

**EXCHANGE REPORT****Name**

Anne de Koster

Year and term for exchange

Year 2, term I and II, Msc

Exchange university

UCL Bartlett School of Planning

Degree programme

Sustainable Urban Planning and Design

The Ultimate Urban Experiment

Before departure

I applied to spend my second year of my MSc programme at UCL for several reasons. I really wanted to take more modules on social issues such as gentrification and urban heritage, both topics the Bartlett school offered a variety of modules on. I also had been to London several times, and really liked the city – it seemed like a great chance to live there and experience all the urbanisms such a large city has to offer.

Upon arrival

I arrived one week before the programme started, which was close to three weeks before the first term really kicked off. I found my own housing through a British flat-sharing website (which was easy!) and used the first days to get to know the neighbourhood. The university offered several introduction sessions, I had access to the general sessions and one specific to exchange students. I was one of the only MSc exchange students at the faculty so we had a quite tailored intro-session.

Financials

I received an Erasmus grant. Unfortunately, a pound does not stretch far in London so I also upped my student loans a little bit and worked part-time (which I really enjoyed).

Accommodation

As mentioned above, I found it privately. I decided to live out of zone one because of the high amount of tourism and pollution here. I lived with an English girl my age, who, like me, spent a lot of time out and about. British housing can be quite bad (humid, cramped) but I liked our apartment!

University and studies

UCL is a very large university. Bartlett has several departments, but I was also allowed to take a max of 50% of my modules at other faculties. I attended a module at the architecture department and another at the development department of Bartlett, and also took two modules outside of the Bartlett, at the geography faculty. The administrative staff was very accommodating and let me change modules at several points. I was also appointed a personal tutor at Bartlett I could email when I needed help, which was nice whenever I really got lost navigating the university. Luckily this was not very often, we were given a handbook in our first week that was very useful.

Courses

I attended nine modules, though two were merely for auditing. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, I ended up dropping out of one module in term II. The six modules I completed were on urban design, participatory urban planning, urban heritage, and urban theory. I especially enjoyed the smaller

selectives, such as the two modules on heritage, the module on urban food production I audited, and the geography module about the deindustrialisation and gentrification of London.

City and country

London is a fantastic city to live in...if you are not struggling to pay rent. It is very beautiful and I actually met a lot of really great people, found it easy to find housing and a part-time job. However, it is also very expensive and traveling often takes a while. It can also be difficult to navigate yourself through a city with so many people, so I understand the city is not everyone's cup of tea. Politically, the situation in the UK is quite charged as a EU national at the moment of course.

Leisure and social activities

Commuting! I preferred biking over using the tube and bus so I spent a lot of time dodging cars. Also eating out a lot, enjoying the many cultural scenes, exploring different neighbourhoods. The city is so big you don't need to travel to other cities or places to discover new things.

Other recommendations and observations

If you can bike, get a bike! Nothing beats biking over the Thames, along Trafalgar Square or along one of the canals.