

## **Sustainability & Social Justice** **in the United Kingdom & the Netherlands**

**Week 1:** After a flight to London, hop on a train and watch as the scenery changes from beautiful rolling hills featuring old stone buildings to a dramatic coastline. Your home for the next week will be a beautifully converted farmhouse in the Devon countryside from where your group will orient and explore the unique community of Totnes- a town famed for the Transition Movement. The Transition Town Movement is a model around the world for how communities can move away from fossil fuels, to regenerative models that serve the environment and people. The first few days of your time here will be devoted to building a strong group culture and foundation for the rest of the program. You can expect to spend some days on the river Dart, canoeing and learning about the history of this region and how it has played a big role in both industrialization and deindustrialization, and now regeneration. Our partner here will help you learn about how the community has transitioned from a down-and-out former industrial town to a community-driven regenerative space with holistic and sustainable solutions at every turn. Your days will be spent engaging with groups that have a sustainability focus and range from permaculture to social enterprise.

**Week 2:** There is so much to learn in Totnes and as reflection is a key part of our program, there will also be days here that you will spend in nature to allow you to reflect and integrate your experiences. In addition to days on the water, your group will also spend a day hiking in the Dartmoor National park, a magical place where you will start thinking about how to start applying your take-aways to your own life. During a free travel day check out the Devon coast and the beautiful city of Torquay, known as the English Riviera. From Totnes, you will head to the New Forest, a nature reserve between Totnes and London, where your group will get to engage in a rewilding workshop that focuses on leadership development and survival skills. Your nights will be spent sleeping in the forest, and during the days you will take part in sessions that range from team challenges like building your own raft, to archery and ropes courses. This adventurous part of the program is geared to help you fine tune your group dynamics and work on your individual leadership skills.

**Week 3:** London Calling! Spend a week in this fast-paced multicultural city. Planned activities will embed you into various neighborhoods to explore challenging topics such as multiculturalism, refugees, sustainability and human rights. Meet with people and organizations who are addressing current challenges with functional and creative solutions. Spend a day with a group working to find creative solutions for the unhoused “rough sleeper” communities through creating business ventures to give formerly unhoused people new opportunities. Another day will be spent with a large sustainable marketplace where creating affordable local food sources is a key principle and community building is the focus. You may also take a photojournalism session that will have you learning how to create a narrative to create social change. Other activities may include sessions with local professors to learn about multicultural London and Shakespear or a workshop with a center that has a training on Peace and Reconciliation. Eat food from all around the world and meet many of the diverse communities that call London home, including spending a night cooking a delicious meal with a refugee family who are using food as a way to share their culture and traditions as well as make an income.

**Week 4:** Depart London by train and make your way to Edinburgh. Enjoy a fun day of exploring Edinburgh and taking in the amazing views of the city from Arthur’s seat. Famed for the highlands, your group will spend a few nights trekking in the Scottish highlands, where you will stay in Bothies and walk through the misty landscape.

**Week 5:** Take the train to the far North of Scotland to Inverness. Here, head to the famous Ecovillage of Findhorn to experience life in an intentional community and learn how they have successfully integrated water systems, renewable energy, organic farming, and natural building into their daily life. Take an inner-journey during a retreat focused on shaping your resilience and reflection skills to be an effective agent of change. Your daily activities will introduce to all of the goings on at Findhorn, from the permaculture gardens to the creative pottery studios and the many reflective practices that they employ here. Learn about how the community has built one of the most renowned ecovillages in the world on what was formerly an old dumping ground and become the place in the UK with the lowest climate footprint.

**Week 6:** Say goodbye to Scotland as you make your way down from Findhorn to the English coastal city of Newcastle. After a brief 24 hours of getting to explore Newcastle, you will board

an overnight ferry to Amsterdam. This fun ferry is a climate friendly way to get to Europe and a great way to close out your time in the UK and when you wake up, you will be in the Netherlands!

Your Amsterdam portion is focused on environmental and social justice through activism. In addition to exploring all of the famous sites and museums of this city, our partners will introduce you to an Amsterdam outside of the tourist circle. Hop on a bike and meet with activists of all ages working to reclaim land for the common good. There is a big push here to save one of the last large tracts of farmland in the city for the use of the public or The Commons. Spend a few days with this group as you get to help in the organic gardens and with distributing food to communities in need.

**Week 7:** From Amsterdam, you will make your way to Boekel Ecovillage, a community awarded the honor of the most sustainable organization in the Netherlands. This newer ecovillage features a wide range of aspects of sustainability: its nature-inclusive, climate-adaptive, circular, biodiverse and social sustainability are all focuses of their model. Their houses are all built using natural materials or waste materials. Your group will get to take part in whatever the community is doing at the present moment: from working in the gardens or buildings to helping with other projects and getting to share in meals and maybe learn bread baking.

As your program draws to a close, it's time for the capstone: Student Directed Travel!!!! Throughout the previous weeks, you and your group will have been working together to decide where to go and what to do during your free travel days. The possibilities are literally endless. Will you stay in the Netherlands? Hop down to France? Up into Scandinavia? Maybe Germany or the Low Countries? Time and budget as well as group wants will be your deciding factors, but the choice is all yours and you will get to put your travel savvy and leadership skills to the test as you build consensus and work toward a common goal.

Following your Student Directed Travel adventure, you will need to make your way back to Amsterdam, where your Overseas Educators will run a special closing ceremony that helps the group celebrate the journey and get ready for whatever comes next!