

Here's my Study Abroad Story

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Major: Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE)

Program: I was enrolled in the IFSA-Butler Program. I found their staff to be helpful and friendly, but other than the orientation, I didn't interact with them too much. Fortunately, I didn't run into many problems that I couldn't take care of on my own, but it was good to know that, if I was having trouble, the IFSA-Butler staff would be there to help me. In addition, their required orientation was a great way to meet some fellow Americans and make some friends before classes started.

Typical Day: On a typical day in Scotland, I'd wake up around ten and make myself some breakfast in the kitchen in my flat. My favorite was baked beans on bread with an egg on the side, a common British breakfast. I had class at noon, so I'd walk through the Meadows, the equivalent of Central Park in Edinburgh to the main campus area in George Square. By the time class



was over, I'd normally try to accomplish something with the day, either studying or exploring the city. Later in the evening, by 7 or so, I'd normally receive a bombardment of texts from friends, largely Internationals and Americans, looking for dinner. If there wasn't an exam or essay coming up, many nights moved to the pub from there. By midnight, I'd be back in my flat getting ready for bed, but not before catching up with my three flatmates (from Bulgaria, Italy, and Newcastle).

Highlights: Living in Edinburgh is like living in a castle, and there are sights on every walk that make you stop and feel grateful for your chance to be there. For me, though, I'd say the highlight was the hill walking. I took the opportunity to see as much of Scotland as I could in my semester, and spent plenty of weekends traipsing across spongy grass. You don't have to be a nature person to love Scotland, but it is definitely a plus if you are so inclined.

Challenges: It's hard to think of anything that I would call challenging in Scotland. There's no significant language barrier, and the classes are similar enough to American style courses that, while you'll

certainly have your fair share of late nights, you won't be weighed down by constant class work either. The weather is different, but much more mild than I expected. In Edinburgh at least, it stayed between 35 and 50 degrees (F) pretty much the entire time I was there, and once you get a nice coat it becomes second nature to dress for the cold on your way out the door. If there was anything I struggled with, I'd say it was the constant feeling that you are the "other". It's not as if the Scots aren't friendly, but it's hard

to escape the feeling that you don't *really* belong there. My American accent in particular started to bug me, if only because opening my mouth was like waving a big American flag over my head. Over time, though, you begin to get more comfortable, and you realize that most of the locals don't actually care where you're from.

Advice: The same lessons apply here as everywhere else: get out there and meet people early on or you'll regret it, make sure to get out of the city, visit the cultural institutions of your new home, etc. In terms of special advice for Scotland, I'd say it's impossible to really get a grasp on Edinburgh without getting into some literature and philosophy. Edinburgh was once called the Athens of the West because of its famous thinkers, men like David Hume and Adam Smith. Do yourself a favor and read some classics. You might be surprised how often you come face to face with a building or alleyway described in them. Oh, and please, for your sake, don't ask anyone about kilts or haggis.

