Erfahrungsbericht Nottingham, England

When I first decided to study a semester abroad, I knew immediately that I wanted to go to England. Ever since my first stay in this cloudy, rainy country I fell in love with the English language and the wild countryside. England surely is a place of incredibly nice bus drivers, pubs, live music and historic castles. Therefore, my five months in England were meant to become adventurous and exciting.

Home

Finding a place to live turned out to be one of the biggest challenges of my stay in Nottingham. I had read in various other „Erfahrungsbericht“ beforehand that finding a room would be easy and could be organized from England directly rather than in advance. Therefore, trustworthy as I was, I created a profile on couchsurfing.com and surprisingly it did not take long to find a first host in Nottingham. The tricky thing with couchsurfing, however, is that you never know in advance what kind of people you are going to live with. So you might end up in a really messy household (which is - sadly - pretty typical of British shared houses) or find yourself living a 45 minutes bus drive away from the city centre.

House hunting is not any less unpredictable, either. The place I looked at in Lenton - the student area in Nottingham - looked great and promising, but the sudden increase of rent once I wanted to sign the contract was a real shock. Two weeks later I was finally able to find a great place in West Bridgford, a really nice area close to the river Trent, with three great flat mates (British, Spanish and Dutch). Rent was very expensive and the house was rather further outside the centre. On the plus side, however, I had a really nice room, a big kitchen and floor heating in the bath room.

Life in the city
As my flat was not located inside the city centre and I had to travel to two different campuses every week I decided to hire a bike within the first days of my semester in Nottingham. A decision that was clearly one of the best I made! Nottingham Trent University makes it really easy for exchange students to be mobile in the city. For one year exchange students they offer a real cheap bus ticket for the whole year, which sadly was not really efficient for only five months, however. Therefore, the NTU bike hire is a real treat. For only 20pounds you can hire a bike for the entire first semester, equipped with breaks, lights and any further repair that might be needed. Having lived in Bremen for over two years now I was used to biking everyday and really enjoyed the daily ride to university. I soon realized that it only took me 10 to 15 minutes to get into the city centre, which made the purchase of a monthly bus ticket entirely unnecessary. The only downside of biking in Nottingham (especially compared to the exemplary facilities of Bremen): there are almost no bike lanes at all and most care drivers are quite rude and unreasonable when it comes to overtaking. Nonetheless, I would not give in the laziness of taking a bus, particularly the number 11 often did not show up without warning. Therefore, after week two, I was already used to biking on the left side of the street that I was totally confused by the right side traffic in an American movie that I watched with a Finish friend of mine one night.

University and student life
Studying in England is quite nice. The lectures mostly only consisted of 50 students at most. Compared to large, crowded lecture halls with up to 500 students in Bremen this was a welcome alternation and created a cosy, collective atmosphere. The journalism course at Trent is a very interesting and challenging study program which I enjoyed most of my studies. Our Professors sent us out into the streets on the very first day of class to interview complete strangers and then made us write a full article. This would be the course of every Monday that was to follow. Therefore, we got a lot of practice at writing all
different kinds of articles - features, interviews, news articles - and the feedback was always constructive and helpful. Sadly, the seminars for political science were not as challenging. As an erasmus student I was only able to chose from a certain range of seminars, most of which being for first and second year students. Nonetheless, assessment methods such as discussion board entries were very interesting and permitted a lively interaction with fellow students. The only downside of Trent University is the fact that it has three different campus locations. I was so thrilled to see that the main campus was right inside the city centre that I totally forgot about the possibility that my classes might take place at Clifton Campus, which is a good 30 to 45 minutes bike ride away from the centre.

The huge choice of sport facilities and societies at Trent and the University of Nottingham made up for the long bike rides, however. England is a great country for students when it comes to group activities. With the students union - a building exclusively designed for the needs of students - I was able to go climbing, trampolining, join zumba classes or hit the gym, all on campus. After a nice workout you could go next door to the student’s restaurant and at night party in the disco. To me, the best society would have been the swing society, however. Three times a week they offered lessons ranging from beginners to intermediates as well as social dancing with incredibly nice teachers and fellow dancers. As England is furthermore known for it’s pub culture with lots of live music, it was not hard at all to find some live jazz and swing music every week and go out dancing in the city.

Trips
Apart from the busy days and evenings during the week, the weekend always offered a great opportunity to go and travel the country. Trent University offers a day trip almost every weekend, Saturday and Sunday, so the choice is big. Even for an England fan like me there were still lots of places left to discover. With Nottingham being in the centre of
England, cities like Liverpool are only a bus ride away, which means that you get to spent all day in the city. Apart from visiting new places and cities you also get to know a lot of students during those day trips and in the end you can bring home a lot of great pictures.

Welcome Week
Certainly the best seven days were those during welcome week! The University of Bremen does offer a *Orientierungswoche* as well for the first semester students, but it is nothing compared to the welcome week organized by the British students. A thick brochure full of events for every single day of the first week of term was handed out to us on the very first day. From then on we could chose from sport activities, society meet and greats as well as theme lunches at the Global lounge and free barbecue at night inside the courtyard of Newton building.

Conclusion
All in all I must say that I had a great time in Nottingham. The one semester went by way too fast, sadly. I can defiantly recommend going for a whole year. This way, it is easier to get to know especially the British students and form even closer relationships. On the other hand, however, due to the time limit I had, I savored every day I had in Nottingham. This way, I got to join most of the day trips, went to almost every party I could attend and therefore had the time of my life. Furthermore, it is now easier to catch up on my work back in Bremen and to complete my Bachelor.