

---

## An Enjoyable Exchange in University College London

JIANG Yifan

BENG3-INFE, Yr 3

### My blog

I treat my study abroad experience as an indelible treasure in my life. Although my study abroad experience was full of excitement, pleasures and improvements, it was also made up of challenges, loneliness and depression. The education environment, places of interests and the people in London all left me deep impression, and mature me a lot by the end of this memorable period.

### My Pre-Departure Checklist

- Application for student visa (Type: student visitor)
- College offer
- Come up with a course list
- Accommodation
- Obtain a rough knowledge of the country and the city you are heading to (weather, transportation, jet lag etc.)
- Money: Cash and credit card
- Necessities of the abroad study: computer, clothes, shoes, badminton rackets and shuttles, medicine, camera, small gifts etc.

### Just Arrived

Sep.17 2013 *I am in London! Not a dream!*

Given that the enormous amount of students from abroad, UCL held an orientation week for the international students but did not provide extra assistance on our arrival. I bought a SIM card at the airport, starting my exciting exchange life in London.

Since I chose to stay at a homestay family in London, the first challenge for me was to carry my heavy luggage with me, get to my host family after a 1.5-hour underground trip.

Fortunately, the transport network in London is highly developed and I got to my new home successfully.

### Orientation

During the orientation week, I was given several speeches by

the representatives from the college, through which I got better prepared for the oncoming study and challenges.

There were lots of activities ongoing on campus. I attended the society feast on which I enrolled in the badminton society, which much enriched my exchange life at UCL.

### My Place

I lived in a host family, which was located in the area 3 of the central London – within 20 minutes of underground to UCL.

My host family was very nice. The hostess, age of 57, is a writer, IELTS examiner and owns several house properties in Ghana. She is divorced and lives with her two sons – 18 and 21 respectively.

The house, although simple, was comfortable and sweet, and was my home in London!

Although my host family is located a little bit far from the central London, it is a fantastic place to live a good life. It is within 15 minutes to the underground station, within 5 minutes' walk to the market where people can get most of the things they want.

On the other hand, my home is embraced by the beautiful countryside from south-west. It is quite near to a river which passes the North London all the way to the River of Thames.

I often went jogging deep into the countryside and along the river. I once borrowed my host's bike and rode south for half an hour and got to the Olympic Park.

### My First class

The teachers and students at UCL have more interaction than we do at CityU. Students are more proactive than us and are encouraged to interrupt the lecture whenever they have questions. It is even not uncommon to find a student arguing with the lecturer! The free academic environment leads to an academic result of excellence.

I have been learning to be proactive in academic learning and to be the master of my own!

### People I met

Due to the fact that there are a lot of Asian students in the college,

---

my best friends in London are from mainland China and Taiwan. However, I made good friends with my host, and other guests in the family as well.

Newspaper is freely distributed at every underground station. More people prefer reading books or newspaper on the underground than looking at their smartphones.

London is a highly globalized modern city that more than 40 percent of its population consists of immigrants. Even so, local citizens give their tolerance and respects to those immigrants.

One of the most important elements of the life of the young people in London is to go to club, pub or bar, buy a drink, chat with their friends and make some new ones. The social time can extend to very late over midnight.

One interesting detail can be noticed that a large proportion of people would rather walk in the rain and wind without an umbrella. I guess people prefer putting on their overcoats to avoid getting wet from rain to getting an umbrella which is difficult in such windy and rainy days.

#### **Out of classroom**

A lot of activities are available for students at UCL and in London as well. Students have opportunities to participate in various societies, social contact activities, participate in different competitions, and volunteer works. Besides, students are encouraged and provided with opportunities to have an internship outside the campus.

I took part in the UCL Badminton Society and became one of the team members. We had a training session every Sunday and had a league match with other U-teams in London. Society enriched my life at UCL and left me a lot of precious memories.

#### *Dec.04 2013 My last game for UCL*

I played Men Double and we encountered the most outstanding opponents we have ever met. We lost the game with the score 1-2 (12:21, 21:16, 23:25). It was a pity I failed to make the last contribution to my team. All in all, I gained much more than I lost.

#### *Dec.11 2013 Carol Christmas*

I went to the Carol Christmas held in a church near Trafalgar

Square with my host and another student in the host family.

#### *Dec.25 2013 Christmas Dinner!*

My girl friend who was on her exchange programme at Uppsala University in Sweden came to spend her Christmas holiday with me. We had the Christmas together with my host family which was an unforgettable experience. It was really a wonderful feast!

#### **Money**

London owns a very high living cost, especially in terms of transport and accommodation cost. Since I only studied at UCL for one semester, I was not eligible to apply for a student Oyster Card which would have enabled me to get the monthly ticket at a big discount (still more than £80). I found a way to cut down my cost of going out by mounting my 16-25 railway card onto my Oyster card and using the public transport at off-peak time (<£100 per month).

The accommodation in London is high as well. I paid for my accommodation £170 per week, though breakfast and dinner are included.

#### **Goodbye**

Exchanging abroad was a treasure that cannot be forgotten. I was upset that I could not get the Schengen visa. I was desperate when I got illness and got wounded. I was excited about being a part of the UCL badminton team. I was curious about the totally different world outside the door. No matter what I have gone through, this experience has been deeply engraved on my mind and would be a part of myself in my life.

I love you, UCL. I miss you, London.

#### **Home sweet home**

I have learnt to be more proactive, positive and well-planned in my life, with which I will face and conquer the coming challenges and difficulties. From next semester, I will continue my study at City University of Hong Kong. I would share my experience with my friends and apply what I have learnt abroad to my study and everyday life. I would also try to find an internship and get prepared for the future career.

HK, I am back!

---

### Sharing

The more you get prepared, the more comfortable you will be when something happens.

When in Rome, do as the Roman do. This is the best way to experience the foreign culture.

Study is important, but study is not all of the story. If you have time, go out and have fun!

Keep in touch with the family and your friends.

Be optimistic, everything will get through.

### Overall rating

5 (5 is the highest in the rating scale)



## An Enjoyable Exchange in Purdue University, U.S.

*XU Yisi*

*BENG3-INFE, Yr 3*

### My Pre-departure Checklist

I applied for student visa right after I got my admission letter. As you need to make a reservation for the visa interview, you better plan for your preparation work carefully.

You need to decide whether you want to rent an apartment or live in the student residence. I need to sign a contract with the university before a deadline to guarantee a residence place, so make your decision early.

My host institution requires us to purchase a health insurance, so you should also think about it. Besides health insurance, travelling insurance is another must for you.

### Just Arrived...

I searched on the social networks to find some student organizations in the host institution which provides pick-up service for freshmen before I booked the air tickets. You should check the pick-up time and site carefully. With the preparation work, when I arrived at Chicago O'Hare International Airport, I got on the shuttle bus in no time.

I signed up for the orientation for international students. The warmhearted volunteers helped me carry my baggage to my residence. After that, we joined a welcoming dinner, during which we chatted and had pizza in the lawn.

### Orientation

I joined the orientation which is called BGR (Boiler Gold Rush) in Purdue. And if you join BGR as an international student, you can join the BGRi designed for international students for free.

During BGRi, I opened my bank account, purchased SIM card for my phone and bought all the daily necessities I need. BGRi is very helpful for international students to get used to the everyday life in the US.