



Alexander Sadie



Program: University Study
Abroad Consortium

College: Adrian College

Major: History and Political
Science

Country: Scotland

One of the hardest parts about coming home from studying abroad is being bombarded with the question: How was your trip?! You know people are interested (even if only halfheartedly), but nothing you say can even come close to capturing your experience. No picture can illustrate the beauty of the parts of the world you just experienced first hand. The classic response is that it was "life changing." Well, the reason this is what comes to mind when I talk to people is because it was life changing. I'd like to break down this generic feeling and explain why.

Babies can pick up an extraordinary amount of information at all times. While they may not speak in coherent sentences or know that their parents' eyes still exists when hidden behind hands, babies are sponges.

When I went abroad, I became a 20-year-old baby sponge. The only way I can explain *why* my experience in Scotland at the University of St Andrews (and the 12 countries I was able to affordably travel to along the way!) is because my senses were always tuned in. At every turn, I was invested in what are normally mundane aspects of day-to-day life. Street signs become interesting. The mannerisms of passerby suddenly tell you so much about where you are. Cars come whipping at you from what you think is the wrong side of the road, but really they're just driving on the "correct" side. College is a word you rarely hear, because you're at University. Everything that we get accustomed to as young adults becomes interesting, and that is why I learned so much abroad. Learning comes in many forms, and while the classroom is a major component, your daily life offers so much more than just school that we often don't take advantage of. There are people we're too scared to talk to; there are activities we're too self-conscious to try; there is an endless reel of news highlights we abhor or are indifferent towards. At St Andrews, I had four months in a different world where nothing was mundane and everyone was an open door into a room of new experience. I saw the world through the eyes of a 20-year-old with the attention to detail and focus of a young sponge, and I am so happy because of that truth.

Studying abroad I made some of the best friendships ever. More importantly, however, I had a chance to self-reflect and get in touch with myself. I realized that there are too few days in our lives to waste time doing things you don't love. There isn't enough time to not spend time with those you love. Coming home, I felt internally more put together than ever before. I am more empathetic, caring, and patient. My life has been changed, and I'm a better person because I had the chance to go abroad. I wish everyone who can does the same.