Our First Go Abroad Session

With Corina and Daniel

November 30th, 2022

Go Abroad Series Ambassadors
Agenda

01 A little about our experiences
02 Why you should Go Abroad
03 What you can takeaway from the experience
04 Challenges you may face
05 Questions!
Hi! I’m Corina, an Economics student, and I spent the last semester of my third year in Madrid, Spain. Here’s a little about my time there...
Hi there! I’m Daniel, I study Geography, and I went to the University of Zurich, Switzerland in the second semester of my second year.

Here’s a wee bit about my amazing experience there
Why should you go abroad?

The list is substantial, but here are some points we highlighted for you...

> An opportunity to see how others around the world learn- an insight into a different university lifestyle.

> You will meet a whole new set of friends, who will likely be exchange students, such as yourselves, from all around the world.

> Traveling to other countries and cities becomes much more manageable- you will find there are always trips going on which you can join- or plan yourself with friends!

> Really expand your knowledge about other cultures, improve your language skills, adopt new traditions and interests.

> Grow your ideas of what you want do in the future- you may find you will want to start your career abroad!
What could you potentially take away from the experience?

> Again, the list is long, and it will be different for everyone as we all want our own unique experience. However, generally...
As time goes by, you will see a clear boost in your confidence- from meeting such a wide variety of people, approaching anyone becomes much easier!

You will have a lived in a different country! This is such a great step in becoming more independent, less scared of trying new things and again, gain confidence in traveling!

An opportunity to gain prospects, whether that is what you take away from studying there or explore job opportunities.

It is generally a great step forward in “finding yourself”

Oh and... it tends to be a lot sunnier and warmer abroad!
Challenges you may face

Homesickness

• Feeling homesick is a completely normal part of the experience of going abroad

• You will normally experience this at the beginning of your time abroad

• Will include a longing to have things from home that you can’t have in your new country, even a desire to go home

My experience:

• Homesickness kicked in around March, about a month after I had arrived in Zurich

• University was in full swing and being abroad didn’t feel like a holiday anymore

• Hadn’t made many friends yet

How to overcame homesickness:

• Keep yourself busy!

• Try to do as much as you can, especially things that you can’t do in Scotland e.g. going skiing and hiking in good weather!

• If you want to go home, you may only be a few hours away by plane (though this may unsettle you even more)
Culture Shock

• Different living in that country than going on holiday there for a week/fortnight
• Will vary depending on country
• Can be difficult to adjust to at first, will get used to it

Language Barrier

• Will vary depending on your own abilities and English levels in your destination
• Zurich is (Swiss) German speaking but most people speak English fairly well
• I didn’t speak German, did not find it too much of a problem
• Most of your friends will probably be other international students
• Having a Scottish accent might be more of a problem!

Different Systems

• Aspects of daily life will be different to what you’re used to
• May not be able to find certain foods at the supermarkets, may find it difficult to get your head around a different public transport system
• May find it overwhelming at first, will adjust as your time abroad progresses
• Embrace it as part of your experience!

Different social norms

• Can be difficult to navigate the different social etiquette abroad
• Varies by country

My experience:

• took time to adjust to the more reserved Swiss culture
• Not too much of a problem for me- most of my friends were other international students
Different university experience

• Universities abroad may have a different teaching style to Aberdeen
• May have more assignments/presentations or more exam-focused
• May have to take more courses to fit the 30 ECTS requirement

My experience:
• Had to take 7 courses and a field trip after exams to get 30 ECTS
• Very exam-based: 5/7 courses only assessed through one exam in early June (very stressful!!)
• Pass mark much higher - 60% but can be higher

My advice:
Focus on passing, not on getting high grades - it won't count towards your degree mark anyway!
Money

• Going on exchange will probably be expensive, but will depend on country

• Will also have to take into account visas expenses and travel costs, exchange rates

• You will pay the same tuition as in Aberdeen and you can still get SAAS funding

• Can also get funding from the Turing Scheme of £300-400pm depending on country’s cost of living

My experience:

• Switzerland is very expensive!!

• Prices shocked me when I first arrived but I did get used to it after a while

• Received a grant from the Swiss government and opened a Swiss bank account

• Opened an international bank account with Starling (highly recommended!)

My Advice:

• Save as much as you can before you go!

• Only open a bank account abroad if you have to Monzo etc. will normally be fine.

• Accept that you will spend a lot of money, especially if you go to Switzerland!

• Try not to worry about how much money you spend - you will only have this experience once so make the most of it!
Any Questions?