Marie Tucker: London Bridge Rotary Club Report

 This summer has been one I have dreamed of since I was a little girl. I want to start off by saying thank you to the The City of London/London Bridge Rotary Educational Foundation for giving me this opportunity. I can’t even put into words how grateful I am. I have always wanted to study abroad and without this scholarship I don’t think I would have been able to. Thank you for helping me live my dream. Throughout the past six weeks abroad I have experienced incredible growth and change as a person. Living in London in the dorms this summer was my first ever experience living by myself, and I couldn’t have asked for a better experience! One of my favorite things about London was just living there. Doing the small everyday things like grocery shopping, taking the tube, and walking through Regent’s Park, I took great joy in. London is such a large and culturally diverse city, and while at first it can be intimidating living somewhere so different from home, after about a week I felt myself slip into the London life style.

One of my favorite things to do in London was see pieces of theatre. Being a theatre major, studying in one of the theatre capitals of the world was absolutely amazing for me! During my time in London I saw three pieces of theatre. I saw *42nd Street*, *Wicked*, and *Hamlet*. All three of these performances were so amazing and so different from each other. I felt like I really got a taste and feel for what the theatre community is like in London. There are so many different shows and performances happening in London from large West End shows to smaller hole in the wall shows there is something for everyone. Being in London and experiencing its theatre community reminded me of my love for the theatre and that I am truly studying something that I really love.

The class that I decided to take while in London was Londinium to the Blitz: London Through Its Museums. Previous students from past years talked highly of this class and its professor, Kevin Flude. It seemed like a no brainer for me to pick this class at University of Westminster. I truly think I choose one of the best summer courses offered by University of Westminster. We were rarely in the classroom and learned about London’s history by doing walking tours of the city and visiting multiple museums. Our professor Kevin was so knowledgeable in everything he told us and always gave us suggestions of things to do after class in the area we ended up in! I learned so much about London’s history by experiencing it first hand and got to see some places that I wouldn’t have thought to visit if it wasn’t for the class. Some of my favorite locations visited in the class include The British Museum, The London Museum, The Victoria and Albert Museum, the Roman Amphitheatre, and Guildhall.

Getting to visit Guildhall with my class before meeting the Lord Mayor of London was such a cool experience! We saw the inside of Guildhall when it was totally empty and learned about the history of the structure. Getting to meet Charles Bowman, the current Lord Mayor of London, was probably one of the highlights of this trip. I feel so honored to have been able to not only meet Charles Bowman but to talk with other aldermen about the program and scholarship and how to further it in the future.

When trying to think about ways in which this program and scholarship can be improved it’s hard to think of any! The London Bridge Rotary Club has done such an amazing job in organizing everything from flights to housing to our meeting with the Lord Mayor of London. One thing Natalie, Amanda, and I did talk about on the day in which we met the Lord Mayor of London was different ways of connecting each person who receives the scholarship with someone who works in their preferred industry in London. For example, possible connecting me with someone who works in the theatre industry in London. Overall, I wouldn’t change this program for the world. It was so well done, and I had the experience of a lifetime.

One other amazing aspect of this summer that this program granted me was the ability to meet my family in London. My dad was originally born in London and his father was one of 11 children in the family. I have a very large family based in the UK. It has been a dream of mine since I was little to meet this side of my family. I was able to meet multiple cousins and great aunts and uncles during my time abroad. It was amazing getting to hear the stories they told me about the times my parents had been there over 26 years ago!

This past summer has been life changing. It was one filled with laughter, excitement, and culture. I met people from all over the world and made friends for life who are based all over the planet. If I had to give advice to scholarship recipients in the years to come, it would be to make this summer what you want it to be! This is an experience of a lifetime and make sure you focus on what you want to see and experience in London. While not everyone I was with or met in London was as into seeing shows I as was, I didn’t let that stop me! I made sure to see as many theatre performances as I could while in London. Take some time by yourself and explore the city. These were the moments in which I found my place in the city. Be adventurous and try something you haven’t done before! Above all, talk to others and meet new people. I have made new friends for life through this program. Everyone else doing the University of Westminster summer program are experiencing this for the first time as well. There are a ton of people that you will have things in common with! I want to end with this quote that I discovered online while in London. “By seeing London, I have seen as much of life as the world can show” (Samuel Johnson). I found this quote online my last night in the dorms as I was looking out onto a beautiful city lit up by building lights and felt immense gratitude. Thank you again so much to The City of London/London Bridge Rotary Educational Foundation for granting me this opportunity. It gave me the opportunity to change and grow and fulfill a lifelong dream of mine.



