

SFU Exchange Report – Spring 2016
University of Leicester, Leicester, England

To sum up my experience abroad, I would say it was absolutely amazing and life-changing. It sounds cliché but it's the truth. I'm a fourth year faculty of education student with only one semester to go before I graduate and I can completely say with confidence that I'm glad I decided to go on exchange near the end of my university career. I think you just appreciate life abroad more as a third or fourth year student than a first or second year student. I believe age has something to do with it, you are more appreciative when you are older. It also feels more rewarding as you reach graduation, it's a nice "reward." In preparation for exchange, I had to first obtain the minimum required CGPA for the application. Once I got the nomination, I didn't buy my plane ticket until December, and I was leaving in January. I flew with Air Transat. I brought along a backpack and two suitcases with me. It may sound like a lot but if you intend to buy lots of souvenirs for family and friends, two suitcases will be ideal. In terms of packing, pack both some winter and spring clothing. I found that Leicester and Vancouver have the same temperature, yet Leicester feels way colder. Don't forget your gloves and toque! I brought with me two credit cards and £1000 cash. I would bring more cash if you don't want to use your credit card. But for me, I used my credit card as a main form of payment. You can sign up for a coach pickup once you arrive in London and the study abroad team in Leicester will take you to the University of Leicester. The first week before classes is a time to attend orientation, settle into your dorm, and get to know other exchange students. Be friendly and be yourself! Once I settled into my dorm and unpacked, I still had some necessities I needed to buy such as dishware and a frying pan. You can always ask to use your flatmates to share if you want to avoid buying. I lived in a building called Opal Court and I highly recommend it. The location is superb. About a 7 minute walk to the university, 15-20 minute walk to the city centre, and a 12 minute walk to the grocery store, Morrisons. Walking to London Road is also very close from Opal Court. You share a kitchen with four other flatmates and you get your own bathroom. The staff is also very friendly.

The first week of exchange was definitely very hard. It was my first time moving out and being on my own but after a few days, it got better. Attending the first week of classes and making friends definitely helped. You can join clubs and societies at the university but they usually have fees. However, it's an excellent way to meet new people. I recommend joining "Exchange and Erasmus Society" at the University of Leicester. You will make friends and get to go on trips with other exchange and Erasmus students. Some of the trips I attended with this society are Bath and Edinburgh. They also throw parties every Thursday night so that you can have a good time and meet even more people.

Knowing that I only needed to pass did unmotivated me this semester, but do not let that distract you. Remember that you are here for school! As unmotivated as I felt, I pulled through and managed to get all of my essays finished. I enjoyed some of my classes and some not so much. The instructors are very nice and so are the students. University of Leicester isn't a very big campus. I've seen some people multiple times on campus but that rarely happens at SFU. That is how small Leicester is. If you're looking for study space or want to

use a computer at the library, go early to avoid it being busy. The library at the university is very small, only three floors. So it's often hard to find a spot during the hours of 12-4.

I did all of my travelling alone and it was such an amazing experience. Not only did I learn a lot about myself but my self-esteem increased by a tenfold. Sometimes you realize you are quite lonely because you're eating by yourself or you don't have someone to take your picture, but don't let this thought discourage you to travel alone. I highly recommend it. For my first time in Europe, I was lucky to see quite a bit. I was able to travel to France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Czech Republic, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland. There was lots of planning and organization involved but the end result included lots of photos, laughs and smiles, and one million memories. Be sure to travel around England and the UK as well. The trains are fantastic around England so planning day trips to Manchester, London, Oxford, etc. was very easy. However, the trains don't come cheap. There are coaches available which are cheaper but take longer to get to your destination. I used the train a lot and bought a 16-25 railcard that gives you a discount, 1/3 off of the original price. I recommend buying this railcard if you think you will be a frequent train rider. It costs £30 for the whole year, but if you use it frequently, it will eventually pay for itself, even if you're in England for one semester. Leicester is also very central, so doing day trips around England should not take too long.

Overall, I had a wonderful time in Leicester. I met lots of people around the world and grew so much as an individual. I learned to live on my own and depend on myself. Being away from home for five months was a good start to being on my own and this experience has definitely led me to believe I can go away for longer next time, perhaps one year. I would definitely come to live abroad in England again. Travelling around Europe was the best part. You get to meet so many people, try new foods, and seek new experiences. While I was travelling, I stayed with lots of locals through Airbnb. It's a good way to make a friend and the hosts can help you if you ask. Hostels are also good if you want to meet other travellers. Going on exchange allowed me to take risks and step out of my comfort zone. Earlier I said it was life-changing, and it really is because you will return home as a new and improved person. I strongly encourage students who are interested on going on exchange to apply, you will not regret it.

Photos:

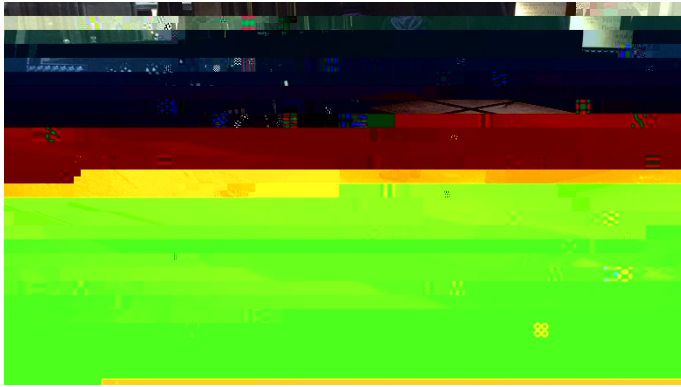
Yummy waffle place in the city centre called Whipee Gelato. This is the peanut butter cup waffles. 12 -nsTc 0.6(y)0b.19n -0.004 Tc 0.004 Tw 12 -0 0 12 72-0 0 ET 1 sc00472 72 42.72 Tm ()Tj



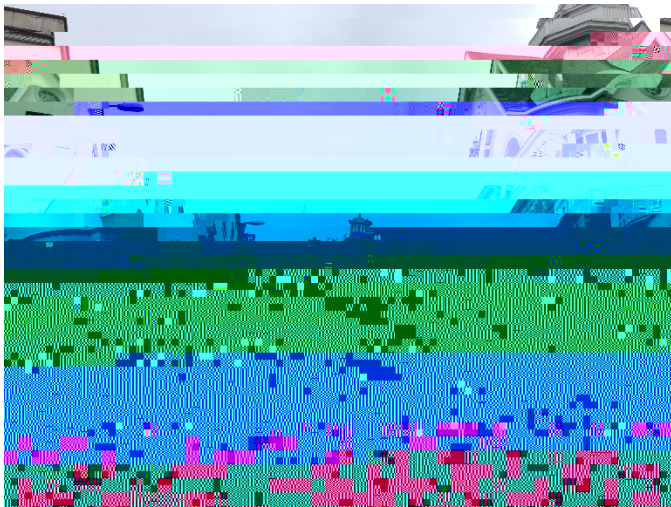
Leicester clock tower in the city centre.



Check out the New Walk Museum located on a pedestrian street called New Walk. Very close to Opal Court. Free admission.



Leicester is known for Richard III. He is located in the Leicester Cathedral. Free admission.



Leicester city centre. Highcross Leicester Mall.



Day trip to the Harry Potter Studio Tour.