Program: Cardiff University, Spring

Emily’s Majors: Biology; Spanish; Certificate European Studies

Academic Life: I was able to take a variety of courses on my program, both while exploring my personal interests and staying on track for my Biology major. Only my Welsh Culture and Folklore course were arranged for International students; in the rest of my courses I was able to blend into the rest of the student body. In those classes I sat alongside English and Welsh students without any special treatment. My professors were primarily researchers, so that experience was similar to my lectures at UW-Madison.

Housing: I lived in the largest student residence neighborhood on campus (Talybont), about a 20-minute walk to most of my classes. The residences bordered the massive Bute Park, so we could leisurely walk through the park to the city centre or Cardiff Castle! My dorm was set up like a flat: 6 private bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms and a shared kitchen space. It was a great fit for me since I could have my privacy but socialize and live among first-year British and Welsh students. My flatmates have become some of my closest friends from my time abroad and we still talk all the time today.

Advice for Someone Considering This Program: Wales is a hugely underrated gem in the UK. Cardiff has a much lower cost of living than many British destinations, which makes day-to-day life more affordable. As a direct-enrollment program, students are able to select from the course catalog and enroll in classes across multiple academic schools; this gives students flexibility to study within their major but also to pursue personal interests. This system allowed me to take biology, medieval history, and Welsh culture courses during my semester abroad. Most importantly, there are over 500 castles within Wales, with more than a handful in and around Cardiff!

Emily lived a mile away from Cardiff Castle, which is in downtown Cardiff and is over 1000 years old!

“Don’t be afraid to branch out and do things outside of your comfort zone.”