

**Stephanie Tadda**  
**Brighton, England Summer 2022 Study Abroad Program**

This experience taught me so much about myself, my future profession, England, and of course, travel! The biggest thing I learned was the gift of talking to strangers and taking a leap of faith. It has opened my heart to trying new things, being bad at them, and loving them anyways. I think that's a powerful lesson. I had no clue that I could walk up to a stranger and start a conversation. There is no way I would do something like that at home, but with the confidence I found in Brighton, I was able to do it. I hope this is something I can carry over at home because it is a great skill I developed. With all our traveling, we had many scenarios, even in classes where we were sort of thrown into various classrooms, and I found myself taking the initiative to move around, talk with students, and immerse myself easily. I think my time engaging in so many new things helped me feel more comfortable in my ability to do this.

I enjoyed all the school visits, but the most interesting was Annan Forest school. In Forest school, the teachers had this innate trust in their kids and vice versa. It was a really cool thing to watch! The whole way the school is run is unique and I was amazed by how much the kids knew about nature and the workings of the world around them.

There was one moment I think that will stick with me forever. I was swimming in the Channel with Kaylie, a good friend I made during the trip because it was a sweltering day during our third week. I was spinning around in the water, suddenly aware of every feeling around me. I felt so free at that moment. I haven't felt that way for a very long time. I could feel the cold water against my skin, the smell of salt, the sun on my face, and this feeling of weightlessness. Not just from floating in the ocean, but in my soul. I think my outlook on life has changed a lot since then, and my overall state of being has become increasingly more positive. I think the best thing I could tell someone doing this program is to let go of your fear of judgment and have fun! I was fortunate enough to find I connected with most of my trip's group, which made this an easy task. Additionally, it is important to say 'yes' to random things and just go with the flow. My best memories were made when plans went awry, or we made spontaneous decisions.