

SCOTLAND



Hiya readers! Have you ever heard of haggis, Irn-Bru or highland cows? Well, let me begin by saying that these are some of the things that you will encounter in Scotland. But before I delve deeper into my experience in Scotland, I want to introduce myself. My name is Sara Mijatovic and I had the privilege to study abroad in Scotland thanks to the Erasmus program. I am in a teacher training program with Biology and English as my study subjects in Linz and I decided to spend my sixth semester in a foreign country for a couple of reasons. First of all, I always wanted to spend a semester abroad studying at a different university and surrounding myself with new interesting people. Second, as I was pursuing a career as an English language teacher, I wanted to enhance my language skills and, also, learn a bit more about the people, the culture and the country of the United Kingdom. Lastly, I wanted to go on a little adventure and immerse myself into a new culture where I was completely on my own for the very first time in my life.

So, when I enrolled for the Erasmus program, I was grateful when the University of Glasgow accepted my application. The process and the preparation for the stay in Glasgow was a bit demanding because there were a few different platforms and assignments every Erasmus student was obligated to complete before and after the stay. Especially, filling out the learning agreement, that contained all the courses that I was going to do in Glasgow and the supplementary courses that I would have had in Linz, was a long process. Even more, when I arrived in Glasgow, I was not enrolled in any courses. However, the university gave me three weeks to sort everything out and eventually I did, but it was stressful because I, also, had to contact the professors in Linz to get their approval for the courses as well. Unfortunately, I did not get all the courses I wanted, but I was content with the ones I finally got which were two courses in the biology field, namely “Human Biological Sciences 2” and “Animal Biology, Evolution and Ecology 2”). Another assignment I had to do was an online language assessment test that attempted to assess my language skills before and after the stay. In addition, that website served me as a free learning platform that was offering remote teaching courses in English. Additionally, I attended a voluntary Erasmus course in Linz the semester before I left for Scotland where I met some of the international students that came to visit Austria. Listening to their incredible experiences and stories studying abroad got me really excited and I could not await until it was my turn to walk in their shoes.



Now, I am going to move on to talk about the University of Scotland and about my experiences living there. From the moment I first saw the University I was mesmerized. The main building with the tall tower reminded me of Hogwarts and the campus was always full of students enjoying the day, walking around or rushing to the next class. Everything looked so picturesque and straight out of a movie.

One of my favorite buildings was the learning hub which is a huge place with roughly 7 levels, and it can contain more than 2,500 students. Inside the architecture is sensational, everything looked extremely aesthetic as well as comfortable and students are welcomed to study there around the clock. I also did some study sessions there because on the

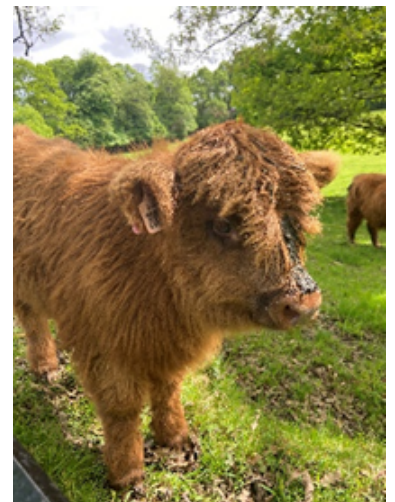
one the hand you can enjoy a beautiful view outside the windows and on the other hand it is quite motivating seeing all the other students working and it pushes you to continue studying. However, what was even more remarkable was the student community. Particularly, I was impressed by the variety of student societies and their activeness; every society would meet up at least once a week and do something together.

In my first week we were invited to participate in various welcoming courses, both online and in person, as for example, they organized a campus tour, a cooking session, an introduction to the infamous highlands and so on. Furthermore, I got introduced to an international students' tour organization which arranged various trips through Scotland. I went on the Harry Potter tour and to Isle of Skye, and I am not exaggerating when I say that those two trips were legendary.



As you can see, Scotland is a mesmerizing country, after all, the national animal is the unicorn. However, one person is not allowed to leave Scotland before he or she has not seen a highland cow. Therefore, my friend and I went to Pollock Park to set our eyes on those adorable creatures.

To be completely frank, studying abroad does not come without its own little challenges and obstacles. First of all, Covid 19 was still at high peak in Austria, and I was worried about the condition in Scotland because I did not want to go abroad just to spend my semester isolated in quarantine. Then I did not get into the courses I signed up for and had to wait two weeks till I got into the first one and then an additional week to get into the second. Nonetheless, I also had some good fortune. As for example, I had a free bus ticket, the "Young Scot", that enabled me to travel all over Scotland for free. I tried new things, like fish and chips, haggis, a fried Mars bar and an orange drink every Scottish person is obsessed about, called Irn-Bru. Most important, I got to meet some awesome new people from all around the world who I'm still in touch with.





Lastly, I want to share some advice. Regarding the accommodation, I was not able to get into a student dorm and, thus, shared an Airbnb with my two college friends, which was completely fine, but it was a bit farther away from the campus and that is where all the action usually takes place. Moreover, it is easier to meet new people when you are literally surrounded by them. Moreover, joining the Erasmus WhatsApp group is a fantastic way to befriend some of the visiting students before you even leave your home country. Also, talk to the locals because they already know their way around the city and that can really come in handy in terms of grocery shopping, visiting the right places at the right time and what to do in your leisure time. Lastly, talk to your advisors and counselor at your home university because they will always be there for you if you need any help.

In conclusion, my semester abroad enriched my life with so many wonderful memories that nobody can take away from me and that I will cherish for all my life. I have no regrets and can only speak fondly of my journey and if I could do it all over again, I would. Cheers!