

Zoe Dahse – Dear Zoe!

Dear Zoe!

I hope that when you read this again, after your study abroad placement, you'll be comforted. I hope you did all you said you would and found ways to overcome the challenges you faced in living sustainably.

A year in Madrid. In a country you love, and have always wanted to live in. You're so excited right now, settling in, and using the language wherever you can. I'm sure in a year you will have learnt a lot.

But the important stuff. Climate anxiety is something you've struggled with for years, to the point of ignoring the news as much as you can. Doing what you can but knowing it doesn't contribute much on a global scale.

Your own country did not participate in the UN's most recent Climate Ambition Summit. The UK is backtracking on its own promises. You feel like the politicians won't do what they promised they would do.

But you've always believed that there is hope in powerlessness.

So, what can you do this year? In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, here are some ideas:

I hope you help homeless people, talk to them, and buy them dinner.

Lead with empathy and consideration.

Volunteer for a social cause that matters to you: educating girls.

Look after your flatmates, even if they haven't openly asked for help.

I hope you call out Spain's machismo problem when you see it and empower women around you. Your Hungarian flatmate has already done this for you on a night out.

You've noticed water stations all over the city, so always carry a bottle with you to refill.

Get a part-time job in a bar and contribute to the economic growth of the country.

Figure out a way to eat sustainably. You've figured out the recycling system, but how can you buy food that won't go to waste? Less is more.

Eat less meat and buy that leather jacket you've always wanted second-hand.

I know you want to travel but take alternative ways of transport.

The following website tells you how the train is a better form of transport:

<https://www.renfe.com/es/es/grupo-renfe/transporte-sostenible/en-el-centro-de-la-movilidad-sostenible>

This website tells you that your flight from London to Madrid created 0.246t of Co2.

0.600 t should be the maximum you make in a year:

https://co2.myclimate.org/en/calculate_emissions

So, a major problem lies in flying. You'll feel guilty when you visit your grandparents in Germany who you haven't seen in a year, but you can offset it. Travel intentionally.

I hope you walk for miles every day, whenever you can. It's good for you, and it's good for the earth.

Use the apps Vinted, Ecosia and Too Good 2 Go to maximise the good you can do.

Actually, hoping is not enough. I want you to do the above.

"'Tengo que pensar sin limites', no 'quiero pensar sin limites'" is what your professor told you on your first day here.

"'I have to dream without limits', not 'I want to dream without limits.'"

Love and hope forever,

Zoe