Alyssa Prado – UF in Dublin & UF in London

Major: Management | **Minor:** English

I studied abroad because…

I wanted to follow my dreams and do something out of my comfort zone. I have always loved to travel and my first time in London took my breath away. I knew that I had to go back and to study there was the perfect opportunity. I followed that with a semester in Dublin because I wanted to go somewhere I hadn't been before and experience something completely new.

One of my biggest challenges before studying abroad:

I never thought I would consider cancelling my time abroad, but those thoughts definitely crossed my mind. As time I got closer, I began to panic, thinking that I was crazy for doing this and for leaving everything I already know. But that also drove me. I didn't want to stay in a "comfortable" place for the rest of my life. I had to grow, and studying abroad was a huge part of that.

A typical meal I had while studying abroad:

I became a fast lover of pastries. They were quick and easy and usually very tasty. Each country I visited had their own twist on certain foods, like croissants, scones, and danishes. My favorite "typical" meal specific to my study abroad locations was, hands-down, fish and chips. While locals may not think too highly of the meal, I think you can never go wrong with a good fish and chips!

My favorite spots in my host cities:

In Dublin, my favorite spot was Dame Street. The area was home to rich history, and you could turn down a street and find something completely new every time. In London, my favorite place was Covent Garden. It was home to some of my favorite pastimes: shopping and people-watching. I enjoyed browsing the stalls of handmade goods and sitting down for a coffee to watch the buskers.

One cool event in each location I got to experience while abroad:

In Dublin, I got to witness one of the biggest events in the country's history, St. Patrick's Day! While my day wasn't exactly spent like the locals, I got to see a tradition unfold. In London, I got to see the city light up for the holidays. Just watching the seasons change and seeing the people transition into a period of cheer, where everyone was smiling, was something I had never seen before. Oxford Street came to life with thousands of holiday lights, Hyde Park opened a Winter Wonderland, the Museum of Natural History had a skating rink!

The most memorable experience for me while abroad:

During my time in London, we took a trip up north to see Edinburgh in Scotland. We were rather spontaneous and decided to climb up this extinct volcano named Arthur's Seat. Due to the spontaneity of the event, I was severely underdressed. That day, I chose to wear booties with a small heel and very little ability to walk on loose rocks. Looking back, that event just makes me laugh because I tried so hard and it still took me twice as long to make the trip.

A habit I picked up while abroad:

Drinking coffee! Which is strange because I went to two countries where drinking tea is more common. I loved visiting different coffee shops, it brought me to different areas of the city and may be responsible for my newfound addiction to caffeine.

What I found most challenging while abroad:

Time management was difficult. Especially towards the end of my time during both programs. I had a monster list of things I wanted to do and see, but classes and internships had to come first. I forced myself to be realistic and only pick out what I felt I couldn't leave without seeing. It was hard, but I had to remind myself that I will be back because these places are no longer so far out of reach.