
Studying abroad

**Understanding University, the
Ultimate Uni Podcast - Episode 17**

Katie

Welcome to Understanding University, the Ultimate Uni Podcast.

My name is Katie and I work for the University of Essex Outreach Team helping to deliver activities and events to support students and guide them on their higher education journeys. The outreach team believe that all students, regardless of their background, education or where they come from, should have an equal opportunity to discover whether Higher Education could be part of their future. Our podcast is designed to give listeners an insight into university life, including the journey before, during and after, dispel some of the myths out there and also motivate and excite you to achieve your potential.

If you'd like to know more or have any questions please contact us by emailing outreach@essex.ac.uk

Ever wanted to experience studying and living abroad? Or do you already speak a second language and intend to work abroad one day? Or perhaps the career you desire requires experience within a different culture. Many university courses offer students the opportunity to take a year abroad, to embark on some amazing adventures, meet new people and potentially learn in another language. Although lots of study abroad courses are delivered in English too. Going to university will provide you with the opportunity to travel and if it is something you haven't tried before or are really interested in doing, then you'll be pleased to know that in today's episode we are joined by Farirai, who has completed a year abroad in Spain as part of her studies at the University of Essex and now she currently works at the university as well, and she'll be telling us all about her experience in this episode. So Farirai welcome, please introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about the course you studied and also your current role here.

Farirai

Thank you very much for having me. So I was a student at the University of Essex from September 2015 and I graduated in 2019. I studied International Relations and Modern Languages, so I was studying Portuguese and Spanish as part of my course and then I did Mandarin Chinese as the language for all option. And then I graduated, moved to China for a bit and now I'm back at the University of Essex as a student recruitment and marketing assistant.

Katie

Wowie. So there already I have lots of questions for you because that is a lot of languages. Was that something you studied at college or sixth form?

Farirai

Yeah, I've always been a bit of a language nerd, so I was born in Zimbabwe, which means my first language is Shona. So obviously when I moved to England I kind of had to, by force, learn English. So that's kind of where my languages started. And then in like year six, I just came home from school one day and my parents are like, we're moving to Spain, not really up to you and the area in Spain that we lived in there was no English schools or anything so then I had to learn Spanish. And so, yeah, I just kind of wanted to keep learning languages and so I took it. I did it. The GCSE, the A-level with Spanish and then university continue Spanish and then I thought, let's learn some more languages and so I just threw a couple more in there.

Katie

That's incredible. And I think, correct me if I'm wrong, but when you already know a language it's easy to pick up other languages?

Farirai

Definitely. I think you pick up transferable skills so because you're used to having to conjugate stuff or keep an eye open for grammar and stuff that will come more naturally if you've had to learn it, as opposed to with your first language, you kind of speak as a reflex so you don't really think about all the grammar instructions and stuff. But once you've had to learn it once, it's easier to learn it another time.

Katie

Wow. So when you went to a college or a sixth form, did you know then what you wanted to do at university? What was sort of going through your mind at that time?

Farirai

I had no idea. I can tell you that very confidently. I originally wanted to study Law and then I did this experience called Pathways to Law, which is really great if you can get your hands on that. So it was year 12 and 13. It just gives you a bit of experience on being a lawyer and they organised placements for us. I did one week in a solicitor's office, one week with a barrister and discovered Law was not for me. It just wasn't my calling. And I just had absolutely no idea what else I wanted to do and so my dad kind of went on a research binge and he found International Relations. So that's how I ended up doing my course. And I absolutely loved it, in my personal opinion, the best degree in the world.

Katie

Did you know at that time that you had the opportunity to do a year abroad as well?

Farirai

Yeah, that was something that I looked out for in anything that I studied, because I just wanted to be abroad.

Katie

Ah okay, so you already knew that before even sort of before thinking about university. Yep, I want to be in another country and partly because your previous experience as well, you probably had a bit more confidence knowing what it could potentially be like. Ah, cool. No, that that's fantastic. For our listeners perhaps who haven't sort of or aren't aware of what a year abroad is. Would you mind sort of outlining what it is, what sort of opportunities you can get from it? But we will talk in a bit more detail about your specific experience in just a moment.

Farirai

Yes, sure. So if you come to the University of Essex, for example, you have the option to do either a full year or you can just do a term or semester so you don't have to feel like under pressure to go for a whole year. But you'll essentially go to one of our countries, Essex has connections with over 70 countries, over 300 different institutions and you can either, most students do end up studying. So it will be, I mean you have quite a lot flexibility in terms of the modules that you choose, then just essentially be going to university in a different country or some people do choose to work. So I have a friend of mine who went with the British Council as an English teacher so that's also an option you have as well. But it depends on the course that you're studying.

Katie

Mhmm. And when do you do that year abroad in your sort of timeline of university?

Farirai

So you do two years of study, then you'd go on a year abroad and then you come back for final year.

Katie

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Thank you very much for that Farirai. So let's talk a little bit more about your experience then, so in the process of university, you applied for your three-year course with the year abroad as well

and was it at that point then when you applied that you had to decide where you wanted to go or was that something you decided later on when you were beginning your studies?

Farirai

So because I was doing languages, the requirement for me was I had to go to a country that spoke my language and because Spanish was my main one, it had to be a Spanish speaking country. If you're not studying languages, then you have a lot more flexibility, of course, you don't have that restriction. But we didn't really have to decide until I think, when we start applying. Beginning of second year. So that was when we started looking and because I just knew I was going somewhere that spoke Spanish.

Katie

Yeah. Yeah. OK. And what about students that aren't sure about where they're going to study? Do you know much about that, what that process is?

Farirai

I think it's the same for everybody in the sense that you would start doing your application in second year. So they obviously encourage you to start thinking about it in first year, Essex Aboard has a lot of information about the different places available and the Essex Abroad staff is great. They're always on deck if you need any advice, if you want kind of experience, what it's gonna be like and you just want some more information, they're more than happy to give you more of a background knowledge and then you've got the tools that you have to do your research. And I believe I'm pretty sure you can apply up to three places, I'm pretty sure I applied to three different universities for my year abroad. So you don't have to kind of stick to just one choice and then if you don't get it, you've got a bit of flexibility there.

Katie

Perfect. It sounds like the university does provide quite a lot of support in that process as well.

Farirai

Yeah, definitely.

Katie

Oh, that's good and probably reassuring for our listeners who maybe have never experienced any sort of travel abroad before. It sounds like you'll get plenty of support in sort of a way with your options and with your applications and things as well. That is great. And is it a requirement that you are fluent in a second language?

Farirai

Oh, no, definitely not. No. If you are doing languages, then you're gonna, if you're studying languages then the courses that you choose will have to be in that specific language. So if you've chosen French as your degree, then when you go abroad, you're going to have to study in French. But for everybody else, absolutely not. English is fine. All of the of connections that we have, most of those universities speak English, they have English courses. So you don't need to feel under pressure that you gotta, you know, be fluent before you go.

Katie

Yeah. Yeah. No, of course. So yeah, if you don't know a second language you can still, could still go abroad. Yeah. It's definitely something I really missed out on so I'm a little bit envious of your fantastic experiences. And when you went on your year abroad, what sort of impact did this make on your studies and potentially your future after university as well?

Farirai

I'm very, very grateful I did it because I used to think that I spoke very good Spanish. I learnt very quickly I didn't. But by the time the year was finished my Spanish was miles better and I met so many people that I'm still in contact with today. That definitely helped me out with everything that I'm trying to do in life and it kind of just gave me a bit more understanding that travelling is definitely something that I want to do, hopefully take it in my professional career. Yeah, I think it's just a really good experience that you just get to see other cultures, see how other people are living outside of your own. Spanish culture is very different

from British culture which is very different from Zimbabwean culture. So it's yeah, kind of rounded me out as a person I'd say.

Katie

And I think there's plenty of opportunity for sort of networking, as you mentioned, you're still in contact with some of these people. Would there have been sort of the potential for you to maybe go back to Spain after you finish your degree?

Farirai

I went, when did I go? I think graduation day, the week I finished my exams, I was like, yeah I'm leaving. So I called up my friend who lives there and her grandparents have a flat on the beach. So I was like, yeah, I'm going to yours. And so, like all of my friends from Spain we just met up at her family's beach flat and just chilled. And then my friend is coming. When is he coming? He's coming in January with his boyfriend, they're going to see the abattoir, they're coming to London. And so now it's my turn to like take them out for a tour. And then it's just kind of a back and forth to the people so the people I'm still chatting with I've got somewhere to stay in Spain, basically, like, that's great.

Katie

That's fantastic. And what about the studies actually in Spain? How was that compared to here?

Farirai

It was very, I won't lie, it was very intense, but only because I think in my head I'd downplayed that I happened to still going to university. So it was kind of, and again, I was doing it in Spanish which obviously it's a whole new level, but it was manageable, it's definitely doable. And the University of Essex staff was still on board to support me, even though I wasn't technically a student for a year. They were still very, very helpful, and my lecturers were great and I learnt quite a lot, I think, because there was a lot of flexibility. I could study anything I wanted just as long as it was in Spanish so I think I did I took like constitutional law and I did an ethics module and I was just like picking random stuff. That sounded interesting. So I learnt a lot. It was really good. Yeah, I definitely enjoyed it.

Katie

And is the structure similar to here? So is the terms the same length?

Farirai

Yeah, terms the same length. I did have to build my own timetable though because I was picking random modules. So it's unlike Essex where they send you your timetable at the beginning of the year, I kind of had to figure out where all my courses were and stuff like that. But in terms of like the school year and then the holiday time, Spain has a lot of holidays, they have a lot of national holidays. There was a little bit more relaxing time.

Katie

Lovely. Thank you. And so that our listeners are aware, what happens when it comes to sort of tuition fee support and maintenance fee support because obviously, for your three years of traditional undergraduate course, you can apply via Student Finance England and you can get that support for those three years. What happens then if you want to do a year abroad or perhaps a work placement year? What happens with that?

Farirai

So you, I feel like it might have changed since I did it because I know when I went you didn't have to pay any tuition fees to the University of Essex, and you just had to pay a small fee to the school you were going to, which student finance still supported you with. I'm not 100% sure what the system is currently, do check the website and see what it says, I'm sure that Essex Abroad have the information on there. But student finance, you do still get a student finance loan and it is usually more. Again, when I went, it was more than what I was getting when I was in the UK because obviously they know you're abroad and you need a little bit extra financial support, so you still apply in the same way that you do while you're doing your course, then the money will still come in the same instalments.

Katie

Yeah, so it's a nice and simple process. So the only additional costs then I guess are whatever you spend over there, perhaps, your travel and things like that. What sort of cost does that include?

Farirai

So yeah, so it would just be your rent, your travel, your food, pretty much exactly what you do while you're here, just in a different country. In Spain I found was a lot cheaper than trying to survive in England because it was just, I think they have like a student bus pass which also worked on the tram. And it was very straightforward. So you have essentially exactly the same thing that you do it in England, just in a different country.

Katie

I think generally the travel out in Europe is a lot cheaper than here anyway. So that's quite good. And, when you were out there as well actually, between your accommodation and your sort of lecture rooms and things. What distance was that? Did you have to use transport?

Farirai

Yes. So, don't do what Farirai did, when I was looking for accommodation I just really wanted to live somewhere with a pool. So that was like the one default thing, which meant that I found a place with a pool, it just happened to be very far from my university, but I didn't realise that I got there, and I was like oh, OK, I'm a bit far. But everybody else who used their common sense, made sure they found accommodation close to it. So don't do what I did, but it's fine because they were direct buses to get me straight to campus. And because there was two campuses and the modules that I chosen again, I got a bit too excited were on separate campuses and so, the campuses are a good 20-30 minutes apart. So it was like jumping from bus to bus to get to class. But I was always on time. But yeah, no, I definitely say make sure you do your research, check where you're living and where your campus is and if there's more than one campus. Do better than me.

Katie

So we've learnt from this that we need to sort of plan out our timetable.

Farirai

And you don't need a pool, I think I used the pool like twice the whole time I was there so.

Katie

I know that the pool probably would have enticed me as well so don't worry about that. Okay then. So costs associated with a year abroad will just be what you would be sort of paying if you're studying in the UK. Perhaps you just need to consider flights and maybe consider how often, did you travel back home at all?

Farirai

I did. I came back I think for Easter. I'm not entirely sure if they still do it now, but Ryanair at the time have, they had like a travel aboard bursary where they gave, I think it was 8 flights or 6 flights. I think you just had to register your student card. It was like discounted flights I think it was like 20-30% off plus free check-in luggage. So that was what me and my friends use most the time when we wanted to travel, which obviously really did help with the discounts on flights and flights aren't too expensive to Spain.

Katie

So you spent Christmas in Spain?

Farirai

No, I spent Christmas in Zimbabwe.

Katie

Oh wow.

Farirai

Yeah no, my dad was like we're going home, I'm like sure, so yeah Christmas and New Year were in Zimbabwe.

Katie

Okay. So Wow. Okay. That's fantastic, lots of places all in one year. Okay. And budgeting then, this would be quite good just in general for student budgeting tips, regardless of whether you do a year abroad or not. But how did you manage that?

Farirai

I think, so whenever I got my student loan payment come through, and I do this all the time anyway, the first thing I did was obviously pay my rent, make sure I had all my bills money aside and all of the essential, important things put to the side. And then you kind of gauge how much you're gonna spend within maybe like the first month. So once you figure out how much you spend on groceries, how much you need for transport and that kind of thing that's how you can then plan out for the rest of the month, because I think it's a lot harder if you try to budget before you know how much life is gonna cost you. So once you've kind of had a bit of experience, okay, cool, groceries I'm gonna need like 30 euros, 20 euros, I'm gonna need this much for travel and the travel pass is really good. I think you paid for that per semester so it was great. Once it's paid, I have to don't worry about it anymore. So I think if you can, bulk payments is always great for me because I just like knowing that I've paid for it, I don't have to think about it anymore. And then you can kind of figure out what you're going to do with the rest your finances once you've got it now on the side.

Katie

Lovely, and did you have like an international card or how did you pay for things out there?

Farirai

Yes, I opened up a Spanish bank account, which I mean, this was pre-Brexit, so it was quite straightforward process, I just walked in. And I think they opened up an international person bank account and I just used that for the year as it was coming in. So money, my student finance went into my UK account and then I would just withdraw that and then put it in my Spanish bank account.

Katie

Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah. And I'm sure that obviously post-Brexit and things, the university will be very supportive in helping with those sorts of things and also visas as well. If that's something that you'll have to do as part of your checks and things if you are gonna do a year abroad. Perfect. Thank you Farirai. Right, well, what did you take with you then? Obviously, you've got a suitcase. You're going away for a year, an academic year. How do you take your belongings with you? How do you know?

Farira

I'm trying to remember what I packed. I think, what did I take with me? I don't actually remember. I took a bunch of, because we have, I had some stuff already in Spain that was ready waiting for me. But I think obviously a lot of stuff you can buy when you get abroad. I think some people sometimes make the mistake where they think I have to take absolutely everything that I ever own.

But I mean, most stuff you can buy there, like bedding, bedsheets, kitchen utensils and stuff, you can buy them quite decently for a good price. I think just maybe focus on taking the things that you absolutely need. So if it's like, I don't know, like my inhaler was essential, I needed to take that, that needs to come with me. I took my teddy bear, I love my teddy bear, he's a wolf, his name is Knot. He had to come with me. And just like kind of the essentials that I knew I definitely couldn't get over there. But most stuff just once I got there because you kind of figure out what it is that you need as well, because I think if it had it been up to me, I would have taken my electric blanket because I get cold easily. You don't really need an electric blanket in Spain, so I didn't take it with me, luckily. So I think yeah, I think a lot of things, once you're there, you'll be able to gauge what you need to buy, what you might not need to get. So don't worry too much about carrying absolutely everything that you own.

Katie

No, and obviously consider what the climate is going to be like as well, because in Spain it's a little bit hotter. But I know the winter..

Farirai

In the winter it's very cold because their homes aren't designed for winter in the ways ours aren't really designed for summer so when it gets cold, it gets very cold.

Katie

Yeah. So definitely do your research because that might not be something you're aware of. Of it being cold in Spain in the winter. So depending on where you go, just check that out and just pack your essentials basically, because then you can get everything else out there. What about the university in Spain then? Did

they provide support? Were there things you could purchase from them or was it, how does it work with that?

Farirai

I mean, I didn't go to them to purchase things, I just kind of went, because the supermarket was quite near to my house, I didn't really need to worry about that too much. But there were a lot of things going on at the university and I had like an Erasmus Mixer's where they were trying to get everyone to meet each other. And I know they had a couple of camping trips and stuff that they did at the Erasmus team. I didn't get to make those because they were when I was either in England or in Zimbabwe. But yeah, they had quite a lot of events for students to just meet each other. And then I joined the university choir, which is where most of my friends came from, such a beautiful community. We're all long-term friends. I only just left the group chat like a couple of weeks ago, and I left Spain in like 2018, yeah, I stayed in that group chat for a while.

Katie

Sorry, the people in the choir, are they from, did they go to the university? From Spain?

Farirai

Yeah. So it's the university of, so I went to Murcia, which is like South Spain, the University of Murcia choir. And so yeah, pretty much all of them were students. There were a couple of us who were on our year abroad as well, but it was majority like students from the university. And so that's where the friend with the beach house and the friend, that's where I knew all of them from

Katie

Wow. Yeah, that sounds absolutely incredible. And taking part in extra societies and things as well help you to integrate in there. So I was just wondering, did you get homesick at all?

Farirai

No, but that's just because I was having fun and yeah, I was really having a great time. My dad calls me all the time, my brothers would not leave me alone, so it was hard to miss them when they kept getting on my phone, love you guys. But yeah, I think it was, because obviously, I've seen them over Christmas and I saw them at Easter so it wasn't like we were completely isolated. And yeah I was having fun.

Katie

Yeah. Amazing. Do you have any tips for any anyone that may feel homesick if they were to embark on an experience like this?

Farirai

Yeah no, I think it's very, because I know it's definitely something that does happen. And I think it's very important to keep in contact with the people back home, even if it's like having to set up a schedule, because I mean, it's not a huge time difference in Spain but if you're going somewhere really far away or you might need to be like okay, be by your phone at 2:00 a.m., I know it's 2:00 a.m., but I need you to be awake. And then also just have a community of friends whilst you're there abroad because they always make you feel better about having like a down day or something. My friends were like yeah we're going out and they were just like a really good mood lifter. I think also just remembering, you know, if you feel like you really, really do, you need to come home and you can come home, there's always an option for you to, you know, come back, see your family. And it's a year, like a year might sound like a super long time, but it's not as long as it sounds and then before you know it, it's over and you're back in the UK. You're gonna wanna go back.

Katie

Well, it's an academic year as well isn't it. So it's actually less than a few months. Thank you for those tips. I just thought I'd backtrack because you mentioned Erasmus and I just thought be great for you to explain what that word is, what it means.

Farirai

Yes. So, the Erasmus scheme, which I don't believe the UK currently is in anymore due to Brexit.

But back in my day, it was just essentially an arrangement across Europe where when you do a year abroad, you'd kind of fall under, that if you'd go on the Erasmus scheme and there's certain benefits that will come with that. And there was a lot of connected universities across Europe which would then, you know, make arrangements for their students to either do an exchange or you just come here and study for a year. So that was essentially what most year abroads in Europe, European area would fall under the Erasmus scheme.

Katie

Thank you. Do you plan to go back?

Farirai

Of course. As soon as I can, I definitely will, we've still got the house that we bought when we moved to Spain when I was a kid. My dad really, really, really wants to move back. So it's kind of one of those things where, yeah, once we get the opportunity, once things are starting making sense, I think I'm going to go back in April, actually. I might just pop in like hi guys.

Katie

Well, it's fantastic that you've made those connections over there. And like you said, you've got you popped back just after your graduation. I imagine that was a really fantastic sort of celebratory time. That's amazing that you've still got those connections and friends over there. It's really lovely. What was it like coming back then? So you've spent your year in Spain and you came back for your final year of your undergraduate. What was that like?

Farirai

It was good. I think, my year, it was very full. As in like, I felt like I'd reached a satisfying conclusion to it, I guess it's been a good year and I can go back. I'd say probably the only downside kind of to having done a year abroad is a lot of my friends hadn't, as in my university friends here in Essex. So by the time I came back to do my final year, they had graduated the year before. So I still had like a few friends who did languages with me who'd also done a year abroad, but because I did a joint degree, so my International Relations friends, they graduated the year before. So it was kind of like my friendship cycle had diminished quite greatly and everyone else had kind of, you know, it was going off and doing like post-graduation life. So that was kind of a downside. But I mean, it was okay, like I still had my friends. And final year it kept me busy enough for me to not miss having a social life. I had things to do, but yeah no other than that. Yeah, it was it was a fine it was fine experience.

Katie

Was there anything as part of your year abroad that made an impact on your final year studies?

Farirai

Yes. So I ended up I think it was just the research that I'd done so because I'd done I did like a conflict management module whilst I was in Spain that really helped me with my dissertation. So my dissertation was, I mean, not to bore you with the title, I'm trying to remember it word for word. To what extent does nationalism affect revolutions within the Zimbabwe community? Something along those lines. It has a more official title but I'm forgetting it now. But yeah. So the modules that I've done in Spain, they definitely really helped me in terms of the questions to ask, I was quoting a lot of the authors that I had to I had to read The Prince by Machiavelli, which I'd heard about for years. But I was never going to read that book until it was a compulsory module because we were like having an exam on it and I was like okay fine. So because I'd read it, I could now actually quote it. So, yeah, just like things that I had learnt, they definitely did help me out with my diso.

Katie

Amazing. Yeah. Thank you so much, Farirai, all of that has been well, very interesting for me to listen to and hopefully for our listeners as well. What advice would you give to students that are considering a year abroad?

Farirai

If you can do it, I definitely would highly recommend that you do do it. I wouldn't let, don't let your own fear, but also don't let other people's fears, hold you back, because I think that was a thing for me, to be fair when I was going to China a lot of people were kind of trying to scare me out it and telling me how scary it could be, but it's honestly not as scary as it might sound to you. I think if you have the opportunity,

definitely seize it, you're going to learn so much about yourself, about the world, you develop as a person and you learn things that you might like, that you don't like, that you might not have picked up while you're here in the UK. And it's always nice to take a break to just try something new. So, yeah, if you can definitely, definitely go on one.

Katie

Yeah, university is a great opportunity for, to take on these so, um, yeah, why not if it's there. And also if you're still not sure and you enrol in a three year undergraduate course. I think there is an option for you to pick it up at another point.

Farirai

You would still be able to just add it onto because I think most, there's very few courses at the University of Essex that doesn't offer the option for a year abroad. Most of them do. So yeah, once you get here, then you just be able to let your department know I want to go abroad and they should be able to sort something for you.

Katie

Fantastic. And you just mentioned China, and just wanted to know little bit more about that, was that, was that experience brought on because of your experience in Spain or I know that you've been to a lot of other countries before anyway so you've probably had a little bit more confidence to go somewhere else, I'd just love to know a little bit more about that?

Farirai

Yeah. So China, I've always wanted to learn Mandarin. So I was studying Mandarin as part of my course. But one thing Spain did teach me is if you want to learn a language, you've kind of got to be in the country and it helps tremendously. So I kind of figured, yeah, if I want to master Mandarin, let me go. So I went with the British Council as an English teacher. English as a foreign language teacher. And originally my plan was to do it for two years, but unfortunately because of the pandemic it only ended up being six months, but it was still a really good six months. I was teaching at a high school in Suzhou, which is about 20 minutes outside of Shanghai. So, yeah, no, it was a really good year. I got to plan my own lessons. My students were so much fun. I really miss my students. Like I say this a lot, they were great kids. So, yeah, it was literally just a year of teaching English. And again, there was a lot of financial support in that one. So if anyone does consider doing it, it's not as scary as it sounds. It really was fun. And it's another thing you also have the option to just do a semester if you didn't want to do the full year long programme. But originally, I would have liked to have done two years.

Katie

And you said earlier that you hope that these experiences will help with your future ambitions. What are they if you don't mind sharing?

Farirai

Yes. So ideally, I would like to go into the public service sector as a diplomat would be great or something working in foreign relations, foreign affairs. Ideally work in kind of, you know, a Chinese speaking countries, or Spanish speaking countries. So that's kind of, it's a very shady goal at the minute because, you know, I've had to redesign my career path. But yes, something in the foreign relations.

Katie

Wow, very inspiring. And today has been sort of, especially for me, I didn't get to go on a year abroad, and if I could go back in time, I would definitely seize the opportunity now. So thank you so much Farirai. I wanted to finish off with your favourite moment of your year abroad in Spain.

Farirai

That's a good question. Well, with the university choir, we did, they do every year like a kind of retreat where we just go to like the mountains for a weekend. And that was a really, really fun weekend. I was staying in a cabin. And it was like, what, how many of us, like 30, 40 of us, just like chilling. And I think it was like the weekend of the Eurovision finals. So we were like watching it and obviously, like they're all Spanish, I'm British and some of my friends are French so we got very, very competitive. And that was also the year of the World Cup. So I'm going to tie it in with watching the World Cup finals with my French friends because obviously France won and it was just really fun watching it with them because they got really excited.

Katie

Amazing atmosphere I imagine.

Farirai

Yeah, it was great. Loved it. It was brilliant

Katie

And that's not something you would have got here.

Farirai

Yeah, no. I don't really have any French friends in England, do I have any? But I have French friends in Spain!

Katie

Yeah. Well, thank you so much, Farirai. That has been absolutely incredible hearing about your year abroad, and I hope that our listeners now understand a little bit more about what it involves, how to get involved with a year abroad as well. But there are so many options out there. So do check out when you're doing a university research, see what's available, speak to your departments and also just take on any opportunity that you can because from Farirai's experience, it sounds like it's the most amazing thing that you can do. So, thank you so much for joining us, Farirai.

Farirai

Thank you for having me. It was great.

Katie

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Thanks again and don't forget to share the episode with your family, friends and colleagues.