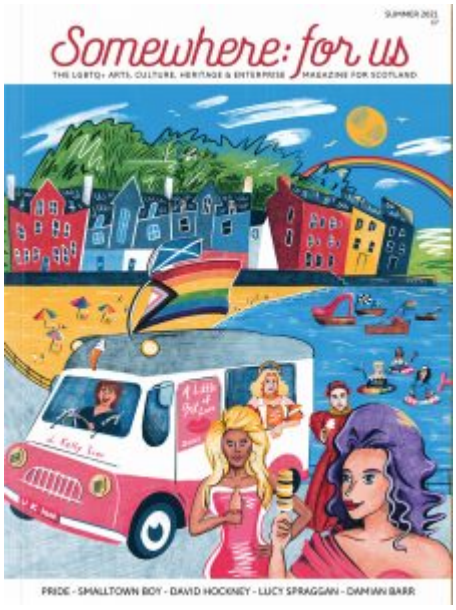
Life as an LGBTQ+ student in Edinburgh



As part of Pride Month, Tristan (Ancient and Medieval History, MA Hons) shares his experience as an LGBTQ+ student at the University of Edinburgh.

Navigating your first year at university can feel both intimidating and exciting as you get to grips with higher education, exploring a new city and meeting new people. This experience can seem even more daunting as an LGBTQ+ student, particularly when tolerance can vary so widely between countries. Fortunately, Scotland has strong governmental policy supporting the rights of LGBTQ+ people and the United Kingdom as a whole has consistently ranked highly on the Rainbow Europe Index. But what does this mean for LGBTQ+ students at Edinburgh, and what is life in this city really like for those of us who identify as such?

LGBTQ+ Life on Campus

As an openly transgender and queer man, I did have some anxieties about adjusting to student life and whether I would find my place in Edinburgh. Despite being an Edinburgh

native, beginning undergraduate
studies is a big step for anyone. Thankfully, my time here has been overwhelming positive and I've had the opportunity to engage in a number of LGBTQ+ centred events. I currently sit on the School of History, Classics and Archaeology's Equality and Diversity Committee and, as part of that, helped organise an LGBTQ+ History Month event in February 2021. Despite being forced online by the COVID-19 pandemic, this meant we were able to invite a speaker from the US to discuss their work with Queer Britain. EUSA, the University of Edinburgh's Student Association, also run events to commemorate this month, so you're sure to find lots to get involved with.

Likewise, there is both a student-led PrideSoc, which you can join, and the Staff Pride Network who hosts events and networking opportunities. LGBTQ+ support is very visible on campus, and I've felt confident being open about my sexuality and gender identity.

Finding Support

As well as the groups on campus, there are various charities and community organisations which can support you as an LGBTQ+ person. LGBT Health and Wellbeing, based in Edinburgh, host a variety of services, including several social groups, so you needn't feel worried about being isolated during your time here. You can also find support through the likes of the Scottish Trans Alliance, LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall Scotland.

In 2020, Somewhere: For Us, a magazine celebrating LGBTQ+ people in Scotland, was launched here in Edinburgh which is not only a fantastic resource but highlights the importance of visibility in the city.

Bars, Cafes and Eateries

Edinburgh also boasts several venues either owned by or active allies towards LGBTQ+ folk, including sober spaces such as the Greenwood Cafe, and bars and clubs like Cafe Habana and CC Blooms. There is also a fantastic queer-friendly venue opposite the central campus, Paradise Palms, if you want to grab some food (all of which is vegetarian/vegan) or a drink after your studies. Whether you're looking for somewhere to eat or want to experience the night life, there are lots of options within the city.

Edinburgh as a city is vibrant and beautiful, and LGBTQ+ life here is no exception. If I can offer any advice to you as a prospective student, it's OK to be yourself and don't hesitate to reach out for support.