

Bristol University

Sem 1 2017

Otago Majors: MFCO and Clothing & Textiles

I suppose I should start this evaluation off by saying I would recommend this experience to anyone and everyone. I don't really know why more people (at least that I know) don't go on an exchange if I'm honest. A lot of people have told me they 'can't afford it' however, I found apart from getting to the destination, my weekly living costs didn't increase at all, and especially with the financial assistance the uni gives you, if you save some money up beforehand (I worked full time for the entire summer) then it's a completely financially feasible experience. Anyway, these last 5 months have been single handedly some of the best months of my life. I won't glamorise it – uni doesn't suddenly become better, or your life magically improve just because you're halfway across the world, in a completely new environment, but the adventures you have and the people you meet is a completely unrivalled experience. I have seen so much more of the world already, gained so much independence, and met friends that I can confidently say I'll have for the rest of my life. Bristol is an interesting place as although it is very much a city in its own right, it also reminds me of Dunedin in some ways in that it has a relatively high student population. This makes it a REALLY fun place to study though. Basically every night there's something on, there's always student catered events, and the town is always thriving, but similar to Dunedin, it's also easy to knuckle down and work when you need to as everyone else is too. However, if you want to get away from studenty stuff there is a whole city of actual residents to experience (And London is only a 1.5 hour train or 2.5 hour bus away!!).

Accommodation

I actually chose Bristol uni as I had a friend from high school studying full time there. She had someone pull out of her flat halfway through the year so I took that person's spot, and flatbed rather than going into halls. I did however make good friends with some Australian girls who were all on exchange and living in halls so I know a bit about both experiences. The first thing I would say about flatting is, the same as in Dunedin I suppose, the people you are with can really make or break it. My flatmates were all kind and respectful, however they were quite quiet and not super sociable. This did make my earlier weeks a bit harder as I was lacking that built-in friendship (apart from my friend I already had). Although in saying that – this won't be any different in halls. The majority of the halls here are set up like flats. So it will still be in a hall, however rather than being along a corridor you will be in rooms set around a living room (and kitchen if you choose self-catered). A few are set along corridors – such as parts of Hiatt Baker and Wills Hall. Secondly, halls are essentially divided into two sections – those that are in Stoke Bishop, and those that aren't. Stoke Bishop essentially a campus of halls, which is about a 10 minute bus ride from the actual uni campus itself. All but one of the Australian girls I knew were in Stoke Bishop halls and they really enjoyed it. I think overall they are just a lot more sociable, so being an exchange student who most likely knows no one, I would say that is the best option. However in saying that, if you can find a flat with sociable people then that is also a really good option, especially as they're likely to be closer in age to you. Whiteladies road/Redlands area tend to be the most studenty – sort of like Queen street area/Castle Street if you're a second year, so they are good locations to

start with. I'm really happy with the decision I made as I still had an amazing time, but it just would have been better if I had more sociable flatmates I think!

Coursework

I'm not going to try and make out I spent my whole time studying vigorously. I didn't, and I also didn't really need to. The uni hours in the UK are MUCH less than in NZ. They refer to papers as 'units', and everyone takes Three Units, so equivalent to three papers, which is pretty standard. I only had 7 hours per week, all up. In NZ I would have had at least double that. This meant I literally only had two hours on a Thursday, and five hours on a Friday. It's based around self-focused learning so you are much more reliant upon doing your readings etc. Most of the time I did those and it really does help you get the most out of your time as it allows you to participate in the seminars – which is important as they are mostly set up as discussions rather than a lecturer talking AT you. All in all though, it was not a high stress semester for me. I do think I was lucky with the papers I took, but I didn't have any huge assignments throughout the semester, and then had three relatively big ones at the end, and no exams. The end of the semester was a little stressful as suddenly I had about 8,000 words of assignments to hand in a small time frame, but I just made sure I got started on them before the Easter holidays so that I could spread them out and make sure I wasn't rushing toward the end. This is obviously dependent on what course/units you take, but I suppose my biggest recommendation is do your readings etc as it'll really help you get the most out of your academic time there. Another point – over there if you do a degree – such as a film degree – you only do film papers, you can't do other papers from other courses. As exchange students you can mix and match papers, but it can be confusing explaining this to other students!

Overall Tips

If you're arriving in January then BRING WARM CLOTHES. It's a temperature shock. Bristol does get pretty balmy in the summertime though, so that's a perk. It's still England though, so don't expect the tropics all year round! One of the biggest culture shocks for me was the number of homeless people around, and how they literally will come right up to you and ask for money. I have travelled a lot and so have seen this most places I go, but when it really becomes a part of your everyday life it's a bit of an adjustment. I did live in the city centre though so it is worse around there than it is up in the more residential areas. Bristol has a really amazing food scene at the moment, with heaps of great places already, and lots more opening now/in the future. Pata Negra is a tapas place that is amazing, Pinkmans is EPIC breakfasts and good coffee, as is Spoke & Stringer. Bosco Pizzeria is yum as, and if you feel like a Splurge, The Ox Clifton is really yum. Polpo on Whiteladies road is also amazing. Swoon on Park Street has the best Gelato, and Bens Cookies in Cabot Circus is SO YUM. Also Deliveroo (They deliver food from HEAPS of restaurants) will be your new best friend. Go up to Clifton Village and make your way through the coffee shops/cafes/restaurants there as there are a lot of goodies! The Everyman Cinema on Whiteladies is really cute, and Watershed Cinema is super cheap (Four Pound Tickets) and they play kind of arthouse movies but they normally have some good ones! Bristol is famed for its nightlife Scene. The triangle has a few classic 'clubs' – people's opinions vary but make sure to go out on a Wednesday night sports night - normally held at Bunker (Now renamed Gravity but most

people still call it Bunker). Motion is the '17th best nightclub in the world' and hosts some incredible events. Bingo Lingo is one of the funnest nights I have ever had so I would definitely recommend keeping an eye out for those. Thekla is a nightclub on a boat, and is very fun. Also if you're after a bit of different night I 100% recommend Propoganda at The Fleece nightclub! Guaranteed a fun night. Bristol is also right in the middle of cider area in England, so make sure you go to the Apple and try the Old Bristolian – it is very high percentage and as a result sort of tastes like muddy water, but it's something everyone has to do (or so I was told!) Bath is only 10-15 mins on the train and definitely worth a day trip, it's such a beautiful little town. Shopping in Bristol is relatively limited – Cabot Circus has Zara/Topshop etc but I don't really like the area down there, it's a bit weird. Good if you need some stuff from the big chain stores though. Sightseeing wise there's a lot to do. Walk up to Clifton Suspension bridge, and across it. The views down the river are incredible (go on a clear day). Cabot Tower in Brandon Hill Park also has amazing views over the city. Bristol is also the home of Banksy, and I'd recommend going on one of the Banksy walking tours. Also go up to Stokes Croft and have a look around the street art, as it's really funky up there.

Overall, I'd say Bristol is an amazing place. It's an easy place to be a student, but also has so much going on, all the time. I was never not amazed how busy the town was even walking home from late on a Sunday evening! I had the most amazing time and I have no doubt you will too!