

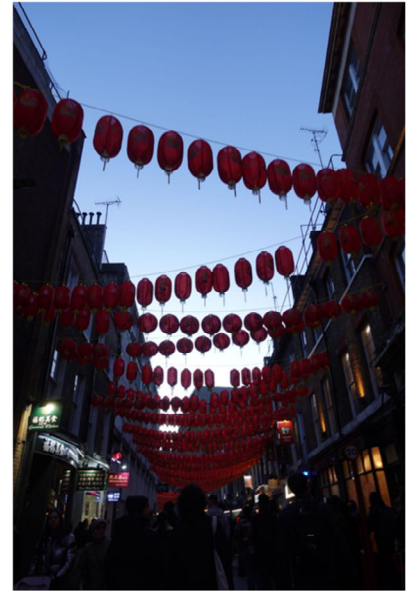


Finding Home Abroad: Discovering London's Diversity in Chinatown and Soho

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Welcome to the Heart of London

- London's diversity is something you should experience, not simply something you read about.
- Chinatown and Soho, two neighborhoods rich with culture, color, and connection, brought that sensation to life for me.



I wanted to begin by emphasizing that London's multicultural nature is best experienced by walking its neighborhoods. Chinatown and Soho are right next to one another, but they represent very different expressions of culture. Visiting these places helped me realize how history, migration, and creativity come together to form modern London.

Exploring Chinatown

Chinese New Year sounds include the sound of drums, the scent of barbecued duck, and red lanterns overhead.

While studying abroad, it was reassuring to hear languages I hear from my family.

A place I found comfort in while abroad.



Chinatown became a space of familiarity for me. The sounds of drums, the smell of roasted duck, and the red lanterns instantly reminded me of celebrations with my family. Hearing Mandarin spoken around me felt grounding. Even though I was thousands of miles away from home, this space reminded me that culture travels with people, and that made London feel more welcoming.

Favorite Finds in Chinatown

1. Old Tree Daiwan Bee: Minced Pork over Rice
2. Chinatown Bakery: Taiyaki and Asian Buns
3. NIU Taiwanese Beef Noodles: Beef Noodle Soup and Taiwanese Popcorn Chicken



^Me trying Taiyaki from Chinatown Bakery

These were some of the restaurants I connected with most. A lot of Taiwanese dishes felt familiar because they reminded me of meals my family makes. Food became an easy way to feel at home. Trying taiyaki was also a fun moment that helped me appreciate how food can bridge tradition and modern experiences abroad.

Experiencing Soho

During the day: coffee shops, street art, and vintage stores.

At night: freedom, lights, and music.

Soho is vibrant, inclusive, artistic, and freely itself.



Soho felt completely different from Chinatown. During the day it's artistic, full of cafés, vintage shops, and small galleries. At night, it transforms into a lively celebration of individuality. I found that Soho thrives on creativity and acceptance. Being there made me realize how important spaces like this are for people to freely express themselves.

Soho Highlights

- Carnaby Street – fashion, art, and local boutiques
 - Lots of well known fashion brands as well!
- Heaven – one of London’s most iconic LGBTQ+ clubs
 - Super fun and good music!
- Old Compton Street – where history meets nightlife



Carnaby Street shows how fashion and art intersect in London, bringing together global brands and emerging designers.

Heaven was one of the most memorable places I visited—an LGBTQ+ club that’s full of energy and music.

Old Compton Street holds a lot of LGBTQ+ history and seeing people of different backgrounds come together showed me how culture and nightlife can be powerful forms of community.

What I Learned About Diversity

In Chinatown, I felt comfortable. I felt a connection to something familiar yet changing because of the busy sidewalks, handwritten menus, and mix of old and new stores. Hearing talks in Mandarin and English was comforting, as was witnessing customs that were still in use but had been influenced by the city.

In Soho, I discovered expressiveness. From little galleries buried between cafés to people dressed like walking pieces of art, every area seemed to be alive with imagination. It was a place that embraced uniqueness and distinction, where distinctions between identities and cultures dissolved into something quite different.

Together, they demonstrated to me what intersection actually looks like in action, not just as a theory, but as a continuous flow of ideas, experiences, and energy. I observed how people of both neighborhoods bring their histories into common areas, resulting in multifaceted, vibrant, and dynamic communities.

Finding Belonging Abroad

These places reminded me, as an Asian American student studying abroad for the first time, that finding connection matters more than trying to blend in. I learned that belonging does not mean disappearing into a crowd. It can come from sharing stories, exchanging glances, or simply existing alongside others with openness and curiosity.

London's people, cuisine, and rhythms reshaped how I saw myself. From late-night bus rides through the city to quiet mornings in local cafés, I began to understand identity as something fluid, constantly shaped by place, encounter, and movement.

I had never lived in a city before, and I had not realized what it meant to notice the subtle intersections of cultures, languages, and lives that overlap on every street corner. In London, I discovered that observation itself is a form of connection and a way of understanding both the world and my place within it.