

'All the places I've seen in textbooks are now in front of me'

During the university's London Study Program, Cal Poly students and faculty immerse themselves in local culture as they study the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The following student journal excerpts (edited for brevity) reflect the exhilaration of exploring new impressions in the Old World.

Students live and learn in London



The rain pours down while taxis make their way noisily down Old Brompton Road. Business people rush about for morning coffee and newspapers. I look out my window at the magnificent Victoria [and Albert] Museum across the road, then head to Westminster Abbey to research Shakespeare's monument and other memorials. Later I walk down to Knightsbridge and order a sandwich in a local cafe. I politely ask, "Where's the loo?", say "Cheers!", and move on to the Tate Gallery, where I view art by Picasso and Turner. Once again I have been exposed to a world I have never known before.

— Jessica Ciarla (speech communication junior)

Our room has a balcony that looks out onto a tranquil garden with beautiful trees and flowers. We can also walk the neighborhood and pass by all varieties of Indian, Thai, Greek, and Italian restaurants and small family grocery stores. I feel like I'm not just living in London but experiencing many other cultures as well. It is very easy to notice the "big" picture, but it's also important to stop and take in the small rewards.

— Amy Cortez (speech communication junior)



Each day here has been filled with new sights, smells, foods, and a way of life that I am still growing accustomed to. My nights are filled with musicals [and plays] and a never-ending nightlife. School is intense because of the shortened term. Each class has a British focus, enabling us to learn a lot about this country and city.

— Joel Bingham (Extended Ed)

"The Temple and the Inns of Court? Sounds bizarre," I thought as I got off the tube [the London subway] to join my walking tour. Turns out the Temple is a church built by the Knights Templar [a 12th century religious order] and the Inns of Court were homes for all the city lawyers. The Tudor Hall with its Inner Temple was erected by Queen Elizabeth, and Shakespeare premiered one of his plays [Twelfth Night] there for her.

— *Stephanie Avey (computer science senior)*



Today I went to Easter service in Westminster Abbey. We were seated in the choir section of the Abbey, with its beautiful wooden pews and elaborate handcrafted carvings. Our singing echoed off the walls and created the feeling of angels singing all around me. I couldn't help but relive Princess Diana's funeral, with Elton John singing "Candle in the Wind" and Earl Spencer giving his heartfelt eulogy.

— *Tasha Cain (business administration senior)*

Last weekend I bought a ticket to the distant suburb of Amersham and was amazed at how quiet and calm it was compared to central London. When I got to the end of the line, something else unexpected happened: the driver invited me into the cab of the train! He showed me the switching and auto-stop mechanisms and told me some great anecdotes.

— *Joshua Lehan (computer science senior)*



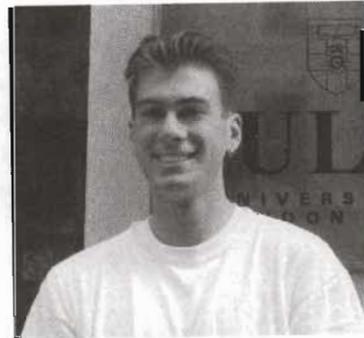


All the famous places I've seen in textbooks are now in front of me. At the National Gallery I've seen Monet, Renoir, Van Gogh, Picasso. We've been to the Tower of London, the London Museum, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's Cathedral. We spent a weekend in Paris, where we saw the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and the Musee d'Orsay, and walked down the Champs Elysees. After mid-quarter break we're traveling to Ireland and Scotland. I'm so excited.

— Bree Allen (civil engineering junior)

Today in Amsterdam we saw the Anne Frank house. All my life I've heard about this place but never ever imagined I would actually go there. I walked around downstairs in the office area, then went behind the famous bookshelf to the annex apartment. Even though the original furniture was confiscated by the Nazis, there were dioramas of how it was set up. I also saw Anne Frank's original diary. A lot of my own family was sent to concentration camps, as were these people after their capture on Aug. 9, 1944, and it was touching to see the house.

— Scott Feldstein (computer engineering junior)



The British people really are different, from the way they dress, eat, and talk, to their political and social views. I always thought of England in an abstract way, but lately when I hear news about peace talks in Ireland, or the value of the pound to the dollar, or the weather in Scotland, I pay closer attention. These things have meaning that they didn't have five weeks ago. Living here has increased my awareness of global affairs more than any class ever could! There is simply no replacement for the first-hand experience.

— Rob McAfee (computer science senior)