

### **Taking the plunge: Life in a British Boarding School**

Take a deep breath. Your country is known on the map. Or at least you think it is even though nobody else around knows if it even exists. But then, did you even understand from the first time they were asking where you are from? Surely not, because the accent was more British than in the videos you had watched. But it's all okay. It takes time and a lot of courage.

I still vividly remember my first day in Scotland. All packed, slightly sleep deprived and sun burned, thinking how on earth the first school day has to be in August. However, this all seems very superficial compared to the fact that I had never set my foot in the UK before, and suddenly, I was about to live there for quite a long time. I wanted to daydream how it would be when I get to the boarding house, but since I had never been there, my mind was genuinely blank. But it was all going smoothly. I landed in Scotland, welcomed by nice cloudy weather. I had to call my taxi driver who would take me to my new school. Three minutes after the call, I was in complete distress. The only thing I understood from this first conversation was, "Wait." Imagine a girl with big glasses and an expression as if she has just seen a ghost. That was me, and I realized I had taken the plunge.

Migration stories can be all myths to you until you actually experience them yourself. At first, you're like everybody else, dreaming of a land far away where everything seems to be better, everyone is happy and accomplishing their dreams. The circle gets smaller when you take that one-way flight. You become the dream, somebody your family

and friends think about quite a lot of the time. You start your new life, and then, it's just you and your own migration story. In the beginning, I had a pretty good grasp of it. No nostalgic feels, no crying on the phone, all smiles and daisies during the days. However, as time went by, I got exhausted. Not many were the people who stuck with repeating from time to time something I couldn't catch in a conversation, tell me how to get from point A to B, or accept the fact that my culture was very different but not in a bad way. Simply said, I got lost in the stereotype – the forever foreigner. I thought I had fallen in an empty pool.

Later, I found just that the fall lasted longer than I had expected, but the pool was there, and it was deep enough. It apparently took time for people around me to understand that the stereotype they expected to see wasn't me. We both had to adapt in order for the puzzles to fit together and create a picture. You don't have to abandon your personality to get a grasp of your new life. You should trade. Learn a few slang words, drink your tea with milk, and immerse yourself in the moment. Give somebody a piece of your character, and they would give you a piece of theirs. That's how the mutual understanding and respect arose, and I learnt how to swim in the pool, not forgetting to breathe. Now every time I go back to school after vacation, I feel like I have come to a hometown rather than a foreign place.

It is challenging to start a new life from scratch. However, if you ask me, I would do it all over from the start again. It takes time. And a lot of courage.