



Dear Student,

I would like to say a big thank you for those who wrote to us in response to the first **NYU Letters from London**, introducing the Student Life team and asking if you have any questions you would like answered, with regard to your upcoming experience at NYU London. In this letter I would like to update you on our Cultural Programming Calendar for Fall 2016...

Update on the Cultural Programming Calendar: Fall 2016

Currently I am putting the finishing touches to the Fall calendar. We are hoping to have the full and finalised document ready for dispatch in the third **NYU Letters from London** around the 9th August. This document will contain details of all of the exciting events we have planned for you this upcoming term alongside details of how to get involved in volunteering and charity events. For now, though, I am delighted to share with you information on this semester **big trip**: A Weekend in the West of Ireland trip (Friday 14th October to Sunday 16th October 2016).

A Weekend in the West of Ireland trip on Friday 14th October to Sunday 16th October 2016.

As you will read from the *attached* document, sign-up for this trip is **now open** and you can apply to join the trip by simply returning the (attached) booking form (and scan-email it back to hub@nyu.ac.uk) and we will do the rest! You will notice that the trip carries a fee of **\$375.00** which we can (simply) charge to your NYU student account; all we need is your permission. So, if you would like to join us in Ireland, please return the attached form at the earliest possible opportunity.

As you will read the attached document gives an overview of the trip's proposed itinerary and travel arrangements. We will be based in the city of Galway on Ireland's west coast, a city that is famed for its food and music. Galway is at the centre of the revival of Celtic culture that has been underway in Ireland for a little while now and attracts many of the country's finest musicians and artists who are keen to celebrate this heritage with visitors. The West of Ireland is, for many people, the *real* Ireland and where you will find some of Ireland's most magnificent countryside and many scenic highlights. We will visit, as part of the trip, the amazing Cliffs of Moher and the beautiful region of Connemara, whose scenic beauty is balanced by the severity of its history. The trip will be led by Tony and me. Tony has many years of experience of leading groups to Ireland and has built up a very comprehensive knowledge of the country, its history and traditions. He tells me to expect lots of great tales and legends, some of the best scenery *in Europe* and some of the best traditional music sessions you'll find anywhere! So if all of this sounds appealing, we look forward to receiving your completed booking form and you joining us on our weekend to the Emerald Isle!

As mentioned before, the main Cultural Programming Calendar will be with you in the next few weeks and it will contain information on all of the other day trips, sporting events, theatre performances and cultural eating events we have organised for you for next term. For now, I hope you enjoy reading the attached document and, if you are interested in joining myself and Tony in Ireland, return the attached booking form to us!

Social media

Make sure you find us on the Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to keep up to date with events at NYU London and regular news! See below to follow us on our social media platforms:



NYU London



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NYU London

Also, if you have any questions relating to your upcoming stay at NYU London, do post in the **NYU London Fall 2016** Facebook group, where my colleagues Leo Crolla or Sonia Andriano will be able to answer your queries.

Amazing volunteering opportunities

During your time at NYU London, there will be plenty of opportunities to get involved in volunteering and community service, both on a regular basis and on one-off, fun volunteering days. You will receive more information on the full programme in due course, but one of the opportunities needs a bit more preparation before you arrive, please see below for more details.

NYU London SHINE Project

The SHINE Project connects students with local elementary schools in London to help support children's learning in the classroom for 1-2 hours a week.

Working alongside teaching staff, you'll have the opportunity to support a range of activities including:

- One to one reading and writing support
 - Class discussions
 - Play activities
- Art and music projects
 - Sports classes
- School plays and performances
 - Field trips

And much, much more!

SHINE is a fantastic opportunity to experience the British education system and gain a really unique perspective on the cultural differences between the US and the UK.

This programme is very popular with our students and has a limited number of places available. If you are interested in volunteering with the SHINE Project in London please apply NOW!

The application form can be found [here](#) and should be completed and returned to the SHINE Project co-ordinator, David Hopper: david.hopper@live.com by 5.00pm on Friday 12th August 2016.

All students wishing to take part in the SHINE Project **MUST ACQUIRE A LETTER OF GOOD STANDING/GOOD CONDUCT CERTIFICATE BEFORE LEAVING FOR LONDON**. You will not be able to take part if you do not have this check. It must be obtained from your local police department and it will need to have been issued no earlier than 3 months before you arrive in London

This Week's Correspondence

Since writing last week, we have certainly enjoyed hearing from many of you and continue to invite people to contact us (via hub@nyu.ac.uk), if you have any questions concerning your upcoming experience at NYU London.

Quite a number of you have had similar questions that I thought I would try and share (back) with the group, so everyone can benefit from the information. The most popular questions (this week) have been:

"How many people will attend NYU London in the Fall?"

We will have around 430 students at NYU London in the Fall: 130-or-so of this number will be Freshman, BPE or Masters students who will be staying in London for the full year and return in the Spring Semester. The remaining 300 will be made up of semester-long study-away students! Students from the United States make-up the single largest nationality on the student roster, but we have students from all over the world, so we are very diverse community, which adds to the fun of the place. We also welcome study-away students from NYU Shanghai, and NYU Abu Dhabi.

"What is the housing like?"

It is very nice! Many of our students tell me they prefer the housing in London to the dorms in New York!

We have three housing units:

1. Byron Court (Operated by NYU)

2. Guildford House (Operated by NYU)

3. Urbanest King's Cross

Please see the NYU London website on:

www.nyu.edu/global/global-academic-centers/london/student-life/res-life-housing/explore-the-residences.html

All of the units are within a 40-minute walk of the NYU London Academic Centre and each is well appointed with all of the amenities you will need for modern student living. Two of the residences are located within a 15 minute walk and two are owned and operated by NYU London. The third residence is Urbanest King's Cross, and this is approximately 35 minutes away by walking. This is externally controlled and will therefore be slightly different from the other residences. There is also a public bus that goes from directly outside Urbanest to outside the Academic Centre in approximately 20 minutes.

The accommodation is split into apartments with a variety of rooming configurations (e.g. twin, triple shared bedrooms etc.) with single beds, a desk per student and closet-space, etc. Bedding is provided (although *not* towels – so please bring your own). Shower and bathroom facilities are shared with the apartment's residents, either en-suite or next door to the bedrooms, in some cases. Each apartment has a communal kitchen (pots, pans, silverware, plates provided) and lounge area. Students should note that NYU London does not offer a meal plan, so students will cater for themselves. **ALL Urbanest rooms are single en-suites in cluster flats with a shared kitchen and living area.**

Each apartment has its own individual "credit card type" key which (also) operates other communal doors in the residence and grants access, via the front door, to the building. Each residence has Wi-Fi access, a suite of computer terminals and study rooms. Each building has a TV lounge and laundry room with washing machines (coin operated).

"I am planning to fly in to London on 29th August would like to stay in a hostel for the night. Do you know of any cheap/safe hostels to recommend, preferably near NYU housing?"

The most affordable hostel to stay in that is close to NYU housing is called the Generator (see: www.generatorhostels.com/en/london). It is very well located (for everything) and near to Russell Square Tube Station which gives direct access to London's Heathrow Airport, via the Piccadilly Line.

If you are looking for a convenient budget hotel (as opposed to a hostel) take a look at the Celtic Hotel on Guilford Street. The Celtic Hotel has just gone through a major refurbishment – actually changing its name, from the St. Margaret's Hotel, in the process – so don't be confused when you access its website on: www.stmargarethotel.co.uk/index.html.

I believe it is now a very nice hotel and very good value, especially for Bloomsbury, this part of London. I have not stayed in the hotel, myself, but one of our faculty members, who lives out of town regularly uses it and tells me it is very good. The thing I can say about it is that its location is very good. It is literally, 100 metres from our Guilford Street residence building and a mere 10 minute bag-drag to Byron Court and the NYU Academic Centre. So it can't really be beaten.

In Bloomsbury I think the Celtic Hotel would be the best budget option, but if you don't mind being outside this area, take a look at these other budget choices:

- The Columbia Hotel is www.columbiahotel.co.uk is cheap (for its location).
- The Ace Hotel in Kensington would be a good value option www.ace-hotel.co.uk
- As would the Easy Hotel off the Cromwell Road www.easyhotel.com/hotels/london_earls_court.html
 - The Holiday Inn Express at Southwark is brand new www.exhisouthwark.co.uk
- I've heard good things about the Gate Hotel www.gatehotel.co.uk in Notting Hill, if you want something a bit more "individual"
 - Similarly about the Mitre House Hotel www.mitrehousehotel.com in Paddington.

“I’m thinking of doing some travelling at weekends, where can I get help?”

As I said in the blog last week, we can all help you, but the best person without a doubt is **Tony Skitt!** For those of you who will be travelling to Europe for the first time, I have **attached a travel guide** that will hopefully give you a place to start.

As you will see (from the attachment) the document attempts to introduce people to travelling in Europe, especially if this is their first trip. It also gives some ideas and suggestions of places to go and things to see. I hope you find it helpful.

NYU London will also be holding a Travelsmart week within the first few weeks of classes. Travelsmart is a week of events, activities and workshops that will aim to help you plan, budget and stay safe when you are travelling, so look out for further information after your arrival.

In past years, a lot of students have been able to organise weekend trips quite easily once they’ve got to London, met up with some other “travelling buddies” on the programme and found out (from Tony) where the best place to stay in Barcelona is or whether they should do the French or Italian Riviera, or why is it that everybody goes on about Ibiza etc.

Last semester, some students were having problems finding “cheap deals”. This was mainly because they were not able to book far enough in advance to actually get the “cheap deals” – as these are subject to availability and are *always* the ones that go first! **I would suggest that students take advantage of the NYU Traveler system which will give students greater financial freedom when booking trips.**

My advice would be to have a look at the following websites:

- www.skyscanner.net for general guidance on budget airlines.
- www.easyjet.com and www.ryanair.com for European destinations
 - www.aireuropa.com for Spain
 - www.aerlingus.com for Ireland
 - www.germanwings.com for Germany
 - www.airluxor.com for Portugal

These will give you “a flavour” of what sorts of deals are available at the moment, so you have a “reference point” when thinking about your budgets.

Consider too, there are quite a few good London-based agencies that can help plan and book travel. STA Travel www.statravel.co.uk/ is a great resource for students and I would always see if they can beat any other price you have been quoted. Why STA is so good, is that they can legally discount travel to students and people under 26 years of age. They can also arrange “travel packages” for you, so not just your flight but the hotel and transfers too – so all you would need to do is pop into one of their agencies (there is a very well located one on Goodge Street – which is near to the NYU London Academic Centre) and you’ll come out with your weekend in Milan all booked.

“How should I carry cash to London? Do I need to buy British Pounds in advance? What about money to travel in other countries?”

Good and important questions: My advice would be to have some British Pounds (£) with you when you arrive in the United Kingdom (maybe around £200.00). This will allow you to pay for travel into the city and get you through until you have time to visit an ATM. You can usually buy British currency at your local bank, if you give them enough notice (around 3-4 days), alternatively you can buy it at large international airports like JFK.

Generally-speaking, ATMs are certainly the best way to go in terms of getting cash as you travel around Europe, as their conversion rates are better than most other forms of currency exchange. Check with your bank prior to leaving home that your ATM card will work across Europe; it needs to be part of an international network like Maestro, Cirrus, or Plus. One or all of these logos will be on the back of your card.

When speaking to your bank, ask them about what fees you can expect to pay when withdrawing money from an ATM in Europe? Different cards have different fee tariffs but generally you can expect to pay a withdrawal fee. This might be in addition to a separate fee levied on turning the US dollars in your account in to British pounds or Euros (if travelling). One way to avoid too many withdrawal fees (of course) is to withdraw more money at one time. So you may find yourself withdrawing larger amounts (e.g. £100 or £200) at a time rather than £20 or £40 per visit to the ATM.

Many students decide to open a UK bank account whilst studying here, particularly full-year students. The bank will require an official confirmation letter from NYU London to prove that you are a student studying in the UK. I would suggest that students visit the Student Hub (G08) to complete a request form from Thursday 1st September. In my experiences students have been unable to open a 'student' account at a UK bank, instead opting for a regular current account.

If you are planning to travel to a popular European country like France, Italy or Spain, you will need to buy a separate unit of currency called the Euro. As many of you will be buying this currency using a non-European (e.g. American) bank account, it would be cheaper for you to purchase your Euros at your destination rather than in the UK. This is because if you bought Euros in Britain you would have *two* exchanges to make: E.g. US dollars to Pounds and then (these) Pounds to Euros (so incurring *two* transaction charges). You would be much better to visit an ATM as you get off the train in Paris and go to the ATM at the train station – where you would be buying Euros directly from your own (E.g. US) bank account and (therefore) just pay for one transaction.

Another thing to note, is that credit and debit cards are widely used in Europe but MasterCard and Visa are *by far* the most popular types of card, please make sure you have one or both. Other cards like American Express and Diners Club are not accepted everywhere.

This answers the questions we received, from you, over this week, but keep them rolling in – as we enjoy answering them. I will send you another **NYU Letter from London**, which will contain our Cultural Programming Calendar for the fall. Until then, enjoy the rest of the summer!

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Kindest Regards,

Julia