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The Beginning of a Great British Adventure

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Rilee Macaluso
Nottingham, England
October 11th, 2018

The Beginning of a Great British Adventure



We have been in England for three weeks, and it is just starting to hit me that I will be spending the next four months here – The University of Nottingham.

A lot can happen in three weeks when you're acclimating to a new country and way of life, so here are some highlights.

The first few days on campus were exclusively international students, which allowed me to meet others who were facing the hardships of not only starting classes, but being significantly farther from home than usual. It was really great to meet people from around the world, although most of them were just beginning university, not studying abroad. Friday included a pub crawl for international students at any of the universities here in Nottingham.

The next day was 'fresher's' or freshmen move-in day and the beginning of 'fresher's week'. Unfortunately, I got sick right before I left home and although I had hoped to shake my cold by the time people showed up, I had not. This meant that I was not in a partying mood and instead of easily befriending those in my hall by going to all the club nights, I hid away in my room downing hot tea and watching Netflix.

Luckily, I had a few Linfield students to hang out with during that week. We explored Nottingham City Centre and our new campus. Shopping and eating in cute cafés became the norm of our week. We even found a little garden on campus. Its quaint charm mesmerized us instantly and we spent hours lying in the grass and soaking up the sun, knowing full well that it could be one of the last nice days we'd see for a while.

Even though I have been getting to know other students, ironically the people I am closest to are a few people from Linfield. Maybe it is because we were mostly all placed in the same hall or just that we understand each other's struggles better than most, but four of us have created an easy friendship.

I've also met some other exchange students who introduced me to people that they had met, namely an Australian girl named Nalini. Now there is a group of exchange students that sit together at meals and go on random adventures. One of these adventures took place our second Saturday in Nottingham.

Our outing was to the Attenborough Nature Reserve, a beautiful lake surrounded by greenery, and only a short £1 bus ride away from campus. The reserve is everything that I would have expected from a lake in the English countryside. I'm not sure how many of us went, nearly 30 I'd guess. It has been nice getting to meet exchange students because they are in the same situation that I am, and are more mature than the 18-year-olds just moving to uni (university) for the first time. It is also crazy that we, students from all over the world, have been introduced at a University in Nottingham, England, and even though we aren't studying the same things or from the same countries we are able to understand each other because we are all in the same boat, missing home but in awe of the opportunities that we have here.

Four of us Linfield kids headed to London after we finished classes on Friday afternoon for a weekend getaway. We booked the cheapest Airbnb we could find near London and let me tell ya, 'you get what you pay for' should've been our mantra for the weekend. The apartment was cramped and not very clean but at least we weren't spending that much time hanging out in there. This and the £1 umbrellas we got from Poundland, England's version of the dollar store, proved that sometimes it's worth the splurge.

Our first day in London we went to see the sights: Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey and The Tower of London/Tower Bridge. Halfway through the day it began raining and so we spent a good amount of time hiding out in a café instead of seeking out other tourist attractions like Big Ben and the London Eye. Even so, we made the best of the situation and even ended the night by finding a cool restaurant near our Airbnb. Here we got wood-fired pizzas and pints of mojitos, a good end to a long day.

On Sunday we headed to the London Natural History Museum, because, hey, it's free and we are pinching pennies anywhere we can. Let me just start by saying that the museum is amazing! It's huge- you could spend days in there and probably still miss parts of it. There are so many exhibits going on and so much to learn and see. So, we checked our luggage at the cloakroom and headed for the closest exhibit. From ancient birds, to Charles Darwin, to volcanoes and royal gems, this was by far my favorite place we visited all weekend.

Sadly, the weekend had to end and we headed back to Nottingham as late as rationally possible, soaking up as much of London as we could- don't worry we'll be back.

More adventures to come!

Cheers,
Rilee