

## Liam's European Vacation

I have always wanted to study abroad. With my majors and playing on the lacrosse team it was going to be very challenging to do it for a whole semester. However, with the summer program being available I figured this was a perfect opportunity, it was indeed. My friend Thomas and I had a few ideas of what program we were going to do between Oxford and Italy. Eventually with the classes given we decided on Oxford, what a choice. Dr. Sacco and Dr. Goma are the two best professors that we could've asked for to take us on this experience. They make the experience much more enjoyable, each in their own ways. With everything, every place and everyone on the trip, it was one of the most exciting experiences in my entire life.

### Friends Overseas

- **Your average tourists**

A good community was something that Dr. Sacco and Dr. Goma helped build with many different school trips with all 27 of us students. We went to a couple noticeable places: London, Stonehenge and Bath. These trips were not only fun and exciting but



My friends and I in front of Big Ben and Parliament.

also brought the entire group together in many ways. Through sharing experiences to free time with friends in the cities we were in. The first time we went to London was amazing. As a group on the first Saturday, we all had to wake up somewhat early and take an hour to two-hour bus ride into the center of London. Once the group had arrived, we were given about four hours of free time. Since this

was the first weekend, I was still getting to know people. This day was spent exploring with some of my new friends. Anthony, Owen and Thomas (who I had known previously). We went all over from one side of the river to the other side, and saw Big Ben at Buckingham Palace. We walked approximately over 6 miles within those three hours. Once those four hours of free time were up, we met as an entire group at Shakespeare's globe theater. This is where I watched King Richard the Third. After the



Thomas and I overlooking Stonehenge.

play, it was time to go home. This bus ride was the example that mirrored all the other ones. Seeing people we had not seen all day, asking about what they did, how they liked the play and what they thought of London. Another trip that stands out to me for the community is the trip to Stonehenge. We got on the bus around nine and the ride was supposed to only take an hour and a half, but it did not. It in fact took nearly two hours and about 20-30 minutes. After sitting in the bus for longer than expected. I guarantee everyone on the bus was a little annoyed. Experiences like these help us as a group get closer to one another. Stonehenge finished after about an hour of being there, we went to Salisbury after that. After the Cathedral we made our way home. These trips fostered a sense of a tight Nite community that was reflected in other aspects of the trip.

- **Popcorn and candy, please!**

Oxford not only brought exciting adventures but also the general hangout with the groups. You build a second family with some of the people on the trip. Being that I only went on the trip really knowing one other person I have met a group of people that became good friends with. Many who went to salve than I have ever seen before and probably would have not met if not for this trip. One of the main things my friends and I would do was watch movies. We would watch most of the movies on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. These movie nights would range from all types of movies, horror movies to Ace Ventura Pet detective. Memories from movie nights were some of the best ones to come out of this experience. I was never a big fan of horror films on this trip, but over four weeks I became one. This was the greatest number of scary movies I have ever seen. The only reason that I watched them is because of the group of people when watching them. There were always at least four to five people in the common room when we would watch movies. They would usually start around 9:30-10:00 and last till about 11:30-12:00. After those movies ended some people went to sleep, the others stayed through on another. Many friends' ships grew heavily thanks to movie night with the group. I believe this made everyone who was watching the movie get more comfortable and more friendly with one another. These happen weekly and we were able to get close to many people. Another memory that I like is when most of the group was downstairs watching the baseball team in their national semi-final appearance. Dr. Sacco was also there with everyone while we cheered on our school. Overall, these nights are some of my most fond memories from the trip.

- **Sunday Funday**

Another thing the group of people I grew close with on the trip would do is family dinners for only two of the Sundays. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> to last Sunday of the trip, after going out to happy hour at the varsity club. One of our friends offered to make us all dinner to eat

in the common room dining room. We ate pasta and garlic bread and played card games for most of the night. Poker, BS and spoons all were played with the group. This night would eventually turn into one of our many movie nights. The weekend after that we decided to have dinner again. This time it was going to be breakfast for dinner, pancakes and bacon. This unfortunately did not go as planned, the pancakes did not turn out as pancakes when they were being cooked. So, the best college is to order pizza. Six dominos pies were ordered to Logan House. The group ate the pizza while in the common room listening to music, hanging out, playing games, etc. These dinners only happened twice but they show what strong group of people you can meet and what type of friends you can make while on this trip.

## Food Connoisseur

- **Different kind of turf**

One of the best and most enjoyable places I have found on this trip is the turf tavern. I did not find it; Dr. Sacco took us after we saw the Evensong at the New College Chapel. The turf tavern is one of the oldest pubs in Oxford. It is in an alleyway next to the bridge of spies. The sign is very small to see, and states that the tavern is one of "Oxford's best kept secrets' ". After Sacco showed us this place, I have been back plenty of times and will probably continue to go. It is a tavern, so they have pub-like food and drinks. As Sacco stated he holds the record for ordering 27 Pimm's at one time. Pimm's are one of the most famous and liked British mixed drinks. It was cool to have one of their main cocktails inside a pub that has been around since approximately the 1300s, well at least the building was used as a tavern. The turf Tavern became its name in 1842.



Hidden entrance to Turf Tavern.

- **Taylor's - Should be called Liam's**

Every day I went to this lunch place in Summertown, Taylor's. It is an inexpensive sandwich shop two bus stops away from Logan House. This gourmet sandwich shop in the center of Summertown and in the city center has a few types of food. They have premade/reheated sandwiches, make your own sandwiches and pasta as well. For the 4-5 weeks I went with a make your own sandwich. My sandwich consisted of Chicken Bacon spread, cheddar cheese, cucumber, red onions, Jalapeno peppers, olive oil, salt and pepper on a plain baguette. When I say that this is one of the best sandwiches I have ever had, I mean it. The sandwich tasted like subway on steroids. Last



Taylor's Sandwich Shop in Summertown.

week, the person working knew my order off the top of her head. "My favorite customer" she would say. The sandwiches, smoothies and other food there are not expensive either. The sandwich and a coke will only cost about 8 pounds and that goes with extra money for cheese. Thomas and I would often sit outside daily and discuss what the plans were for the rest of the day. This spot was a staple during my time in Oxford. Taylor's Oxford Gourmet sandwiches were a staple place in my trip.

- **Expanding the palate**

The British are known for a couple things, one being the most powerful empire of all time well at least in more modern times. The empire was so big that at certain points the sun would not set on the British empire itself. This brought a lot of diversity to the empire. In Oxford the food was very diverse, and you could literally get mostly any type of food you wanted. From American fast food to traditional Indian cuisine. I decided this would be my opportunity to expand my palate. I had never once had Indian food and I was excited to try it out. I went to the spice lounge in Summertown, both times I went we walked. The first time I went I had Chicken Tikka masala which I did not really like. After that I had Chicken Biryani, which was delicious. I would recommend spice lounge to everyone who goes on this trip. This was just one of the many times I tried to expand my palate while on the trip. Oxford with its diverse foods brings many cultures together in such an historic city.

- **Non-traditional learning**

Learning at Oxford was a little bit unique compared to western colleges. First, the professors are called tutors, and class sizes traditionally range from 1-3 students per. My eastern religions class was the biggest one they have ever had with nine students. It covered 5 eastern religions Hinduism, Buddhism, Shinto, Taoism and Confucianism. These classes were no normal lectures, more like conversations. This class would have been so boring if it wasn't for Magnus, our professor. Magnus would stroll in every day with his morning tea and get us talking right away. Whether we were talking about religions or even just talking about chain restaurants or where to get the best burgers. It was always interesting. He took us to many museums to look and learn about religious artifacts and statues. This class really spiked my interest in religion, not just mine but all religions. Since this trip I have thought about picking a minor in religion and if it was not for Magnus, I probably would not have ever thought that.



3 Bardwell Rd. This is St. Clares' academic building.

- **Most important piece of paper**

The Magna Carta is one of, if not the most famous pieces of paper in the entire world. It is the first real document of legislation that has rights for people that the king himself needed to follow. The Magna Carta was written in 1215, meaning that this document is over 800 years old, and it's perfectly preserved. It is the basis for every written piece of legislation in the entire world. It was incredible to see in person the details on the paper itself were unbelievable. The immersive number of words on the one page, handwriting so small yet so clear, and the paper itself was lined. Unfortunately, you were unable to take photos of the Magna Carta because of the damage it could cause. On the back wall of the room it is, there is an English translation. It takes up the entire wall, but the actual paper is small, and you would not think it could fit on one piece.

- **Literature in place**



Well outside of St. Margaret's Church.

One of the two classes I took was with Dr. Sally Goma. Going into the Literature class in place, I was worried. I'm not much of a reader nor a literature scholar and I thought that I would surely dislike the class. However, that couldn't be further from the truth. This was no regular English literature class. Goma's class was always filled with exciting moments and each day differed from the rest. Like the class name, in place, she took us all around the city of Oxford on trip after trip during class time. These trips all had meaning towards the curriculum. Some of the time we would walk through colleges where famous

writers went to schools like Lewis Carroll and Christ College or C.S Lewis with Magdalen College. On the third to last day of classes there was supposed to be a normal room class when Goma decided it would be nice to walk to St. Margette's Church. It was not a short walk, but it was not overly long, it was very beautiful and scenic. The most exciting part was that at the church there was a well. Not just any well but the well that inspired Lewis Carroll's Treacle well in Alice in Wonderland. This was one of many spontaneous trips we went on as a class. It was a full immersive class experience that cannot be taught anywhere else than in Oxford.



Entrance to Christ College.



Deer Park on Addison's Walk.



Oxford's Botanical Gardens.

### **That's a Wrap!**

Oxford was the most fun I have ever had in 4-5 weeks in my entire life. This summer abroad gave me knowledge, a sense of community and general life experience. Thank you to everyone who made this trip amazing and to the professors that put up with all the students. If anything is gained by reading this blog post it should be that Oxford is THE place to study abroad in the summer. You won't regret having an experience like living in Logan House, going to St. Clares and enjoying England.