

Study Abroad Brighton, England

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This summer I had the incredible opportunity to study abroad in Brighton, England. This program was specifically for education majors, and while abroad I experienced the school system of England and received 40 clinical hours. As a special education major, I was a bit skeptical about going on a program that was for all education majors, rather than focusing on just special education. However, this program changed my life and my views on teaching, and I found a piece of me that I never knew was missing.

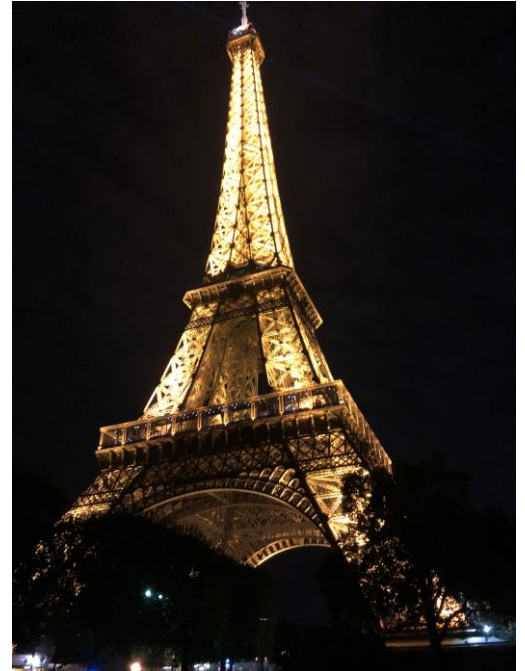
I departed from Chicago on July 1st, where I would eventually arrive back to on August 1st. I have always been a homebody, and I was extremely nervous to embark on this journey across the world for an entire month. Thousands of thoughts were running through my head, and as I took my seat on the airplane I remember thinking to myself, “this is it, you have been waiting for this your whole life.” And with that thought, the plane took off and my fear turned to excitement.



After 13 long hours of traveling, we arrived in London and the introductions started. I met 13 of my best friends that day! Only a few of us had left the country prior to our trip, and it made me feel better that I wasn't alone. Upon arrival at the University of Brighton, we had already bonded as a group. After that we moved into our dorm rooms where we would spend a good portion of the rest of our trip.

Our clinical observations started the first week, and we jumped right in. Being in the classrooms in England was such an amazing experience. We got to observe the differences in teaching styles between the US and the UK, which really broadened my views on teaching. One school that I observed at had a daily break, and every student or staff member at the school was allowed to relax for 30 minutes. I think that taking things that I learned in schools in the UK and incorporating them into my own lessons and classroom someday would be great. It is so important for students who are studying to be teachers to gain experience in ways other than observing, and studying abroad is an incredible way to do this and to open up your eyes to other cultures.

Aside from being in classrooms, we took many trips to different places. Our first group trip was to Stratford Upon Avon and Oxford. We were able to see Shakespeare's birth place and Oxford University, among other amazing places. Our next trip was to Bath and Stonehenge. As a group we toured the Roman baths and got to learn about their purpose. We also took a day trip to Stonehenge and witnessed the mysterious rock formation. My favorite trip that I took during the program was to the Harry Potter Studios in London. I am a huge fan of Harry Potter, and see the sets brought to life in front of me was indescribable. The program ended on July 27th, however, that did not stop me from seeing more. My friend and I traveled to Paris and Amsterdam for two days each. We explored Paris by day and watched the Eiffel Tower light up at night. In Amsterdam, we floated down the canals and toured the city. My trips to England, Paris, and Amsterdam are experiences that I will cherish forever.



From my time abroad, I learned not only about the school systems, but I learned a lot about myself as well. While in a different country, it is easy to find parts of you that you never knew were there. I gained confidence that I did not know that I had, and that is something that I will be forever thankful for. I also grew socially as well, and created bonds that I hope will last a lifetime. If I were to give one piece of advice to college students, it would be to study abroad. Having the experience to travel while also gaining and education is a rare thing, so do it

while you still can. I am so grateful for the opportunity that I had, and I hope more students have the same amazing experiences that I got to have.