

The UK from Up Above

"You have control now."

"I have control, Sir."

Before I came to the UK, I wrote two lists. One was of all the things I feared about coming to study abroad, and the other was of all the reasons why, against all those fears, I still wanted it so badly. What happens in my heart when I look at these lists now? - Chemical reactions. Fears bursting up in flames, their ashes flushed away by waves of new experiences I had never imagined. Coming to the UK gave me the chance to become the individual I had always wanted to be. It is all about learning, experiencing, achieving, and being spellbound by everything around me at all times.

People tell me I've grown... I tell them it's because of the rain, but it's not.

Learning how to do a tie, finding my way through the enormous campus, playing laser tag for the first time, falling in love with Economics, watching the fireworks on Guy Fawkes night, seeing a pantomime in Glasgow, listening to carols from the hills of Edinburgh, going to my first ceilidh, having my first kiss, travelling by train to London for the Team Maths Challenge, getting badly ill before my prelims but passing them with flying colours - this is only a rough sketch of what my life looks like at the moment. A life that is painfully challenging, incredibly rewarding, absurdly beautiful, and without any doubt: WORTHWHILE.

Before I came here, the typical Scotsman looked something like William Wallace to me – William Wallace dressed in a kilt and shouting in Gaelic at the Loch Ness Monster. By the time I leave, he will look more like an Adam Smith dressed in a kilt, drinking IrnBru and fighting for Scottish independence...

I will always remember how kind everyone has been to me since I set foot on this ground. I'll keep trying to figure out what that taxi driver was telling me in his strong Scottish accent. And I'll hold on to all the mental snapshots of stunning Scottish landscape bathed in sunlight, because contrary to popular belief, it's often sunny here!

But now the interesting part of my story: last year in September, I became an air cadet. This year, on the 29th of February, the day that was never supposed to happen, I took off in a

two-seat aircraft from the runway at RAF Leuchars. Had I ever imagined I would fly a plane? Not even once. But now I felt like shouting all across Europe: "Mum, look at me, I'm flying!"

The view over St. Andrews was spectacular. And up there, at 900 feet above the ground, it was peaceful, but one would have said there was a scary and unknown world down below. I wouldn't. Not after having grown fond of this world. One where every Tom, Dick and Harry is proud to be Scottish. Where mail travels fast and meetings start on time. Where people cry at John Lewis adverts. Where school is fun. Where exams are taken seriously. Where being a boarder makes you feel like you're in a teen movie. Where the future looks bright! This is the world I saw from high above...

"You have control, now", the pilot told me.

"I have control, Sir", I replied.

And with careful and steady moves, I performed my first air manoeuvre.

If there is one thing that living in the UK has taught me, it is confidence. It is being brave enough to take life into my own hands... and soar.

I have control now.

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