

## **Man Sik Mina Chan**

Plagued with Doubt? Don't Worry!

Summer vacation is wonderful. Free to do what we wish, we pass our time by visiting friends and family, taking on a job or two, and dabble in our hobbies. For the outgoing exchange student, it is a period full of consternation: Why do I need to list every country I've been to in the last ten years on my visa application? Which student housing should I pick? What in the world is a BRP and why do I need to pay extra for it?

Allow me to assuage your concerns by offering a tempting solution to all your problems: Have you considered the option of...not going?

Fortunately, I managed to prevent myself from reaching that conclusion.

Challenge 1: When the cons outweigh the pros.

Imagine this: You're frustrated from your advisor bombarding you with factual information and none of the assurance you implicitly asked for in a politely worded email, it's taking ages for your visa application, and you have the niggling thought that maybe this wasn't worth the time, effort, and money.

What does one do? Create expectations out of thin air! With the help of Tripadvisor, I made plans to bask in the glory that is West End theatre, resolve my acrophobia at the Seven Sisters, and promised my friend to visit Teletubbyland at some point. I also took the time to search for honest advice from students at my host university through Reddit and YouTube to understand what I'm getting myself into.

Don't feel discouraged. It's research time!

Challenge 2: When you're feeling homesick already.

I remember starting university away from home. Within a month, the longing for home outweighed the spirit for adventure. This time, I'm more prepared: I brought along teddies bears and oversized hoodies—things from home that will comfort me during my inevitable moments of distress. Another effective solution to cope with such afflictions is to create Facebook and Whatsapp groups with my fellow UK-bound peers. I'll have a couple of blue days, at least in the beginning, but misery loves company.

Challenge 3: Fear of being an outsider.

The irrational fear of not fitting in never fails to rear its head in new surroundings. But fear not! There are many parts of one's identity that transcend nationality and culture. Find school clubs and activities on your host university's website that correlate with your interests. Say yes to opportunities that facilitate new connections! One's insecurities should never impede with the imperative to have a good ol' time.

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The process of preparing for an exchange programme is beset with self-doubt, and being in a foreign country can feel overwhelming. Yet simultaneously, overseas exchanges can be full of invaluable experiences that can completely overturn the way you see the world.

So, the next time you long to throw up your hands and cry “I’ve had enough!”, kindly take another look at your destination and you’ll come to the natural conclusion that yes, it’ll be all worth it.