

Thinking of studying abroad? Here's what I wish I knew 6 months ago!

Studying abroad is one of the greatest things about university, but let's be real – it can also be stressful and come with its fair share of challenges. So here are the top three challenges that I've encountered while preparing for my year abroad, and that I expect to encounter once I am abroad – and how to overcome them

As a chronically indecisive person, the first big challenge for me was ... choosing where to go for my year abroad. There's just so many options and it's so hard to narrow it down! As a first step, I thought about my different criteria: things like my budget, the type of climate I prefer, preference for urban versus rural campuses, course offer in my area of interest, and so on... – if you're still looking for universities that fit YOUR criteria, try this quiz I created:

<https://www.opinionstage.com/kat-r/where-should-you-study-abroad!> But once I'd found several suitable universities, as a second step, I also had to realize that between those, there wasn't one ideal choice – it simply comes down to gut feeling a little bit as well, so don't drive yourself crazy overthinking it either!

Once I had finally picked my destination and gotten everything sorted, my next challenge was to figure out how to actually get there – between crazy ticket prices, all the luggage I want to bring, and trying to be as climate-friendly as possible, it wasn't super easy to find a good option. After much searching, I found a great deal for those going from Europe to the UK, or vice versa – an Interrail pass (<https://www.interrail.eu/en/interrail-passes/global-pass>) will cost you 185€, which sounds like a lot but gives you 4 days of free travel on any European trains and lets you take unlimited luggage. That way, I can squeeze in an end-of-summer vacation and then go on to London with as much luggage as I want, all with the same ticket and in a climate-friendly way! Of course, if you're going overseas, you may need to fly – check www.skyscanner.com for cheap flights and consider shipping luggage instead of checking it, it's often cheaper!

Finally, as a vegetarian with food allergies, I was concerned about going to a new country where I won't be able to find the usual products and dishes I know I can eat. Luckily, I found apps (<https://appadvice.com/app/myfoodfacts/367171860> for example) that let you scan products at the supermarket and will tell you at a glance whether they contain anything you're avoiding – and if you want to read the label yourself but it's in a foreign language, there's an app to help with that too (<https://www.itranslate.com/>). I also made sure my accommodation provides a full kitchen so that I can make my own food and not be forced to rely on canteens and restaurants that may not have suitable options.

I'm sure I'll encounter more challenges still – but I'll gladly tackle them because that is part of why studying abroad makes you grow so much!