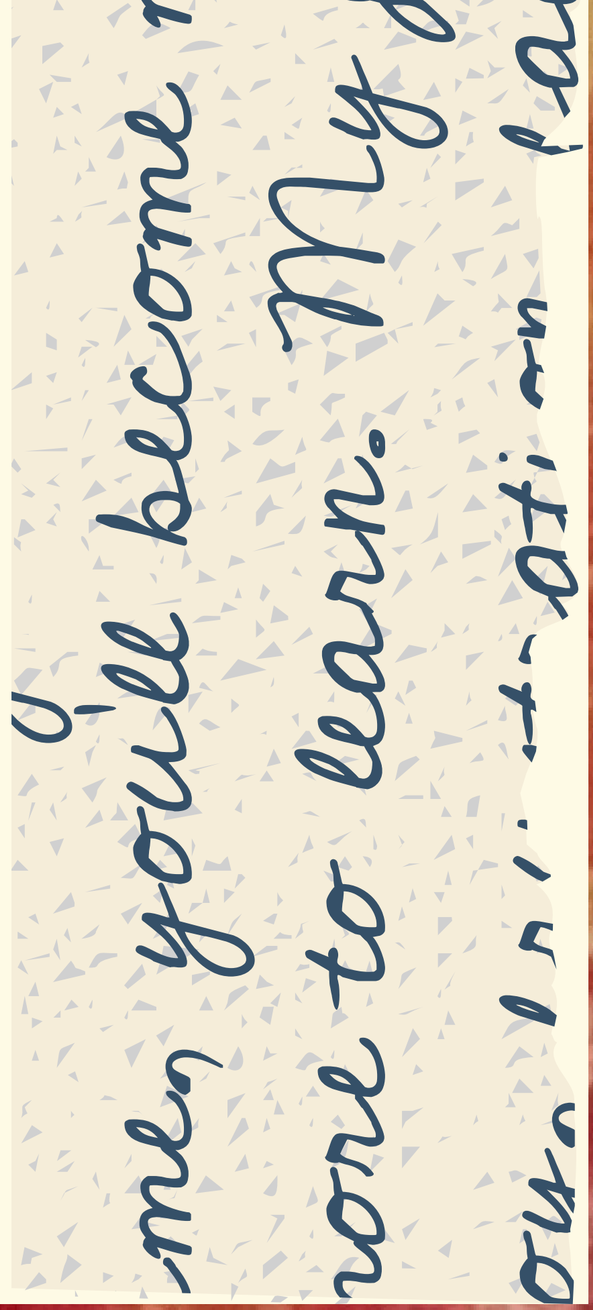

THE
OCTOBER
EDITION

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A NOTE FROM

THE EDITORS

A huge thank you to everyone who submitted to our first edition of The Exchange Journal - we've really enjoyed reading your articles.

To those who haven't submitted but are eager to, keep an eye out for our next editions over the coming months; we plan to focus on more specific themes as our time on study abroad passes.

For now, we've put together a relatively broad first edition, one that reflects the tumultuous nature of arriving somewhere new, settling in and grappling with expectations versus reality. We hope you enjoy!

Bella and Lara





SETTLING IN

PAGES 5-11

SOCIAL PRESSURE

ADJUSTING TO AMSTERDAM, BY LUCIA IMI



I have noticed one major difference between my new start in Edinburgh versus Amsterdam; the lack of social pressure. I remember the initial weeks in Edinburgh feeling a bit like a fever dream, awkward chats about degrees and accommodation, and the ever-looming question of ‘what are we doing tonight?’ There was the constant pressure of being socially active whether at the pub, at pres or even just chatting in someone’s room. With hindsight, I felt as if I was living to validate everyone else’s anxieties and fear of missing out by burning the proverbial candle at both ends. I have not experienced this sort of social pressure since I have been living in Amsterdam. Maybe this is due to maturing, or, it might be the fact that a year abroad has provided me with some much needed perspective.

From the get go my social agenda has felt completely on my own terms. I have been much more driven by taking full advantage of this new city, its opportunities and meeting interesting people, rather than being motivated by guilt and external expectations. Without my usual support network of friends and family my experience here is totally dependent on my actions, mentality and approach towards living abroad. This new emphasis that I have placed on self-accountability has weirdly been one of the most freeing parts about this year so far. I urge those who are thinking of taking a year abroad to view it as a year of potential and personal fulfilment removed from the social pressures we subconsciously, and consciously, navigate in familiar environments.



EMBRACING Copenhagen AND SLOWING DOWN





Basked in late August light, La Banchina is a sp.ot of pure tranquillity and peace. Nestled into a corner of Christiania, a large wooden deck wraps around the pool of dark water, tanned bodies lounging in the cool Northern sun. In observing this scene, it is hard not to compare to the scenes of summer chaos familiar to those of us from the UK. A far cry from jeering pot-bellied builders on their seventh pint of the day, the air instead is filled with soft murmurs and an icy sense of calm.

Coming to Copenhagen has felt like a lateral step, a meander away from the predicted trajectory of my university life, falling into the calmer pace of European living. Instead of rapid one-hour lectures filled with frantic typing, the seminars here drift through three hours, punctuated with frequent coffee breaks. The price of a daily sweet treat is high but is steadily becoming ingrained into my daily routine.

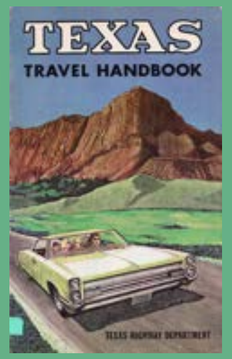
I've felt myself adapting to a slower pace not just in terms of university timetable, but also in my movements across the city itself; a city undoubtedly characterised by the cycling culture. Undeterred by the weather, the dedication to cycling serves as refreshingly cathartic mode of transport – a far cry from the packed London tube, gasping for air at every available air pocket. Cycling home from the bar is a surprisingly revitalising end to the night; gone are the days of sinking into the Uber surrounded by greasy chips (cheap late-night food cannot be found for love nor money). This elongated sense of time perhaps speaks more to the experience of a culture where efficiency doesn't always take precedent. The familiar reliance on companies like Amazon and Uber have been stripped away, as both were axed from Denmark after their failure to comply with local labour regulations. The community is prioritised over the individual; and paradoxically, the people themselves appear more confident, collected.

Though I am yet to fully master to effortless style that Danes appear to radiate as they navigate through queues of cycle lanes and icy winds, I remain optimistic. I watch the blur of blond hair rush past as I am overtaken by yet another 9-year-old Danish boy on a mountain bike, and grimace with the resolution that I will get better; cooler, calmer and more 'Copenhagen'.

by Bella Henry

FRAT PARTIES, POOL DAYS AND 30 DEGREE HEAT:

MY UNEXPECTED YEAR IN AUSTIN





Never did I think I would be writing this from the States, yet here we are.

I always wanted to go on a year abroad and had my mind set on my top ten places, so it was rather a large shock when I wasn't accepted into any of those and subsequently offered a place in Austin. I didn't even realise Austin was an option for placements, and definitely couldn't tell you that it was actually the capital of Texas.



Yet, over two months in, I would not have wanted to go anywhere else. Immersing myself into the deep end, into a whole new culture across the world is one of the best things I've ever done. The constant 30-degree heat and endless tanning days by the pool does help, yet there are endless opportunities and experiences to dive into that I wouldn't even consider in the UK. Settling in felt natural surrounded by other exchanges who are all in the same position, adapting to the same new experiences that American colleges offer, filled with frat parties and die-hard school spirit. The variety of people we've met out here is crazy and seems bizzare that although I'm studying in the US, my best mates are Italian, Danish and Spanish, which shows how much diversity you get along with the shared interest of others seeking opportunities for studying abroad.

University style seems completely the same yet very different at the same time. The best way to describe it would be that it is a complete representation of what you see in the films. From college bars, frat parties and American football games, everything is bigger and more extravagant, constantly exceeding expectations, and quite frankly puts a lot of UK universities to shame. We still have to remind ourselves that we are not on holiday, and that this is actually part of a degree, as it sometimes feels like we are just taking a year out travelling…

So, I guess I am encouraging everyone to be open about opportunities that arise as it could be one of the best decisions you will ever make!

BY JEMIMA BARLOW

NOT QUITE FLUENT

OCTOBR IN FRIEBURG, SOUTH GERMANY

BY MAUDE CASEY



The sun is shining most days so while there is no need for my winter coats yet, there is also no danger of getting tan. In the mornings, I sometimes wander around the lake that happens to be next to my accommodation and see the odd person venturing into the water for a dip. I haven't felt brave enough to swim just yet. There are cyclists zooming past everywhere, reminding me to buy a bike from Kleinanziegen.

For now, I'm getting the tram into town each day, I've just finished my second week of classes. There was slight panic over whether I would be able to take my preferred courses since my matriculation was only approved four days before the start of the teaching period. Note to self, German bureaucratic processes are not for the faint-hearted. Despite that initial drama I'm taking three German literature courses, all of interesting subject matter but that require immense linguistic concentration. For disciplinary courses taught in German, Albert-Ludwigs recommends having C1 Level, which is one step down from fluency.





You might say, I shouldn't take courses that are at such a high difficulty level but unfortunately Edinburgh is very specific about what type of courses I am allowed take. Weirdly enough I'm not fluent (yet), so earlier this week I enrolled on a C1.1 course – don't mention that to Edinburgh though because it hasn't been confirmed on my learning agreement yet! I'm hoping that this language class will improve the confidence of my spoken German. Sitting in a seminar room discussing complex German literature and having only just about followed along with the discussion, is certainly an exercise for my brain. And although I can speak German, when the professor inevitably directs a question towards me, I will almost certainly lose my ability to form coherent sentences. I leave the class wondering how on earth I will be able write a 6000-word paper at the end of the semester.

When I'm not feeling the pressure of fluency, I'm exploring; maybe I'll head up to Schlossberg to watch the sunset or to Café Atlantik for a Ganter – the barman corrected my pronunciation the first time I ordered one. Or I'll go to have dinner in Vauban with Oskar (who specifically asked to be mentioned). I still have not got bored of heading to the shops, Edeka's bakery section is unmatched, and DM (a better version of Boots) sells everything I could possibly need – even Kodak Gold 200. But no shopping on a Sunday: Sontag ist Ruhetag, so everything will be closed. There are many new things I can do here, so I am trying to ease the pressure off myself to be a perfect linguist four weeks into my stay.

Full Circle in Weimar.

REDISCOVERING HOME, GROWTH AND A BIT OF KÄSE.



Today, I met a group from my secondary school, who were on the penultimate day of the very same exchange (with a school in Weimar) that I did 6 years ago. After my only seminar was cancelled (I've cleverly, or not, "front-loaded" my academic week), I was able to spend the whole day with them. I developed a rather bizarre taste of home, that was both comforting and surreal in equal measure.

I spoke in German to both my teacher and the language assistant who had coached me through my A level (and lots more), under the admiring gaze of my former underlings. Ha. A few of the year 9s admired my jacket, jeans, my oh-so-Leipzig carabiner with key attaché, and I felt like the biggest Käse.

I'm Getting used to living and studying in Germany, and whilst this meeting reminded me of home and comfort, it also served as a much-needed reminder of how far I've come.
Without being too cheesy, it was amusing to think about how impressed 14 year old me might have been today as I swung in front of the Hauptbahnhof on my bike to embrace my old teacher.

BY RACHAEL WILLIAMS

LOST IN TRANSLATION

CULTURE SHOCK IN CANADA



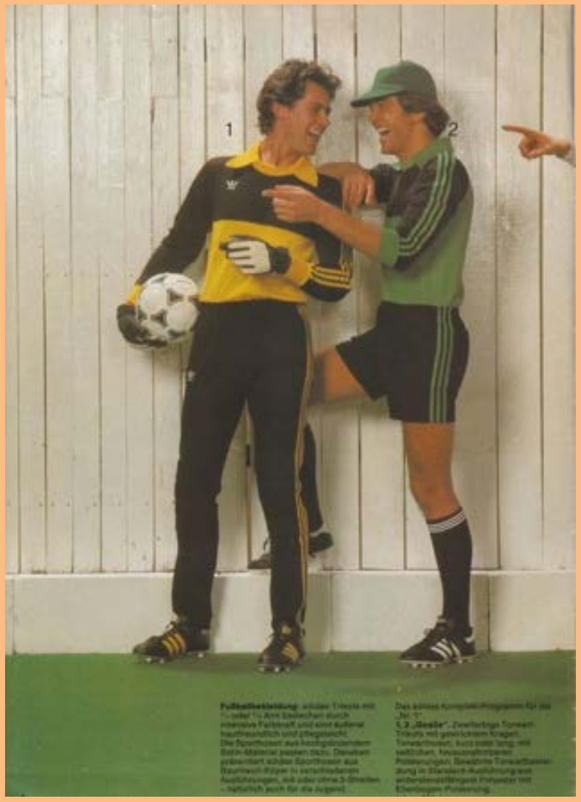
BY LAUREN HASTIE

Culture shock is a funny thing. Something I didn't quite believe in before arriving on my year abroad. Being almost 3 thousand miles away in a completely different continent, I came to realise very quickly that not everyone spoke with a Scottish accent and believed mutual bullying was a love language. The ignorance that came with knowing somewhere, how they spoke, how they performed everyday tasks and how people generally behaved made me overlook every lecture thrown at me about culture shock. 'It's not a real thing, I'll be fine.' Ironically, I was not fine. Naturally, I assumed everywhere thought the same as home. I knew there'd be things I'd find different or confusing but never did I think it would be quite this different. I felt as if I was trying to decode riddles, like showing up for a maths exam having never seen a number before or asking for Starbucks in gibberish. Which for the record was a new normal... ‘Caramel Latte, Lauren’ is only 3 words but they’re yet to get my order and name right. I've had people ask if I'm Irish or announced that I sound like Shrek (which I took as a compliment). .

I never thought I’d be lost in translation in a country who’s native language is also English. The drinking and dating culture here struck me the hardest. Being from a country which encourages going out and drinking, the lack of alcohol gave me the shakes. No one understood the concept of studying with a pint in hand or drinking to the point of not remembering (an average night in Hive). I remember phoning my dad and him telling me to stop being dramatic, ‘just go to Walmart.’ To which I cried 'Walmart has no alcohol.' I felt so isolated. I was in rehab. In regards to dating, being 'friends' was a good thing. Being told you're friends on a date back home would send the average Brit home crying having been friend zoned, but nope. Here it was a good sign. Life soon became a series of social experiments trying to determine how the Canadian mind works. People hold doors open for you here. Even if you are fairly far away, it is considered normal to wait and hold it open. I knew I'd adapted when someone let the door close in front of me and I felt myself frowning at the person for being so rude. A month before I would have expected the door to be slammed shut before I got to it. Although it all came as such a shock, I adapted to the change in culture and actually began to think this could be good for me.

SETTLING INTO A NEW CULTURE AND CITY:

THE POWER OF SPORTS



BY SAMI WILLIAMS

A week into my study abroad, showing up to a potentially intimidating football training session in a place outside Amsterdam, called Amstelveen, oddly brought me the most comfort I experienced over those first few uncertain weeks. It wasn't so much meeting fellow Edinburgh students as they slowly dribbled into the city or running into familiar faces only my drunken brain could recognise in the light of day. Instead, it was the universal, reckless enthusiasm when I watched almost all of the 20 random Dutch men grab as many footballs as they could from a bag and repeatedly launch shots - at full tilt - at the net, without any hint of a warm-up. I couldn't help but laugh thinking about how many times I had seen this unfold from under 9s to senior football, with coaches barking for us to stop this activity with the threat of inevitable pulled muscles. Yet, there was a strange comfort seeing this now seemingly universal scene unfold in a city that was entirely new and alien to me.

Fast forward to now, I'm two months into my study abroad and without fail, no matter how stressed, tired, homesick, anxious I am, every Monday night, Wednesday night and Saturday morning - I have a dependable activity where my only focus is on my first touch, positioning or body shape. So, for at least two hours my problems feel that little bit smaller than they did before. I've learnt more about Dutch culture and words here than anywhere,. I know stories about notorious Dutch gangsters and outside whose house you can find their bullet holes and I've learnt which supermarket sells the cheapest chicken and it has been the place where I've felt most relaxed and accepted. If ever I need a spare bike, restaurant recommendation or lift somewhere - I know where to ask immediately.

I think it's very easy to get caught up in the cycle of eating, studying, going out, and sleeping whilst at university. So, when either the work or socialising gets too intense - having a 'get out' like sports or arts is invaluable. Ultimately these activities are a universal language, bridging cultural differences and forcing you to socialise in a scary, yet familiar setting. You don't think about whether you should show up late to calm your nerves, because if you aren't on time - you're running laps.

Overall, if you are on the fence, try that thing with full commitment and if it doesn't work out - it doesn't work out. But it could become your comfort zone, you never know.



THE SEARCH FOR ACCOMODATION

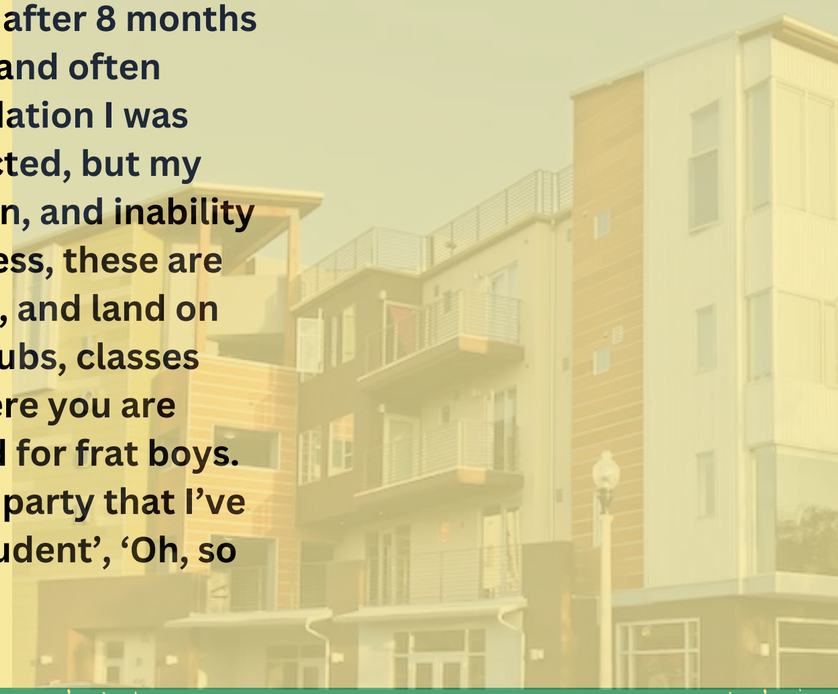
PAGES 13-15

Housing: Where to Start?

LIFE IN SANTA BARBARA, BY SAM GUANT

Before moving into my accommodation on the sunny shores of Santa Barbara, I was aware of the fact that I would be living in a three-man room, on-campus. It didn't occur to me that this particular corner of the UCSB campus resembled more a summer camp for 18 year olds, than a cosy home – mainly due to my complete lack of research.

So, where to start? Well, actually start. Often, our experiences at our home universities are shaped by our living situations; if our room-mates are doing the dishes, if they actually know where the bins get taken to after 8 months (true story). But the key difference is that those that we co-habit with are often our closest friends, and often become those who define the joys of university. Back to Santa Barbara – coming into my accommodation I was greeted by over-concerned parents, and Spikeball loving bros. Cultural adjustments are to be expected, but my living situation was never an inevitability. Instead, it was a by-product of my extreme disorganisation, and inability to browse through Facebook forums filled with '4-20 friendly' and 'love a good-time' posts. Regardless, these are hoops that need to be jumped through, in order to make sure that you can sift through your options, and land on the one that works best for you. That is not to say that accommodation defines your experiences; clubs, classes and day-to-day living feels very welcoming when most conversations segue into a discussion of where you are from. In a sense, being an outsider in a new place is also an asset. However, the same can not be said for frat boys. They actually, and unfortunately, directly resemble their depiction in pop-culture. The singular frat party that I've attended I was questioned on 3 separate occasions, 'are you in a frat bro?' – 'No, I'm an exchange student', 'Oh, so who invited you then bro?' (conversation edited for sanity).



Aside from unfortunate encounters with 'frat bros', UCSB is an amazing place, where you can study, surf and socialise in the same day. However, accommodation does matter – to an extent. Do your research! Persevere through Facebook group-chats! It is worth it, even if my living situation is currently subject to change...

Flat hunting in France

BY JOANNA BOWMAN

If you had told me a year ago that I would arrive in Lyon for my year abroad with no idea where I was going to live, I would have laughed in your face. You always hear about someone who arrives in a new place without a plan or a place to live, and you may assume that it's because they were unprepared. In fact, you can prepare as much as possible, but if the housing market says no, it says no. Before I delve into the whole process, I have to say that it all worked out in the end. Two months on, I am so grateful to have found a flat with three lovely french girls, and in one of the prettiest districts of Lyon.

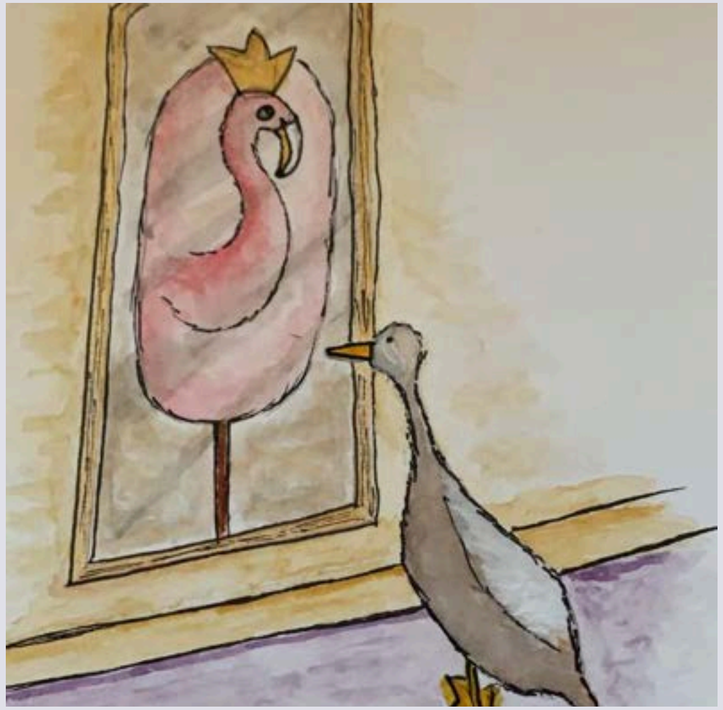
In July I started searching websites such as Studapart, Chez Nestor, La Carte des Colocs. Whilst I was close to securing a flat once or twice, they all fell through due to either my dossier not being complete, someone else applying quicker, or me deciding it wasn't quite right. At times I doubted whether I'd made the right choice to hold out for a flatshare with French people, rather than a studio or university accommodation. However, I kept repeating the cliché: nothing good comes easily!

One of the hardest things I found was trying to tell the future. It's so hard to know what 'the right move' is because there often isn't one. Flat-hunting is like playing five different chess games simultaneously : whilst you are making your move in one, the odds of your chances in the other four is changing. The main thing is to try and stay calm and to trust your instincts.

I highly recommend booking an Airbnb in advance, for a week or two. This was the only certainty I had, and it was the address I used for my visa application. After ten days, I had been to six viewings (some promising, some quite fruity), had many phone calls with landlords/ladies, and finally signed a rental contract! I then booked another Airbnb for two more days to sort insurance- and deposit-related details. Also, it turns out that the French stereotype of everyone being on holiday in August is true, and as soon as it hit September the viewings came flooding in

Overall, whilst it wasn't easy, I am so happy to have stuck with it. How can I complain about a bit of stress when I now live with the sweetest flatmates and speak French all the time! Not to mention I'm only five minutes away from the biggest park in the city, as well as the Rhône river and more importantly, a boulangerie!





MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

PAGES 16-21



DUNEDIN: THE MDMA CAPITAL OF NEW ZEALAND

While sitting in my dingy Castle Street flat on my arrival at the University of Otago, I did what I probably should've done when I originally accepted the place: some research about the town I was hoping to live in. Naturally, this led me down a YouTube rabbit hole. Choosing to neglect the more practical videos on campus tours, my attention was drawn to one particularly captivating title:

'The City Run by Students (Dunedin, New Zealand)'.

Having heard rumours of Dunedin's reputation, I eagerly pressed play. Over the next 11 and a half minutes I was educated on the raucous debauchery of Castle Street's couch burnings, street parties and Dunedin's status as the MDMA Capital of New Zealand. If you're considering coming to Otago on a year abroad, I urge you to watch it. It's highly entertaining. With my expectations set for the coming months, I ventured into town.

However, I was soon met with a disappointment I would continue to face for a while. Castle Street was quiet, the town empty. After some more research into the lack of a consistent nightlife, I found the root problem. Due to Dunedin's infamous party life the New Zealand government and University of Otago combined forces into controlling the behaviour, shutting down student bars and enforcing heightened police watch over house parties. This was seen in full effect recently when the much-anticipated opening of 'Dropkicks Dunedin' was barred the day before the event by the local council. My Edinburgh compatriots and I were gutted.

Disappointedly, I settled into the rhythm of university life. Yet in this period, I very quickly discovered the true joy of coming to university in New Zealand: the awe-inspiring beauty of the place. Quick explorations of the surrounding rolling hills within the Otago Peninsula sparked a desire to discover further. Over my mid-semester break I embarked on a trip around the South Island, visiting locations such as Franz Josef Glacier, Milford Sound and Lake Pukaki. If you're considering coming here for a year abroad, this is what I urge you to come for. The outstanding scenery of the country can't quite be put into words, and neither can my admiration for the Kiwis' preservation of this integral part of their culture. Days spent climbing, hiking and surfing have further cemented my love for the outdoorsy nature of the country.

This is not to say there is no nightlife in Dunedin. It is just different to Edinburgh and less frequent in its appearance. This is something I have come to appreciate. So, if you're considering coming to Otago for your year abroad I would implore you to do it. Just manage your expectations slightly – don't get lulled in by any false titles.

By Angus Abel Smith

FITTING IN WITH THE AESTHETIC...



Often when we move somewhere new or have a change in our careers there is a general stigma to use this time as a chance to reinvent ourselves. Generally new places are associated with new beginnings and I think a lot of the time we subconsciously use these physical changes as an excuse to rebrand ourselves.

For example, before I left for Copenhagen I did a classic whole wardrobe out, depop, vinted switch. As I boarded the plane, I felt confident in what I thought to be my new *"Scandi Identity."*

Perhaps a day, or actually a walk to my local supermarket later, I realised I had not achieved the *"Scandi Aesthetic"*. Every girl appeared to have the *"I just woke up like this"* dewy skin, white blonde , floor length hair and an outfit that stops you in your tracks...

I immediately felt like I might as well have had *"I live in London"* on my t-shirt, and to make matters worse the cashier took one look at me as I said *"Tak"* (Thank you in Danish) and asked me in slow English whether I would like a receipt...

In the days that followed, I often found myself buried under a heap of clothes - the entire contents of my wardrobe - just to find something to wear to Univeristy... Quite a contrast from England, where generally anything more than a hoodie and tracksuit to a lecture is excessive. But after two months here, I have yet to see a single person in tracksuits - not even getting a 10pm late night snack at Netto.





Then I discovered Vera's Market, an IRL Depop - Danish girls every Sunday sell their entire wardrobes for ridiculously cheap prices. I believed this was my gateway into the world of Scandi fashion. Over the weeks, 10 items and £25 later I looked in the mirror and still did not see the Dane I so desperately wanted to be.

Of course I didn't - I do not have white blonde hair or dewy skin.. I do need to wear a bit of makeup to feel good and I'm not opposed to a comfy pair of trousers. Therefore, is there a need to have an identity crisis, and think that I will only make friends if I fit the local aesthetic? I am not Danish and never will be. I have learnt to admire their style and nonchalance, but have decided that I can also offer them a bit of England. In doing so, I reveal a part of myself that doesn't need to change or be rebranded. And have successfully still made friends. (just...)



By Lara Brech

SASKIA FRASER



ABROAD IN ADELAIDE

The 'Wildcard' Application



Despite having already lived and worked in Australia on a working holiday visa, before returning as a study exchange student I had never been to Adelaide let alone the state of South Australia. Aside from a few brief google searches and WhatsApp conversation with a friend of a friend, I had little to no idea what to expect. I found the idea of being an inspired young student venturing into the unknown exciting - #catchingflightsnotfeelings #jetsetter #maincharactermoment. However, there are a few things I would have appreciated knowing about both the application process and the adjustment period of living and studying abroad.

Being dealt the 'wildcard'

What is a 'wildcard' offer? When the SWAY team is unable to offer you your top choices of institution in the first instance, they will offer you a place in an institution in the same country/ region that you've nominated as your preferred choice in your application.

Adelaide was my wildcard. I'm sure the SWAY team thought 'it's still in Australia... how different could it be?' I can now tell you the answer is very.

As Australia is a federation (and quite a big one at that), each capital city varies from state to state. For example, while Melbourne is less than an hour flight away from Adelaide, the difference scale, culture and atmosphere is huge. This also applies to how and to what capacity your degree is taught at your host institution.

If you have been dealt a 'wildcard' (and this may come as obvious to most) make sure to thoroughly investigate the host institution and how they specifically cater to your course. I would even recommend getting in contact with a faculty staff member at your proposed institution to ask about the study options open to you as an exchange student.

(CONTINUED)

LIVING ABROAD IN ADELAIDE

With that said, the experience you have on a year abroad is what you make of it. It may seem tricky to begin with given the circumstance of being far away from everything and everyone you know and love. Adjusting to living and studying abroad is not a linear process, there are going to be good days and bad days just as you would have at home. But it's unfamiliarity that prompts growth and better understanding of yourself and the world around you.

This has certainly rung true for my first semester abroad in Adelaide. Living in this small, quaint 'city' (more akin to a large country town) has encouraged me to reorientate priorities in my day-to-day life that I had placed on the back burner in Edinburgh, giving more time to maintaining my mental health and habituating routine exercise.

In terms of accommodation for an Australian exchange, I would recommend a residential college; at least for the first semester. The range of colleges again depends on your host university; there are four (out of five) colleges affiliated with the University of Adelaide. It is a great way to fully immerse yourself into the Aussie student culture. Though they are advertised as the Australian response to Oxbridge colleges, I would say they take more of a resemblance to an American fraternity. College life fosters a great sense of community and has a support system (plus fully catered meals) that certainly helped in adjusting to life down under. However, I have also found that this community and its members unwavering zeal for its traditions can also feel insular at times; a cult-ure shock that took some time to adjust to. Whilst I've met some great people at college, being back in a dormitory room surrounded by 17-18 y/o freshers discovering their free will with every pint sculled has me missing having an independent space to call my own.

EMBRACING THE UNKNOWN:

WHY EVERY YEAR ABROAD IS WORTH IT

I have always had the attitude that any year abroad is worth doing. All of them will come with their challenges, but at the very least you will learn so much and if you are lucky like me, you will love it too. As I write that, I realise I'm incredibly lucky to be here, but I'm not that lucky to love it because it seems like that's the general consensus.



My advice when it comes to applying is to be as open-minded as possible! You may not have heard of the city or the university but that doesn't mean you are downgrading in anyway. You may not get another opportunity to live abroad for a long time if ever!

That said, there are some things to consider. It's going to be expensive - whether that's visa, accommodation or general living costs. The likelihood is you will want to travel around when you get there too so factor that in. Other than that, the only other problem I have faced is a light feeling homesickness - which in actual fact is quite a nice thing, become I know I will have all my friends and family waiting for me when I get back.

BY DARCY BROWN