Study Abroad Journal
Fall Term 2025-26
The University of Warwick (United Kingdom)

BY

Wong Ming Hon

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Study Abroad Experience - Monthly Activity Log

October

I finally arrived in Coventry after a lot of annoying events, including the cancellation of my flight from Hong Kong to Birmingham due to a typhoon and the worryingly delayed student accommodation offer. Everything has changed, so I spent some time exploring the city and campus. Different from the strong academic atmosphere at HKUST, the Warwick campus is more energetic and spacious. It looks really like a 'typical' university that we see in Western films. Student societies were holding booths everywhere on the campus. I was so lucky that my student accommodation held a welcoming party, creating a chance for me to meet some HKU students there. We gathered and played drinking games one night, and since then we became good friends and have dinner together every day (sometimes some students from mainland China and India also joined us). We also travelled together in Birmingham, London, Stratford-upon-Avon, and Bristol. All of them gave me different feelings, but my favourite one is London. Besides the diversity, shops, and skyline, the dining there was SURPRISINGLY good. I also flew to Paris. It was very romantic when the Seine River cruise went under the Eiffel Tower. The food in Paris is the best in the world, in my opinion. Everything went well. Two minor challenges were adapting to the weather (it always rains here) and using the induction cooker (it's not hot enough).

November

I had a lot of traveling. I started my November in Italy. If you enjoy museums, Florence is the go-to city for you. Milan was okay because I don't like shopping. I didn't plan my Rome trip well, though. My partner and I didn't book to visit the Colosseum in advance. We paid for a guided tour at triple the price. It was worth it in the end, but I still learned my lesson – don't be a deadline fighter when traveling. Anyway, Italy is one of my favorite countries so far because of the impressive historical buildings, brilliant food and beverages, and friendly people. After taking a 5-day break in Coventry, I flew to the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. The best memory from the trip was the Heineken Experience in Amsterdam, where we visited the renovated Heineken beer factory. I learned about the process of manufacturing beer and, of course, had a few cups there. After Benelux, I went to London (again), Liverpool, and Manchester. I had been looking forward to

visiting Liverpool because I have been a Liverpool football fan for 12 years. I was super excited that I couldn't even fall asleep before my first-ever trip to Anfield Stadium. However, my team is not doing well this season. I couldn't believe that we lost 1-4 to PSV Eindhoven. The uncle sitting next to me said in a Scouse accent, 'You're not coming back, lah.' No, I don't think so. We'll win when I come here again next time.

December

I woke up and went to Lisbon on the first day of the month. Three days later, I went to Porto. Besides playing around, I was also more responsible on this trip because I invited two friends with me, but they didn't know each other beforehand. Things did not go as well as expected. I felt like the energy levels of the two didn't match. Fortunately, there were no direct conflicts at all, but they couldn't become good friends or travel partners. I learned another lesson – do not try to bring different friends on a trip because this is very risky. However, the Portugal trip was still amazing overall. We drank a lot of port wine and chatted a lot. After going back to Coventry, I had to immediately bury my nose in books because there would be a test soon. You may have noticed that I seldom mentioned my university life in Warwick because I didn't go to classes often. I'm glad that my time management was good enough, as the quiz was quite straightforward for me in the end. It was quite interesting that I met a girl from Vietnam in the test venue. She was a student representative at Warwick and invited me to walk around and introduced me to the campus. I finally got myself familiar with the whole campus in my last week here. After finishing my last class in Warwick, I packed all my belongings and went to London (AGAIN) with my partner. I can't even express how much I love the capital. Then we went to Munich for the Christmas markets. The city was fabulous, but one of the worst challenges happened here. I got food poisoning and suffered a lot in the middle of the trip. I was grateful that my partner took good care of me during this period. We then went to Budapest, the city where her host university was, and settled down after a painful 13-hour-long Flixbus ride. There were no more trips in the following week because I had to write my final essays. That week was the best example of the 'work hard, play hard' attitude. However, I still went out for a while when it was snowing. It was the first time in my life experiencing snow.

January

After spending a whole week reading lecture notes, conducting research, and writing my essays, I finally had nothing to worry about. Therefore, I booked a few trips in the last month of my exchange program. I went from pain to Spain and joined the countdown for 2026 in Barcelona. Then I went to Seville and Madrid as well. Seville was surprisingly good despite its small size. Setas de Sevilla was super beautiful at night. I also went to Plaza de San Francisco for the light show for two consecutive nights simply because it was too good. After Spain, I went to Bratislava, Vienna, and Prague. January is not the best time of year to visit them, but I still had a lot of fun. In the last week of January, a friend from CUHK and a pair of couples from UST came to visit us in Budapest. We explored the city that day, which was very special and touching for me. It was because the week was the end of my exchange program, but at the same time, just the beginning of theirs. They will experience similar things I've experienced here. I hope they will also find this experience fruitful and unforgettable!

General Study Abroad Information

1. Visa Procedures

I hold a Hong Kong passport. I did not need to apply for a visa for one-term exchange (short stay ≤ 6 months). However, I need to apply for a UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), which is what HK passport holders need to apply for to enter the UK for sightseeing purposes. The application for the ETA is very simple. It requires a photo, passport details, some personal information, and a very short processing time (<3 days).

2. Orientation Activities

The orientation week was the week before the commencement of the term. The following are some orientation activities; not all of them are compulsory:

1. Welcome to Warwick Business School
2. Introduction to my.wbs (my.wbs in Warwick Business School is like Canvas in UST)
3. Inbound Exchange Welcome to WBS
4. Inbound Exchange Students Social
5. Speed Friendship
6. WBS Society Fair
7. Supporting WBS Student Success
8. Student Conduct Workshops
9. Buddy Scheme Taster

I remember that 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 are compulsory, but I recommend also going to 5 and 6.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

3. International Services & Activities

There are a few services supporting exchange students:

1. Email about pre-arrival tasks and checklists
2. The International Student Support webpage about everything we need to know before travelling to the UK
3. The International Student Success Course website helping students to start easily at Warwick

4. Accommodation

This was a disaster for me because I almost could not receive a student accommodation offer. There are student accommodations on campus, but full-time students are prioritized. By the time the Warwick Accommodation Team informs students that there are not enough rooms for all of them, the external student accommodations are almost fully booked. **Therefore, I highly recommend booking external student accommodations in advance. Do not wait for Warwick.** Simply search in Google, and there will be a wide range of choices.

I got an en-suite room offer from Trinity View – own bathroom, shared kitchen with 4 other flatmates. The facilities were sufficient.

5. Courses Registration

There is a handbook for students to see what modules (or 'courses' for UST) are offered in the term. When module applications open, simply choose the modules in my.wbs and submit. It is not guaranteed that students will get enrolled in the modules they want. The results are released a few days after module applications open. However, students can still edit the module applications afterward, e.g. add another module when it is still available.

Please find WBS Inbound Exchange Pre-Arrival & Module Application for more details.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

6. Courses that You Have Taken

1. IB2AD0 – Data Science & Generative AI
2. IB2B40 – Digital Business
3. IB3940 – International Financial Management

The first two were similar to Information Systems courses at UST and were not difficult. The third one is equivalent to FINA4403.

7. Finance & Banking

The currency used in UK is GBP(£). 1GBP ≈ 10.5HKD (21 Feb 2026). Major expenses are as follows:

1. Flights: ~HKD 10,000
2. Student accommodation: ~GBP 2,500
3. Living: ~GBP 150-200 /week

There is no need to bring a lot of cash to the UK, as contactless payment is very common. However, bring some EUR if you plan to travel in Europe. Contactless payment is common in most European countries, but not all of them.

For a bank card, I recommend Mox by Standard Chartered because 1) it's easy to make one, 2) the records are very clear, with time and payment amount stated, and 3) there is no administration fee for foreign payments. I also opened a Wise bank account because the student accommodation only accepts a UK bank account for deposit refunds. (I also used it to help my friend pay NOK for his penalty for parking in a designated disabled parking space.)

8. Climate

RAINNNNN… Bring a jacket with a hat because it is not common to use umbrellas here. Always look for weather information before going out.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

9. Health & Safety

There is no health centre account for short-term exchange students. However, the medicines in pharmacies are usually cheaper than those in HK.

As for safety, be aware that Coventry and nearby Birmingham are known as two of the most dangerous cities in the UK. I personally think it isn't that bad in Coventry, but Birmingham is concerning. Also, keep an eye on the security alert emails from International SOS.

10. Food

It costs around £12-30 to dine in a restaurant. The food on campus is either small or expensive, except for a Chinese all-you-can-eat restaurant that costs only £12.99. I only dined at that restaurant whenever I went to Warwick. The food in the UK is not as bad as I imagined, in my opinion, since the culture is so diverse and you can have whatever cuisine you want. I sometimes explore the Indian cuisine nearby, and they never disappointed me.

However, cooking is the best option in my opinion because it is much cheaper. Most ingredients are affordable. Asian ingredients are more expensive but definitely available. Dairy products are cheap. It is a great chance to practice cooking as well.

11. Transportation

1. To Coventry: There are no flights to Coventry but there are transfer flights to Birmingham. On my first day, I took a taxi from Birmingham International Airport to my dormitory in Coventry. It costed around £50.
2. To Warwick: Buses to Warwick usually cost £3 for one trip or £5.20 for day ticket. They accept contactless payment. You can also get a bus pass, but it won't be cheaper unless you go to Warwick very often. Sometimes taking an Uber with your friends is even cheaper.
3. To airport: Take bus X1 to Birmingham International Airport (still £3 and £5.2) if you are close to Coventry Pool Meadow. Otherwise, take the train.
4. Train: Buy a pass in trip.com for discounted tickets. Also plan your trip there.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

12. Communication

There is a chance that your student accommodation or Warwick will provide a free data card. It is also easy to get one in Coventry. I bought mine in HK before traveling to the UK. It is totally up to you.

Also, try to talk to more people. I met some exchange students from HKU at the welcoming party in my student accommodation. I talked to them, and it was one of the best decisions I made there. We had dinner every day and travelled together.

13. Sports & Recreation Facilities

There are a lot of sports facilities on campus. However, to access them or join a sports class, you need to be a yearly member of the sports club, which I did not join because it was quite pricey, and I knew that I wouldn't be in Warwick often.

The first two weeks of the sports classes are free and open to everyone. You can go to the free trials and decide if you want to pay for them.

14. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

Student societies hold booths in the first week, probably in the Sports Hub (just like those at HKUST in the atrium). You pay to join the club. There is not much difference between the student society cultures at Warwick and UST.

15. Cautionary measures

1. Sometimes different British accents will make you question whether you really understand English. Take your time to adapt to them.
2. Be more polite when writing an email.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Items to Bring

Clothing

1. Down jacket (with hood)
2. Windbreaker
3. Thermal underwear and long pants
4. Scarf
5. Gloves
6. Warm hat
7. Winter clothes for going out
8. Winter clothes for home
9. Underwear
10. Socks
11. Sports shoes
12. Slippers
13. Summer clothes for going out (if needed)
14. Summer clothes for home (if needed)
15. Suit and leather shoes (if needed)
16. Sunglasses (if needed)
17. Watch (if needed)

Study

18. Computer
19. Mouse
20. Pencil case
21. Calculator

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Toiletries (Easy to Buy there)

22. Comb
23. Perfume
24. Body wash, Shampoo, Facial cleanser
25. Tissue
26. Toothpaste, Toothbrush
27. Wet wipes
28. Razor (if needed)

Travelling

29. Passport
30. ID card
31. Cash
32. Bank card
33. Phone
34. Wallet
35. Keys
36. Data card
37. Charger
38. European plug adapter

Others

39. Headphones
40. Medications

Useful Links and Contacts

Attached above.

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK