

Casen Incoming Study Abroad Podcast



Helen 0:06

I'm joined today by a lovely student who's come to join us. Would you like to introduce yourself and tell us where you're from?



Casen 0:13

Absolutely. I'm Casen. I'm from Texas and the United States. A small town called Canyon up in the top of Texas and came here to study in writing just for a term.



Helen 0:24

OK. Thank you so much. So, can you tell us to start with why did you choose to study abroad and pick Reading?



Casen 0:32

Well, I've always wanted to study abroad just because I've always been interested in seeing more of the world, and I've always been fascinated by England and just the everything about it at the accents and the the sites and the the cloudy skies and everything. I just love it. But I wanted to be close to London and have access to the city and everything, but I didn't want to be in London because I thought it might be overwhelming coming from such a small town. So, I thought that reading would be perfect because it has that close proximity where you can hop on the train and get there and see whatever you want to see, but you don't have to actually.



Helen 0:52

Mm hmm.



Casen 1:07

In the city all the time still kinda like the the small town sort of feel.



Helen 1:11

OK, So what of your first impressions been since you've arrived? How was your welcome here at Reading? What've you know? What are your first thoughts?

 **Casen** 1:21

Amazing. I love it here so much. The people are so friendly. That was kind of my first impression is that the people are so chipper and happy to help and it's just been it's been amazing. I really do love it.

 **Helen** 1:32

OK. And have you been to London many times?

 **Casen** 1:35

I have a few times, yes, and I I could just keep going back over and over again. It's amazing. It's so cool to just see things from the movies. Like you can just stand in front of Big Ben and it's right there. I love it.

 **Helen** 1:42

OK.

Fantastic. And it is. Yeah. For those that don't know, Reading is only half an hour away on the train. The fast train up to London. And we also have the Elizabeth line now. So, we are very well connected. What do you think of Reading itself and the campus?

 **Casen** 2:04

I love it. It reminds me of home. But it's there's so much more like coming from Texas. We don't have trees or green grass or anything. And so you can just walk around and see old buildings and the people are so friendly and there's such a small town. There's so much to do. Like it. It still has the city feel itself. And so, you can go to the city centre and shop anywhere you want to. But then on campus, it still has the like, kind of like the close-knit community kind of feeling. And so it's been really cool.

 **Helen** 2:34

How have you found your classes so far is that? Well, you know what, what would you say is different to what you're used to and how have you been managing?

 **Casen** 2:45

Well, I study Politics, so it's been obviously very different. Just having a completely


different political system, but.


The the lectures are amazing. They're also friendly and so willing to help, and that that reminds me of home as well. Having like the small class sizes where.


Your instructors really do want to help you out, and they're willing to meet with you and and really do whatever they have to do to have you be successful.


The format's a little bit different than the United States, I would say.


The US is a lot more like exam driven like frequently.

 **Helen** 3:19
OK.

 **Casen** 3:22
You're being tested on what you know, like almost every week, basically. Whereas here it seems like it's more of a just.
Just essays at the end just to see.
Sort of like how you're going to apply the knowledge that you've collected over the semester. So that's been really interesting. I think you have to kind of prepare differently, but it's been a lot of fun and I think I, I don't mind writing. So it's been, it's been good.

 **Helen** 3:47
OK. So it sounds like you've had a lot of support as well from your academic tutors and everything.

 **Casen** 3:54
Oh yeah, it's that's probably been one of my favourite parts about writing. Is that not only the study abroad office, but the? I mean, my instructors, yeah, my instructors and all. All of the other people on campus are so willing to help out whenever they need. And then I think knowing that I'm from a different country there, they're going the extra mile to make sure that I feel at home here. So that's been really wonderful.

 **Helen** 4:18
Oh, that's so fantastic to hear. OK, so you mentioned the study abroad office. How was it when you arrived? Did we? Did we look after you? Well, what about your other,

your sort of cohort? Have you bonded well together? Did we help you settle in that sort of thing?

 **Casen** 4:33

Yeah, it's that's so funny because literally the first day that I had a study abroad, I think it was like the orientation event or something. And you and Chris just jump right in to make people feel so welcome. And then so that was amazing. And then. I love that you kind of force us to get to know each other a little bit. The other study abroad students because it it kind of requires you to build community with other people and the same people that I met at those first events, the trip to Bath and the like, the orientation and stuff are the same people that I'm friends with now and and going and doing things with so.

That's been really, really interesting that it's been consistent that way.

 **Helen** 5:14

OK. So would you have any highlights so far? Obviously you mentioned the trip to Bath. Have there been any other highlights that you've enjoyed?

 **Casen** 5:23

The trip to Bath was definitely a highlight. It was. It also like something out of a movie, just the old buildings and the quaint little streets and everything it was. I mean, I just can't explain how cool that kind of stuff is, but also just the daily life on campus in reading is. So, I mean, it's just so fun. Like just and being able to be in accommodation with study abroad students and spend more time with them outside of classes and everything is just, it really does build a sense of community.

 **Helen** 5:54

And of course, everybody, it's not just from the States, is it? We've got such a multinational cohort this time, so I imagine you're connecting with people from all over the world.

 **Casen** 6:05

There's people from Australia, Germany, Austria, New Zealand, like I've made connections with people from countries that I've never even thought about going to

and they've given me tips for if you're ever there, they're like, here's some things you need to see. So that's pretty cool too.



Helen 6:19

Yeah, it really does broaden your horizons. OK, so it's not always like a Disney movie here, is it? So have you had any challenges so far? And if you have, what sort of things have you done to overcome them? I mean, you may not have had any challenges, but sometimes there might be something.



Casen 6:33

Well, well, well, well.

Yeah, not really. Not too many challenges. I mean, it's been surprisingly smooth sailing, which I've I'm gonna guess not on wood, but it's been. Yeah, it's been amazing. I would say not so much a challenge, but just something to adjust to has been that I think like night life and and stuff is a lot more common. Just in England in general than back home I because I come from like, out in the country where we have like a a Western bar and that's it. But here in reading, it seems like.



Helen 6:44

OK.



Casen 7:05

People are a lot more interested in going out and having fun and stuff, which is. You know when you have an early morning, that's something you kind of have to adjust to, but.



Helen 7:14

OK. But yeah, it sounds like you're dealing with that very well.

OK, so I'm guessing a really positive vibe from you so far from your experience. So would you do it again? Would you recommend it to others?



Casen 7:28

Absolutely. Yeah. And it's.

I mean, it's so interesting how you just learn when you get here. Like it's just kind of like a learn as you go thing, but you become so independent just by being, like

thrown into it. And I can't not only just how amazing writing itself is, but the life skills that I think I'll take away from it of just being able to function on my own. And yeah, it's I I would do it all over again for sure.

 **Helen** 7:44

Yeah.

Oh, excellent. Now, if you were to recommend this to people from home, would you have any hints or tips for them for the for when they arrive? First of all, any sort of, I don't know anything that you've found that you wish you knew like this time last year that you can then pass on to anybody listening to this podcast thinking, oh, I might go to reading.

 **Casen** 8:19

Well, there were several things. Luckily, I don't mind kinda making a fool of myself and just like learning as I go because there were several things that I just kind of figured out when I got here. One thing I would say is that reading, which this is a good thing, but Reading is very sustainable as you know, like they're very eco friendly. And so bring a reusable coffee mug if you're a coffee drinker, bring a grocery bag because they won't. They won't have them and that is that could take some getting used to.

 **Helen** 8:48

OK. Yeah, that's very important.

 **Casen** 8:49

Umm, but it's a great thing though. I mean it's it's really cool.

 **Helen** 8:54

Anything else that you would recommend? What about when you arrive and get to the airport you know? Is there any tips or?

 **Casen** 9:04

To pack lightly and be willing to buy things when you get here as opposed to bringing them from home. I mean, if that's within your budget because it's it is a hassle. I brought two full size suitcases and then like a hiking backpack, which felt like

a lot. But then I got here and I look around the room and it's a little bare. So you have to kind of add on the less necessary things when you get here. But as long as you have basics.



Helen 9:23

Ha ha ha.

And are you grateful you bought a coat?



Casen 9:34

Yes, a coat and you an umbrella. This is oh, this is a good piece of advice. Bring an umbrella that is windproof because it will fly upside down and you don't want to be the the moron in the street with the upside down umbrella. So.



Helen 9:50

Yeah, it has been a bit wet and wild since January since you've arrived, but hopefully we're turning the corner now and we'll see some nicer days. OK, so my guess my last thing I'm going to ask if there's call to action if anybody would like to get in contact with us. We have our study abroad website. We have the e-mail address or do you have any other advice for students that might think of coming to reading?



Casen 10:24

The UK, because I speaking from experience, you and Chris are so helpful and so willing to help people feel welcome. So I really think that people will get here and feel that it's a lot like almost like a family on campus because people are so willing to go the extra mile for you. So reach out, just go for it.



Helen 10:44

Definitely.



Casen 10:44

When you'll feel like you're home.



Helen 10:47

Oh, that's wonderful. Thank you so much for your time. Casen. Right. Thank you very

much. And we look forward to meeting you soon at the University of Reading. Thank you.

● **Helen** stopped transcription