Study abroad. A pair of words that have crossed the mind of every college student. So many possibilities and endless opportunities. I’ve always wanted to do it, I just never knew when. Then I arrived at the University of Houston where I was finally presented with all the help and information I needed to do something I’ve longed to do for some time now. Thanks to the UH Learning Abroad Office, I would soon be calling Swansea, Wales my new home for the semester.

When I arrived in London, the new feeling of travelling completely on my own for the first time instantly kicked in. Getting from my terminal to the exit was no big deal, however finding the correct floor was a bit of a hassle. You see, the floor labeling works a little differently in the UK compared to back home. The “ground” floor is actually the first floor and the “first” floor is actually the second floor (to us Americans that is). Can you relate to my initial confusion? I eventually made it to my hotel and began exploring London.

The next morning it was back to the airport to meet fellow UH Coog David Phan. I had met David briefly at our Pre-Departure Orientation back in December. We had agreed to meet at London Heathrow so that we could navigate our way to Swansea together. If someone had been recording us, you’d immediately be able to pick us out in the crowd. Running around the airport trying to figure out how to get to the train station. Finally, we made our way to London Paddington Train Station and hopped on a train to our new home, Swansea, Wales.

Day 3 in the UK and it was finally time for the International Students Orientation (getting there was quite an interesting journey as well). We were split up into groups and seated at a table with other exchange students. They immediately began going over the basics of every orientation, with a few ice breakers in between (yay for ice breakers, am I right?).

After a morning of going over the usual, we were released to register for classes and purchase our bus passes. We walked downstairs to the university’s Travel Shop (yes, they have one of those) to purchase our bus passes. Aside from that, my new friends and I decided it’d be a good idea to splurge on tickets for trips around the country that the shop offered on the weekends. Places including Liverpool, the city of Bath, and the Harry Potter Studios Tour in London.
Once we got that out of our systems, we split up to register for our modules. This is where the real confusion began Back home, when you’re ready to register for classes, you typically visit your advisor and then you go online and register for your courses. Well that wasn’t the case at Swansea University. Here, you have to go to each individual department, speak with an advisor, figure out what you’re taking, and then go online to blackboard (finally something familiar) register for your course, as well as the workshops and seminars that go along with it. OH! I almost forgot, you also don’t get to pick your schedule... You pick a course and there’s only one designated time for it and that’s when you go to it. Convenient, right?

Now, I know what you must be thinking “Wow, Erika... Studying abroad sounds horrible.” But I can assure you, it’s not. Once we got the bus system figured out, and our schedules in place, everything else began to fall into place.

I was fortunate enough to be placed in a flat with some pretty great roommates. Fellow UH Coog Leslie, Chloé from Australia, and Jordyn from Canada. We all get along very well and even travel together on some weekends.

All in all, Swansea Uni has been an adventure so far. Being able to study abroad has always been a lifelong dream of mine and now, I’m finally living it. Can’t wait to tell y’all about the rest of my adventures. Until next time, Go Coogs!