

Before the trip: I was so excited to finally be able to visit England, but I was also equally terrified. I had never been out of the country and haven't been on a plane for ten plus years. I did not know the other girls that were going on this trip. So, this whole experience was basically twenty-five giant steps out of my comfort zone. I was so excited to go to London, see castles, be surrounded by English accents, and observe how schools function in England. After saying a tearful goodbye to my parents at O'Hare airport, I was ready for my month-long adventure.

Week 1: The first week was full of activities. One of my favorites was the tour of the Brighton Pavilion. It used to belong to King George IV and later it became a hospital during World War One. It was a building that contained a lot of history and a beautiful building. We had an assignment to go on a scavenger hunt around Brighton. During this scavenger hunt we were able to learn how to get around Brighton and see the variety of unique shops Brighton had to offer. We also had a street art tour, which exposed us to the variety of art that is hidden around the town. One of my favorite paintings was a huge angel that was surrounded by gold glitter.

Later on, in the week we had our trip to London. We saw Buckingham Palace along with the changing of the guards, Westminster Abbey, several talented street performers, and a under construction Big Ben. It felt like an unreal experience being in London. There were so many things happening and so many things to see. We ended up wondering around London and found a place that looked like it came straight out of the Disney movie, Tangled. We also had the best Chinese food I have ever had for dinner. We had a weekend trip to Oxford and Stratford-upon-Avon. We were able to stay at a cute little bed and breakfast. This was when I was able to have a

proper English breakfast, which was amazing. The breakfast is made up of sausage, bacon, fried egg, tomato wedge, and baked beans.

Week 2: We started doing our observations at the local high school. Everyone at the school was super kind to us. The students were very interested in our accents, the phrases we use, and our president. The mornings of the high school was one of my favorite parts. Staff members stand outside the building and give a handshake to each student. The staff are close to their students and know a lot of them by name. The students have frequent breaks in their schedule to relax, eat, and/or use the bathrooms. The whole building also has a time called D.E.A.R, which stands for Drop Everything And Read. During this fifteen minute period, everyone reads from a book of their choosing. This is something that I would love to incorporate into my future classroom. The girls that I went on the trip with and I realized this little bit of time made us want to read more when we had free time.

Week 3: We visited Beachy head, which is a huge cliff that overlooks the ocean. It provides a beautiful view but it is also nerve racking to stand near the edge. We also went to an amazing musical in Brighton called Summer Holiday, which is a romantic comedy. We frequently sang the songs that were in this play throughout the trip. We were able to go back to the high school we observed and watch their school musical, Sister Act. We were able to sit in on the rehearsals earlier in the week, so it was fun to see it come all together on opening night. It was also interesting to see British kids try to talk in American accents. The weekend we went on another little trip to Bath and Stonehenge. The Roman Baths were beautiful and it was amazing to see the water system they created. We were even able to drink some water that the romans believed had

healing powers. Stonehenge was a strange experience. There is really nothing around the structure but fields and some cows in the distance. It made us all wonder where were the rocks brought from and how the structure was assembled to what it is now.

Week 4: We were able to play a game of Rounders, which is like baseball. We all had a blast running around the bases and trying to tag one another out. We were able to visit a fourth castle. But this castle was different because it had a moat with giant fish in it. There were several ducks roaming around the outside of the castle that we tried our best to dodge. The final week we also took several visits to the pebbly beach. We enjoyed watching the sunset on the beach and sticking our feet into the cold water. We also liked visiting the ice cream places that are sprinkled around Brighton. On our last day, we had a tea party that included crust less sandwiches and tiny pastries. Then it came time to say goodbye to all my friends that I had made on this adventure. We exchanged tearful goodbyes and I headed to catch my flight back home.

After the trip: After this trip, I gained more confidence. I am more confident to go on more adventures and to voice my opinion. The trip also made me realize how independent I am. I was able to travel all by myself successfully. I am also so glad that I gained so many friendships from this trip, which wasn't something I was expecting. I am already planning to go back in about 4 years. After all I have to see Big Ben when it is not under construction and I have been craving a proper English breakfast.