

Archaeology Fieldtrip around East Lothian

Dr Henry (Indiana) Jones Jr once said, “If you wanna be a good archaeologist you gotta get out of the library!”, which is exactly what some of our first year archaeology students did recently.

The School of History, Classics and Archaeology is lucky enough to have a wealth of archaeological sites on its doorstep. A group of first year archaeology students led by Dr Guillaume Robin (Archaeology Teaching Director) and Dr Tanja Romankiewicz (Lecturer in Prehistoric and Roman Archaeology) recently toured East Lothian, taking in a range of sites covering thousands of years.

The group first visited Chesters Hill Fort, an Iron Age hill fort, probably built in the first millennium BC, and which was occupied into the Roman occupation of Britain in the early centuries of the first millennium AD. The site has never been excavated but the remains of several houses are still visible.



Professor Ian Ralston (baseball cap at left) describes Doon Hill, to students

Next on the itinerary was Doon Hill, an Early Neolithic settlement site (c. 3700 BC). In the 1960s the site was

excavated but was thought to be Early Medieval! Further research and new radiocarbon dating have recently demonstrated its Neolithic date. A special guest joined the group at Doon Hill, Professor Ian Ralston (Abercromby Emeritus Professor of Archaeology). Professor Ralston – an expert in hillforts – has a history with Doon Hill, having first excavated there a schoolboy and returned to it following his retirement, being instrumental in uncovering the evidence of the true date of the site.



Archaeologists assemble!

And last, but definitely not least, was a trip to Tantallon Castle, a grand Medieval castle built on a sea cliff edge. Built in the mid-14th century, it was besieged several times over the centuries, finally by Oliver's Cromwell's invasion of Scotland in 1651. It's a popular filming location, featuring in everything from sci-fi movie 'Under the Skin', starring Scarlett Johansson, to 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai', a Bollywood romantic comedy.

You can find out more about our archaeology degrees, Drs Robin and Romankiewicz, as well as Professor Ralston's work at the links below.

- Undergraduate Archaeology degrees at the University of Edinburgh
 - Dr Guillaume Robin's staff profile
 - Dr Tanja Romankiewicz's staff profile
 - Professor Ian Ralston's staff profile
 - Site visited – Historic Environment Scotland
 - Atlas of Hillforts of Britain and Ireland – Ian Ralston
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What makes HCA so special?

Tanvi shares her experience of being an international student, and the supportive community of School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

Student life in Edinburgh is colourful and multifaceted, and this is something that the University has continued to provide throughout my time as a student here. My experience at the School of History, Classics and Archaeology (HCA) started during Covid so my entire first year was online. I found that as an international student this eased the transition from home to university for me, somewhat. However, at the same time it sometimes made engagement difficult. I found, though, that the University – and especially HCA – strived to remedy this lack of in-person learning. And now, as a third-year student studying full-time in person, I find that the same opinion of student life here holds up.

Academic rigour



The School of History, Classics, and Archaeology provides not only a large variety of degree options, but also an allowance for flexibility and diversity

within those degrees. In addition to a wide range of course options, HCA implements a balanced but academically challenging environment – something that is put in place from day one.

From my personal experience as a student from the USA, schools don't have an A-level system and the courses offered are general and broad, with no opportunity for Classics or Archaeology backgrounds. I found that even with no prior knowledge of Classical Archaeology and Ancient History – although I was surrounded by peers who had the opportunity to take a Classics A-level – HCA has ensured an all-round and in-depth introduction to the subject. Overall, the class structure, assessment style, and myriad of course opportunities have allowed me to garner the same proficiency in my chosen degree as someone who had prior knowledge of some of the course material. I have found that other international students with a similar background have shared this experience in other degrees.

In addition to literal content, HCA implements an academic system with additional external support from faculty and such tools as the HCA writing centre and peer mentors that result in a higher output of quality of academic work. Three years at

HCA have taught me – besides academic content – the professional qualities associated with research, writing, and presentation in regard to my academic work and external projects.

Faculty

The academic opportunities that University of Edinburgh students have are a product of the faculty. The School ensures a broad panel of faculty spanning multiple historical, classical, and archaeological specialties. This not only allows the greater variety of choice for incoming and prospective students in pre-honours, it also allows honours students to choose from a large pool of academics to determine their postgraduate pathways and dissertation topics/guidance. In this way, the HCA faculty pushes students to explore various topics that allow them to experience a very varied subject area.

Societies



By far some of the most influential engagement among students in HCA comes from the History, Classics and Archaeology societies. As a member of the Archaeology Society, I have found myself not only meeting other students in my course subject, but also other HCA students in HCA through joint society events. By meeting other people in the same subject as

me my academic life has improved, which encourages me in my studies. And by gaining access to the wider HCA student network, this has created and sustained an even more warm and welcoming environment in the School.

In addition to the social aspect of the society programs, the academic and professional opportunities awarded to members and attendees is immensely helpful. Through opportunities like conferences and lectures by experts in various fields, the students of HCA have a wonderful chance to widen their academic horizons while also networking amongst academic professionals. And it allows them to browse and gain familiarity with future career opportunities. The Archaeology Fieldwork Fair instituted by the Archaeology Society provides multiple career and fieldwork opportunities annually in addition to other opportunities offered within HCA. The University also has a number of heritage and collections internship positions for students in the relevant fields, providing valuable experience for the future.

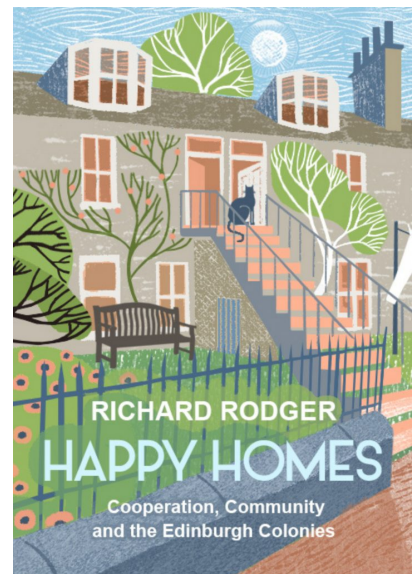
The wider University community

The resources and support available in HCA are supplemented by the environment of the rest of the University, and its faculty and students. The multicultural and diverse surroundings of the University and the wider Edinburgh area is truly something that not only influenced my decision to attend the University, but has deeply affected my current experience here as a student. As an international student, and a person of colour, the University of Edinburgh has created a central community in which students of all backgrounds, interests, and identities can collectively explore the beauty that the city has to offer.

Edinburgh's Colonies – 'Happy Homes'?

A new book by Professor Richard Rodger – Professor Emeritus of Economic and Social History – looks at the history of one of Edinburgh's most beloved architectural icons, the 'Colony' house.

My book, "Happy Homes: Cooperation, Community and the Edinburgh 'Colonies'", takes its title from the Reverend James Begg's 1866 publication, "Happy Homes and How to Get Them". Begg was one of several influential Free Church of Scotland ministers who encouraged better housing as an alternative to what they perceived as the ungodly overcrowded and insanitary tenement flats in the Old Town. Begg made a link between housing improvement and the emergence of environmental biology – as contained in Charles Darwin's "Origin of the Species" – and with Samuel Smiles' popular volume "Self Help", since both of these contemporary bestsellers were concerned in their different ways with the moral and physical improvement of the urban poor.



In 1861, in the midst of a long-running strike, the decision by a group of building workers to form and register a Limited Liability Company – one of the earliest in Scotland – and to issue shares, hold meetings, publish accounts, pay dividends, acquire sites and build houses was a truly radical departure. In the first ten years, the Edinburgh Cooperative Building Company (ECBC) obtained and built homes on six different sites, three of them in Leith (Hawthornbank, Ferry Road (Trafalgar Place), Restalrig Park) as well as Stockbridge, Norton Park (Abbeyhill) and Dalry. By 1871, the ECBC had

completed over 750 homes and housed 3125 individuals. One in six of all household heads (16.5%) was a woman, over half of whom were widows. As shareholders and property owners women were also entitled to vote, not just in ECBC meetings but also eventually in municipal elections.

By 1914, half a century after its foundation in 1861, the ECBC had built over 2200 properties housing almost 10,000 people on eleven separate 'Colony' sites. Was there a bigger builder in Edinburgh between these dates?



Stockbridge Colonies
off Glenogle Road

The houses were distinctive in their design – unusually for Scotland these workers' houses were in terraces – each with a separate front door opening on to a small private garden with a shed or coal store. Entry was from both sides – the upper floor by external staircases on one side of the terrace, and the ground floor flat from the other side of the terrace. There were no through roads giving them a sense of safe, self-contained neighbourhoods each with discrete identities. Internally, there was a range for cooking, WC, sink with cold running water and, depending on the date of construction, one or two bedrooms.

'New build' model dwellings for the Edinburgh working classes were a new feature of the 1860s. The names, and indeed the buildings, are still evident in the modern cityscape – Pilrig Buildings, Ashley Buildings, Rosebank Cottages, Chalmers Buildings are just a few identified in "Happy Homes" – but the rents were beyond an unskilled labouring class of workers and, significantly, these model dwellings returned between 5% and 8% on capital invested. Even with 'Begg's Buildings', a block for workers in Brand Place in Abbeyhill, it was not James Begg who invested but Robert Cranston, owner of the Waverley Temperance Hotel on Princes Street, who advanced £6000 for the construction of 72 new homes. His return was 8% – substantially better than government stocks.

"Happy Homes: Cooperation, Community and the Edinburgh 'Colonies'" is based on a detailed analysis of manuscript census returns, valuation rolls (rental values) and Company records. This reveals much that is new about Edinburgh and the Edinburgh Colonies. The socio-economic composition of residents is explored, ownership patterns are examined, the scale of women's involvement as household heads and property owners is identified, and the subtle variations in the occupational composition of each of the Colonies is revealed, an analysis of the birthplaces of residents produces intriguing patterns and geographical connections between and within Colonies.



Carvings showing trades involved in building the colonies

Perhaps most surprising is the conclusion that it was commonplace for individuals (rentiers) to buy several properties for letting and so the idea that the Colonies were an early example of a property-owning democracy is misplaced.

There were serious errors of ECBC management. This is not to deny the efforts and competency of James Colville during his 30 years as the ECBC Manager, but the ECBC made some dubious decisions. It was slow to recognise the sharp, sustained downturn in the local (and national) housing market after 1905. It acquired the Baird Saughtonhall estate in 1902 but soon after sold land at Balgreen to other house builders. After the Great War, unlike house builders McTaggart & Mickel, Miller and many others, the ECBC did not contemplate an application for the Treasury subsidies to private housebuilders in the 1920s. The ECBC was in terminal decline and before long the salaries of the office staff exceeded those of the building workers.

While there is rightly a degree of admiration at the ambition and scale of ECBC house building, and their remains a strong degree of local affection amongst the public for Edinburgh and

Leith Colony housing in the 21st century, “Happy Homes: Cooperation, Community and the Edinburgh ‘Colonies’” is a hard-nosed assessment rather than a rose-tinted one.

“Happy Homes: Cooperation, Community and the Edinburgh ‘Colonies’” is published by The Word Bank (£15) which is a community initiative of the Old Town Development Trust with support from Scotmid, itself a Cooperative Movement successor to St Cuthbert’s Cooperative Society which was formed just a few months before the ECBC.

The unexpected perks of bus travel in Edinburgh

Moving to another city can be stressful and frustrating but there can also be unexpected benefits, as Hanna (Classical Studies MA Hons) found.



When I first came to Edinburgh, everyone assured me that there was an “amazing” public transport system here. However, coming from a big city in Germany with a close-knit system of trams, undergrounds and buses, I was rather disappointed. I thought Edinburgh was a capital city but all it has is a tram with a single line and buses. Since Edinburgh is exceptionally walkable and most of my weekday appointments are a 30-minute walk or less, this didn't bother me too much. Besides, especially in the city centre, walking is just as fast or even faster than taking the bus. However, as my radius slowly expanded as the semester progressed, 45-minute walks in the rain down to the Peffermill Playing Fields, the University's sports complex, or tiring walks back from the supermarket with full bags of my weekly groceries became more and more tiresome. So, I began to cautiously familiarise myself with the bus system.

Contrary to people's assurances, I felt the buses are not always that reliable. Most of the buses don't tell you the names of the stops, which makes the journey very stressful if you're not yet very familiar with the city. And due to

roadworks buses can be delayed or need take a different route than the one your phone shows. This always makes me panic and get off at the next possible stop! But there are some benefits to the buses in Edinburgh.

The infamously changeable Scottish weather sometimes made me take the bus anyway, and then the bus is a warm shelter from the wind and rain. And the exceptional friendliness of the bus drivers is just as warm! Coming from a place where no one speaks to the public transport drivers and they never interact with you, the bus drivers in Edinburgh are a wonder to me. They are – I am not exaggerating – the friendliest, most polite, and helpful people. I once took a bus from the airport to my flat and asked the bus driver for directions. He didn't just tell me the stop. No, he stopped at a bus stop, turned off the engine, got out, helped me with my luggage and showed me the next stop I needed to get to and explained in detail which buses I could take.

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de free in Scotland for people under 22 (for many students, this means the entire duration of their degree), I have decided to officially make my peace with buses. Plus, what I have acknowledge only now, buses are one of the best ways to get to know Edinburgh. The architecture of the city is magnificent but you don't really notice it until you look up – and that's often not an option due to the aforementioned changeable weather. But if you sit in the front at the double-decker's big window, you can see the impressive architecture and all the monuments of Edinburgh from a prime perspective. A truly worthwhile experience.

What's more, buses are free not only in Edinburgh, but all over Scotland. This means you can travel to St Andrews, North Berwick or Glasgow for free in no more than two hours. Unfortunately night buses are not included in the free bus ride which can be annoying when your feet hurt from a night-out at a ceilidh but that doesn't interfere with my reconciliation with bus travel in Edinburgh. The next time it's pouring rain, my shoulders hurt from grocery bags, and I have the prospect of reading my book on a warm bus, I'll be all appeased again. Buses are now one of the things that make Edinburgh even better for me, and as long as I am not 22 yet, I will definitely make the most of my free bus travel pass.

Lothian Buses cover Edinburgh and the Lothians

Plan your journey with the Lothian Bus journey planner

Applying for Young Persons' (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel

Home is where...

To say the Covid years were tough is, of course, a gross understatement. But what if you're a new international student finding your feet in a foreign country? Olivia is a second year History (MA Hons) student, and this is her story.



View of Edinburgh from Calton Hill at sunset.

I had never been to Scotland before August of 2020 when I moved here for the first time. I honestly don't think I was scared then, but looking back with a year and a half of separation, I don't know how I wasn't terrified. I was definitely anxious about concrete ideas like making new friends, adjusting to learning at a university level, and what if I didn't understand Scottish accents, but as for the physical act of hopping on an airplane and moving to a different country, I wasn't overly concerned about it. It wasn't really until my first week out of isolation that I realised I was in a totally new place living with totally new people, and I had no idea what I was doing. I still don't really have any idea what I'm doing.

I spent my first couple weeks in the city going to the same

grocery stores, the same tutorials, the same coffee shop, the same and the same and the same. My world here – whilst bigger than I ever could have imagined in rural Texas – was still incomprehensibly small compared to the Edinburgh I live in now. And for the most part, I didn't think about home. As the semester went on my flatmates and I started to get more comfortable with each other, and the same and the same and the same started to get less familiar. My flatmates and I would stay up late in the kitchen singing ABBA or trying to figure out ceilidh steps or talking about whatever and whatever else. We'd take day trips, go for long walks to nowhere, explore the wynds and closes of Old Town and get completely lost. And before I knew it, I had finished my first semester of university.

I went home for Christmas, discovered that it was infinitely harder to be the one who leaves than the one who stays, and when I came back, Edinburgh was a different city. The lockdown meant that even the same and the same and the same that I had experienced in the first semester was limited. My flatmates either went home or didn't come back, so I moved to the West End of the city and basically didn't leave my room for the rest of the semester. The concept of making a home here had splintered.



Olivia and her friend, Nikki.

But that semester ended too and I got to go home. I spent most of my summer recovering from living through a global catastrophe functionally alone, so when I came back to Edinburgh this year I didn't know what to expect. I was scared that it was going to be as isolating as it was the previous semester, and I was scared that I would be starting over with friends again. But I didn't have anything to worry about and this past semester has been incredible! The same and the same and the same of my first semester is a distant memory. Edinburgh – which I thought I had a decent grasp on – has gotten so much bigger and I can't possibly imagine that I'll see the whole city before I graduate.

I think that the biggest hurdle to overcome, being both an international student and a pandemic student, is realising that the concept of 'home' takes time. Recently, I went on a trip to St Andrews with one of my very dear friends, and for the first time coming back into the city felt like coming home. After a year and a half, I've made a home and I didn't even know it. My home here is impermanent, but it is beautiful.

“What's so great about living in Edinburgh?”

Good question. Luckily, Tristan [MA (Hons) Ancient and Medieval History] can help answer that.



The fortress on top of Castle Rock includes the 12th c. St Margaret's Chapel – the oldest building in the city.

In the 18th Century Edinburgh designated itself the 'Athens of the North', and wandering through the city centre it's not hard to see why. Okay, after twenty-something years in the Scottish capital I'm admittedly a little biased. But what isn't to love about studying a history degree in a city with a beautiful medieval Old Town, gardens set in an old loch and a castle built upon an extinct volcano?

A city that blends its rich history with its position as home of the largest arts festival in the world (yes, the world!) is something quite unique – there's nothing like wandering down the Royal Mile during the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August. In fact, Edinburgh hosts a huge programme of events throughout the year: from the Book, Jazz and Blues, and Science Festivals, to the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. If live arts aren't your thing – although there's plenty to indulge in across the city's many theatre venues – you'll certainly find something to pique your interest.

One of my favourite aspects of the city is its fantastic selection of museums and galleries, the largest of which is the National Museum of Scotland located just minutes from the School of History, Classics and Archaeology. Its collections include the recently opened Ancient Egyptian and East Asian galleries as well as an extensive wing dedicated to Scotland's past. However, because the city itself is so rich with history, just wandering down the Royal Mile is an adventure in itself. Each 'close' – the Scots word for an alleyway – tells a story, of its former occupants or use, the most infamous being the underground Mary King's Close (**definitely** worth a visit!). A former lecturer once told me to always look up at buildings when wandering through the Old Town as you'll be amazed at what you learn from inscriptions and plaques.



Even in the middle of the city centre, there are lots of places for a quieter walk, including along the Water of Leith in picturesque Dean Village.

What I particularly love about the city is the amount of green space. The public Princes Street gardens, situated between the New and Old towns, are always bustling, as are the gorgeous Royal Botanical Gardens. However, you'll find some more secluded spaces if you know where to look, including a hidden gem at the bottom of Dunbar's Close – I'll let you discover that one for yourself! You're also never too far from the countryside and there are lots of scenic walks a short bus or train journey away.

Between its incredible art and literary festivals, heritage sites and beautiful parks – and that's before we discuss everything that the university itself has to offer – Edinburgh is a pretty fantastic city. To be a history student here is something really special, and whilst it might not boast the monumental buildings of the Athenian acropolis, the 'Athens of the North' isn't short of wonder.

Find more walks around Edinburgh at the Visit Scotland site.

You can see a map of green spaces within Edinburgh on the Edinburgh Outdoors website.

Summer in Edinburgh: What can I do?

Many students stay in Edinburgh over the summer break – why wouldn't you? – but what do they do all day? Student Ambassador Tess has some suggestions.

Find yourself in Edinburgh for the summer? Have no fear! It's not uncommon for students to stay up in Edinburgh as the sun starts to peek through all the clouds around May. However, you

may be a bit stuck or unsure of what you can fill your days with. Here are a few suggestions of what you could do over the summer in Edinburgh and Scotland in general.

Road trip to the Highlands or Bus Tours



Tobermory on the island of Mull.

Road trips are a fun way of exploring the different national parks and the Highlands in Scotland, especially if you're interested in hiking and camping. There are loads of campsites and affordable hostels along the way. You can also customise your trip to hit all the major spots, like Loch Ness, Loch Lomond, the Isle of Mull, the Isle of Skye and the Cairngorms. You could even drive up as far as John O'Groats, which is the northernmost point of the British Isles. If you're not super sure about where you should go, there are pre-planned routes like the West Coast 500. The possibilities are endless; all you really need is a good group of friends, a few experienced

drivers and a map!

If you're not super comfortable with driving or you don't have a designated driver friend, there is also the option of hopping on a bus tour. There are loads that take you to places like Skye, or to the crannog on Loch Tay, or to a number of other locations across Scotland. These tend to be cheaper than a road trip, as you don't need to hire a vehicle, however your schedule isn't as flexible. These are great for day trips and weekend breaks, which may be better suited for people with summer internships or jobs.

Beaches

I know it seems a bit surreal to suggest going to beach in Scotland, but you'd be surprised with how beautiful and sunny Scottish beaches can be. I suggest checking out places like North Berwick, which is a quick train or bus rides away, or even going to Portobello beach here in Edinburgh. The water can be a bit cold but when the sun's out, it's actually a great way to get some vitamin D. There are loads of nice waterside restaurants as well as decent fish and chips shops to get a takeaway. If it's a particularly sunny day, I suggest you jump on the bus or your bike and get down to Portobello via Arthur's Seat!

Bookstores

This one seems a little bit weird, but if you're like me and really love the smell of new books, there are loads of bookstores to check out in Edinburgh. Places like Topping and Co. in Leith are multiple stories with a vast number of titles to peruse; you can even get a cup of tea and read a book at Topping! Other great bookstores include Portobello Bookstore (you could hit the books and the beach in the same day), Lighthouse Books, Armchair Books, Golden Hare Books and Tills Bookstore. They often have really interesting editions of

books, as well as some signed copies! Edinburgh was the world's first UNESCO City of Literature so you're sure to find a bookshop to your taste.

The Seven Hills of Edinburgh

It's no secret that Edinburgh has often tried to model itself after Classical models. Calton Hill, which hosts the National Monument of Scotland – sometimes called 'Scotland's Folly' or 'Edinburgh's Disgrace' – is a prime example of how many of its inhabitants deemed the city as the 'Athens of the North'. This is not where the Classical resonances end. The Seven Hills of Edinburgh draw parallels with the Seven Hills of Rome



Designed by William Playfair the National Monument of Scotland was intended to be another Parthenon to commemorate Scottish soldiers killed in the Napoleonic wars but construction was halted in 1829 due to lack of

and are a fantastic way of getting to know the city. Many

people do all seven in one day, but I think there's no shame in spacing it out if you're not a keen hiker. If you do want to try it out, the hills are: Calton Hill, Castle Rock, Corstorphine Hill, Craiglockhart Hill, Blackford Hill, Arthur's Seat and Braid Hill. There are loads of guides to follow; make sure you bring ample water supplies and lots of snacks! I speak from experience.

Museums

On top of the National Museum of Scotland, which is the home of the first cloned sheep, there are a number of museums littered across Edinburgh. If you're interested in music and musical history, you could check out St Cecilia's Hall. Run by the University's Centre for Research Collections, this museum has a wide array of interesting instruments in their exhibits. For any fans of Zelda, there are a large number of ocarinas you can admire. Other interesting museums to check out are the National Portrait Gallery at Princes Street, Surgeons Hall, the Museum of Edinburgh, the Writer's Museum and the Scottish National Gallery.

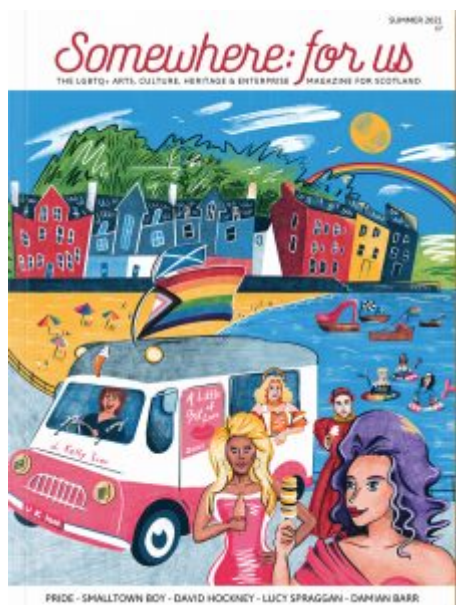
The Fringe

Last, but certainly not least, is the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. This is just one of several festivals which take place in Edinburgh during the summer but it's been the birthplace of productions like *Fleabag* and the musical *Six*. It's a fantastic way to spend your summer immersed in the arts during August and consists of both paid and free shows. It is an 'unjuried' festival, which means there is no selection committee when it comes to what productions run during the month, which makes for some very interesting performances. These are often not limited to just black box spaces and theatres, there are over three hundred performance spaces and many outdoor pieces as well. On top of the huge variety of

shows put on every day, the food stalls are unbelievably good! The Fringe is definitely the highlight of a summer in Edinburgh.

No matter what you choose – and there's plenty of choice – your summer in Edinburgh is sure to fly by!

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.

Living in Edinburgh

It's only now that I'm in my last semester of my final year, and I'm having to contemplate moving to a new city, do I realise quite how much I love Edinburgh and the people in it. Having lived here for four years now, and I can honestly say that there is no other place quite like it. It's become my home away from home.

But if you are moving here for the first time it can be daunting, so I've compiled a list of things about living in Edinburgh which might help. Some are things that I wish I'd known before I came here, while others are simply things that I love about the city.

The Weather



At the Botanic Gardens during their Christmas Lights show, wearing the cosy coat my family

bought me!

As a naïve 18-year-old from South Wales, I was blissfully unaware of how cold Edinburgh (and Scotland more generally) gets in winter. Little did I know that snow in February is par for the course and how much a biting cold wind can cut you to the bone! From November through to February of that first year, a scarf was permanently attached to me and I had a hot water bottle in bed every night, in a vain attempt to stay warm. Thankfully that Christmas, my family gave me a huge duvet-style coat that has kept me warm every winter since!

The Variety of Things to Do

The city is always full of things to do, so if you're looking for something you can definitely find it! I love going to the theatre as a treat, and the wealth of performance spaces that Edinburgh has makes this really easy. It's also quite straightforward to find tickets for a good price, as most places offer student rates or sell last-minute tickets at a discounted rate.

Green Spaces



The view of the city and Arthur's Seat from Blackford Hill.

As a country girl, I really appreciate the amount of easily

accessible green space there is in the city. First and foremost, there is Arthur's Seat, the ex-volcano in Holyrood Park. However, there's also the Royal Botanic Gardens, Blackford Hill and the Pentland Hills. Indeed, I'd argue that you get a better view of the city (especially at sunset) from Blackford Hill than Arthur's Seat (controversial, I know). If I ever feel homesick, or just want to clear my head, I know I can go for a walk and be surrounded by nature within 30 minutes. This has definitely made city living much easier for me.

A Compact City

Despite there being so much to see and do, Edinburgh is actually a relatively compact city. You can get to most places in both Old and New Town on foot. Because of this, it didn't take long for me to feel comfortable and familiar with the city. However, if you want to go further afield, say to Newhaven or Portobello, Lothian Buses are great.



Carys Flew