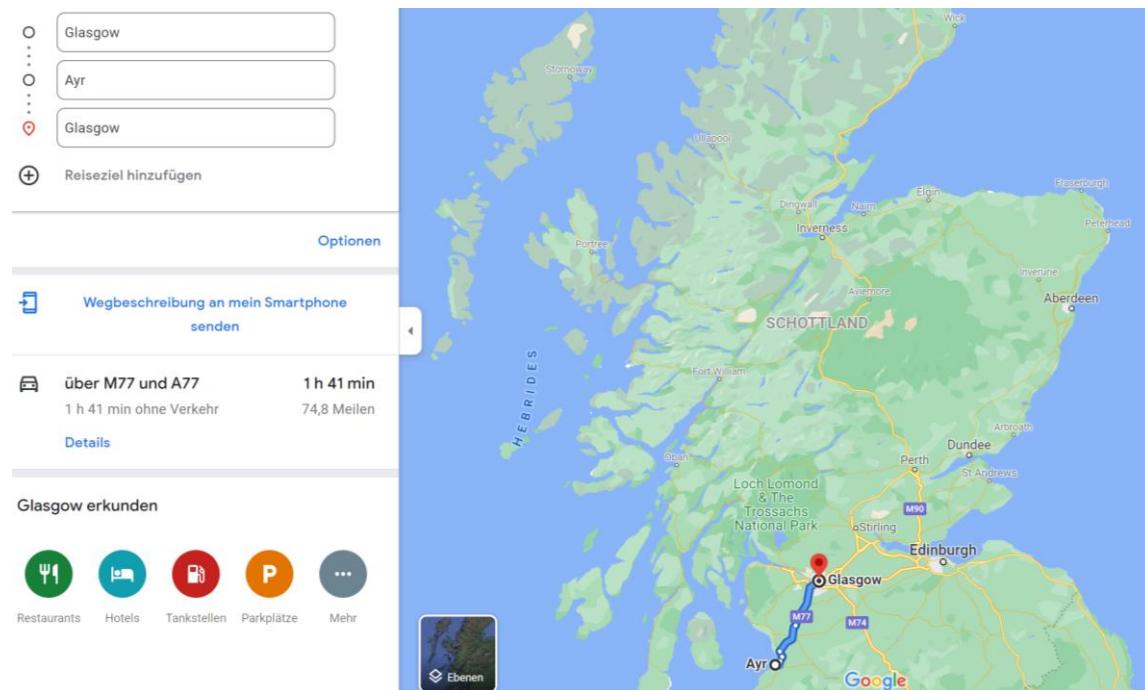
8. September 2021 / Glasgow, Loch Katrin, Loch Lomond, Glasgow / with Alina / 146 miles



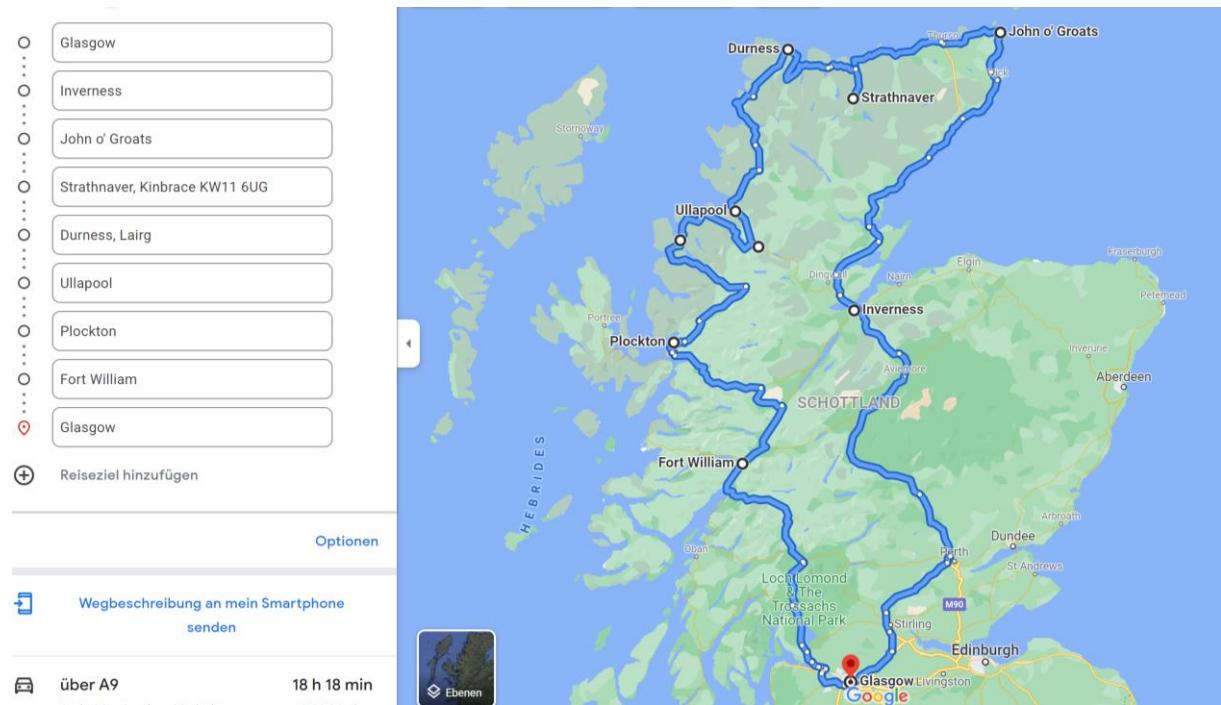
10. – 13. September 2021: /3-day road trip: Northeast of Scotland: Buckie, Aberdeen, Dundee/with Alina/ 460 miles



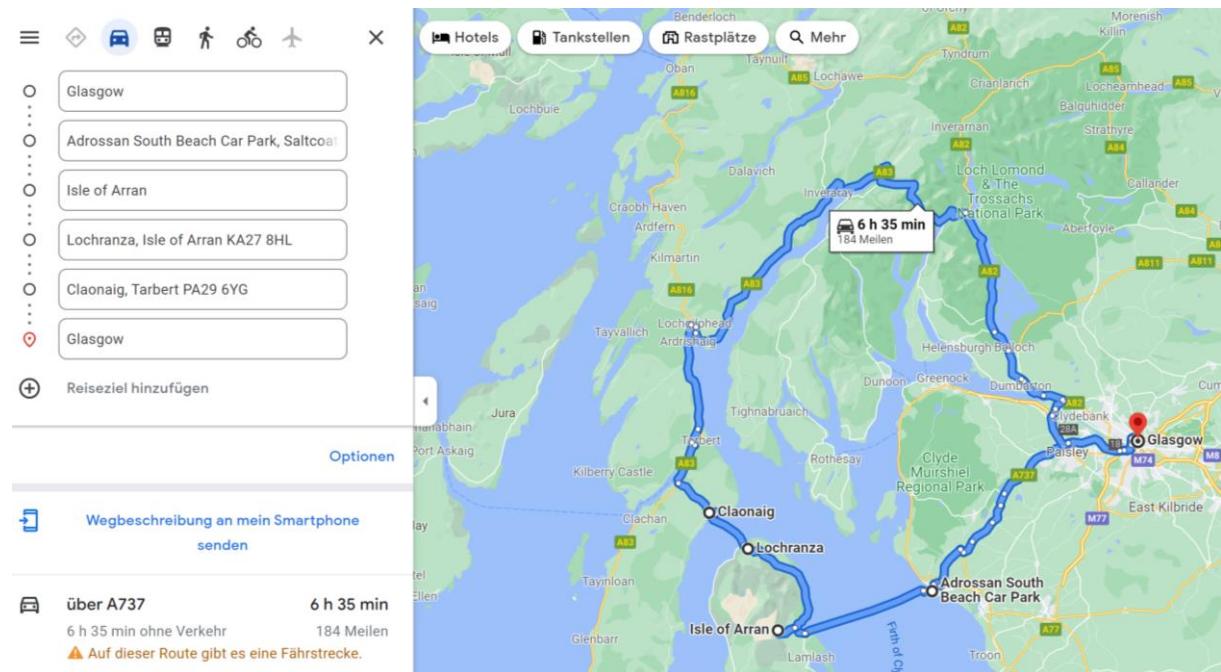
25. September 2021/ Ayr/ with Luki, Alina/ 100 miles



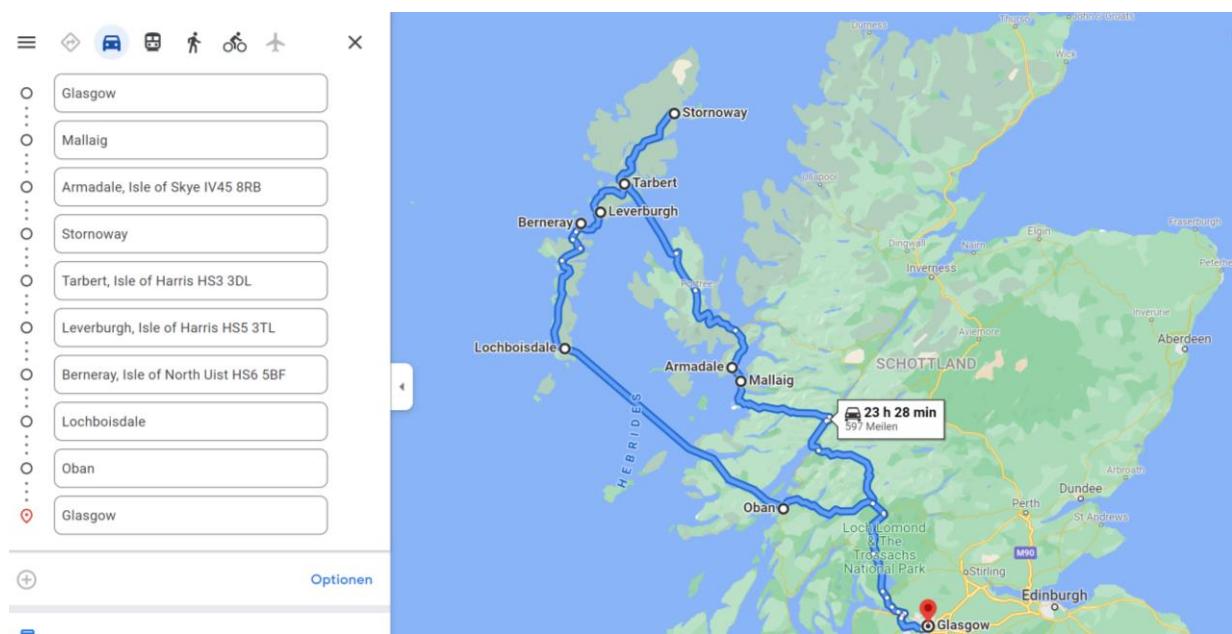
27. September – 4. October 2021/ North Coast 500: Glasgow, Inverness, John o'Groats, Strathnaver, Durness, Ullapool, Plockton, Fort William, Glasgow/ 1.000 miles



24. October 2021/ Glasgow, Adrossan, Isle of Arran, Lochranza, Claonaig, Glasgow/ with Richard, Clemens, Alina/ 184 miles



5. – 9. November 2021 / Island hopping: Glasgow, Mallaig, Armadale, Stornoway, Tarbert, Leverburgh, Berneray, Lochboisdale, Oban, Glasgow / with David, Robert, Alina / 600 miles



## 5. Information for future University of Glasgow exchange students

### 5.1 Travelling to Glasgow

My boyfriend and I decided to drive to Glasgow by car. It took us approximately 30 hours. We made stops in Würzburg, Cologne, Gent, Box Hill, Birmingham and Liverpool and we made a 12-day holiday out of it. We liked it very much because by doing this, we already saw a lot on the way up. All our other friends from Glasgow came here by plane. Coming to Glasgow by car needs a lot of planning, not only due to the pandemic but also due to the ferry, hotels, and covid-tests. For us, it was still the perfect solution.

### 5.2 Finding friends

Finding friends was not really a problem. Alina was in the visiting students Facebook group and therefore we had most of the information needed. In one of the first days, we met with other students in a pub and tried to make connections. This worked really well and we found some friends we spent a lot of time with during our stay. Living in a student accommodation also helped finding friends. Nearly all students who lived in our student accommodation were non-nationals, meaning all of our friends were from different countries. At the end of the stay, we had friends from England, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Germany, France, the USA, Rumania, Poland, China, and Canada. We met most of them on the first night.

David, our friend from Sweden we met during a photography walk in Freshers' week. This is a week when the university tries to bring people together by launching events, presenting the different Unions you can join and hosting parties. A good tip is to visit

as many events as possible and find people to hang out with there. A further great tip is to join a Union to find friends as there gather people with the same interests. There are Unions for everything. I could not believe how many there were until I saw them at the Freshers' week. Nintendo-Union, Taekwondo-Union, Arts-Union, Chinese-Union, Baking-Union and countless more.

What is more, the university also has a so called "Buddy Programme". Before the semester starts, you have to fill in a form with questions concerning your hobbies, interests, etc. and the university tries to find a student who has similar hobbies and interests. This also helps people to find friends and the buddies try to help you if you have questions about the university or exams. Alina's buddy was Jenny, who has become a really close friend who we also spent a lot of time with.

## 6. Conclusion

"One day, you'll leave this world behind, so live a life you will remember." This is a line of a song from one of my favourite artists, Avicii and pretty much sums up my motivation before coming here. Little did I know that this decision was one of the best of my life and the time would be unforgettable.

Before coming to the UK and Scotland, I had my prejudices about this country, thinking it is always rainy or cold and that the landscape is not as beautiful as it is in Austria. After staying here for a few months, I am glad to say that all my negative thoughts were turned into a positive view about this kingdom. The weather is amazing most of the time and the country is totally worth visiting. Additionally, the people in Scotland are extremely nice, which came as a surprise to me, being used to rather unfriendly people in Austria.

Travelling through this country, I realised how beautiful the nature is and that there is so much more to discover on mother earth. I am so glad I had the possibility to study one semester abroad and travel that much. Looking back, I can say that I have never before visited so many different places and countries in such a short period of time.

It was one of the best decisions in my life and a time I will never forget. The friends I made here are friends for life and we already made plans to visit each other in the different countries. I enjoyed my time in Glasgow to the fullest and am so thankful that I decided to take part in this adventure.

If someone asked me if I did it again? One hundred per cent YES! For everybody who is not quite sure yet, I can just say: Do it, you will not regret your decision!!