

Edinburgh Scholars Participant Comments Fall 2018

Vaibhav Anand '19 - Computer Science and BEM Caltech/Informatics Edinburgh

The ability to transport into a whole new environment and gain exposure to very different cultures makes studying abroad an incredible opportunity that everyone should avail themselves of. As soon as I arrived in Edinburgh, the first thing that I noticed is that everyone here is so friendly and open, from people in the street to the people you'll meet in the residence halls when you first arrive. As someone coming from small school such as Caltech and an even smaller high school, the large size of the university is a great chance to meet many new people. Edinburgh gets students from all parts of Europe and the rest of the world; I've meet people just in my housing that are from all parts: England, Ireland, Brazil, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Cyprus, etc., making a very culturally rich experience. While studying abroad here in Edinburgh, you'll also be staying so close to the best parts of Edinburgh - a block away from the Royal Mile, shops, coffee houses, museums, pubs, parks, etc. and there's great public transportation to any place that might be out of walking reach.

Academically, the focus here is more on independent learning rather than frequent assignments. Instead of having weekly sets that often create strenuous nights before the day before, students here structure how they will learn and absorb the material in a way that is best suited to their own style instead of cramming a lot of information at specific points of the term. At the same time, classes here also provide tutorials (recitation sections) and practice problems as other ways to augment the lectures. Everyone here is intelligent and well-rounded in many areas (not only STEM) and this encourages a more holistic education.

The relaxed atmosphere at Edinburgh also allows time for more extracurriculars such as societies (clubs), giving you the opportunity to try new things and grow yourself in a non-academic environment. The main society that I have joined here is the Athletics Club, which is their "Track and Field" society. It has been a great way to meet new people while also doing something that I love. I would encourage everyone to go the "taster" sessions during the first 1-2 weeks of the term, which allows you to experience a lot of different societies that they have (there are hundreds) and get a feel for which ones you like to join.

Studying abroad in Edinburgh also allows great opportunities to travel. During my time here so far, I got to explore much of Scotland - its cities and its picturesque highlands; the country is very beautiful and I would highly encourage doing so. As someone who has never been to Europe before, it is great to have the chance to also visit England as well as other parts of Europe, especially because from Edinburgh (relative to the states), most of these trips to the mainland of Europe can be very affordable.

I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to study abroad here in Edinburgh and I only wish that I had more time here and didn't have to leave in December. I know, after I have left, that I will cherish the friendships that I've made here. It has been an unforgettable experience and I would encourage everyone to apply to study abroad during their time at Caltech.

James Deacon '19 – Mechanical Engineering & Computer Science/Informatics Edinburgh

Studying abroad at the University of Edinburgh has been one my favorite experiences during my time in college. While the city is cold, it is also one the most beautiful places that I have

been! I would definitely recommend studying abroad to all college students as the change of scenery, even for just a few months, is very refreshing.

Here at Edinburgh the class system is quite different from Caltech which allows for many more weekend trips than would be possible in Pasadena. I have already been to Glasgow, Inverness, Loch Ness, Stirling, and a few places in London and its only half way through the term! In future weeks I definitely plan to visit, Copenhagen, Sweden, Paris, and Dublin! While each of the classes only has a few assignments throughout the term, it is important not to get behind. For instance, I just had my first assignment in over 3 weeks and if I hadn't continued to study course material I would have found the coursework significantly more difficult. However, the coursework here is definitely at a slower pace than at Caltech. Lectures cover less material per hour and there are far less assignments. The lectures are also recorded, but I've found that attending lecture is still important as watching the recording just isn't the same.

There are also a ton of fun things to do in Edinburgh as well! Of course, you have to climb Arthur's Seat and visit Edinburgh castle. Both of these have absolutely amazing views of the entire city. I personally really enjoy walking in the meadows next to central campus and I also found a neat walkway between Kings and Central campuses. The walk between the two campuses is a couple miles but I like to do it a few times a week. The area is also very hilly unlike flat Pasadena so keep that in mind when you plan walks around the city.

Edinburgh is a very large school, but make sure you check out the activities and sports fair during welcome week. I myself have joined a few societies which are a great way of meeting new people outside of the group of Caltech students you will travel with. Day to day life is also very different here. You have to learn to cook for yourself and live in a flat. I imagine it's quite similar to how Bechtel residence works at Caltech, but as this is the first term that Bechtel is being lived in I can't confirm that until I move into Bechtel myself this January. I've really enjoyed this personally as I spent the last 3 years on Caltech's board plan and was getting quite sick of the same food term to term.

The culture here is very welcoming. I've made a ton of new friends and even met some people who made friends with previous Caltech exchange students from past years! There are many people from all over. In my flat we have frosh from both Estonia and Sweden. I also met some guys from South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Germany! You'll be most likely living in Kincaid's Court where I live now and there are lots of other exchange students to meet here too. In particular, I've made good friends with a guy from Canada and a girl from Texas. Studying abroad was one of the best decisions I made at Caltech and I would do it again in a heartbeat!

Michael Goulet '19 – Computer Science + English Caltech/Informatics Edinburgh

The academics at Edinburgh are strikingly different from those at Caltech. As many others have mentioned, there is almost no weekly "mandatory" work (what we would call "sets"). Instead, important information is presented in lecture, and you are expected to review it on your own time in preparation for a comprehensive final exam. Some classes may have tutorials where ungraded work is reviewed and you can ask questions if you're confused from lecture, and I have a few Informatics (CS) courses that also include two or three large programming projects as well. However, I found it to be a load off of my shoulders, since I could focus more on the concepts and the general ideas, instead of understanding just enough to get my set finished so I could move on to the next one.

I also found, to my surprise and delight, that many of my Informatics courses cover a healthy balance between theoretical and practical knowledge. For example, my Extreme Computing (EC) course mixes discussion about academic papers from software conferences with practical conversation about implementation of the same software systems (often filling in important gaps that go unmentioned in a purely theoretical discussion). I've had a few internships, and I know very well that this sort of mixed knowledge is invaluable for day-to-day work at a software company. Being able to cover this in an academic setting, instead of having to learn most of the "practical side" on my own as is common at Caltech, is really great.

Since I'm not drowning in work all day, I've found it easy to devote some of my time to university "societies" (academic and social clubs). One society that I was excited to join is the Linguistics Society (LingSoc). The society holds paper discussions, presentations from academics in the Linguistics dept, and even goes on purely social pub crawls and holds board game nights too. I'm also a member of the Mexican Society, and the Pride Society, and since the Uni is so large, there is always something to do even if you're not a member of any society.

Outside of the Uni, there are plenty of places to shop and eat around Edinburgh. There are bars and clubs on the Cowgate right next to my residence hall flat, plenty of restaurants and coffee shops on Nicolson/South Bridge close by, and major shopping just a short walk away on Princes Street. Edinburgh has an interestingly complex street structure, with some "high" streets and some "low" streets, but I have found it easy enough to navigate on Google Maps and think it adds to the charm of the city. The buses are frequent and the public transportation system is comprehensive, and there's always Uber or taxis if you need to get to somewhere in a hurry. Before I left, many people warned me about the cold and rain, and since I'm a native Texan, I was a bit worried about the weather; however, I found that with a nice jacket and a hat, it's actually quite pleasant to walk around the streets of Edinburgh—I promise you'll get used to it.

If I had to choose my favorite part of my experience, I'd probably choose my flat and my flatmates. I absolutely love all of them and I'm going to be so sad when I have to finally say goodbye! I've met an amazing group of 11 people who come from different backgrounds, study vastly different subjects, and we still have so many things to share with each other. The Americans in my flat share our American traditions, and the English and Scottish people have taught us so much about living in the UK. We go out to clubs and pubs regularly, but often on a lazy night we just sit around the flat's common room and talk about life. There's always someone who's down to go exploring as well, and on the weekends, I've found it quite easy to round up a few flatmates and friends and explore a new coffee shop or restaurant.

Living abroad has been a tremendous experience, especially as a senior when my time at Caltech is finally wrapping up. If you plan right, you can still get an academically rigorous experience at Edinburgh, and have plenty of extra time to balance it with lots of fun and memories. Being abroad doesn't have to be about going to Europe every weekend either; I've found the time I've just spent at home with my flat family to be just as invaluable.

Katie Johnston '19 – Applied and Computational Mathematics Caltech / Mathematics Edinburgh

Studying abroad is an extremely unique experience. It is more than just traveling to a new place, and it is more than just going to school somewhere else. You get to experience a new school, city, and country in a way like no other. Being here for a whole semester lets you really

digest the new place and see what life is really like here. You get to live in the middle of the city, right at the heart of all kind of new things. We are just a block off the Royal Mile and can easily see all the cool things in the city, from the castle to Arthur's Seat.

Studying abroad presents some great new opportunities. I joined the water polo team here. It's a really fun and great way to meet new people, but I also get to experience this game I've played for years from a slightly new perspective. I get to play with girls from all over the place, and everyone has a slightly different playing style that is interesting to see. There's also lots of different vocabulary and it makes you realize how uniform we are in the US. I've also joined the Friends of the Postcard Association. There are a lot of clubs/societies here at Edinburgh that we just don't have at Caltech, and it's interesting to find people with some of your more unique interests or try an activity you might never have heard of.

Classes are different here too. The structure of classes is different, with a lot less focus on problem sets, giving you time to learn that material at your pace. You have very few problems sets, and the grade is also mostly based on exams, which different than Caltech. There are also tutorials, which are similar to office hours in that you get to do problems and ask questions, but there are a lot more guided in the problems. It's also less stressful because you just have to learn the material before the test, nor worry about getting the problem set done in a few days. It is also very interesting to experience a larger school. Walking around you don't recognize everyone, when going to the library have to look for a seat and waiting for certain things sometimes requires long lines. All these are thing we don't experience at a Caltech, and it opens your eyes to more of the world.

One of the best things about traveling abroad is weekend travel. So far, I've been to London, Glasgow, and Loch Ness, with plans to go to many more. I've seen so many castles and heard a lot of different accents. I've tried Haggis and Irn Bru, which are mostly unique to Scotland, and thought that both were weird but kind of good. I've dealt with more rain and wind in the last month than ever before, but it's been fun to experience this new place. I recommend study abroad to anyone who likes to travel and to everyone who wants to experience something new.

Dong Hyun Kim '19 – Electrical Engineering Caltech/Electrical Engineering Edinburgh
I'll be honest, even as I prepared my application for study abroad I was a little bit worried on whether the experience would be worth it. Would it actually be enjoyable to live in a completely foreign country that I'd never been to before? Fortunately, all of my doubts washed away within the first week of staying at Edinburgh. In fact, I can now say with confidence that studying abroad will be one of the best decisions I have made at Caltech.

There are some obvious benefits to being at Edinburgh. First off, the city is just gorgeous. You can literally walk 5 minutes from your room and be surrounded by the environment that inspired J. K. Rowling to write Harry Potter; in fact, there's a café and restaurant where Rowling wrote her first book of the series. If you like climbing, you can also go up Arthur's Seat and see a gorgeous view that you can't find anywhere else. Before coming to Edinburgh, I tried my best to avoid walking and complained a lot about the distance between my room to Moore; now, I want to leave my room and explore the city whenever I have time. It's definitely a really nice change.

Since Edinburgh classes are less work intensive, I also have a lot more time for myself. I've been able to go to the gym without stressing out about upcoming sets and use exercise as a way to

relax and have fun. Since I am preparing to go to graduate school, I've also been able to focus on graduate school applications and study for upcoming interviews. Although I'm spend more time outside of academics, I am still learning a lot of interesting information through my classes spread out in the EE, CS, and Political Science departments. For my CS class I am learning about Blockchain and Distributed Ledgers; for my PS class I am learning about the Financial Crisis of 2008. Both are classes I can take thanks to the University of Edinburgh's wide selection of courses.

A not-so-obvious-perk is the amount of diversity that you experience at a school this big. It's been less than a month and I'm already close to everybody in my flat, eating lunch and dinner with people from Estonia, Switzerland, Scotland, England, Ireland, Canada, etc. It's truly an eye-opening experience to engage in conversation from people all around the globe. And of course, you get close to all of your other study abroad friends that you may not have interacted with at Caltech.

I highly suggest taking a term to study abroad, it's an experience that's hard to forget. There is definitely a reason why everybody who has studied abroad has thoroughly enjoyed the experience. If you're on the fence, just remember: the drinking age in Europe is 18!

Cherish Nie '20 – Chemistry Caltech / Chemistry Edinburgh

Studying in Edinburgh has been a wonderfully refreshing and invigorating experience, and a needed break from the rigorous Caltech lifestyle. In some ways, I feel like a frosh again, excited to meet new people, explore new places, and find a new rhythm. It's a great opportunity to engage with people from all over the world and of all disciplines, and I'm so glad to have befriended so many vibrant people from all around the world, including students from Caltech who I probably would not have crossed paths with otherwise.

Edinburgh has so much to offer, from beautiful historic sites like the Edinburgh Castle and Calton Hill to natural formations like Arthur's seat to modern areas like Prince's street. It's a city full of youthful energy and is incredibly student friendly, with many quaint coffee shops, study spaces, and shops with student discounts. There's a relaxed atmosphere here, and now that autumn is upon us, I love taking the time to walk around and admire the beautiful foliage that I can never see in California. This is really the perfect city for study abroad, small enough to feel comfortable but big enough that there's always something interesting to do.

Since the university operates on semesters, the classes are taught at a slower pace with a few tutorials, similar to recitations, over the course of the semester to reinforce the lecture material. All classes and tutorials are usually finished by the late afternoon, so no evening office hours to plan around which I appreciate. The coursework is very manageable, and there's a focus on self-study rather than weekly sets which gives me more control over how I learn and my work-life balance.

Outside of studying in coffee shops all around the city, I've enjoyed having the time to cook for myself, participate in the archery society, go to the gym, and socialize with the students here. I've also had time to travel around Scotland to see the breathtaking Highlands and Isle of Skye, and I'm very excited to be spending some weekends in other European cities including Rome and Geneva in the upcoming weeks.

This is an experience I've always wanted to have and one that I highly recommend to anyone looking to experience more of the world or just try something new.

Kevin Tat '19 – Computer Science Caltech/Informatics Edinburgh

This time last year, I was unsure whether or not I wanted to study abroad. Going into my senior year, I knew that I didn't want to miss out on recruiting opportunities and grad school applications. Now that I've been at Edinburgh for a couple months, I can say without a doubt that deciding to study abroad was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

The main difference between studying at Caltech and here at Edinburgh has been how much more in control I've felt in terms of learning. While having weekly problem sets at Caltech makes it helpful to know what you need to learn, the lack of weekly assignments here gives you much more independence to dictate your own pace of learning. I've really enjoyed going to a bunch of different cafes around the city (most of them are within ten minutes from the university) and doing readings or assignments for tutorials. Furthermore, the classes I'm taking at Edinburgh have been really interesting and different from Caltech courses. The course offerings are so diverse here that you have the opportunity to explore interests from the history of bagpipes to learning about nature-inspired algorithms.

Speaking of interests, I've also had a lot of time to pick up new hobbies and travel on the weekends. The city of Edinburgh is gorgeous; I still haven't gotten used to looking up and seeing castles, gothic churches, and all sorts of amazing wynds and alleys. There are farmer's markets, weekly school events like ceilidhs (Scottish dances) and pub/café crawls and hikes you can do in the city. However, the best part of studying abroad has been how many options there are to explore Scotland and Europe. The international student society offers weekly trips to places throughout Scotland like Isle of Skye and Loch Ness and it's also really easy to buy cheap tickets to places like Iceland, Italy, and France (and basically every European country you can think of).

The living situation has also been really interesting. We live in 12-person flats in a residence not too far from the main campus. Most students don't live on campus after their first year, so the majority of my flat mates are freshmen. It's been so fun learning about how growing up in cities like Manchester or Glasgow is like and my flat always has fun dinner conversations learning about one another. There are also quite a few other exchange students in my flat who are from Caltech and they provide a nice sense of familiarity whenever we want to talk about stuff from back home.

Overall, I would definitely recommend studying abroad at the University of Edinburgh. There are not a lot of opportunities in life to get to live somewhere for just a couple months and coming to Edinburgh would make the best of this opportunity.

Helena Wu '20 - Computer Science Caltech/Informatics Edinburgh

My time studying abroad at the University of Edinburgh has been an overwhelmingly positive experience. I've surprised myself by trying new foods (like haggis), traveling frequently and easily, and befriending students from very different backgrounds.

I've grown to love the beautiful city of Edinburgh with its cobblestone streets, cute coffee shops, and scenic views. On a typical day after classes, I usually walk to a nearby café and

spend a few hours reading materials for the next lecture. On weekends in town, I've walked the Royal Mile, visited the Edinburgh Castle and climbed to the top of Arthur's Seat. The National Museum of Scotland (free entry!) is right across the street and holds many fascinating, world-famous exhibits such as Moby the Whale, Dolly the Sheep, and the Lewis Chessmen. Beyond the typical touristy activities, I've also enjoyed experiencing the bustling nightlife with my flat mates, and grabbing dinner and drinks at the local pubs.

The University of Edinburgh offers so many interesting classes that I initially had trouble finalizing my schedule. I'm particularly excited about taking Blockchains and Distributed Ledgers, a class about the cutting-edge blockchain technology, which is not offered at Caltech. I'm also taking Natural Computing, a class about optimization and search algorithms inspired by nature, which is especially applicable to artificial intelligence. In both of my CS classes, I've been assigned programming-heavy projects to gain hands-on experience on the topics covered in class. While collaboration and working through weekly problem sets was the norm at Caltech, independent study and reinforcement through the weekly tutorials (smaller discussion groups) are emphasized here.

Outside of classes, Edinburgh offers countless opportunities to explore extracurricular activities through the hundreds of societies. I'm really happy to be able to continue playing competitive Ultimate Frisbee with the team at Edinburgh, called Ro Sham Bo. Through this sports society, I've gotten to know my teammates through the biweekly trainings and Wednesday pub socials. I've even had the opportunity to travel with the team to play tournaments in Glasgow and Aberdeen! Another great way to stay active is with the university gym membership – I paid for one that included use of the climbing gym facilities and group exercise classes.

One of the highlights of studying abroad is having many opportunities to travel. One of my most memorable weekend trips was the Isle of Skye trip, hosted by the International and Exchange Student Society. I took hundreds of pictures, but the breathtaking sights – cotton-candy colored clouds, starry night skies, picturesque waterfalls, and the mysterious Old Man of Storr, are undoubtedly best experienced in-person. I would also highly recommend exploring Glasgow, an aesthetic cultural hub just a one-hour train ride away from Edinburgh. Outside of Scotland, some of my biggest travel plans include an ice cave and glacier hiking tour in Iceland and a visit to the United Nations European headquarters in Geneva in upcoming weekends.

Engaging in my classes, traveling often, and becoming integrated with the city have all helped me become a more independent yet sociable person. Studying abroad at Edinburgh has been beyond rewarding, and my college years wouldn't feel complete without such a memorable experience.

Juliette Xiong '19 - Computer Science Caltech/Informatics Edinburgh

When I got accepted to Caltech, I had already decided that I wanted to study abroad. The only question was where I wanted to go. I think that all of the study abroad schools are probably great options, but I absolutely fell in love with the city of Edinburgh this term. For one, the location is perfect - the flats where we stay in are in the heart of Old Town Edinburgh, which is a lively city full of history, culture, and beauty. Having grown up in the United States all of my life, staying at Edinburgh has been truly eye-opening for me. When I walk outside of my residence, I see restaurants, pubs, coffee shops, museums, patisseries, everywhere.

One thing that I had always longed for but never had while growing up was walkability, and that is certainly not lacking in Edinburgh. Every time I walk somewhere, I am awestruck by the beautiful architecture all around and will subconsciously stop and stare. Countless times I have gone grocery shopping, to class, or to the gym, and on the way back I happen upon a store that I had not been to before. This is actually how I discovered some of my favorite restaurants and coffee shops. Another thing that I have enjoyed here is the charity shops. I'm not sure where else they have these, but in Edinburgh there are thrift shops where the proceeds go to a particular charity. I have countless great finds there, and I don't know how I will bring them all back to the States. As a foodie, I want to quickly point out that the Indian food here is amazing and there are some great Japanese, Chinese, Malaysian, and Korean places here as well. Don't forget to try the Scottish food like haggis, which is incredible, and the desserts and pastries!

Additionally, the work here is much more independent and spaced out. Studying informatics here is particularly convenient because all of the classes are a 5-7 minute walk from where we stay. I am taking 2 informatics courses and 2 humanities courses, and I only have 2 sets and 2 essays besides finals. So, as you would imagine, there is a lot more time to delve deeply into topics and enjoy your hobbies instead of having to do weekly problem set after problem set. For instance, an ordinary day for me might look like this: wake up, eat breakfast, go to tutorial/classes, eat lunch, go to a coffee shop and do some work/readings, go to the gym, eat dinner, play board games, and sleep. It's a completely different experience here, being able to appreciate and absorb all of the events going on. One thing that has been ubiquitous here is involvement in societies. In welcome week, there is an activities fair where you can meet members of different societies and potentially join some. There are so many societies - cultural, academic, athletic - that I had never even heard of before! It's a great idea to join these because it's an easy way to meet other people outside of your flat and option. Another interesting thing that happened was that I got to know a lot of Caltech students who I had not talked to before, and have made some friends who I really enjoy spending time with. I'm not sure if this happens most years, but I'm really glad that it happened this year, because I am sure that I will maintain some of these friendships when I come back to tech.

Also, I know that it's tempting to travel all over Europe every weekend since everything is so close and the flights are so cheap - within the UK I've visited Glasgow, the Isle of Skye, Loch Ness, and London, and am going to Switzerland and Iceland. I am still planning more trips, but I think that it is important to spend time in Edinburgh as well to explore the city and get to know people at the university. For instance, I really enjoy farmers markets, and most of them are on weekends. In particular, I thought that the Edinburgh Farmers' Market and Grassmarket Market had splendid options for food and fun vintage-like decor.

Studying abroad is the best decision that I have made at Caltech, and I am so glad that I picked Edinburgh. I was certainly tempted to apply to other places, but I realized that I will potentially have other opportunities to live in some bigger, more tech-established cities. However, I wasn't sure if my future would easily take me to Edinburgh. I think that visiting Edinburgh and living here are completely different experiences. While Edinburgh is a lovely tourist city, I think that living here is an irreplaceable experience because it is not only exciting, lively, and full of culture but also comfortable and welcoming. Having been here for a month in a half, I am still in awe every time I step outside and see the architecture and nature, smell the lovely scent of ethnic food, and hear the mix of Scottish and English accents all around. I'm certain that I want to come back to visit again, and Edinburgh will forever have a special place

in my heart. If you study abroad, I truly urge you to pick Edinburgh - I could not asked for a better experience.

Julia Yang '19 – Electrical Engineering Caltech/ Electronics and Electrical Engineering Edinburgh

Before entering Caltech, I had asked some of my mentors and older friends what they most valued from their college experiences. I distinctly remember the look of bittersweet nostalgia on their faces when they answered with “studying abroad” followed immediately by a snap back into reality and strong insistence in their voices when they urged that I try to study abroad as well.

Now that I have been in Edinburgh for 6 weeks, I understand why they responded as they did. There are so many opportunities to grow, learn, travel, and explore.

Edinburgh, has been a particularly fantastic place to study abroad. The city, especially the area around Kincaid’s Court where I’ve been placed, is extremely walkable. Most of the surrounding streets are like condensed versions of Lake—there are hundreds of shops and restaurants to spend your life savings at, but all venues are pretty small (fitting a party of 8 in a restaurant can be difficult) and often narrow with multiple levels. I’ve also found that the city is much more condensed in many other ways. The up-down structure of shops is also reflected in the hills, steep wynds and closes (alleys), and layers of streets that offer endless opportunities for exploration. Attractions such as the Edinburgh Castle, Victoria Street, and The National Museum of Scotland are all within a 10-minute walk.

There also plenty of opportunities to explore Scotland and the rest of Europe. I’ve taken advantage of some of the organized bus tours offered, and traveled to Loch Ness and the Isle of Skye. The Waverly train station is also within a 10-minute walking radius, so I easily took a train up to Glasgow for a day trip. The plane tickets are also great prices, so I have plans to take some weekend trips around Europe after this “midterm” season.

Of course, however, study abroad is not all about travelling. The academics here have also shaped my experience greatly. There is significantly less *graded/assigned* work, which has allowed more schedule flexibility, but it also means I have been absorbing more material. I have more time to fully understand concepts, and I go to lectures and labs ready to actively absorb material (hopefully this helps with the final exams because most courses here are graded solely based off the exam). My EE classes are mostly lab courses where there are clear and explanatory lab instructions, and the Professor and TA’s walk around and answer questions. My HSS courses require readings of papers, and the tutorials provoke intimate conversations. There is also such a diversity of experts in their fields—my HSS courses have multiple lecturers who come to speak about their area of expertise, so every lecture has been in depth and well presented.

The accommodations also promote independence and self-management. I’ve been placed in a 12-person flat in Kincaid’s Court, a self-catered hall. For me, this has been quite fun because I love to cook and bake, and my flat has been unusually good about keeping the flat kitchen/lounge relatively clean (only a few unwashed pots and stolen goods so far). The residents of my flat are a mix of Scots, other Brits, and international students creating a

diversity of culture. I've had a good number of conversations discussing cultural similarities and differences, and it's been an eye-opening experience.

Eye-opening – I would say that's the best way to describe these past 6 weeks. Every week has brought me new memories, and I expect to go home with that same look of bittersweet nostalgia on my face.

Rebecca Zhang '20 - Astrophysics Caltech/Astrophysics Edinburgh

After spending a summer doing a SURF abroad in Europe and going directly to Edinburgh for my term abroad, I was still very much excited at the prospect of living abroad as I was fascinated by how much the city had to offer. There are so many museums and cultural centres to explore (and many of which are free of admission too!) on all sorts of subjects – the history of the city at the Museum of Edinburgh, the relics and symbols of childhood through time at the Museum of Childhood, and the re-telling of traditional stories from all cultures at the Scottish Storytelling Centre. There are all sorts of restaurants and cafés to visit with offerings from Korean street food to homemade pasta, making it a real paradise for foodies. Even better, the whole city is incredibly walkable and also has excellent and frequent bus connectivity if you don't feel like walking. The many gardens (oftentimes very small and "tucked away" behind bustling streets) and historic buildings make any stroll particularly scenic and refreshing, and any bus ride on the top deck always feels new and exciting, especially in autumn as the leaves are changing colours.

The learning structure is very different from that at Caltech, with a strong emphasis on self-management and taking the initiative to do extra problems or reading as necessary. It was interesting to encounter some classes with very different structures. For example, in one of my classes on lasers, there is an oral exam that requires both theoretical knowledge of different subjects in the class, and also on the spot problem solving skills. It was also particularly interesting to take a humanities class – Celtic Civilisation – very unique to the region and not offered at Caltech, giving me a glimpse into a culture and history that I didn't know much about before.

Another big perk of studying abroad in a major city in the UK like Edinburgh is the ease and relatively low cost of travel. There are very affordable plane and also train tickets to and from all sorts of British cities, and with very frequent and convenient service. In my time traveling, I have been able to meet many other travelers and expats from different places all over the globe, given the large international communities in many cities like Manchester and London. Similarly, it's particularly exciting to be able to meet students from all over the world in all places at the university, from bumping into people at the library to meeting new people at seminars or social events.

From my own experience, I can happily say that studying abroad at Edinburgh is a particularly rewarding experience, with much to learn in and out of the classroom, in and out of the city. There is much to learn about different cultures and places and is an interesting change of both personal and academic lifestyle from that at Caltech.