

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT COMMENTS MICHAELMAS 2017

Michelle Anthony '19, Computer Science, Cambridge Michaelmas/Corpus Christi College

Despite having made my decision to study abroad at Cambridge a long time ago, I was apprehensive about many things up until the moment I stepped into Corpus Christi College in a jet-lagged daze. Had I signed up for too many classes? What would the culture be like? How much of this place could I really see in a single term?

I don't mean to imply that all these questions evaporated from my mind the moment I moved in; instead, they were overwhelmed—pushed aside. Stepping into Cambridge as a student is an intense experience, and one that will knock you off your feet in a good but disorienting way. Donning your gown for the first time and signing your name in a book that indelibly marks you as a lifelong student of the college is only the beginning; experiences like actually living in the historic buildings, joining in the formal dinners and so on really make it clear that you have entered a different world. This is a world where, like Caltech, everyone dedicates themselves to academic excellence, but this is also a world where the weight of centuries-old tradition permeates every inch of daily life.

The differences from Caltech go beyond the formalities and fancy architecture. Cambridge is, after all, a college town; there is no well-defined grid of roads that defines the university's boundaries. Instead, the colleges and faculties are interspersed among the cobblestone streets, so the 'outside world' of pubs, shops and restaurants integrates neatly into student life. As someone who likes to take things slow, I particularly enjoy stopping by one of the many cafes around Corpus Christi for afternoon teatime or simply to take in the sights from the sidewalk. Nightlife is certainly present in spades if you wish to explore Cambridge after dark—there is no shortage of bar or clubbing events organised by various colleges and societies for those so inclined.

Cambridge in the fall was the perfect time to visit for me. The path to the Computer Science Laboratory out in West Cambridge takes me over the river and past a beautiful walkway that almost has the feel of walking through a forest; the reward at the end is a magnificent view of an open field. The air at this time of year is just cold enough to keep your mind clear. Scenery aside, because fall is also the start of the academic year, there are many events designed to get you to meet new people, such as get-togethers within the college or club welcome events.

Naturally, no discussion of Cambridge would be complete without the classes you will actually be taking. Study abroad is an excellent opportunity to seek out classes you will not be able to find at Caltech and experience a teaching style different from what you are used to. In fact, one of the factors that pushed me to pick Michaelmas over Lent

was a single class not available at Caltech (Natural Language Processing). Supervisions—highly personal tutoring sessions between one faculty member or graduate student and usually two to three students—are incredibly rewarding learning experiences! The preparatory work is reasonable, and because you have the opportunity to clarify what exactly you don't quite understand from the lectures with experts face-to-face, you will be able to gain a much deeper understanding of the material.

Thus far, I have found my time in Cambridge to be a great complement to my time at Caltech; there are many things I have come to love from this place, and also many things back at Caltech that I miss and have come to appreciate a little better. Ultimately, Study Abroad at Cambridge will undoubtedly get you way out of your comfort zone—and what better way is there to learn about the world?

Ida Huang '18, Electrical Engineering, Cambridge Michaelmas/Pembroke College

I vividly recall my first moments here, stepping out of the bus from the airport and landing in what seemed to be a time capsule taking me back a few hundred years. Cambridge is an architectural jewel. The rich history is a seminal part of the experience here as is the educational experience.

In Michaelmas term, I got to go through Fresher's week. During Fresher's week, I found that it was easy to meet new people at college. I also got to be part of Matriculation ceremony, where I signed the books that contained members of all members of the college. Being part of college reminds me a lot like being part of a house at Caltech. I was also put into a college family (a mix of upperclassmen and freshers). They helped answer any questions I had and also hosted a family night where we all went clubbing together.

The educational experience here has been rewarding. All my lectures are structured and well taught. All of my professors are engaging and do not just read off their lecture notes. The students here are very hard working, but do not tend to collaborate as much on problem sets as we do at Caltech. I have found that classes are taught at a fairly fast pace, but the professors are more than willingly to stop and explain any concepts over again.

Outside of classes, students here commit a lot of their time to societies and clubs. During Fresher's week, the Fresher's fair is where you will can sign up for societies. Because of this, there's great opportunity to either try something new or meet people with similar interests. I decided to join my college's rowing team as I enjoyed rowing and it is an activity not offered at Caltech. Many societies also do formal swaps or a pub crawl with other societies so it's a great way to interact and meet people outside of your college. Because so many people invest their time outside of school, there always seems to be an event or performance going on. I was able to attend a life drawing

class, watch a comedy show put on by Cambridge students, and listen to a local jazz band play at an independent coffee shop.

There's a lot to see and explore around Cambridge as well. I've visited the Fitzwilliam Museum a couple times already and I've enjoyed being able to take my time inside, as it is very accessible. I pass it on my way to classes every day. The Cambridge market square is also a great place to people watch and enjoy street food. London is just a train ride away if you are interested in getting out of Cambridge for a day.

Overall, studying abroad at Cambridge has been a great experience so far and I am extremely grateful for this opportunity.

Gyu Bin Jang '19, Chemistry, Cambridge Michaelmas/St. Catharines College

My time at Cambridge so far has been very unique and much more than what I expected. It was much more diverse, bigger, and friendlier place. I was little bit afraid to begin again as a newcomer in Cambridge because it was my first time to be in UK, and I knew I had to make a lot of effort to make new friends. However, it turned out that my worries were unnecessary; everyone was willing to help me even before I asked for it, and I enjoyed every conversation I had with people in Cambridge. For example, I arrived at my college at 9PM, and I met someone who just came back from their summer break in the Porter's Lodge. I had my luggage with me, and even before I said anything, she wanted to help me carry my bags to my new room and show me around the campus during the weekend. I was pleasantly surprised by this experience, and I am glad the I had the chance to.

One of the things I love about Cambridge is its environment. Every morning, I walk to the chemistry department. It's a 15-minute walk from St. Catharine's, so it is not too far away. This short walk however has everything you would want to experience in Cambridge. When I stroll down the pathway, I go by at least three unique coffee shops, three crosswalks that each lead to a new alleyway, the grand Fitzwilliam museum, two afternoon tea places, two restaurants, and a hotel. It's a busy cobbled street with cars and bikes, which makes me feel energetic each morning. I feel the cold breeze that wakes me up as I take my next step, and I would again admire beautiful historic buildings in Cambridge.

On my way back, I can choose between two pathways to get back to my college. I can either take the way that goes through a row of Asian restaurants that I haven't tried yet or take the path that I came from. It usually depends on what I want for lunch. I can go back to my hall to get food or get food from one of the restaurants/cafes or the market place near my college. Lunch is one of the most exciting time of the day because I get to explore new foods that only Cambridge can offer.

Students in Cambridge are very passionate about their studies. In Fresher's week, I have met freshers, and, unlike Caltech, some people are studying Music, Law, History,

Veterinary Science, Medicine, etc. I have enjoyed the interesting conversations we had during the Fresher's event, and all of them were excited to start the term to learn their studies. Students I've met in Part III Chemistry course were also very passionate about Chemistry and their projects. In an excited tone, one of the students I've met explained her project for this year, and how much she is eager to start working on this project.

Moreover, the supervision system in Cambridge is invaluable. I am taking Part III Chemistry course in Cambridge, which is equivalent to senior year courses in Caltech, but because I am a junior, the classes I am taking are quite hard for me. Sometimes there are questions that I am not sure how to approach it, and during the supervision, I can ask my supervisor to go over the parts that I don't understand. Because supervision is with only one other student, it is easy to approach him and learn the materials. Studying abroad is a great opportunity to explore Chemistry without worrying about my grades, and learn what I am interested in among numerous categories within Chemistry.

In Cambridge, there are countless societies such as wine tasting, music, rowing, windsurfing, photography, tea, archery, trampolining, and cultural societies. Joining societies is a good way to make new friends outside your colleges because it is a more relaxed setting with people who have common interest as you. Among these societies, I luckily had a chance to join Catz music society (Catzapella), rowing, and tea society. Because it is a Michaelmas, it was easier to join them like other Freshers and meet new friends in the Fresher's *Squash* for each society. Especially in rowing, it emphasized being part of the whole group, which helped everyone bond together while we were in the water. I also had opportunities to go to tasting sessions to try out new activities such as archery and trampolining. These opportunities are easily found during Michaelmas as new freshers are coming in.

These four weeks in Cambridge has been amazing so far. I have made precious memories, and I am excited to make more during the rest of this term. After all, how common would it be to discuss with a professor about the science of eating and actually experiment whether cheese will float in the water during Matriculation Dinner. I am glad that I have met new friends here, and I will definitely cherish these unique memories.

Sandra Ning '18, Computer Science, Cambridge Michaelmas/St. John's College

Despite being a natural worrier and having my fair share of misgivings about studying abroad, being at Cambridge has truly been an irreplaceable experience. As you apply for study abroad, you might be concerned about missing opportunities at Caltech (not to mention your friends). Perhaps you need specific credits for graduation, or you planned to do research next year. While these are serious concerns that must be thought through, don't doubt that Cambridge can offer an equal wealth of cultural, academic, and career opportunities.

The first thing that struck me about Cambridge was the refreshing change of scenery. Michaelmas is an especially good term to be at Cambridge if you love autumn, or nature in general. The weather, although certainly much colder than California, hasn't yet plunged into winter and, as a result, many days are unexpectedly pleasant. I appreciated the brisk winds, lush vegetation, and the occasional days of beautiful sunlight. The nights here are also under-appreciated; compared to Pasadena and Los Angeles, there is less light pollution and smog. On a clear Saturday night during the Orionids, I was able to walk just five minutes away from St. John's College and catch sight of some meteoroids burning through the sky. Aside from the natural surroundings, the old cobblestone roads, artfully embellished windows and quaint buildings create a charming city whose architecture is incredibly different from Pasadena.

A good tip to remember is that the museums and botanical garden of Cambridge are all free to students. There is no pressure to explore everything within just one visit, since you can come any time with no penalty. I was very excited about exploring England's natural surroundings, and joined the Nature Society here (although if you like hiking, perhaps the hillwalking or rambling society might suit your tastes more). Trains can take you to nearby fens (wetland reserves) like Wicken and Lakenheath, or in the other direction to London.

Another thing unique to Michaelmas term is the societies fair, which takes place during the first week. The societies are incredibly diverse. Not only are there art, music, cultural, sport, professional and volunteer societies, but they can be Cambridge-wide or college-specific. Societies at Cambridge are much more active than clubs at Caltech, which gives you ample opportunity to try something new. I joined societies I knew I would enjoy, like the Nature Society and Board Games Society, but also explored the Tiddlywinks Society, which is a society focused on the quirky and surprisingly strategic game of flipping chips onto other plastic chips. Studying abroad during Michaelmas term means being present when these societies are actively searching for new members, which can make finding like-minded people easier.

Academically speaking, Cambridge is about as fast-paced as Caltech is; the Michaelmas term is 8 weeks long and Computer Science students take anywhere from four to seven classes during that time. However, these classes are short, taking up only the first or second half of the term. This allows students to sample a variety of different topics, although some courses are continuations or complements to others. Despite the fast pace of the classes, all lectures take place between 9am to 1pm. Although some time between 1-5pm may be devoted to meeting with your supervisors, this scheduling gave me ample time during the afternoon to review the lecture material and work on the exercises given to me. I really appreciated having the time to process the concepts that I learned in lecture. Furthermore, supervisions can be an amazing asset to the learning process. When a supervisor goes over the course concepts and the exercises assigned, it feels like the perfect combination of lecture and homework review that is normally split between recitations and office hours at Caltech.

Cambridge also offers a lot of opportunities for networking and job finding for their Computer Science students. E-mails are regularly sent out about visiting speakers or company-held events for students. I was surprised and pleased to find an e-mail inviting international and exchange students to an informational session about working in the UK. If working abroad is something you're thinking about trying, the Cambridge Computer Laboratory supports you with a good amount of professional events.

Studying at Cambridge has shown me that while many things are similar, the differences are notable and thought-provoking. Those differences cover all aspects of life, from the apparent lack of public bathrooms in England to the English education system. I think living in Cambridge has broadened my perspective and allowed me to question the way things are, and how they should be.

Willis O'Leary '18, Chemistry, Cambridge Michaelmas/St. John's College

Being a student at Cambridge is much different – and even better – than I expected. I highly recommend the experience. I arrived at St. John's College exhausted after 18 hours of travelling. I walked under the shadow of the college's enormous "chapel" (read: cathedral) and into the porter's lodge. I must have looked quite pitiful; a kind porter guided me on a five-minute walk across the college to my "dorm room" (read: two-story mini apartment). My room at John's has a desk, chairs, and a clean and modern bathroom on the first floor (my own.) There are enormous windows that let in tons of natural light and provide a view of the Cambridge skyline. My bedroom is on a second floor with access to the rooftop. Overall, the rooms at St. John's are large by Caltech standards.

The city of Cambridge is often pictured front-and-center on UK travel brochures – and for good reason. Mismatched buildings line charming, winding streets. Crooked chimneys and gothic steeples dot the skyline. During Michaelmas term, the trees turn brilliant hues of red and orange. In the early morning, fog and bicyclists descend on the city while pedestrians stream along narrow sidewalks. Late at night, groups of students wander between pubs, clubs, and food trucks. In short, Cambridge is the antithesis of the sprawl of Los Angeles.

On average, I have two hours of lectures in the morning. In terms of student engagement and lecture style, Cambridge lectures are no different from those of Caltech (though they use projectors rather than blackboards). However, unlike Caltech, you are not expected to take comprehensive notes. Packets of typeset notes are distributed at the beginning of courses, and you can jot down important points in the margins. After my lectures, I usually go for coffee and a sandwich, either at the chemistry department's canteen or at one of the countless cafés within walking distance. I then return to the department for supervisions, hour-long meetings with a professor (or grad student) during which we review problems sets and discuss lecture.

Supervisions are extremely helpful and engaging. They are somewhat like Caltech's office hours, but far more directed, individual, and (in my opinion) useful.

Michaelmas is an exciting time to be a student at Cambridge. Cambridge's end-of-year exams lie well beyond the horizon, so students are generally quite happy and free. As a result, social opportunities abound. I do most of my socializing in societies (clubs), which are very active during Michaelmas. As part of the hiking society, I get to visit beautiful natural spaces in England nearly every weekend. I've dabbled in the Sailing society (sailed for a few hours) and the Tiddlywinks society (just Google it). Societies are a great way to meet like-minded people; as a bonus, many societies organize socials, formal dinners, and pub crawls. Another benefit of Michaelmas term is formal dinners in hall, which are very well attended. We sit at long wooden tables under a high ceiling watched over by portraits of various preeminent alumni. This setting makes donning your academic robes and engaging in some meal-time banter even more enjoyable.

In conclusion, Cambridge is a wonderful place to study abroad. The city is totally different from LA, and the academic environment during Michaelmas is more relaxed than at Caltech. However, Cambridge (and England) also feels welcoming and familiar; I feel right at home.

Madelyn Wang '19, Engineering, Cambridge Michaelmas/Corpus Christi College

In the past four weeks I've spent at Cambridge, I've been able to experience so much more than I ever imagined. Cambridge University is home to thousands of students, divided into 31 colleges. For me, my home is at Corpus Christi, the second smallest college. I matriculated with 82 incoming freshers, in a formal hall decorated with stained glass and lined with the portraits of former masters and the first female fellows. During matriculation itself, we dressed in traditional gowns and attended a ceremony conducted in Latin, signing two books that inducted us as members of the college and of the university for life. I felt so lucky to have that experience, especially since I'm only studying here for one term.

During Freshers' Week, I met many first-years through college-held events such as punting on the river Cam. Four or five people can sit in the flat-bottomed boat, with one person standing at the stern to punt. Propelling the boat involves quickly dropping a long metal rod into the water, pushing the rod against the river bottom, and then rapidly lifting the pole out of the water. It's a great way to see Cambridge from a different perspective. At the Activities and Societies Fair, there were hundreds of societies available to join, ranging from arts and music to whiskey appreciation societies and more. One club, called the Cake Fairies Society, delivers free cake to you once a term! I've found that the societies here are much more active than the clubs at Caltech. Most have weekly outings, whether it is going to a pub, taking a train out of Cambridge to explore, or just socializing with other members while playing a board game or

watching a movie. It's easy to meet other students outside of the college through societies, especially as most will hold a 'squash' at the beginning of the term, which is a kind of taster session to meet new and old members and find out what the society is about. I joined Corpus' rowing team, the Cambridge baseball team, as well as the Hillwalking Society, where we go on hiking trips in national parks around the UK. There are so many events constantly happening in Cambridge that it's easy to fill up your entire week with all sorts of events.

Another special aspect of Cambridge life is attending formal dinners. Each college's formal is a bit different, with the halls being decorated differently, or the food being served differently, or other idiosyncrasies. There are even themed formals; I just attended a Halloween formal at Corpus last night, where everyone dressed up in costume ('fancy dress') rather than the usual formal dress and gown. In addition to formal dinners, there are opportunities to attend classical performances and the choral evensong. I attended a performance of Stravinsky's L'Histoire du Soldat at St. Catherine's, and am looking forward to going to more. There are also theatre and comedy shows such as the Footlights Smokers, and all these events are usually within a ten or fifteen walk!

Academically, I've found Cambridge to be similar to Caltech in terms of the course load and how challenging the classes are. Since these are advanced courses, they can be quite difficult, but I've found my professors to be passionate about what they're teaching and the students to be attentive and focused. Cambridge also has a supervision system, where we meet in groups of 2-5 with either the professor or a graduate student, at least in the Engineering department. The supervisions are good opportunities to go over the homework, ask questions, and better understand the subject material, all in a relaxed and encouraging environment.

Overall, studying abroad in Cambridge is a once in a lifetime experience, and I already know I'll be sad to leave. With all sorts of events happening constantly and easy access to London, I've found Cambridge to be truly an exciting place, and I'm glad to have had the opportunity to study here.