I took a semester to study abroad at Harper Adams University in Newport, Shropshire, England. I was there for a total of four months and did my fair share of traveling while there.

Practical Information

In order to receive my visa I had a bit of paper work that I needed to bring with me. Cornell and Harper gave the paper work to me; it was just a transcript and some letters. The visa was very easy to get, we got to the boarder and they stamped it into our passport after a few questions. We did not have any trouble getting our visa nor getting to Harper Adams.

Packing

The weather at Harper Adams is very similar to that of Ithaca. Most of the time you will find yourself in rain boots. I wore my normal clothing here with the exception of a lighter jacket than normal for winter. Keep in mind that normally spring comes early in England compared to New York so we were in lighter clothing much sooner.

Resources

The way I found information about Harper Adams was to go directly to their website. There you can find out about their social events calendar that they distribute as well as other social interests. Most of the time, while at Harper, I would just ask my friends where would be the best place to go for a weekend or anything along those lines. For the most part they were very helpful and Google did the rest.

When we arrived at Harper Adams we had directions to go and find Jo De Silva who had been emailing us prior to our arrival. Her office is in one of the main buildings so it was not hard to find. There was no system put in place for a ‘buddy’ to show you around when you got there. Jo was the one to show us to our dorms as well as a few other buildings on campus. There were also no orientation activities that were happening on campus. This is because it was between terms and everyone else had already gone through that. However, Jo was very helpful as well as the rest of the staff trying to get us settled.

Academics

University

The campus is rather small compared to Cornell’s campus. At Harper you are able to see most of your friends walking to and from class. On campus there is an SU (Student Union) bar as well as the Welly Inn. Most students that live on campus will go there for a drink with their friends and on Wednesday night most of the campus will go to the SU bar for the activity that is planned. There are a few cafes on campus as well, one in the library and one in the Faccenda building. Students like to hang out in these cafes between classes. Also, the library has plenty of computers for students to use as well as a printing system so it was not hard for us to print papers or access the computers.

Courses

Mitch Crook helped through the enrollment process. We had an idea of what classes we wanted to take once we got there but had to enroll in them when arriving. The system is completely different than Cornell’s as well as the grading system. There was no homework or tests given. The only assignments we had were 2000-3000 word research papers one for each class. We took a total of eight classes to get the requirements for Cornell. The papers are graded differently, nothing is given above and 80 and passing is a 40.

Life Abroad

Language

You wouldn’t think that going to England you would have a language barrier but if you are not used to the accent you may have to ask someone to speak a bit slower or explain what they mean. First going there this happened a lot to me. The people over there would start talking and I would have to ask what they meant because they would use a different word. But in class it is pretty standard, you can understand the professors and they are willing to help you if you ask.

Banking

As for banking, I used my debit card. It wouldn’t be a bad idea to get a credit card before you go either just to have in case something happens.
Housing

Housing was not an issue; we lived on campus in the self-catered dorms. We had to cook our own meals but there was a shuttle that ran into town every day. In total we spent about $2100 on housing alone but there was a laundry service as well as a cleaning service. The dorms are set up so everyone has a single and your own bathroom. It was so nice to have especially because at Cornell I have yet to have my own room let alone my own bathroom.

Transportation

For traveling around the town near the university we just took the free shuttle from Harper into town. Other than that we would take a taxi to the train station and take the train to wherever we were headed. The first thing we did when we got to the airport was get a student train pass, this saves you a lot of money when it comes to buying train tickets.

Communication

When calling home I just used FaceTime and Skype. There is a package Skype offers so that you can call phones at home. I did not buy a cell phone to use while I was over there. I was able to iMessage people with the wifi and I could Facebook message them. I did not find a problem with this at all. It is about ten days to send a package, but it is not cheap to do so.

Social Activities

I met a lot of students from all over the UK as well as some international students. It was much easier to meet the students from the UK if you lived in a dorm that was for international students. I did not join any clubs while I was there but if you were interested you could join a sports team. I did however get a gym membership. There is a Facebook page for Harper Adams international students and they do activities such as dinners or go out for a drink together. For fun the local students like to go out to the bars in town on Monday night, watch the rugby game on Wednesday and for Wednesday night there is an organized event at the SU bar on campus.

Shopping

For groceries there were a few different stores in Newport; Waitrose, B&M, and the Co-operative food. For the main part of our groceries we went to the co-op because it was cheaper than Waitrose and had more variety than B&M. But if you wanted to get ranch dressing, hot sauce, or the better type of peanut butter you would have to go to Waitrose. On Sundays the shuttle would take the students without cars to the Azda in Telford, which is like a Walmart.

Health and Safety

The campus felt very safe. It is very rural compared to Cornell so there aren’t any wanderers on the campus for the most part. For health services there is a doctor’s office on campus and then there is a hospital about 20 minutes away from campus. I would recommend going to the doctor on campus first before going to the emergency room (A&E). This is because if there is something seriously wrong they will put you through the system however if you need to stay a few days or anything along those lines they will make you pay. I know this because my friend had to stay in the hospital for a few days.

Travel

While abroad my friend and I traveled to France, Spain, Monaco, and Portugal as well as around the UK. We made the plans to go when we had free time and when our families were coming. The experience was amazing and we had friends and family where we went so we actually got a few home-cooked meals out of it! We just used Google to research the trips and everything worked out great! The airlines that are the cheap ones to travel are Ryan Air, Jet stream, Easy Jet, and BMI Baby. These airlines will get you around Europe for a rather cheap price. We then took the train to get places once we landed as well as the subway systems. We stayed in hostels when we weren’t somewhere with family. We found the hostels through the website hostelworld.com. For the most part there are free walking tours through the hostels and it is only about $20 a night if you get the right room.

Overall exchange experience

The overall experience was amazing! I had a great time there with my friends and I learned a lot about the culture. I will definitely miss Harper Adams and all of my friends. I am happy that I went and now realize how great of an influence this will have on my future. I learned how to adapt to different cultures while traveling and I made great contacts for the field that I am interested in. I learned so much about how their dairy industry (field I’m interested in) ran and the differences between it and the one in the US. Going to Harper Adams has given me so many opportunities I would have never imagined and I did not hesitate to take them.