

Unofficial WU Student's Guide
for Study Abroad at University of Sussex
by
Dan Rubin, Class of '04

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(Note from Director of Overseas Programs: We don't have a WU student's guide for the University of Exeter yet, which is similar to Sussex but even more scenic and just two hours from London by train. Anyone interested writing a guide for Exeter or adding to this guide?)

Why the University of Sussex:

Whether you have been planning to study abroad since freshman year or just recently became interested, I assume you are reading this because you are considering studying at the University of Sussex for one or two semesters for a variety of reasons, such as: you need good courses taught in English; or you prefer to live in an English-speaking country (either for comfort or, like me, you are inept at learning a foreign language); or you want to live in England, but you don't want the craziness of London; or you have heard that Brighton is a hip place to be. These are the reasons I chose the University of Sussex, and I have never regretted my decision.

Brighton has many advantages: it has a beach, rocky though it is, whereas London has a rather unattractive river; its size makes it much easier to handle; its location makes walks through the English countryside as easy as climbing a fence behind campus; the city (a short bus ride away) has a young trendy feel and lacks the ant-farm feeling of the touristy and businessmen-ridden streets of London. Plus, it takes only an hour to get from Brighton to London by train (passing through Gatwick Airport on the way). The train is direct and a roundtrip ("return") ticket is almost the same price as a one-way ticket, making daytrips simple and affordable.

When To Go:

I went for spring semester, but you also can go for fall semester or the full academic year. If you start in the fall, you have the choice of beginning in early September with the September Programme for one course worth three WU credits or starting in late September with the regular Sussex autumn term. Fewer Americans (students and tourists) will be around in the fall, and you will be starting classes at the same time the British students arrive on campus, which may allow you to become more involved than those who arrive in January. You will have lots of time to travel beforehand, especially if you go over in the summer and/or you skip the September Programme; but there is no additional cost to you other than housing for the September Programme, which may give you a lighter workload during the autumn term, especially if you are returning home in December. The spring semester is comprised of the Sussex spring term (January - March) and summer term (May - June), with a long Easter break and with exams and final papers done in the summer term (except for those going home in December, who do special exams and final papers then).

What You're Getting Yourself Into:

LOCATION: The University of Sussex is on the outskirts of Brighton, amidst hills and pastures. You

can literally jump a fence and find yourself face to face with sheep. Walks along marked hiking paths bring you to amazing scenic views of the countryside and the ocean. At the same time, within twenty minutes you can find yourself in the middle of one of England's most happening cities.

Brighton is a hard place to describe. It attracts lots of tourists and is home to artists, musicians, ordinary folk, and many people who commute to London for work. If you were to extend the U. City Loop, throw in some historical buildings, a beach, a mall, a casino and a small amusement park (on a pier extending into the ocean), and tons of clubs and pubs you might get something like downtown Brighton. The location of the University has something for everyone, whether you like long walks or funky dance clubs.

EDUCATION: University education in England is different from WU. It seems easier, because you spend less time in class, but you are expected to spend more time studying on your own. Two to four courses a term is a normal load and most classes might meet only twice a week. Despite the lack of time spent in the classroom, you can learn a lot. The English system encourages outside research more than US system. When writing a paper on Chaucer, for instance, you would be expected to read up on English society in the late 1300s. If you have never dealt with really researching a topic before, this experience will be great for you.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS: Most likely, you will be living in a self-catered dorm. There are residence hall type dorms in which you have a single (with a sink) and share the bathroom and a kitchen with perhaps 11 other people on your floor. There are also student house type dorms with 8-12 people. It is possible that you will be assigned a double in a student house (especially if you ask for one), and again there is one bathroom and one kitchen. It is possible, but unlikely, you would be placed in an apartment in Brighton, or you could decline student housing and find a place to live on your own, which probably would be more expensive, depending on how many people share the place. Some students, when they arrive, actually choose to live in an apartment, but most find it simpler to stay in Sussex student housing. About half of the student housing is on campus. Also, there is an international dorm (Norwich House), which accommodates students from all over the world including other Americans. In the other dorms, you will be living with mostly British students.

There is no meal plan. There are various places to eat on campus, including pubs, but they are not open late. If you have never cooked before, this is a great time to learn. Have the English teach you how to fry chips (French fries), or the French how to make crepes, or the Swedes how to cook blood (cow blood mixed with pig blood mixed with flour is a Swedish staple). There are two small grocery stores on campus and there are much bigger grocery stores in town (similar to Safeway or Schnucks).

EASTER VACATION: One of the appeals of study abroad in England during the spring semester is long Easter break. At the University of Sussex, you have about five weeks between the spring and summer terms. How you use your time during this break is, of course, your own choice. Some people decide to visit family at home or significant others wherever. Some travel around Europe for part of the break and stick around campus for the other part. Normally, your room remains available to you

throughout the break, but you might have to switch to a temporary room if yours is needed for a University conference or event. When you apply for housing, you can forego it during the break to save a bit of money, by this may be quite inconvenient for you. You will have to store your belongings that you don't want to carry with you, and you may end up spending more money to live elsewhere or keep traveling; plus, you probably should spend part of the break studying like the British students do.

So You Are Going. What Next?

PLANE TICKETS: As soon as you know Sussex is your destination, buy your plane tickets to take advantage of the cheapest fares and/or most convenient routes. I don't have an airline recommendation, but whatever you do, fly into Gatwick Airport. I don't care if it costs an extra hundred bucks, when you get into England for the first time, tired and disoriented, it will be worth it. Located south of London, Gatwick is one of two major airports in the London area and by far the closest one to Brighton. An escalator takes you from the airport terminal to the train platform, where direct trains go from Gatwick to Brighton (or Lewes - see arrival directions below). If you fly into Heathrow Airport (west of London), you probably will to take the Tube (subway) for an hour to Victoria Station in London and then catch a train south for another hour through Gatwick to Brighton (or take a coach link between Heathrow and Gatwick and then the train to Brighton. With luggage, extra connections are a pain, so I repeat, **FLY INTO GATWICK.**

PASSPORT: Unless you have a felony record or cannot prove where and when your were born, getting a passport is a fairly simple endeavor: go to the post office, fill out the paperwork, get the original or an official copy of your birth certificate, return to the post office, pay the fee, and then wait (about five weeks). It can be expedited for a extra fee, but **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE.** If you are a card-carrying member of AAA, you can get free passport photos at one of their offices. Also, you will need photographs of yourself for random things while you are abroad (e.g., a Youth Rail Card), so get several extra photos. These should be similar to your passport photos but need not be of passport quality - photomat quality will do. I think I needed eight additional photos in all. In the past you did not need a student visa for the United Kingdom issued before leaving the US; it was issued upon arrival in the UK based upon your Sussex letter of admission and your WU letter of financial guarantee. Starting in 2004, however, US students studying in the UK will need pre-issued entry clearance stamped in their passport by a British consulate before leaving the US if they will be in the UK more than six months. This is another reason to get you passport early, because you should allow at least a couple of weeks to get the entry clearance stamp if necessary by applying on line and then sending your passport to the appropriate British consulate with a FedEx return slip and your credit card number.

MONEY: The British still use pounds (Sterling). They have not converted to the Euro yet, and are not likely to change anytime soon. The conversion rate will mess with your mind and your bank account. Just remember, when you spend a pound you are spending much more than a dollar, probably between \$1.50 and \$2.00, depending on the exchange rate. British prices include a high sales tax, so they seem familiar and acceptable to you until you convert them to dollars. You may be seduced into spending pounds like they were dollars, which is a costly mistake. Also, remember you are not accustomed to paying for public transportation, beer, etc., at WU, so watch your budget and spending habits.

I recommend you continue to use your **US BANK ACCOUNT** while you are abroad. You really don't need a British bank account, although you can easily open one if desired.

I highly recommend having an **ATM DEBIT CARD**, which might be a separate card or a dual function of your credit card. It will make your life a lot easier. It's the most convenient way to get cash, plus it provides the best exchange rate with a low service fee. There are a few bank machines on the Sussex campus, where you can fill your pockets with pounds, and more ATMs almost everywhere you go. Whenever you take money out of an ATM, however, there is a transaction fee (typically about \$2), so take out as much money as you are comfortably carrying, so you will save money by avoiding multiple transaction fees. (Be very careful about hiding extra cash in your luggage or dorm room.) For buying things (almost anything), though, you should have a **US CREDIT CARD** (Visa or MasterCard are most widely accepted), which also gives you the best exchange rate without a transaction fee, but be sure your credit card bill is paid off in full before the deadline each month to avoid finance charges. You should avoid using a British credit card even if you have a British bank account, because the fees and rules are different and because your finance fees may mount up while the "final" bill makes it way to your US address after you leave England. **ON-LINE BANKING** is great to have too if your bank provides it, so you can track the actual amounts involved with each ATM transaction and then balance your checkbook. It might allow you to track your credit card charges as well.

You should carry some **TRAVELER'S CHEQUES** for security, emergencies, and the odd time when you can't find a convenient ATM connected to your bank's network or your debit card is damaged, lost, or stolen; but you won't get as good an exchange rate for your traveler's cheques as with the ATM, and the service fee may be higher. Alternatively, you can draw cash from an ATM with your credit card (if it wasn't part of the debit card that was damaged, lost, or stolen), but remember that transaction will be a loan with finance charges, not just withdrawing your own money. I went to a town in Italy where the ATMs would not accept my debit card, so I was thankful to have a few traveler's cheques in my pouch. At the same time, if you do not have time to get them before you leave, don't freak out; they are not entirely necessary, and they can be bought wherever you are abroad.

Having **BUFFER MONEY** in your checking account in case of emergencies is a good idea. You never know when you will unwittingly get involved in an pottery smuggling operation in Italy with people from your hostel and have to flee back to England. No, but seriously, the ability to leave somewhere quickly is a good option to have even if there is very little chance you will need it. Always know what your options are for quickly departing an area of concern and have a credit card or debit card handy to pay for a ticket.

When you arrive at the University of Sussex, you will go through an orientation program. During that orientation, you will be registered (as distinct from enrollment in classes) but not before you **PAY YOUR RENT**. Washington University does not pay for your room and board. You have to. If you don't have enough money readily available when you arrive, you will remain unregistered while you sort out your finances.

CARDS AND PASSES: As a **HOSTELING INTERNATIONAL** member, you get reduced fees at **Hosteling International** affiliated hostels. Also, members can make reservations at these hostels. Being an **HI** member is not necessary, but it may save you money if you focus on staying at **HI** hostels. I bought an **HI** membership card (\$25), but I didn't use it much. When you are going to a new city, you may not want to limit yourself to the **HI** hostels. They usually are very clean and well run, but perhaps not the friendliest or homiest available. If you are big on saving money, though, you could definitely do so by staying at **HI** hostels, some of which do not require the **HI** card for you to stay there unless you want to reserve your place in advance.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITY CARD: Since you will have a University of Sussex ID, I don't know how important the **ISIC** is, but I was always glad I had an extra form of identification. Also, it can get you discounts at some places (like the boat tour down the River Seine in Paris and all over Barcelona) that the Sussex ID cannot. Of course, if you use **STA Travel** (www.statravel.com) for student rate airfare and other needs, you have to have an **ISIC**, which they'll happily issue (\$22). The card provide some emergency and accident insurance too, but you will be covered already by the **WU** plan.

EUROPASSES: Hold off!. There are so many ways to travel in England and Europe that the best thing you can do is hold off until you get there. You simply won't know where, when, with whom, or how you will travel until closer to the time you are wish to go. In the end, I did buy a Eurail pass, and I was glad I had it. The tricky thing is that while you can buy a pass online from England, it must be delivered to a US address. I had it sent to my parents, who then sent it to me. You should consider the wide range of student rate tickets and rail passes that are available to you at a "British" student in addition to the rail passes that can be bought only in the US. Discount airfares and/or bus fares might be a better deal for specific destinations. Just wait until you get over there and figure out where you want to go before you make the decision.

Packing:

I'm going to say this now (as the **WU** folks say as well), and you are going to ignore me; but you really shouldn't. When you get to England, you will discover how difficult it is to carry four bags by yourself, recalling the advice to take just two - a backpack and a roller or two rollers. Then, when you are heading home after one or two semesters of collecting stuff from all around Europe, and you cannot get your luggage from the dorm to the train without stopping twenty times to rest even though you already sent some stuff home in boxes, you will remember these words: **PACK LIGHT, REALLY REALLY LIGHT.**

What American students do not seem to realize is that **THERE ARE STORES IN ENGLAND.** There are places where you can buy clothes, shampoo, etc. And, oh yeah, they have book stores (and libraries)! **DO NOT PACK BOOKS!** Bring a book for the airplane ride if you want, but no more. They will add pounds upon pounds to your bags. Don't take bed linen, optional clothes, etc., either.

CLOTHES: Bring essential clothes, but remember you will probably buy some clothes while you are over there. They are different and fun, and you will pick them off the rack thinking that you are going to impress all your friends with an outfit that they would not be able to buy without crossing an ocean. So, **DON'T BRING A LOT OF CLOTHES.** You will learn quickly that you can wear clothes more than once without washing them; Europeans do it. Also, during the winter months England tends to be cold dreary place. I wore trousers (the British term) straight through to June. Shorts are for recreation, not daily wear. But you are probably going to be traveling to warmer climates at some point, so bring a little bit of everything. Bring clothes that you can layer. One good coat/jacket to protect you from wind, rain, and snow (although it rarely snows in England) would be wise. A solid, water resistant pair of walking shoes is essential too.

PERSONAL ITEMS: England is far away. There is a 6-hour time difference between you and your friends at WU. Everyone gets lonely from time to time. Bring a few things that make you feel closer to home. One of my American friends plastered her walls with photographs of friends and family. I brought a CD collection. If you have to make a choice between an extra day's worth of clothes and your stuffed Winnie-the-Pooh that you have been sleeping with for 10 years, go with Pooh-Bear. Also, certain foods are unavailable, so if you must have sunflower seeds to be happy, I suggest you either pack a big supply or have your parents ship you some. Eat them to make room in your luggage for the extra stuff you'll be carrying home.

COMPUTERS: There are enough computers on Sussex campus to satisfy your computing needs. If you want to bring your laptop so that you can have internet in your room, forget it. Arranging in-room internet service is not worth the time, money, or hassle. Every campus computer is on the net. They are all networked together so that if you save your work at one, you can open your file from any other computer on campus.

That being said, I brought my laptop and was very happy I did. There are certain times of the year when everyone has papers due, so you might have to wait up to half an hour for a computer. Also, I preferred working in my room; but I could have dealt with using campus computers for work if I had needed to. I was happy I had my laptop mainly for entertainment purposes. My laptop, with DVD player, served as my personal movie theater and my radio. Again, like I said about personal items, if it makes you feel closer to home, it is probably worth bringing. If you are worried about theft, you can insure everything in your room through an on-campus insurance agency for a reasonable price.

OTHER ELECTRONICS: The power coming out of English electrical outlets is different than that coming out of American outlets. Voltages in the rest of Europe vary from the US and UK too. Laptops are advanced enough now that all of them have internal converters. Your electric shaver and hair-drier are not so advanced and will explode if you plug them in. **LEAVE YOUR APPLIANCES AT HOME.** Buy low cost ones in England if necessary.

NOTE: Basically, when you fly to England, you can bring two carry-ons and two checked bags (with weight restrictions). My suggestion to you is this: bring one carry-on and one checked bag. If your checked bag is over the weight limit, take a rolling carry-on suitcase and put your heavier stuff in there. Usually, the weight restriction for carry-ons is not enforced by US carriers (but is enforced by most

other carriers) so long as it complies with the carry-on size limit (fits under the seat or in the overhead compartment). Beware that most foreign airlines have smaller carry-on size and weight limits than US airlines and may force you to check the carry on that a US airline would have allowed. Like everything else, you can buy cheap luggage in England to get your extra stuff home at the end or you can take half-empty luggage in the beginning. You are going to want to travel around Europe with a backpack or a modest size rolling suitcase with good wheels (rollerblade style) and strong/comfortable handle. There are at least three stores in Brighton that sell quality form-fitting backpacks. Buy one and bring it home as your second carry-on or second checked bag. That's what I wish I had done.

You're There!

IMMIGRATION CONTROL: So you assembled everything you need in your room (after putting half of it away again). You pack, and you go. Teary goodbyes. Friendly farewells. Your adventure begins. Skip to 9 hours later. You're tired and clammy. You probably don't look great or smell much better. But you're in England! Smile! The first thing you are going to have to do is go through immigration control. Signs will direct your way. Once there, you must provide the immigration card you filled out during the flight and documentation to confirm your identity, nationality, and purpose/duration of stay in the UK. This is easy for a visitor seeking a 30-day tourist visa, but you are seeking a multi-entry student visa for the duration of your study abroad program. Since you need a student visa, you might have to jump through some hoops, especially if you want the option of working part time too. If you need entry for less than six months and draw a friendly immigration officer, minimally you will need your passport and your **ACCEPTANCE LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX** and/or your **WU LETTER OF FINANCIAL GUARANTEE**, preferably both. This will prove that you will be a full time student at a British university and that you have enough money to support yourself and return back the US. Any additional information you have that can prove this would be good to have ready.

If you need entry for more than six months, then, beginning in 2004, you must have entry clearance stamped into your passport by a British consulate before you leave the US. You can apply for the clearance on-line, but then you must send your passport to the appropriate British consulate in the US (with a return FedEx prepaid form) in sufficient time to have it back in your hands before your flight departs. You will be unable to board your flight without your passport, and you'll have visa problems to solve when you get to the UK if you don't have the pre-issued entry clearance if you intend to remain longer than six months.

WORK PERMIT (if needed): If you want to work during your time in the UK, you need a specific kind of student visa. A visiting student can get a visa which restricts work as opposed to prohibiting it. (Restriction = yes; prohibition = no.) If you say that you want a student visa that allows you to get a part time job, they should know what you are talking about. If they give you a hard time, you might politely remind them that certain volunteer programs require you to have a work visa. Say nothing that indicates that you are in an unsteady financial position or the officer may refuse to give you the work permit. The immigration officer will be thorough with the interview to make sure you are not trying to make a permanent move to the UK or work full time. If you decide after arrival that you want to work, you must have your student visa changed (see Random Info at the end).

TO UNIVERSITY WE GO: Once you are through immigration control, you will go to the disorganized baggage claim area, find your luggage, and then walk through customs. You probably will have nothing to declare, so you can walk on through the green “nothing to declare” hallway. You must stop for inspection if a customs officer ask you to, which is a random event. Once you are in the main part of the airport, follow the National Rail signs. If you get confused, remember everyone there speaks English (although with accents that may be difficult to interpret), so just ask someone for directions. On your way, look for an ATM with a logo for your debit card’s network and draw some pounds to get started (maybe 50 to 100 pounds, worth about \$80 to \$160).

Once you find the railway ticket window, you might want to immediately buy a **YOUNG PERSON’S RAIL CARD**, except WU provides it later for Sussex and Exeter participants. It will save you an insane amount of money during your travels on the British National Rail system.

You should purchase a single second class ticket to **FALMER**. The agent at the window will sell you a ticket, or you can use a vending machine with your credit card. (If you are going to London first for some reason, you might pay the small extra amount to use the Express train, which runs every 15 minutes). Then, you will look up on the time board and not see Falmer listed, and you will become scared and confused. Don’t sweat it. **YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE TWO TRAINS TO GET TO FALMER**, which is the University of Sussex stop. What will be listed on the board at the airport are **BRIGHTON** or **LEWES**. Either of these stations will connect you to where you want to go. Brighton is just three stops to the west of Falmer; Lewes one stop to the east. There will be more trains going to Brighton than Lewes. Since you have all your luggage, I suggest you go via Brighton as there are no stairs to climb once you get there. When you arrive in Brighton, you again will not see the connection Falmer listed as a destination, but it is a stop for multiple trains (those going to Eastbourne for example). Just ask somebody for clarification.

If the International Office at the University of Sussex is expecting you to arrive on that day, someone probably will be waiting for you at the small Falmer station. If not, just follow the pathway under the highway. When you come out the other end of the tunnel, you are on campus. You made it! Now you just need to get to York House, which some distance further. There is a map near the front drive. You’ll find it.

Settling In:

BED: Probably, you will want to collapse in bed upon arrival. I am no expert in handling the effects of jetlag. People do many different things, but if you want to go to bed, do it. You can rent bedding for 20 pounds per term from the reception desk in York House, so don’t bother bring any with you. You get a pillow, a pillowcase, sheets, and a duvet. The quality is not great and the fitted sheet may constantly pop off the mattress, but it works. If you have energy, you also could take the bus (or the train) back to Brighton and buy your own bedding. Ask the people at the International Office or the porters at York House where to go and any other questions you may have.

COMMUNICATING: There are a number of ways that you can contact home. What you might do first is buy a phone card that works in the pay-phones, so you can put your parents' minds at ease. This is not to say that phone cards are the cheapest way to call home, but they are simple and quick.

PHONE CARDS (calling cards): There are numerous kinds of phone cards in different colors with various gimmicks. I have no idea which ones are the cheapest or if they are the cheapest way to call the US. Prepaid cards will be cheaper than say an MCI, Sprint, or AT&T card. Cards/accounts like Ekit (www.ekit.com) are good value and rechargeable. There are tons of pay-phones around campus whenever you wish to use a phone card.

ROOM TELEPHONES: You will have a telephone in your room, but you cannot use it to call off campus until you set up an account. England's phones work on a pay-as-you-go basis, so you can put 20 pounds on your phone account then use it for however many minutes 20 pounds buys, depending on the distance of your call.

Even if you do not set up an account, people can still call you on your room phone. If your parents want to talk to you weekly, some American phone companies offer a reduced per-minute rate to England, or they can get subscribe to Ekit, etc., for significant savings.

CELL PHONES (mobiles): There are two major cell phone companies in England: Orange and Vodafone. (Vodafone owns Verizon in the US.) I and all of my friends used Orange, because the price and reception on campus was good. Cell phones, like landlines, work on a pay-as-you-go basis. Once you purchase a phone, you get what is called a sym card, which you must stick in your phone under the battery. Then, you register the sym card and set up an account. After that, you can pre-purchase minutes. You can "top-up" (add time to) your account at Orange stores, drugstores, and many other places. There are three top-up locations on campus.

There are places where you can buy used cell phones, but be careful. They sometimes sell stolen mobiles that you will not be able to register. If you see a sign that says "not responsible for stolen mobiles" behind the cash register, you might want to find another place to buy it.

I do not know what the rate was for calling the US with my mobile, but I think it was similar to the rate of the phone in my dorm room (which was better than what I could find with a calling card). I found that having a cell phone made it a lot easier to hook up with friends in Brighton and when I was traveling around. When I was in Italy, I was able to contact a friend from Brighton who was traveling in Spain to set up a rendezvous in Geneva. But, be careful in selecting your phone and service, because some will not work on the Continent. (None but the largest and most expensive will work in the US and vice versa.) Also, I liked having it for safety reasons, as a way to call for help if I had an emergency. Furthermore, "text messaging" is huge in Europe and the cheapest way to contact anyone on the same mobile service.

E-MAIL and AIM: Having e-mail will make you wonder how anybody went abroad not long ago

without it. It is fast, easy, and largely free. Once you are registered at the University of Sussex, you get a username and password, which allow you to use any computer on campus. You will get a Sussex e-mail account too, but you can continue to use your WU account or any other preferred account, but be sure to use message forwarding to the one you regularly use and watch out for inbox and storage limits if you use a free hotmail, yahoo, etc., account. Also, there are many internet/e-mail kiosks all over Europe where you can get on line for a small fee.

Technically, you are not allowed to use Instant Messenger or the like on campus computers. The rule is in place to ensure that students who need the computers for work get them. You cannot set up Instant Messenger on the computers, but you might use AIM Express, which can be easily be found on AOL's website, if the lab is not busy.

SNAIL MAIL: In the days of old, letter carriers were king. Although the postal service has taken a back seat in this fast-paced electronic world, I cannot tell you how nice it is to receive something in the mail when you are abroad. Surprisingly, it does not take that long. My parents sent me a package that arrived within a week. When you are low on funds, occasional postcards make excellent presents. Your address will be:

Room Number
Dorm Name
University of Sussex
Falmer, Brighton
East Sussex, BN1 9QS

Travel:

ENGLAND AND THE REST OF GREAT BRITIAN: It's an island! That will become clear when you start looking into traveling around Europe. You must cross the pesky English Channel somehow. But, before you set your sights on France or Spain, remember you have some awesome stuff to see in England, Wales, and Scotland as well as Northern Ireland and Ireland.

I strongly recommend you take advantage of the daytrips provided by the International Office. This is, hands down, the cheapest way to see southern England. Canterbury, Bath, and the Isle of Wight are just a few of the trips they take. The office will let you know when the tickets go on sale. As soon as they become available, make sure you are there, because they always sell out.

Traveling by train or bus is easy to figure out in England. Both National Rail and National Express have websites for times and fares. Spend some time in London - at the National Theatre, Tate Gallery, and National Museum for example. See where Shakespeare was born or where Robin Hood danced around in green tights. Get up to Scotland. It may be an island, but it is a BIG island.

Elsewhere: Eventually, you probably will want to visit the Continent. There are multiple ways to do this. London has four airports (Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton, and Stansted) with service to anywhere you would want to go. You could also take a 20-minute train ride from campus to New Haven Harbour and hop on a two hour ferry to Dieppe, France. As far as flights and ferries go, there are many options. Do an internet search for cheap UK flights or cheap UK ferries (out of New Haven or Dover would probably be best for you).

You could also take the Chunnel, either by train or by coach aboard the train. A coach is a long haul bus with comfortable seating, etc. The Chunnel is a long tunnel beneath the English Channel. Sounds cool, but it's not; it's boring. But, it's a comfortable fast route to France or Belgium. There are no windows or anything. It's is just like going through a long tunnel anywhere else.

Once you reach the Continent, you have a lot of options. If you want to travel by train, you can choose between local trains and intercity/express trains. Local trains make many more stops at smaller cities, but they're cheaper. The intercity/express trains will stop only at big cities, making them faster, but they may more expensive (unless you are using a pass). If you are going a long distance, you could use a SLEEPER (with seats that convert to beds), which costs extra and normally requires a reservation. You could take buses or coaches (some coaches are sleepers too). You might fly from city to city with discount fares or a pass. Also, you might rent a car; but if you plan to do this, you should practice driving a stick shift before you go (the lowest rate cars normally have manual transmissions) and be aware of restrictions and high insurance rates for drivers under age 26. You might need a passenger or two to make a rental car affordable, especially when paying for fuel at two to three time the US rate.

GUIDEBOOKS: No matter where you go or how you get there, it is in your best interest to have a good guidebook. There are four or five different kinds that everyone in the hostels had. Your parents might recommend Rick Steve's series of guides, including Europe through the Backdoor; and if your parents are coming along and paying for everything, great, go for it. If you are traveling by yourself (and I hope you are), or at least with others your own age, you will want a book that is not aimed at the upper middle-class adult with a job. You are going to want a book that understands how poor you really are. Lonely Planet and Let's Go were the most popular, but sit down in a bookstore for an hour and go through them all to find one works for you. These books will help you find places to stay and eat. They provide maps. They have emergency numbers. They give more travel tips than I could possibly hope to give here. A good guidebook that matches your needs is, in my opinion, a must, even if you chose to stray from the well beaten path.

SPEND THE EXTRA MONEY FOR GOOD BACKPACK. I had a crappy backpack and it killed me. Get one that fits to your back, has a good hip belt, and concentrates the weight on your hips and close to your back. Again, there are places to get backpacks in Brighton, but you could purchase one from REI, L.L.Bean, Alpine Sports, etc., before you go and use it as a main piece of luggage during the flight over and back.

There is so much more I could say about planning or not planning your trip. There are advantages to

knowing where you are going to stay before you get to a city. There are adventures that come with not knowing where you are going to stay or what you will do until you get there. You will make uninformed decisions and some mistakes. That is part of the fun.

Random Info:

SWITCHING CLASSES: I heard it was unlikely that I would be able to switch my classes once I got a schedule. This was untrue. Upon arrival, I noticed a class I wanted to take, went to the secretary in charge of visiting and exchange students, she called to confirm availability in the class, and I was in. That simple. So, if you are not happy with a class you get, see if there is another that you would rather take and ask. You might get lucky.

LOST PASSPORT: I didn't actually lose my passport; I sent it to the Home Office for a work permit change of visa (I was not issued one at immigration control when I arrived), so I didn't have it for awhile. First off, if you were not issued a work visa and you want one, instead of sending your passport to the Home Office to change the visa (which the Sussex International Office will help you do), I've been told you can go back to the Immigration Office at Gatwick and get it changed there. Check it out.

Nevertheless, if you are without your passport for whatever reason and an emergency arises back home or your need/want to travel outside the United Kingdom, **YOU CANNOT FLY HOME OR GO ANYWHERE ELSE WITHOUT A PASSPORT.** You can, however, go to the American Embassy in London (or an American Embassy or consulate in the country you are traveling in) and get a **TEMPORARY PASSPORT.** This may take several hours; but if you must travel internationally, it is your only option. Check the operating hours and wait times before you go. Also, it may be useful to have a photocopy of your passport, although you cannot use the photocopy as an identity or immigration document Importance of having a photocopy?

TOILETS: I never heard of a "squatter" before I visited France. A squatter is a toilet that has no bowl or any other part that resembles part of a toilet. It is a hole in the ground with two places for your feet. Basically, public toilets in Europe from your perspective, especially in France, are unusual at best and disgusting at worst. Of course, I've seen some bad ones in the US too. If you are fortunate enough avoid a squatter, then the toilet may have no seat. Soap and toilet paper are not guaranteed either. So, always carry around tissue paper and hand soap. Plus, you probably will have to pay between 20 cents and a full Euro to use the facilities. A small towel is suggested too. Hotels, museums, restaurants, etc. should have decent restrooms (perhaps the only reason to visit a McDonald's).

Websites:

University of Sussex: www.sussex.ac.uk

WU Overseas Programs: www.artsci.wustl.edu/~overseas

WU webstac: <https://acainfo.wustl.edu>

American Embassy: www.usembassy.org.uk

American Citizen Services: 020-7499-9000

Address: 24 Grosvenor Square, London, W1

British National Rail: www.nationalrail.co.uk

British National Express: www.nationalexpress.com/neh.cfm

Eurostar (Chunnel trains to Paris and Brussels): www.eurostar.com

Economy Airlines:

Easyjet- www.easyjet.com

Go- www.go-fly.com

RyanAir- www.ryanair.com

Ferry: Hoverspeed- www.bluedogferrytickets.co.uk/ferry_hover.htm