

Ingrid Carpen  
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My name is Ingrid Carpen and I had the opportunity to fulfil the last half of my student teaching abroad in Eastbourne, England in the United Kingdom. I am a part of the Golden Apple Scholars Class of 2019 and I'm studying middle level education. I have the endorsement areas of maths and science and was the only middle level major on the entire trip. I received a scholarship from the study abroad office to fund some of the expenses from my trip in conjunction with writing about my experiences.

I flew into London February 19th to stay with my host family and get ready for our University of Brighton orientation the week before our placement started. When I got to my host family's house, that is when I found my placement for the next couple of months. I was placed at The Eastbourne Academy (TEA) in their maths department teaching years seven through year eleven. In the UK it is very rare to find a middle school since they usually have primary school, secondary school, then college. The school I was working in could be compared to an alternative school in the states due to the amount of behaviour issues and lower testing scores prevalent throughout the school. Since the schools are all academy's the students get to choose where they would like to go to school. There are four schools around Eastbourne, and we are usually ranked at the bottom of most student's lists. Although that was the case, I still enjoyed my time in TEA and learned a lot about classroom management and about the UK school system. I also learned a lot about the different terminology they use in maths compared to the US. For example, they call "slope" the "gradient" and they do not use graphing calculators when learning higher level maths.

Throughout my time at TEA there were four nationally led teacher strikes. Teachers all around the country were walking out of their classrooms to take a stand for better pay and conditions. This was very interesting for me to see considering I always grew up hearing about Chicago Public schools going on strike. I had the opportunity to join them in protest each time they were on strike.

While I was not in school I used that opportunity to travel around England and Europe both on my own and with the supervisor for the University of Brighton. Included in our tuition and accommodation were trips to visit the historical sites around the country. We visited castles, small villages, and historical landmarks all around the country. Our first trip was during our orientation where we all went to London on the train from Eastbourne. On other trips we visited multiple castles (Bodiam, Windsor, and Warwick), historical landmarks (Roman Baths, Stonehenge, and Big Ben), and historical villages (Bath, Rye, Salisbury, and Stratford). Although I am not into history, these trips were very interesting. Since we were in the UK we did not have a "Spring Break" but we had an "Easter Holiday" where I got two weeks off instead of one. I used those two weeks to travel around Europe where I spent a week in Athens, Greece and five days travelling around Italy. I stayed in Italy with one of my housemates, who is also a Golden Apple Scholar, and we explored Rome, Florence, and Pisa. During my time in Greece I was able to make so many new friends from all over the world. I stayed at a hostel and it was one of the best experiences I've had. If you plan on going on a trip anywhere in Europe I would recommend staying in a hostel, especially if you are travelling solo.

While I was in Eastbourne I had the pleasure of staying with a host family. My host Mum and Dad both made me and all of my housemates feel at home. I felt as if I was one of their daughters throughout the entire experience. We would all eat dinner as a family and stay and talk for hours at the dinner table. They would drop us off and pick us up from the train station when we wanted to explore and travel. They were always there for us if we needed anything or wanted additional support while being there. When our families would visit us in town they would always invite them over for dinner because they wanted to meet our families. They truly cared about us and our well-being. They were the ones that made this experience amazing.

If you are a student at ISU debating on whether or not you should go on this trip you definitely should. It was an experience of a lifetime and has given me such a diverse experience regarding education. When interviewing for schools it is an excellent opportunity to stand out and share about what I have witnessed. Everyone is always eager to ask me questions about the differences between the UK and the US. I hope you choose to have the experience of a lifetime like I did.