



University of Sunderland

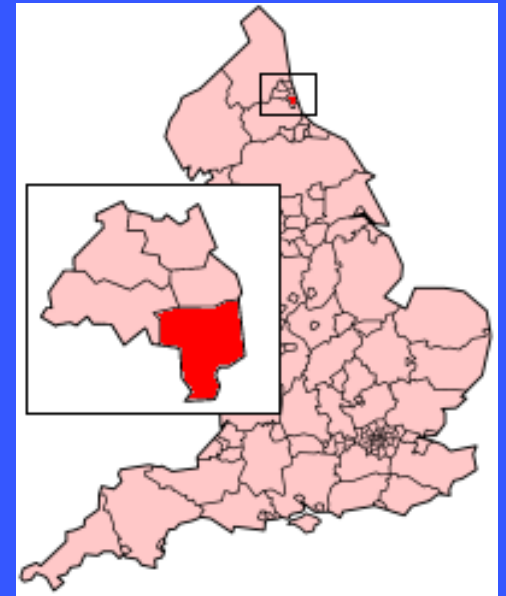
Sunderland, England

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Location

- Sunderland is about 30 minutes from Newcastle, the closest “big” city
- It is a short 3(ish) hour train ride to Edinburgh, Scotland.
- It is a 4(ish) hour train ride to London.



Getting to Sunderland

- After you are accepted, there are several things you need
- Plane ticket
 - Studentuniverse.com
 - Statravel.com
 - Skyscanner.com
 - These are all great websites to look for cheap tickets
- Passport
 - There are lots of tips online for this
 - It is best to complete this several months out from departure
- Getting into the country
 - To enter England, you must have:
 - Passport
 - Acceptance letter to Sunderland
 - Proof of where you will live in England (the contract for the dorm/flat will work)
- Where to fly
 - While there are many options for flights, the easiest I found was:
 - Fly into London (HEATHROW!!!!!! Gatwick is very far outside of London and more of a hassle)
 - Fly from London to Newcastle
 - The university should provide transportation to your dorm when you arrive
 - However, as you begin to travel, you will find a Metro train (like MARTA) that can take you from the airport to Sunderland

Arrival

- On designated day, faculty from the University of Sunderland met us at the Arrivals gate at the airport in Newcastle.
- The university had a cab waiting for all of us and it was a 30-40 minute drive to our dorms.

Dorm Life

- Clanny House (is the name of the “neighborhood” of dorms)
- Flat style (think of a townhome)
- My specific flat had 7 roommates total.
 - 7 bedrooms, 2 showers, 2 toilets, common kitchen area
- Laundry mat style for all of Clanny House

Classes

- Most classes operate this way
- Beginning of the week: lecture style with appx. 50 students
- Throughout the rest of the week: class is separated into pre-determined sections for a more intimate style setting
 - Approximately 10-20 from original lecture
 - Go more in depth about material, ask more questions

Easter Break

- Easter Break is essentially University of Sunderland's Spring Break.
- It is THREE WEEKS long.
 - My friends and I went to France, Germany, and Italy during this time.

Homework/Quizzes/Tests

- While all classes have their own rules, all 3 of my classes operated this way.
- We had no homework other than to read articles/from textbook
 - No need to buy textbooks- the Library has them!
- At the end of the semester, we had a final paper/project due and a final exam
- There were no quizzes throughout the semester or tests---it was up to you to keep up with studying

Final Exams

- Finals exams are like standardized tests in the States
- All of mine consisted of two essay questions that we responded to in a Blue Book. It was expected to spend an hour answering each question. (2 hours total exam time)
- We had several classes put into a large classroom with proctors (professors) from other classes
- Secondary information was required, so there was a lot of outside research required to be remembered

Student/Professor Relationship

- At the University of Sunderland, professors don't mind being called by their first name and encourage it
- Open discussion/interruption is welcome
- It is more of a mentor relationship ("Let me tell you about all of this knowledge I have") vs. the authoritarian relationship in the US ("I'm the professor, listen to what I have to say.")

Sunderland (The City)

- Sunderland is a small, residential area.
- There are pubs about every 2 store fronts.
(Just kidding, but it feels like it)
- There is a mall (think Valdosta's mall, not Atlanta's malls).
- There are museums (almost all are free in Europe) and lots of parks.

Food

- To get “real” English food, you can step into any pub. You might see American foods, but I can assure you 8/10 times, the English have changed it.
- There are typical fast food restaurants (McDonalds, Burger King, etc). It's interesting to eat here, also (the meat actually tastes like meat!).
- There are several brands of grocery stores: Aldi, Sainsbury's, and Tesco. I'm sure there are others, but those seemed to be the most prevalent. Tesco is the most similar to Wal-Mart (there's a couple “expresses” and a giant Tesco).

Nightlife

- Most college age students go to clubs (loud music, dancing type clubs)
- At night, the pubs are filled with working adults, but if you have a good group to go with you can have fun there, too.
 - The drinking culture is part of the norm in England. There is nothing rare about seeing people go to the pubs on their lunch breaks, have a few drinks, then go straight back to work.
 - While people do get very drunk, the English tend to carry themselves well when they drink.

Public Transportation

- There is the Metro that goes to different places in Sunderland and to Newcastle.
- There is also a free bus system provided by the University (just need your student ID) that goes from Clanny House, to both campuses, and to the mall, stopping at important places (grocery store) in between.
- The train system is widely utilized throughout the UK! We took it to Scotland (3 hours) and London (4 hours). It goes all over the UK and even to Paris!

Clothing

- Class: Rarely does someone “dress down.” Girls usually always have hair/make up done and jeans/shorts/skirt and a cute top/sweater on. (Think of what you would wear out to a bar in Valdosta.) Guys, of course, can get by with jeans and a t-shirt.
- Clubs: Girls go ALL out. Semi-formal attire. Honestly, most girls looked like they walked off Jersey Shore (big hair, fake tans, animal print, tight clothing). Guys, of course, can get by with jeans and a t-shirt (funny how that happens), but do sometimes wear button ups.
- Running errands: same attire for class. I was stared at when I wore a t-shirt around town.

Weather

- Sunderland is right on the Eastern coast of England. During the winter, wind is CONTSTANT. Any direction you turn, the wind is NOT to your back. That's what makes it cold, so layering is essential.
- It also doesn't snow because of the saltiness of the air. If it does, it's huge, wet flakes that don't stick.
- During the Spring, I always carried a jacket because it was usually cool.
- For June/July, it was perfect weather.
- Rain: it does rain A LOT. And mostly just that annoying, sprinkling rain. Always bring a rain jacket/umbrella. Even if there isn't a cloud in the sky.

Suggestions

- I strongly suggest joining “societies” (clubs) to meet English friends.
- At Clanny House, nearly all of the residents are international students, so it is very easy to just stick to your comfort zone and only make American friends.
- Introduce yourself to your professor early in the course and go to them if you have questions about assignments, would like helpful hints to study.

Money

- Check with your bank about their international withdrawal policies. I used Wells Fargo (my mom's bank). There was always a fee when I withdrew, so I would try to withdraw a large amount of money at one time and then budget for the week so that fee was only charged once.
- It is not likely the bank will give you an account, since you are there for a short amount of time, but if you ask the Exchange program directors, they might be able to help you start one.

Blog

- While in Sunderland, I kept a blog. It goes more in depth of the things I did on a day to day basis and even documents some of the traveling I did!
- <http://travelingsrat.blogspot.com>