

Here I am, in my dorm in the East wing of York House, attempting to put into words all the fabulous things that happened to me over the past three months... Suddenly, an Elf knocks on my door and I receive a surprise from my Secret Santa. I am treated with a Cadbury hot chocolate and the most delicious peanut butter toast, carved into the letter 'A' for Adriana, a Christmas tree and a heart. Now it actually makes sense that my friends asked me what my favourite spread and toast is... Genuinely, I have never experienced nor dreamt about anything like that before. This sentence could very accurately describe my whole stay at Downe House School.

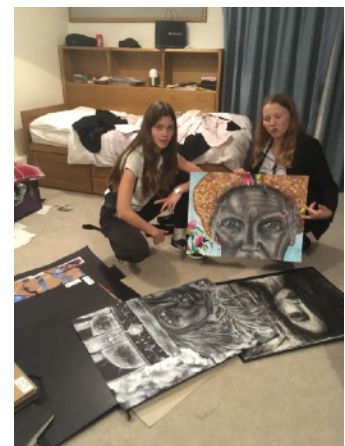


For instance, a whole new experience to me was to study four subjects in a true depth. Even the very choice of these made me realise the interests I want to pursue in my future. In the beginning of the term, I wasn't very sure about it. I had even switched English for Philosophy and Sports Science! Thanks to the most tolerant, kind and patient approach of the teachers, I find myself now absolutely loving my subjects and knowing, where my heart is. Lessons at Downe were fun and engaging though also challenging and hard work, which pushed me forwards in many areas.

I have even discovered several parts of me that I hadn't known before. In particular, I have developed a great passion for Philosophy. I have had very captivating talks with both my Philosophy teachers and Mrs Toogood about my university choice and was strongly encouraged by them to study subjects closely related to Social Sciences in the university, which is very likely also going to happen. The school has indeed provided me with very precious advices and guidance for my future studies and careers; in addition, I have had a specialised Higher Education meeting with Miss Clark and Mr Atherton.



Thanks to the emphasis the school places on Arts and Music, I have been lucky enough to develop my own analogue film for the first time, paint the English countryside set of the AGS House Drama or practise my piano play in some of the many rooms of the Music Block. Initiated by my great friend from U6, Melissa, I played a well-known Czech piece at the Lunchtime Concert.

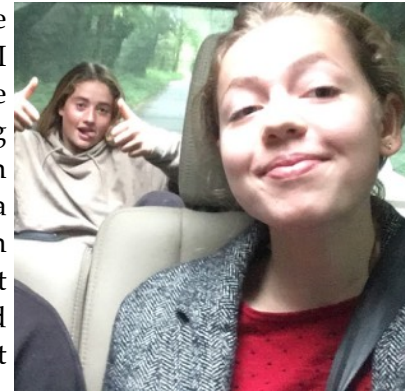


Likewise, I have been introduced for the first time to boarding, and that indeed in the best possible way! The most kind and always caring housemistresses and matrons were setting the peaceful atmosphere and rules in the House, the girls were creating a sense of home and strong bonds to each other... I was so immersed and satisfied in this new lifestyle. As many girls keep telling me, I am truly a part of their year group... I have made many great friends here and am

convinced that some of the friendships will last lifetime - we are already making exciting holiday and university plans!



Nevertheless, we already have some exciting adventures behind ourselves. I have spent the first exeat at Millie's in the English countryside. We have been hiking in the woods and refreshed the British history in our minds by watching Victoria and Abdul in the cinema. I've been introduced to both her family and her best friends. They were very kind to me and we've led engaging talks (not only) about the countries we come from.



Another exciting adventure was attending the MFL Taster Session at the University of Cambridge with Nina. Exploring the historical city centre was also amazing, though the complicated transfer was a little stressful. However, looking at it from distance, it is one of the things that actually made us so close with Nina.



In the renowned Oxbridge battle, I am more on the side of Oxford, as it is bigger and livelier there. To make this opinion and to make aspirations of studying there, I had (unaware of these results) gone with the History of Art Society to see the World Religions Exposition at the Ashmolean Museum. There are so many reasons that I have fallen in love with this city. Its museums, hip atmosphere, the University campuses,

adorable coffeeshops... And even more delicious coffees!



Another outstanding Downe House adventure has taken place in London the previous weekend. I have stayed there with Anna and Emma and had the most fun 24 hours. At night, we have been to the Winter Wonderland and screamed our heads off in the rides. The following day, the girls have shown me some of their favourite hidden gems of this vibrant city and we have concluded the first Sunday of December with a fabulous iceskating session.



To show the girls what adventures Prague has to offer, Anežka and I have organised a Czech evening, where I have played a video, made out of my favourite shoots of my motherland, school and friends. We have talked the girls through the



history and traditions of the Czech Republic and offered them some of our favourite Czech sweets. Apparently they loved both, so I am looking forward to their visits and to sharing another unforgettable memories with them!



There are so many more experiences that Downe House has enriched me with... The reels aka the most hilarious spins with boys in kilts. My first ever Netball trainings and matches. Choral singing with its breathtaking team spirit and energy. The Peaky Blinders series marathons. The amazing Christmas atmosphere. The list could go on and on...



Nonetheless, thanks to my stay at Downe House, I have grown as a person and become much more independent and confident. I have also improved in my leading and decision-making skills thanks to the MUN and Young Enterprise sessions that I have attended every week. As my brother had accurately predicted before I came here: *"Adriana, when you come back, you will not be a child anymore - you will be an 'Almost-Adult.'*" This is very true, my studies at Downe House now make a crucial part of my self-development. A part of me is always going to be the 'Downe House Girl'. I will never forget the generosity and graciousness that Downe House has shown me in the Michaelmas term 2017...*"Genuinely, I have never experienced nor dreamt about anything like that before."*

*...some of the photos from the film I have developed for the first time on my own...*

