

Studying Abroad Won't Change Your Life:



I squeezed my mom and dad tightly while exchanging goodbyes, I love you's, and I'll text you when I land's. In 12 hours, I would be landing in Dublin, Ireland with 23 strangers, a few suitcases, and electric anticipation that, to my disdain, kept me from getting any sleep during the 4-hour layover and long-haul flight. Little did I know that (not to be *that* girl that studies abroad, but) I was about to have the best month of my life with some of the best people I've ever met.

If your experience is anything like mine, maybe you can relate...every time I went on a college tour, asked anyone for college advice, talked to current college students, whatever it was, the first thing I heard was, "you *have* to study abroad. It will change your life."

Sure, I wanted to study abroad. That sounded incredible (and extremely cliché). But, to be honest, I never put much thought or effort into actually going abroad. I didn't think it would be possible for me. I thought my parents would *never* let me go. I thought it would be too expensive, too hard to fit around my classes, too far away from home, too, too, too. I let all these ideas I had conjured up in my mind keep me from ever looking into it. It wasn't until I switched into my Communications major during my junior year that I really considered looking into it. All of my friends had spent their summers in Italy, Australia, France, etc. while I was working my mundane, minimum wage job in Knoxville, living vicariously through them via Instagram and Facetime.

They came back with incredible stories, new friends, and amazing experiences, that made me feel like I was missing the experience of a lifetime. December rolls around, and the deadline for applications to study abroad were quickly approaching. So, I did what any logical person would do: without thinking it through at all, talking to my parents, or knowing how I could make it work, I applied to the first study abroad program I saw that seemed like it could remotely correlate to my major. I eventually got accepted into the Dublin program, and I had 2 weeks to accept the offer I was extended. Well, I still hadn't exactly told my parents that I had even applied. I'm sure you can guess how happy my parents were with me when I came to them and said, "hey so I applied for and got accepted into a month long study abroad program in Dublin, Ireland, and I have 2 weeks to decide if I'm going and how we're going to pay for it!" ...sorry Mom and Dad!!! After about a week and a half, they finally decided the day before I had to commit to the program that I could go. I was absolutely ELATED. Scared and nervous but ELATED. Something I thought





would never be a possibility for me was finally happening, so this is where I say... THANK YOU MOM, DAD, THE CMST DEPARTMENT, PEYTON MANNING, DR. HAAS, and DR. MILLER.

have. I met some of the best people (both from UT and Dublin locals), saw some of the most breath taking views, and had the most fun I've ever had in the span of just one month all while



A hasty decision I made on a whim sitting alone in a coffee shop during finals week turned into an experience that I cannot be more thankful and grateful that I got to knocking out six out of the nine 400 level CMST credit hours I needed to graduate— (shameless Comm Studies/ Dublin promotion).

many other things that I never would have been pushed to learn had I not gone on that trip.

While no, your life won't be *changed*, as some people claim, by studying abroad. You *will* have the time of your life. I learned so much about myself, what I'm capable of, how to face fear and challenge head on, different world views, and so

So, to the Freshman who wants to study abroad, but doesn't know where to start: seek advice from your advisor. To the Sophomore who wants to study abroad but doesn't think they can afford it: there are scholarships. To the Junior who wants to take an internship rather than spend the summer abroad: they offer internships abroad, too. To the senior who thinks it's too late to go: there were graduate students on our trip. Regardless of the reason that you think you can't or shouldn't go, I'm encouraging you, PLEASE take that next step, and GO. There's so much to learn, see, and experience that, unfortunately, sitting in HSS 205 on Monday, Wednesday, Friday **can't** give you.

