

January 24, 2009 - 4:07 pm

I'm sitting at the Chicago Airport crying my eyes out waiting to board the plane to Edinburgh. I have been nothing but excited since I found out I would be going to Edinburgh...until now. Now, I am scared, sad, and don't know what to expect on this new crazy adventure. Wish me luck...



Terrified does not even begin to describe how I felt as my plane left Colorado Springs and almost 24 hours later, landed in Edinburgh. I have never been great with change, so studying abroad in a country I've never been to with no recognizable face is the scariest adventure I have ever forced myself to take. Looking back, I can confidently say studying abroad in Edinburgh is the best decision I have ever made.

When we landed in Edinburgh, everything changed. The sun was shining and everything about the city was captivating. My Scottish roommate picked me (and my other roommate from Tennessee) up from the airport to bring us home. I was captivated by every turn (partly because they were driving on the wrong side of the road!), and did not stop taking pictures for the next four months. We stayed in a house that was only ten minutes from City Centre, which included: the Royal Mile, Prince's Street, the castle, the palace, Parliament, the Botanical Gardens, and so much more. It became my favorite afternoon activity to take a bus to the Royal Mile and get lost on the cobblestone streets and in the history of Edinburgh.



Before classes started, Edinburgh Napier University gave us a presentation on what to expect while living there as well as a Scotland "To-do" list, which I was sure to complete. Climbing Arthur's Seat, trying Irn-bru (a popular Scottish soda), visiting the castle, experiencing the local night life, and visiting the Lochs were all recommended activities.

It did not take long for me and my two American roommates to find a group of local Scottish boys (who played American Football ironically enough) to spend the semester with. They introduced us to their world and became our new best friends. We would play games at their house, visit with their families, and learn about their life and their family customs before University began. They loved introducing us to new food like haggis and black pudding, and fun places like beaches and campsites, and, of course, the people in their life before they met us.



We were able to travel on long weekends and holidays as well. Everywhere we went was a new adventure: from Germany to Ireland to London to Paris to Spain. I learned more from touring the cities and visiting places like Notre Dame and The Louvre in Paris, Westminster Abbey and The Globe Theatre in London, and St. Patrick's Cathedral and Trinity College in Dublin than I would reading about the history and culture in a textbook.

One of my favorite memories is of Easter Sunday. My roommate and I woke

up at 4:30 in the morning to hike to Observatory Hill, three miles from our house to attend Sunrise Mass at 6:00 am. We climbed to the top of the hill, and arrived a few minutes before the service started. I have never seen a more beautiful scene than having a 360 degree view of Edinburgh at sunrise. I looked ahead of me and could see the castle with its British flag flying high silhouetted against the sun's reflection in the North Sea behind it. I looked to the left of me and saw two Scottish men in kilts standing tall against a background of



the city built on the hills. Even seeing two of my University buildings standing tall above the houses was awe-inspiring. And to my right, I saw the moon setting next to Arthur's Seat and the Salisbury Crags. The sun rose as mass began.



International students were also encouraged to take Scottish Culture and Society as one of our classes. I not only learned about the history, customs, sports, and food of Scotland, but also was offered field trips once a month to popular Scottish destinations. I toured a whisky distillery, visited St. Andrews, saw the famous Forth Rail Bridge, and took a tour of the Edinburgh Castle.

Finally, the night life in Edinburgh is more vibrant than anything I had ever experienced. There are always people out on the streets, going out, and dressed up. I was surprised to find the music was very similar to America with the addition of local UK bands like *Girls Aloud*.



The best part of any Sunday night was going to our favorite pub, The Golf Tavern, early in the evening then to our favorite Sunday night club, Cav. Equipped with two levels and three different dance floors, the cheesy pop floor was our favorite. Sunday nights were what we looked forward to every Monday. I learned a lot from going out though. The song Loch Lomond, the unofficial Scottish anthem, always played around 2 am, and our friends would grab me and my two roommates and pull us onto the floor. We would all stand in a circle and shout the lyrics while jumping up and down. Every Sunday. Because of this song, we took a trip to Loch Lomond, and the lyrics mean something special to me now as well:

"O ye'll tak' the high road, and I'll tak' the low road  
And I'll be in Scotland afore ye  
But me and my true love will never meet again

On the bonnie, bonnie banks o' Loch Lomond"



May 31, 2009 8:02 am

So it's 8 am at Edinburgh Airport, and I'm crying my eyes out. I can't believe this adventure is over, and I'm now leaving all my friends I've made here. I didn't realize I would fall in love with so many people and fall in love with such an incredible city. I will never forget this city and all it did to help me find myself.

