

12-1-2015

## Cultural Connections

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### Recommended Citation

Escalera, Raquel, "Cultural Connections" (2015). *2015-16 Postcards*. Article. Submission 1.  
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## Cultural Connections



*Meeting the Harbinsons for the First Time*

Hi,

Winter Break is just around the corner for us here at Uni. My plans for the break are so far to go on the Travel Society's Winter European Explorer Trip from Dec. 13th-22nd. The premise is that we will visit 7 countries and 11 destinations within these countries in 10 days! It seemed like a good deal, a once-in-a-lifetime sort of deal. As far as I know, not everyone from our Linfield student group is going on this trip together, as we each have made separate travel plans.

In terms of getting to know Nottingham and English culture a bit better, I've made some progress by finally meeting my English host family. Neil (far right in the picture) is a lawyer and Gabby (second to left side in picture) is a doctor. Their two sons, Nathan (far left) and Brandon (second to far right) are both in school studying various subjects, including Spanish. I first found out about having an English host family from a school-wide email sent at the beginning of the term by the University of Nottingham's Chaplaincy Office, which was automatically addressed to all international students. The offer promoted only an English family for cultural exchange, hospitality and a warm meal in Nottingham to international students who applied. Even though the email came from the Chaplain's office, it didn't sound too religious and I was eager to get to know English culture better and to establish English connections so I applied.

Soon, I was connected to the Harbinson family. Under the Friends International scheme, and as specified in the University of Nottingham's Chaplain's office school email, the Harbinsons have befriended me and are a point of contact for support or advice for me. They can also help provide me a cultural experience during my stay in the UK. They have told me that it is also quite nice to have me as a family friend because my Mexican-American culture and heritage adds to their (and especially for Brandon and Nathan who are

studying Spanish and other cultures) appreciation of the world's rich variety of culture and the values we share.

So far with the Harbinsons, I have had an introductory lunch at the Red Hot World Buffet (pictured above) and have seen my first live Rugby match. Albeit it was one of Nathan's twelve-year-old rugby matches, but you have to start somewhere! I hope to continue getting to know the Harbinsons better and getting to understand English culture through them. Likewise, I look forward to sharing my Mexican-American culture with them and helping Nathan and Brandon develop their Spanish language skills. They regularly invite me to places with them, such as to church or for holiday events such as caroling.

I'm really looking forward to getting to know Europe as a whole via the Winter European Explorer Trip and in a more intimate context through my connections with the Harbinsons. In the meantime, I'm going to try and get these end-of-term essays out of the way so that I can have more time for experiencing English culture and rejoicing in the holiday spirit.

Thanks for reading!

Cheers,

Raquel Escalera