Hello.
I’m Kathy, and I am studying abroad in London, England!

Just a little about me – I have a small obsession with corgis (a cute stalky dog with short legs), and I enjoy good food. With that being said, selecting a school abroad was an easy decision for me. Not only does the queen own ~5 corgis, but Europe has amazing food, and the University of Roehampton has a great business program. It was a match made in heaven. I am looking forward to so many things: traveling, making new friends, eating, taking marketing and human resource management courses and so much more!

Thank you to the Oscar and Rosetta Fish Scholarship for Excellence fund for making this experience possible. I am truly grateful to be afforded this opportunity. I’ll be setting off on September 9th, 2015, so stay posted!

Cheers, Kathy

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September 8, 2015

BYE HI!
After many months of anticipation, I am finally leaving for London tomorrow morning!!! This day has been on the back of my mind since the afternoon I received my acceptance email to the University of Roehampton Study Abroad Program. Since that day, I have slowly been preparing for my time abroad. And I must say, there were more preparations than I expected. Even though I have my logistics worked out, I am still anxiously awaiting to find out what classes I am registered for and where I’ll be living. I have to wait until I arrive at school to find out…but I’ll keep you posted

In case you are not familiar, studying abroad is different from a student exchange. For my program, I’ll be attending the University of Roehampton along with 10 other University of Hawaii at Manoa students (with varied majors), and we are all required to take a course from the faculty resident director. This semester we are accompanied by a UH Professor who will teach a course on Women & Politics.

Thank you again to the Oscar and Rosetta Fish Scholarship for Excellence fund, Vance Fawcett Scholarship fund and my loving parents for making this experience possible. I am truly grateful to be afforded this opportunity.

Cheers, Kathy

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September 10, 2015
ARRIVED

Recap of the past two days in photos:
ITO-HNL-LAX-LHR (~17 hours in the air)
After arriving in London yesterday afternoon, the university provided a shuttle to campus. It was a lovely one hour drive through cute neighborhoods! The biggest struggle of the day was having to lug my baggage to my flat (apartment). From the check in office, we had to walk across campus on a gravel path (luggage doesn’t roll well on gravel…), and then up four flights of stairs (there’s no elevator in my building). But, I love my flat, and it’s conveniently located right across the College of Business.

Today and the next few days will consist of orientation events, and next week there are freshmen events taking place, that study abroad students are encouraged to attend. School doesn’t start until the week of September 21st, so until then I plan on getting familiar with London.

Cheers, Kathy

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September 16, 2015

WK 1 HIGHLIGHTS
Photo Frenzy
Most of the study abroad students (300+ of us) participated in this event. Groups of eight were given a list of landmarks in Central London. As a group we needed to work together to locate them and take a picture with it. We got a little lost, but our group managed to complete most of the items on the list. The girls in our group were from California, Oregon, Colorado and Spain.
Following the Photo Frenzy Sam and I met up with one of her local friends who took us to a BBQ in East Finchley.

**Afternoon Tea & Billy Elliot**
The Hawaii group had afternoon tea at Harvey Nichols, an upscale department store. I believe it gave us a taste of the posh London experience. Petite desserts, scones and finger sandwiches lined our table, and we were each given a tea pot with tea of our choice. The scones were my favorite.

Following afternoon tea we watched Billy Elliot the Musical at the Victoria Palace Theatre.

**Thrope Park**
Thrope Park, an amusement park located an hour away from campus, was closed off for our university. WOOO, no lines!!! But…it wasn’t the best day to be at an amusement park. It was rainy, overcast and very cold. Besides the weather, the park was awesome. The park featured the Stealth, ‘one of Europe’s fastest rollercoasters’. Rode it and screamed my head off. Even though it was a cold and wet afternoon, it was such a fun experience!
My first week in London can be described as tiring, yet so exciting! I love meeting and talking to new people! And I’m trying to soak up every new experience. I still have a few more days till classes begin, so I plan on participating in the Freshers’ events and exploring London.

Cheers!

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September 22, 2015

EXPLORING LONDON

We have been lucky enough to have good weather for the past few days. When the sun’s out, and the sky is blue, it is imperative to take advantage of the good weather. This past weekend we took a field trip to Greenwich by boat on the Thames River, visited Buckingham Palace and
watched the changing of guards, walked around Holland Park in west London and did some window shopping at Camden Market.

**Greenwich**

I love Greenwich (Pronounced “Grin idge” or “Grin itch”). Like the name suggests, it is GREEN. You can travel to Greenwich by the Tube, but we were lucky enough to go there by boat on the Thames River. I would highly recommend traveling to Greenwich by boat, because you’ll get an awesome tour of London. We, the Hawaii group, boarded the boat on a pier near Big Ben, and from there we passed sights such as the London Eye, The Shard, Canary Wharf and traveled under the Tower Bridge.

Greenwich hosts the Prime Meridian of the World, the National Maritime Museum, the Painted Hall and a beautiful green park. The Painted Hall was absolutely stunning, and the Greenwich Market was THE SPOT for lunch. Mmm I had a lamb and halloumi wrap and a Brazilian churro filled with caramel sauce. YUM. I can’t wait to go back to Greenwich.

**Buckingham Palace**

The changing of guards ceremony was a huge spectacle. I believe is occurs every few days at 11:30 am. As expected, there was a massive crowd. Even though we arrived an hour early, we still didn’t get a good viewing spot (I watched everything from someone’s camera screen). Nevertheless, it was a great experience. I didn’t get a single good photo on this day, so I’ll be back!
It was very crowded.

**Camden Market**

**Holland Park**

**Richmond Park** (Only a 15 minute walk from campus!)
You can see the deer running in the distance! And, it was finally warm enough day to wear a tank top. That’s it for now. I’m so excited because my classes finally begin tomorrow!!!

Cheers, Kathy

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September 29, 2015

WEEKEND GETAWAY: BRIGHTON & ARUNDEL

A weekend away from London has provided me with many lessons in PRE-PLANNING. Samantha and I had so much fun exploring Brighton, Ford, Littlehampton and Arundel! We got lost a good number of times, and had to spend unplanned pounds on bus fares and train rides, but I’m glad to have made it through the weekend with laughs rather than groans.

I think what made our experience unique was staying in a Airbnb in Ford. Our Airbnb was located an hour train ride away from Brighton, the destination we originally wanted to visit. The
train ride was not the problem, but rather our Airbnb was located in a small rural village. Which meant we did A LOT OF WALKING. But, the walking was not bad at all. We walked through the neatest neighborhoods and beautiful countrysides. Also, our host was especially warm, and our bedroom even overlooked miles of farmland. We both felt really lucky to stay somewhere off the beaten path.

DAY 1 – Ford, Littlehampton and Arundel
There wasn’t any shops or restaurants near our Airbnb, so we decided to pick up some lunch in Littlehampton after getting settled in our room. Littlehampton was a 20 minute bus ride away from Ford. It was a quaint fishing village with a main street lined with boutique-like restaurants and shops. Following lunch we caught a bus to Arundel. You can tell it’s a small area because you catch the 700 bus everywhere. Arundel was one of my favorite towns so far. It was a small village located in the West Sussex of England. It hosted a number of unique shops and the main tourist attraction – Arundel Castle & Gardens. Arundel Castle once housed the family of the Duke of Norfolk for over 400 years. With the tour we were able to wander through the gardens and castle rooms. It was simply amazing.
DAY 2 – Brighton
Brighton welcomed us with warm weather and sunshine. This beach side town had a fun, quirky personality. While in Brighton we walked on the pier, ate lunch next to the beach, laid out by the water, roamed the shop lined streets and saw the Pavillon Palace. For lunch we ate at a restaurant named Lucky Beach. We both ordered French Onion Chicken Burgers with a side of chips. Just thinking of our lunch that afternoon makes my mouth water – pickle-brined chicken breast with onions, emmental, rocket (a variety of lettuce) and garlic mayo on a demi-brioche bun. After lunch, we soaked up the sun on the pebble beach. Sam and I both loved Brighton.
BATH & STONEHENGE
I absolutely love London, but it’s nice to explore other parts of England. Last weekend I visited Bath and Stonehenge for the day with a group of international students. Like many cities in England, Bath was rich in culture and stunning architecture. It was nearly a two hour bus ride away from our university. We were only given a few hours to explore, so while there we visited the Roman Baths, got a closer look at the Pulteney Bridge and roamed the streets for some food. The Roman Baths was a sight to see. The steaming natural hot water, the detailed architecture and the engineering that went into the design of the 70 AD landmark was a lot to take in. Even though the Bath itself was surrounded by many tourists, sitting by the steaming waters for a moment gave me a sense of peace.

Following our stop in Bath we headed to Wiltshire, the site of Stonehenge. At Stonehenge, you are first greeted by the relatively new visitor centre, with a simple, modern environmental-friendly design. From there you are able to walk across the ancient landscape to the stones or take the shuttle, as we did. The walk looked quite peaceful across grassy fields, but we only had a limited amount of time there. The site of the stones was serene. A field of sheep was left of the stones, and acres of green grass stretched beyond. The stones were protected – the circumference of them was roped off. Walking around its circumference of the circle of stones was almost a spiritual experience.
It’s extremely hard to believe that I have already spent a month in England. Constantly being surrounded by the diverse cultures and the deep appreciation for art has been something else. I have found myself well adjusted in this country. Classes, or as they call it modules here, have been going great, I joined the Business Society and I’ve made great friendships. Also, the weather has been AMAZING! I keep hearing from the locals that we have been having extremely good weather – it’s been sunny nearly everyday! That’s it for now.

Cheers, Kathy

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October 22, 2015

OFF TO ITALY!

Reading week (fall break) has arrived!

It’s an odd feeling because my brain expects midterm exams, but I don’t have any. My grade relies on one major project or paper due at the end of the semester for all four of my courses. It’s a system that I’m not attuned to, so there’s a lot of pressure to prepare for those assignments in the meantime.

Anyways, I’m spending the majority of the fall break in Italy! I’m off to Pisa early tomorrow morning by myself. I really wanted to take this opportunity to visit my friend who is currently studying abroad in Florence and visit other parts of Italy as well. I’ll be in Italy for five nights – 3 in Florence and 2 in Rome. I have a slight idea what I’ll be doing there (such as eating a lot of gelato…), but my friend’s going to take me around Florence, and I’m looking to book a group tour in Rome. This is my first time traveling by myself to another country, my first time in Italy, and my first time staying in a hostel, so I’m REALLY excited!

I’ll report back when I return next Wednesday.
It is really difficult to put the past six days into words, but I will try my best to. My days in Italy and Belgium were filled with eating, sightseeing and a lot of walking. In Florence, I was with my two friends, but I explored all of the other cities by myself. I never thought I would have the courage to travel on my own, but I am so glad I did. I was originally suppose to visit Paris with a few other Hawaii kids, but when plans fell through, I looked for other trips to take during reading week (fall break). It worked out perfectly because my friend Justin, who’s studying in Florence, was also on fall break. So, a week before reading week I booked my flight to Pisa and figured everything else out from there.

10/23/2015 – DAY 1/6

My Friday morning started bright and early. All of the affordable airlines are all stationed outside of central London, so it required me to catch the city bus and coach for my 8:00 am flight. After arriving in Pisa, I caught the city bus to the Leaning Tower of Pisa. At the bus stop there was an old fashion ticket machine all in Italian. It took me a good 30 minutes to figure out where I needed to go and how to purchase my ticket. It was a good feeling once I figured everything out and I was sitting on the right bus. After arriving in the city central, I walked around quickly to see the sights and pick up breakfast…a cup of gelato! It was a beautiful day in Pisa. The grass looked extra green and the buildings popped from the blue backdrop. From there I caught the bus to the Pisa train station.

In Florence, Justin met me at the metro station. He guided me to my hostel, David’s Inn, just 15 minutes away. Once I got settled in my hostel we picked up some food from a little grocery store and we headed to Piazzale Michelangelo. While walking to the square Justin pointed out all of the famous landmarks: Ponte Vecchio, Museums, etc. There was so much to take in!

After a long walk uphill, the first copy of the David sat in the middle of the square and the sun was just beginning to sunset. It was a beautiful sight because the city began to illuminate on a backdrop of blue and orange. The area was extremely crowded with tourists and locals. We sat on the massive set of stairs along with the other spectators to watch the sunset. Once the city became dark, the landmarks lit up in the distance. It was definitely one of the best views around. Once we took in the view we headed back down to pick up some dinner at a local spot called Gusta Pizza, Justin’s favorite pizza spot in Florence. The inside of the restaurant was crowded so
we opted for take out and ate our pizza on the stairs of a nearby church. After eating our pizza we met up with my friend from London, and Justin continued to give us a tour of Florence.
Our Saturday morning began at a cute marketplace called Mercato Centrale. Downstairs featured specialized grocery vendors who sold meat, produce, pasta, olives and baked goods among other things. Upstairs there was an extensive food court serving up sandwiches, pizza, pasta and other Italian classics. It was also really neat because tucked away in one corner was a kitchen classroom, where Justin’s university offered cooking courses to their students. With Justin’s recommendation we each ordered lampredotto sandwiches. The lampredotto sandwich is a typical Florentine dish, consisting of tripe topped with parsley sauce on a crusty bun. I gave it a go, eating half of the sandwich, but the unique smell turned me away. With more room in my belly, I went for a bowl of carbonara pasta as well. The pasta was cooked to perfection.

Following lunch, we did more sightseeing. We stopped for gelato along the river and then we headed to the Boboli Gardens. It was a massive garden with sculptures and greenery everywhere. We walked around but spent a lot of time relaxing under some shady trees. It is the perfect spot to catch some rays and talk stories.

Later that day we had an AMAZING Florentine steak (bistecca alla fiorentina) dinner at Antico Ristoro Di Cambi. It’s known for their Florentine style steak, porterhouse or T-bone steak prepared over the grill. When ordering the Florentine steak you tell the waiter the weight you want your piece of steak (by the kilogram), and then they bring the raw steak to your table, before taking it back to the kitchen after your approval. Now, let’s talk about the steak. It was the best I’ve ever had. The steak was cooked to a perfect medium rare. It had a crisp crust on the outside, while the inside was tender and juicy. And the potatoes….I could eat those roasted potatoes all day. The meal was simple, in the sense that there weren’t a lot of ingredients – mainly salt and garlic flavored the foods, but everything was cooked so well. Just talking about
that night’s dinner makes my mouth water…. After all of the walking we did that day, I was absolutely content after dinner.
It felt necessary to start the day with a cup of gelato before heading on over to brunch. It was a good decision, because the gelato was amazing! I could really taste all of the flavors because I ate it with a clean palate and on an empty stomach. Brunch was also really tasty. We ate at Le Vespe, a cozy American style café that had an Italian twist. I opted for the eggs florentine. It’s similar to the classic eggs benedict, but spinach replaced the meat.

With full bellies intact we headed towards Duomo di Firenze, the Cathedral of Florence. On our way there we passed through a vintage street market. They sold the neatest things – antique toys, dishes, clothing, and a load of other things. I didn’t end up purchasing anything, but it was nice to see all of the unique items on display. When we reached the Duomo there was a long line to
get into the cathedral, but we decided to go for it anyways. After waiting for an hour in line and walking up 463 steps, we reached the top of the dome. The view was beautiful. Worth every step. It overlooked all of Florence. I loved how all of the buildings were so similar to one another.

The next big exhibit on my list was Michelangelo’s David in the Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze. The marble statue was much larger than I expected, standing 14 feet tall. It was definitely worth visiting!

After yet another amazing day in Florence, I ended the day with yet another amazing meal. We found this charming restaurant called La Giostra on Yelp, and we called in to make a reservation (Italy is big on making reservations). Upon arriving, the hostess greeted us with complimentary glasses of prosecco. In the waiting room there was a wall lined with photos of the owner posing with celebrities that have eaten at his restaurant. I recognized a few of the American ones – Brad Pitt and Will Smith to name a few. The atmosphere was really nice. The restaurant was dim, only illuminating with the candles on the table and the twinkle lights that hung throughout the dining room. The restaurant also provided us with a complimentary platter of antipasti, and we ordered the octopus carpaccio alongside that. For my main entree I went for the pear pistachio gnocchi. It was a small portion, but it was extremely rich and filling. The flavors went well together. I was left feeling so content. I must say, there were a lot of (American) tourists in the joint, but I would still consider this place a hidden gem. They really know how to cater their offerings and service to Americans.

Gelato before brunch
I love Florence. The people. The food. The views. The culture. There’s so much to love about this city. I’m so glad I had my good friend Justin to show me around to all of the local spots. It made my time there go so smoothly.

Cheers! Kathy

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November 10, 2015

ROME / 4

Pisa / Florence / Rome / Capri / Brussels
Friday, October 23 – Wednesday, October 28

10/26/2015 – DAY 4/6
Things don’t always go as planned. But, I’ve been trying to learn how to embrace it. I planned on catching an early morning train to Rome to meet up with my guided tour at 9am, but I missed my train. I was a little bummed, but I reconfigured my plans and got on the next train to Rome. The train ride was a little over an hour, and I got to sit in business class for a little extra money.

After arriving in Rome, I headed to my hostel – La Contra. It was only a 10 minute walk from the train station – so convenient! I really liked the vibe of this hostel. Clean, simple, modern and the receptionist was really welcoming! One of my roommates were in when I was getting settled. Interesting enough she was exploring Rome for a few days before heading off on a Euro cruise for work – to film for an Indian comedy television show. Pretty cool. She said it was the most popular comedy show in India. She didn’t have any plans for the afternoon, so we decided to grab some food and then explore the city together. Of course, we opted for some pasta. I got some white truffle ravioli, which was amazing.

Rome was a lot bigger than Florence. Everything was spread out and there were so many attractions to see. The only sight I got to visit by foot was the Trevi Fountain. It was still under construction, so there wasn’t any water and the perimeter was blocked off with plexiglass walls, but I’m still glad I got to visit it. After watching the Lizzie McGuire Movie in elementary school, it has always been a dream of mine to visit Rome, especially the Trevi Fountain. It’s kind of funny because after 16 months of construction, the fountain finally opened the week after I was there. Talk about bad timing. I didn’t get a chance to see much of Rome, other than what I saw from the hop on hop off bus, but it was a good day nevertheless.

Cheers, Kathy

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November 10, 2015

CAPRI / 5
Who needs sleep when’s there’s so much to see and do! I’m not a morning person, but I forced myself to wake up before sunrise to see the Colosseum by foot before my tour to Capri. It was so worth it. I love wandering through a city that is still asleep. Luckily, the Colosseum was only a 20 minute walk from my hostel, and I felt so lucky to catch the sunrise from the grounds of the Colosseum. It was everything I imagined – massive and beautiful. I didn’t have time to walk around the whole perimeter, but I’m so glad I got to see it!

After my friend Justin raved about Capri, I knew I had to see it for myself. From Rome it was a 3 hour drive to Naples, and a 1 hour ferry ride to the island. It was an extremely long day, but I was able to catch up on my rest on the coach. The windows of the ferry were foggy, so the waters of Capri didn’t look like much from the ferry, but once I stepped off, I felt extremely at ease. The deep blue shades of the water and the somewhat warm weather just reminded me of home. I really can’t describe how happy I was during those moments.

Once in Capri, I opted to do the additional Grotta Azzura (Blue Grotta) boat tour. Our tour guide described it as getting onto a small boat (only fits four people) and riding it through the infamous cave for less than five minutes. Even though it sounded like a really short experience, I still wanted to do it. Those who wanted to have the Grotta Azzura experience from our tour group hopped onto a motor boat. We rode along the coastline to the entrance of the cave. Having the wind in my hair, smelling the salt in the air and taking in the coastline views were all so memorable. Once outside the cave entrance, there were several other boat charters parked and waiting for their turn. The system to enter the cave was interesting. The boatman paddled his little row boat alongside your boat, you have to hop in with two other passengers and he’ll stop by the main boat, where you would pay the cave entrance fee before entering. They got their system down because there’s only entrance/exit into the cave.
Once it was our boat’s turn, I was so stoked! The entrance into the cave was extremely small. I had to duck completely down into the boat to make sure my head didn’t hit the rocks. But seriously, my time in the Grotta Azzura was surreal. The light from the entrance passes through the water in an incredible way. I’ve never seen that natural shade of blue in my life. Once inside, you really can’t take your eyes off the ocean beneath you. The color is just too perplexing and unique. It was definitely a struggle to take everything in and try to capture a decent photo in the low lighting situation. Also, all of the boatmen were singing in Italian, which echoed off the walls, just amplifying the sounds. My boatman was so friendly! On our way out he parked our boat by the entrance and offered to take a photo of me.

Following our little glimpse of the Grotta Azzura, we took a mini bus to Anacapri (the top of the island). There we were given some time to ride a chair lift to Monte Solaro, the highest point of the island. The view was absolutely stunning, and I got a kick out of riding the little chair lift. The rest of the afternoon was really chill. We had an Italian lunch together and had some time on our own to go shopping and see their range of lemon products (island is known for their lemons).

CAPRI WAS SO AMAZING. Even though I was surrounded by couples and families most of the day, I didn’t feel out of place. It was nice to have a nice peaceful day to myself and really take everything in. The beauty of Capri will always hold a place in my mind.

Cheers! Kathy
November 10, 2015

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM / 6
Pisa / Florence / Rome / Capri / Brussels
Friday, October 23 – Wednesday, October 28

10/28/2015 – DAY 6/6

If you say Belgium, I’ll think about chocolate and waffles. And that’s exactly what I got in Brussels, Belgium! I only spent the day in the city center, but I think it was a good amount of time to wander through the streets and eat my fair share of chocolate. After all, I was in Belgium for national chocolate day!

It only takes 30 minutes by train to get to the city center from the airport. All of the main attractions are walking distance from the train station, so it’s an easy city to navigate. After reading a lot of online posts, there was one notable waffle shop in Brussels – Maison Dandoy. You can get cheap 1 euro liege waffles around every corner, but I had to get the best of the best. The upscale storefront has a lot of confectionaries dressed in perfect packaging, but all I wanted was a waffle. They offered both liege and Brussel waffles. Being in Brussels, it would only be right to go for the Brussel waffle. A Brussel waffle has a lighter, crisper batter in comparison to a liege waffle that is denser with a caramelized like crust. I ordered a Brussel waffle with a dusting of powdered sugar. I took my first bite and got powdered sugar all over myself and my camera…..but I didn’t really take notice to the mess I just made because all of my attention was on the textures and flavors of the waffle. Airy, yet fluffy in the inside with the right amount of sweetness. I still think liege waffles are amazing, but I think Maison Dandoy’s waffle really changed the way I see waffles. The waffle was soooo good, I even ate another one even though I was stuffed from lunch. The second time, I ate in, and ordered it with ice cream. I don’t regret that decision.

Other than eating the best waffle of my life, I enjoyed a yummy sandwich in a corner cafe, I hung out in Grand-Place, the massive square, in the city center, found the famous Manneken Pis bronze sculpture and walked into many chocolate shops. It was the perfect cap to my reading week adventure.

Cheers, Kathy
This was one weekend I really wished I owned an umbrella. The weather was damp and cold, but we tried not to let the gloomy weather damper our trip. The highlight of our trip was definitely visiting the little village of Howth outside of Dublin. Even though we weren’t prepared for it, we
walked to Howth Head where we could walk along side the cliffs. It may have been muddy, windy and wet, but the views were worth the walk. It was a nice detour from the city.

In our hostel we met a really nice girl from Seattle. She was doing some solo traveling after working at the USA booth at the Milan Expo for the past few months. Meeting people from different places always reminds me how small the world really is. Both myself and my friend had mutual friends with her – she studied abroad in Korea with the two of them at two different times. After speaking to her about her travels, she really inspired me to do some more traveling on my own! On another note, I’ve been enjoying hostels more than I thought I would. We stayed in a 10 bed female dorm at Jacob’s Inn. It was a bit intense sharing one bathroom, dealing with the snoring, and night/morning shuffling, but for the price, you really can’t go wrong. I have yet to have a horrible experience in a hostel, so a solo trip to a few more countries is currently in the works for my winter break.

In Dublin itself, we visited the Dublin Castle, Trinity College and Guinness Storehouse. It was a neat weekend away from London.

Cheers, Kathy

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November 24, 2015

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

canals.
sleet.
frites.
Indonesian + Dutch food.

walking.

biking.

We all need a little spontaneity in our lives. When my friends from the city invited me on their weekend holiday to Amsterdam I jumped on the opportunity…just a day before the flight. Not having to plan a single aspect other than my flight was such a relief, and I really got to enjoy the weekend with no stress.

There’s a lot to love about the city of Amsterdam. When I arrived in the city central I was greeted with a good dose of holiday cheer. The surrounding area of the train station was lit up and even the main street was adorned with lights. It really set the mood of the weekend.
The highlight of my weekend was seeing SLEET! When little frozen droplets began to fall from the sky, I immediately thought SNOW, but my friend who lived in Boston corrected me. It only sleeted for a few minutes, but it was still amazing.

My diet consisted of Indonesian and Dutch food. Indonesian food is apparently really popular, because there was a restaurant around every corner. We had one proper dutch meal with some meat and mashed potato dishes and mussels. But, the best thing I ate was the street poffertjes: Dutch mini pancakes, topped with butter and powdered sugar. After trying them for the first time at the open market, I ordered them again at a restaurant, but they were not as good. I could really go for more poffertjes.
We attempted to visit the Anne Frank House and the Von Gogh Museum, but the lines for both of those attractions were crazy. Instead, we opted for bicycle rides around Amsterdam. We ended up at the central train station, where we caught a ferry across the river to the EYE Film Museum.
It was an amazing weekend in Amsterdam with good company. From the scenic canal ways to the bicycle friendly roads, there are many reasons to love Amsterdam.

Cheers, Kathy

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November 26, 2015

GRATEFUL.

This Thanksgiving feels a little different than others. Rather than spending it with my family in Hilo, I’m with my newly made friends.

But, with the spirit with this holiday, I have so much to be thankful for. These past few months in London have been beyond words. My life has been filled with amazing people, learning experiences and has given me the opportunity to learn a lot about myself.

With a little less than a month left here, I’m trying to live each day to the fullest. I am so grateful for the people in my life and for these life experiences. Here’s a little snapshot of the past 78 days in London:
HAVE A HAPPY THANKSGIVING!
UNI(VERSITY)

Everyone here refers to university as uni. And, I have gotten into that habit as well. I’m finally done with all of my modules (courses), and I’m so relieved! The coursework was relatively light until the final two weeks, where I had major reports and research papers due.

If I had to compare the structure of university in America to the United Kingdom, I would say the UK has a greater focus on independent learning and research.

My mark (grade) for my Human Resource Management and International Business Workshop module will be based on how I delivered a well argued report. On the other hand, my Multimedia course was marked based on our final video piece, production blog, analysis paper, final exam and storyboard/script.

The course I had with our professor from UH Manoa held a similar class structure to what I was used to. We had weekly writing assignments and a research paper due at the end of the term. Professor Kathy Ferguson was truly amazing. She was so supportive and a great teacher. Along with our class discussions on the topic of women and politics from a historical British standpoint, we had a map and timeline project. Each class we would bring in a piece (ticket stub, business card, pamphlet, etc.) to pin on our London map. She also provided us with snacks every class. On our final day of class we took an excursion to listen to the Chair of Green Peace UK and had dinner together at a British pub. All of the Hawaii kids felt so lucky to have a visiting professor who went above & beyond to help us learn and ease our transition.

Learning in a new environment has been very beneficial to my development and has opened my mind to new perspectives.

Cheers!
December 21, 2015

SOLO TRAVELS?

About a month ago I met a fellow student in a hostel in Ireland. She had been working at the USA booth at the Milan Expo, and was doing some traveling on her own. Traveling on my own, was never something I desired until speaking to her. My concerns of traveling alone were safety, getting lost, feeling lonely and everything in between. But, her experiences really spoke to me.

From that encounter, I began to dream up places to visit. I knew Prague and Barcelona were on that list, and with time, that list extended to include Vienna and Budapest. Considering that I had over a week of down time left in London (following university), I wanted to make the most of my time. Time passed, university began to pick up, and my trip fell to the back of my mind. I wrote down tentative itineraries, but didn’t book anything. The weekend before finals came along, and I got pretty sick. I really considered not going through with my plans, but thankfully, I began recovering on Sunday. I still wasn’t sure about my solo trip, but a friend invited me to Paris later in the week, so I went ahead and planned out that weekend.

So, finals week began, and I was BUSY – finishing up reports, editing my final video piece and we still had had to attend lectures. But, on Wednesday, I finally began seriously thinking about my trip, and I booked a morning flight to Budapest on Friday. It was a hectic week. I turned in my last paper on Thursday night, and stayed up late to book everything and do research – flights, hostels, buses, public transportation and recommended things to do. I didn’t get much sleep that night, but OFF I WENT ON THE MOST LIFE CHANGING ADVENTURE OF MY LIFE.

More details to come.

Cheers!
Oh, Budapest. I couldn’t have asked for a better start of my adventure. The city was beautiful, the weather was absolutely cold, and my hostel mates were kooky. Upon arriving at my hostel, it was not what I was expecting. I booked the hostel based on a recommendation, and didn’t do any research into it. I was initially horrified with my decision, but it worked out in my favor. The hostel may have been grimy, but the people were so friendly. They were like my family for my two nights in Budapest

**Széchenyi Thermal Bath**
Budapest is known for their baths heated by thermal springs. The Széchenyi Thermal Bath, located in City Park, is the largest thermal bath in the city. Despite the 40° F weather the bath was pretty busy. With an entrance fee of 4500 HUF (approx. $16), you were granted access to all of the indoor and outdoor pools.

After three months, it was the first time I got to use my bikini or be in a body of water, so it was the most amazing thing ever! The outdoor pool even had a lazy river. There were two circles in the middle of the pool. The inner circle had a sitting area, and around the sitting area there was a small lazy river that had a strong current that pushed you along.
Street Food – St. Stephen Basilica Christmas Market

Hungary puts sour cream on everything! It surprisingly tasted good on my fried potato pancake and my pork cabbage roll.
PIZZA CHALUPA?
Although the street food was good, the best thing I ate was a milanoi langos (I apologize for the horrible photo). A langos is a hungarian deep fried flat bread, traditionally topped with sour cream and cheese. A hostel mate showed me a little shop that sold a variety of langos. He recommended the milanoi langos. My best description would be a taco bell chalupa shell with
pizza like topping. The deep fried dough was topped by with a bolognese sauce, cheese and a bbq type sauce.

Hungarian Parliament Building

A few hostels in Budapest got together for a night boat cruise. The views were amazing.

Buda Castle
Following my dip in the Széchenyi Thermal Bath I walked from the tram stop at the Parliament building, across the bridge and up to Buda Castle before sunset. It was a really foggy day, but the views from Buda Castle were still stunning. There was a cute railway that took passengers from Adam Clark Square to the Buda Castle, but I walked up instead.

I loved Budapest soooo much, I nearly missed my bus to Vienna. An 8 am trip was not the best idea. I meant to arrive at my stop at 7:30 am, but with public transportation, I had to RUN for 10 minutes to my bus. AND, that was not easy, with a backpack full of stuff, in boots and with layers of clothes. BUT, I MADE IT. JUST BARELY.

Cheers!

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December 27, 2015

VIENNA, AUSTRIA / 2
STOP 2/5

Budapest, Hungary / Vienna, Austria / Prague, Czech Republic / Barcelona, Spain / Paris, France
Friday, December 11 – Sunday, December 20

After nearly missing my bus from Budapest, I was completely content during the 4-hour bus ride to Vienna. I fell asleep, but I awoke to a beautiful view – the tree lined Wien river surrounded by city. With less than a day in the city, I opted to save time by lugging around my backpack…which resulted in me having to take many stops along the way. But, while wandering around the city I found beautiful buildings, Christmas markets and the City Hall.

One downside was my assumption that Google Maps would be able to map out public transportation for me. But, Uber was conveniently there to take me to the places that weren’t walking distance.

My favorite spot was Schönbrunn Palace and Gardens. The front of the palace is pictured below with the Christmas tree in the front. Behind the palace featured grass in spiral designs, where flowers grow in them during the warmer months. There was also a massive hill that gave a great view of the entire city.
SCHÖNBRUNN PALACE + GARDEN

CITY HALL SQUARE CHRISTMAS MARKET
STOP 3/5

Budapest, Hungary / Vienna, Austria / Prague, Czech Republic / Barcelona, Spain / Paris, France
Friday, December 11 – Sunday, December 20

Prague was a city taken out of a fairytale – picturesque cityscapes, cheerful Christmas markets and cheap food.

I arrived in the evening, leaving me the whole night to explore! The Old Town Square (pictured below) had little booths selling little trinkets & food, and had a massive Christmas tree on display. I paid a few korunas to climb to the top of the Tyn church to get an impressive view of the square and surrounding area. The church also housed the astronomical clock from the 15th century. After getting some typical Czech fare and a cup of mulled wine, I headed over to the Vyšehrad castle. It was a bit difficult to find in the dark, but it was worth the trek. From the castle’s ground you could see all of Prague in the distance. That night, I also walked up to the the Prague Castle and walked across the Charles Bridge. It was so nice to wander around and not have to deal with the crowd.

With only one full day in the city, I took a free walking tour of the the Old Town (Jewish Quarters, Square, etc.), visited the Charles Bridge again and stopped by the Lennon Wall. That afternoon I adventured outside to the city to Vietnamese Town.

I found so much beauty in Prague.
Vyšehrad Castle

Prague Castle
Side Notes: Prague has a great public transportation system! I traveled from Vienna to Prague by Bus (about 15 Euros), and from there I was able to get everywhere by the bus or tram. Public transportation runs 24/7, so even if you go out at night, you’ll be able to get home.

Cheers!

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January 11, 2016

BARCELONA, SPAIN / 4
After tossing my scarf and boots in Prague, it was finally time for some sunshine. I love Barcelona because it was a vibrant city of culture and people.

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I traveled to Barcelona by plane and stayed in a hostel. It was very convenient because it was walking distance to Casa Mila and Casa Ballto, two of Antoni Gaudi’s masterpieces.

On my first night, I hit a tapa bar, explored the city center and hung out with my hostel mates. Everyone was extremely friendly, and it was so interesting to hear about all of their backpacking adventures and life stories. I also thought it was neat that the hostel cooked dinner every night for just a few euros.

I only had one full day in Barcelona, sadly. So I visited Park Guell – where Cheetah Girls filmed, the local open market, Sagrada Familia and found a beautiful spot to watch the sunset. Even though my body was exhausted and sleep deprived, the city energized me to keep going.

I wish the weather was warm enough to go for a dip, but sitting on the sand with good company was one of my highlights. I’ll definitely be back~

Park Guell
MERCADO DE LA BOQUERIA

SAGRADA FAMÍLIA

TURÓ DE LA ROVIRA
Cheers!

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January 11, 2016

PARIS, FRANCE / 5
I’m really glad I got the chance to visit Paris. But, if I visited the city again in the future, I would probably not wander around by myself again. Even with the increase in security, it was one of the only cities I didn’t feel safe in.

But, I loved Paris for the food and the Eiffel Tower. The Eiffel Tower was stunning around sunset and at night. I didn’t get a chance to go to the top of the tower, but watching the twinkling lights and wandering around the Christmas market just below was so much fun.

While in Paris, I tried a baguette, a crepe, had mandarina crispy duck at a posh corner restaurant called L’Avenue, tried macarons from Pierre Herme and Laudree, had cheese fondue and I even tried Lebanese food.

Our Airbnb was located a couple blocks away from Notre Dame in a central location surrounded by little boutiques and alleyways of eateries. I was amazed by the number of food establishments near our apartment. Just steps outside our door there was a sandwich shop, kebabs, a pizzeria, a Subway, crepe shop, a bakery and a Lebanese restaurant. So many options. And if I walked in the next alley over I’d find restaurants with French and Asian cuisine.

Paris was a good time.
January 11, 2016

WRAP-UP / HIGHLIGHTS

104 days. 5 trips. 9 countries.

I’m settled back in Hawaii and I still can’t stop thinking about how life changing my study abroad experience was. The traveling, the people, the food and the new school environment. Being out in the world was extremely eye opening.
In the orientation sessions leading up to my trip, our study abroad advisor continually talked about the benefits of studying abroad. I remember her saying it would build a person’s self-confidence and help someone see the world in a new way. Those words did not mean much to me back then, but after returning to Hawaii, I can see how studying abroad has opened my mind. Throughout my time away, I never forgot how I got there. I am absolutely grateful for the generous financial support of the FISH Scholarship for Excellence, the Fawcett Scholarship and the support of my parents.

London was a beautiful city, even on the rainiest of days. I love London for its green parks, open markets, free museums and its culture. I believe it was a place that fitted me well because it was a good balance of the city and the country. Our campus was located in SW London, about one hour away from central London. It was a nice escape from the hectic city.

My first month away from home flew by! During the month of September, I got involved in the Business Society, explored London, and went on a weekend trip to Brighton, a beach town on the southern coast of England. I had a really great time in Brighton. It was my first time traveling in Europe, so it was the perfect way to learn how to book tickets, accommodations and figure out how to get around. We got lost a number of times and booked an Airbnb in the middle of nowhere, but it gave me a lesson on traveling.

My traveling skills were put to the test with my first international trip to Italy in October. To my surprise, my university had a weeklong fall vacation (reading week), so I wanted to take advantage of our break and travel. During my six-day trip, I visited Florence, Rome and Capri in Italy and Brussels in Belgium. My friend studying abroad in Florence took me around that city, and I explored the other cities by myself. The highlight of that trip was the authentic Italian food, the blue waters off Capri and the Colosseum in Rome. Italy still stands to be one of my favorite countries. It was one of the most difficult places to get around because most people only spoke Italian, but they were all friendly and tried to help me to the best of their ability.

Of all of the experiences I had abroad, the most significant one was having the opportunity to travel on my own. This short trip boosted my self-confidence and pushed me outside my comfort zone. I visited four countries in eight days – Budapest, Hungary; Vienna, Austria; Prague, Czech Republic; and Barcelona, Spain. With such little time in each country, I had to manage my time and plan accordingly. Along the way, I met so many interesting people from all different backgrounds. I had to communicate with individuals who did not speak English, ask strangers for directions and navigate in a foreign place. I was initially terrified about traveling alone, but it was one of the life changing experiences of my life.

If I had to compare the university system in England to America, England has a greater focus on individual studying and research. The content taught in class did not necessarily prepare me for the report I had to write at the end of the semester; rather, the lecturer would provide me with tools and I had to utilize them myself. My human resource management and international business workshop class required a good amount of independent research. Although the majority of my grade was based on one report, they also emphasized group discussion and public speaking (although we were not graded on it). I believe learning in a new environment has been very beneficial to my development and has opened my mind to new perspectives.
During my semester in London, I was able to adjust to a new school system, push myself outside my comfort zone and navigate through new places. Through these experiences I have grown as a person. I have become open to new experiences, feel more comfortable interacting with new people and I gained self-confidence. These unique experiences will aide me in my future in business because I’ve gained a greater perspective of the world around me. Studying abroad has been one of the best decisions of my college career, and I am grateful to be afforded this opportunity by the FISH Scholarship for Excellence.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

LONDON

Borough Market (Camden Lock Market in Camden Town would be a very close second)
I LOVE BOROUGH MARKET. It was ridiculously crowded during the lunch hours, but the people and the long waits were worth the hassle. The market hosts food stands that sell produce, meats, cheeses, fresh seafood, baked goods and ready to eat dishes.

You’ll find the most gooey, savory, crispy grilled cheese (or a toasted cheese sandwich as they’d call it) of your life from Kappacasein. Montgomery cheddar, onions, leeks and garlic on Poilâne sourdough. I wish I could find something of that quality here! I also had some delicious chorizo paella…it was honestly better than the one I had in a restaurant in Barcelona, Spain. I believe everything I tried there was top notch, and I wish I could’ve tried all of the ethnic foods it had to offer.

Duck confit burger from the Frenchie at the Camden Lock Market
WOW. This burger made my taste buds explode. So many delicious flavors and textures compiled into the perfect burger. Duck confit on toasted brioche bun with crispy skin scratchings, chutney, rocket mustard, goat cheese and truffle honey. It was easily the best burger I’ve had in my life.

TRAVELING

Blue Grotto (Grotta Azzura) – Capri, Italy
The crystal clear waters off the coast of Capri were mesmerizing. Sailing along the coast in a small motor boat was one of those AWE moments. I tried my best to soak everything in, but there was just so much beauty. The smell of the salt water and the ocean breeze that went through my hair just brought me back home. The beautiful coast was one thing, BUT entering the Blue Grotta did not feel real. Even though the cave had a small entrance (we had to duck in our 4-person row boat), the light that was captured in the cave was magical. I’ve never seen waters that naturally turquoise in my life. It was as though there were bright lights illuminating the waters from below. I love Capri. I hope I get the chance to return one day.