

Kayla

Exchange Report

My name is Kayla and I spent my exchange at the University of Exeter, from January to June, 2013. Exeter is a city in England close in size to Victoria, located about two and a half hours South-west of London. Railways from Exeter to most nearby cities follow the river Exe through hilly green farmland and along the red-rocked coast. I studied Psychology, and the professors were all very passionate and often used examples from their own research, so I learned about a lot of new experiments and papers.

I had a different experience from many exchange students because I chose to live off campus. Unfortunately, there is no English version of Craigslist so it is hard to find accommodation from outside the country. I ended up finding the perfect place, a small student house with two other girls and one guy. They were extremely welcoming, they introduced me to their friends, showed me around, gave me lots of advice, explained confusing British slang to me, and generally really helped me feel at home. There were downsides to living off campus however, it was more difficult to get to class, and it was more effort to make sure I still made friends at school. It was also a big risk for me because I might have had a harder time finding a place, or I could have found somewhere and not liked it. Overall I enjoyed it and I think it was a good decision.

My flight was with KLM and was excellent, and I highly recommend them for any trans-atlantic flights. Because I am a Canadian student and was staying for less than 6 months I did not need a Visa, instead I filled out a form that they had at the gate including my address, place of study, and duration of stay (5 months) and showed them my Official Unconditional Acceptance letter, and they stamped my passport with a Student Visa. I was very worried about this but it was really easy. I was also confused about terms and semesters in England and ended up needing to change my plane tickets. I thought I understood the school website but I should have contacted my English exchange co-ordinator first for confirmation.

The most important things I packed were passports, plane tickets, my Official Unconditional Acceptance letter, and British Pounds Sterling. For other packing I mostly brought clothes, along with some books and electronics and small travel-sized washroom supplies. I had to think about what I could easily just buy in Exeter and not pack it, in order to keep my luggage from being overweight. English winter is chilly and rains often and the summer is very hot, so I needed clothes of all kinds. I made sure to change a lot of money into British Pound Sterling

because I did not know if my cards would work. I would recommend getting a Travel Visa or something similar because I got a British bank account but it took a very long time to set up and even longer to wire my money overseas, I would not recommend it. The cost of living in England is slightly higher than Victoria, but travel is much, much cheaper and easier than anywhere in North America. Sharing rent with roommates, and cooking my own food really helped keep the costs down. Often my roommates and I would have roommate dinners where we would all contribute groceries and all cook and eat together, which was fun and cheap.

The English academic style is different from the North American academic style. There is almost no graded homework, instead there are two or three very large projects throughout the term, and a final exam or paper during to exam term. Students need to be responsible and keep up with class readings and lectures, and start the large projects well ahead of time. England has high standards for papers and reports, it helped me to review what was expected in the Exeter grading scheme, to look up writing guides on the internet, to read a lot of journal papers and articles and see how they are written, and to make appointments with my Professors and discuss expectations. I made sure to make use of all the resources available to me and as a result I produced work that I am really proud of. I did have some issues because the University had a specific method of handing in projects that I did not know, it would have been much easier if I had asked someone how to hand in assignments earlier.

There were a lot of clubs (called "Societies" in England) at the University, my favourite was the Exeter BodySoc, which hosted Yoga, Pilates, and Aerobics lessons at a very low cost, as well as fun events and socials. There were also lot of exchange student events, which was good for me because I was living off campus and it helped me meet a lot of new friends. On weekends we visited nearby towns such as Bath and Penzance. Trains make inter-city travel cheap, fast, and easy. There were also a lot of interesting activities in Exeter, such as their Underground Tunnels, the RAM Museum, the Quay, and their Cathedral. Museums are free all over the UK so I went to a lot of them.

During the long school break I went on a 2 week trip around Italy and France with some exchange-student friends. Hostels and travel were cheap but food and tickets to tourist sights could get pricey. My favourite places were the Coliseum in Rome and the Louvre in Paris. I also went on a solo trip for one week around England and Scotland which was a very fun adventure.

I learned a lot on the exchange about other cultures and people but also about myself and my own culture. I was very anxious before I went but I feel much more confident now in myself and my ability to deal with new and different challenges. I met a lot of people and tried and learned a lot of things that I might not have otherwise. Overall I really feel like I've grown as a person.



At the Exeter Quay.



A day trip with some other exchange students.



In the Exeter Underground Tunnels.



At the RAM Museum with one of my housemates.