Undergraduate Student Profile: Maggie Lieu

Maggie studied Astronomy, Space Science & Astrophysics with a Year in the USA MPhys (2008-2012) and wrote this profile about her 3rd year in the USA.

I spent my year abroad at the University of California in Los Angeles, the city of angels - I absolutely loved it and did not want to come back! My apartment was situated just behind the FOX theatre where red carpet premieres were held all the time. I even got to shake Ashton Kutcher’s hand one time which was amazing. I was right in the lavish hotspot for celebrities with Beverly Hills, Hollywood and Bel-Air just around the corner. If that wasn’t enough, the beautiful white-sand beach was only 10 minutes away by bus, the mountains for skiing/snowboarding just 2 hours’ drive, and the desert where you can even observe the milky-way due to the lack of light pollution was just beyond that. I was living the dream and making friends with many unbelievable people from leading academics to producers, directors and models...

University (or ‘School’ as it is referred to) was inspiring - to be surrounded by people who are so passionate about what they are doing and really directed and focused on their futures made me realise more than I did before just how much I loved physics. I gained contacts working for NASA’s JPL, Rocket Dyne and Northrup Goodman which will be very useful in the future. The classes were quite different to those in the UK. I had a great deal of flexibility on what modules I could take and when I wanted to take them - it was even possible to study extra non-course related subjects such as art, directing or history if able to handle the workload.

One difference to living and studying at a university in the UK was that students in the USA usually share rooms. At first I thought sharing rooms with strangers would be daunting, but whilst abroad I shared with two other girls which was fine and it actually helped me. I grew as a person and also became more considerate and aware of others in the process.

I really enjoyed being in Los Angeles and greatly appreciated the opportunity of a lifetime to study at UCLA. Meeting all the incredible people, indulging in a totally different culture and participating in activities not necessarily available in the UK was an amazing experience and I was very sad to leave at the end of a wonderful year!