

STUDYING ABROAD

Always been curious about what it is like to spend time studying abroad? We have asked a student to enlighten us about all the fun and the difficulties that are involved.



Name: Minke Jonk

Age: 21

From: Breda, the Netherlands

Studied in: Southampton

Studied abroad from September 2010 to June 2011

Why did you want to study in that particular country or city?

Southampton was actually third on my list, after Dublin Trinity College and Dublin University College. I liked the modules Southampton had to offer; I didn't know anything about the city itself or the area it was in. I didn't want to go study in London, because that was the one

town on the list that I'd been to already and I wanted to discover other parts of Britain. "Soton", as it's affectionately called, turned out to be great for that. As it was within reach of so many places I've seen most of the south of England in nine months.

Are there any surprising or major differences between studying abroad and here in Leiden?

We'd work together a lot more than in Leiden. Getting to an answer was much more a joint effort. We'd peer-review each other a lot, whether compulsory or not. The style of lecturing was pretty much the same, but in seminars there was a lot more "compulsory" participation. In several modules, everyone had to prepare a short talk on a certain novel, play or poem (as a sort of class discussion), which really helped with writing essays because you basically did essay prep, finding quotes to support your ideas and getting feedback from the lecturer and other students before even thinking about actually starting your essay.

Which courses did you do whilst abroad and why?

In my first semester I took a Shakespeare course, Children's literature (fullest module I've had; almost all of that year's hundred-something students were there) and 19th Century Visual Sensations. Especially the latter really helped me choose a subject for my bachelor's dissertation. In my second semester, I took Twentieth Century Irish Drama, Writing Rural England – for which I had a lecturer who was very... let's say peculiar (he always called us students "yokels" in his emails and his standard salutation at the end was "Pip pip") – and Literatures of Islands and Oceans. The last one was amazing, I became completely obsessed with whales after reading *Moby Dick* (I actually read it twice, once for class and once more for my essay. Now I'm reading it again for my masters' dissertation!).

What are you studying at the moment?

I'm taking the Translation Dutch-English-Dutch Master, specialising in literary translation. I've noticed that because of my experience living in the UK, there are cultural references or specific words that are more clear to me now than when I did the minor in the BA.

Did you enjoy studying abroad? Are there any things you wish you had done differently or had known beforehand?

I've enjoyed it immensely. It made me a much more independent, stronger and more sociable person. I wouldn't have done it any differently. Every single experience I've had in Southampton, all the amazing people I've met and all the things I've learnt made it an awesome experience I wouldn't change for the world. I loved the life I lived over there, the independence I experienced and just living in a different country with a different culture, surrounded by people who are from all over the world. The hardest thing was going back to the Netherlands, and even though I knew it was going to be difficult, the actual experience of missing something so much it almost hurts sometimes was something I wasn't really prepared for.

Any tips for people who are thinking about studying abroad?

I can't *not* recommend it. Yes, you'll be going there alone but you're not going to be the only one who feels like they've been thrown into the deep end. Most people you'll meet are like-minded, so to me it really felt like coming home. I am a Harting scholar, so the one tip that might be valuable is to do well in your first three semesters in Leiden. And I mean *really* do well. And write a really good motivation letter. That's the thing that got me in, because my grades weren't the highest. As far as I'm aware, the Harting programme isn't something you can sign up for; you have to be invited. Also, once you're assigned to a university, start planning. Maybe even go there before the semester starts. Just to get to know your new university town a little!
