“Is it really summer?”

With an average temperature of 17 °C (as estimated by a human who lives near the equator), this is one question you will find yourself wondering out loud every time you wrap yourself deeper in your jacket, if you even brought one. Thanks to the unpredictable weather, I have also learnt to express my intolerance to the cold in four different languages, depending on my company. But a cool summer also means long walks without breaking into a sweat, and if you’re blessed with great weather (which we were, mostly), LISS has a lot of fun in store for you.

Raring for a hike? Ilkley is just 30 minutes away. Itching to shop? There seems to be a sale every day in the city centre, which is accessible by foot. Need a snack? There are cafés right opposite the campus, and you cannot forget the home-grown brand Marks & Spencer. To date, the hiking trips remain my favourite ones; plus they prove to be efficient in burning all the baked goods I had feasted on since my arrival. For someone who has lived in a city her whole life, soaking in the beauty of Mother Nature (thanks Ilkley, Yorkshire Dales and Bolton Abbey) or just enjoying splendid weather (Whitby) were experiences nothing short of inspiring.

Modules wise, Music in Film is unsurprisingly the chosen one for a music lover. We had interesting discussions on both Western and Asian film composers, alongside an introduction to the psychological and commercial aspects of film music over time.

There was also a field trip to the National Media Museum in Bradford and some of us even returned to Bradford to watch a musical organised by the Bradford Youth Players, which our professors played live music for! Off campus, I would occasionally head down to the city centre to play the two public pianos – one under the escalator near H&M in Trinity, and one in Victoria Quarter. And if you’re into live music, Leeds also has many talented buskers showcasing their talent in and around Trinity.

Being the only person from my university to sign up for LISS certainly made me apprehensive at first, but I’m happy to say that I’ve forged friendships with those from and beyond my country. Be it cooking together, exploring the city centre, travelling outside of Leeds, trying cheap beer and even just studying on campus. A friend once remarked that LISS felt more like a summer camp compared to a 10-week summer school he previously had; and truly, the classes, field trips, excursions and socials combined was what made LISS friendly and warm, despite the cool weather. To the organisers, social assistants and newfound friends, thanks for making my first trip the UK so exciting and memorable. I will be back!