

KATHERINE ALONSO

College Admissions Portfolio

Hello and Welcome!

Hi, I'm Kate, and welcome to my college portfolio.

I've had a pretty weird and wonderful upbringing. I spent much of my middle- and high-school years living on a boat in the Caribbean and in Portugal. I've played with jam bands, received my Open Water Diving certification, and helped launch an Indian restaurant.

While I love my adventurous life, I'm ready for the next stage: college.

Because I'm technically a homeschooler, I will not be graduating with an accredited high school diploma. This portfolio serves as its substitute.

I prepared this document with the help of my mother, Michelle, and my education coach, Blake Boles. Together we've tried to tell the story of my education upbringing in a way that's easily digestible. If you'd like more details or clarifications, please email or call me—I'm happy to explain.

Thank you,
Kate Alonso

Vital Information

NAME:	Katherine (Kate) Alonso
ADDRESS:	123 Spruce Dr. Orlando, FL 32000
PHONE:	123-456-7890
EMAIL:	notreal@email.com
BIRTHDATE:	4/16/2001
PARENTS:	Michelle Bruce & John Alonso

Standardized Test Scores

SAT. Aug 2017. Math: 620. Reading: 620.

CLEP College Algebra. July 2017. Passed.

CLEP Precalculus. Oct 2017. Passed.

CLEP Calculus: *coming soon.*

CLEP American Lit: *coming soon.*

My Formal Education: The Quick Version

I went to public school through the 6th grade. I took my first high school class, Algebra 1, that last year and participated in normal activities like the Science Fair (made it to the state science fair for molecular biology—focusing on my love of cupcakes) and the Social Studies Fair (where I placed in the county science fair).

My parents decided to expand our view of the world the next summer and moved us (4 children) onto a boat in the Caribbean. I began “boatschooling” with my mother, who is a former high school math teacher. She describes our model of homeschooling as eclectic.

In middle school, I began taking online high school courses from the Florida Virtual School (FLVS), an accredited online public school. These courses supplemented my homeschooling in science, history, French and language arts. We studied cultures, history and geography while visiting countries.

In freshman year, I continued this combination of honors online courses with FLVS and honors level homeschool work. During this year we moved from the boat to Portugal so that we could live and travel while “worldschooling.” *[continued on next page]*

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My Formal Education: The Quick Version (continued)

In sophomore year, I wanted to try out “regular school,” so I lived with family friends in Tennessee and attended a public school for a semester. I loved it! I was able to take things like drama and orchestra (two of my loves) as well as honors level courses which validated for me that homeschooling was working. The second semester I went back to living in Portugal and continued my homeschooling, virtual school work and traveling.

In junior year (this year) and senior year (next year), I’m doing part-time virtual schoolwork alongside a large number of self-directed projects and independent studies as we continue to learn from our travels. I’m taking online university courses as well as CLEP and SAT Subject tests to show I can handle competitive college academics.

Academic Coursework

I have completed challenging academic coursework in a variety of settings. One credit indicates a standard, full-time course.

The following abbreviations are used in the course list below:

- SUM = Summit High School, an accredited public high school in Tennessee
- FLVS = Florida Virtual School, an accredited online public school for Florida residents
- HOME = homeschooling coursework taught and assessed by my mother
- SDL = self-directed learning and other ungraded coursework

2014-2015 (pre-high school)

<u>COURSE</u>	<u>GRADE/CREDIT</u>
French 1 (FLVS)	A / 1 credit
Algebra 1 Honors (HOME)	A / 1 credit
Geometry 1 Honors (HOME)	A / 1 credit

2015-2016 (freshman year)

<u>COURSE</u>	<u>GRADE/CREDIT</u>
English 1 Honors (HOME)	A / 1 credit
Algebra 2 Honors (HOME)	A / 1 credit

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2015-2016 (freshman year) - continued

<u>COURSE</u>	<u>GRADE/CREDIT</u>
Biology 1 Honors (HOME)	A / 1 credit
Dance Tech 3 (HOME)	A / 1 credit
French 2 (FLVS)	A / 1 credit
Intro Info Tech (FLVS)	A / 1 credit
Global Studies (HOME)	A / 1 credit
Personal Fitness (HOME)	A / 1 credit

2016-2017 (sophomore year)

<u>COURSE</u>	<u>GRADE/CREDIT</u>
English 2 Honors (SUM)	A / 0.5 credit
English 2 Honors (HOME)	A / 0.5 credit
Chemistry 1 Honors (SUM)	A / 0.5 credit
Chemistry 1 Honors (FLVS)	A / 0.5 credit
Pre-Calculus Honors (SUM)	A / 0.5 credit
Pre-Calculus Honors (HOME)	A / 0.5 credit
Band - Concert Orchestra (SUM)	A / 0.5 credit
Music - Orchestra / Performance (HOME)	A / 0.5 credit
Theater Arts 1 (SUM)	A / 0.5 credit
Musical Theater (HOME)	A / 0.5 credit
Contemporary Issues (SUM)	A / 0.5 credit
French 3 Honors (SUM)	A / 0.5 credit
French Culture and Language (HOME)	A / 0.5 credit
Spanish 1 (FLVS)	A / 0.5 credit
Physical Education (HOME)	A / 1 credit

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2017-2018 (junior year) - in progress

<u>COURSE</u>	<u>GRADE/CREDIT</u>
Honors Physics (HOME)	*
College Composition 1 (ASU online)	*
Spanish 1 (FLVS)	*
American History (HOME)	*
American Literature (HOME)	*
Sociology 101 (SDL - EdX)	*
Deaf Culture (SDL - Coursera)	*
Musical Theater (SDL)	*
Music (SDL)	*

TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS: 19 (as of March 2018)

OVERALL UNWEIGHTED GPA: 4.0 (as of March 2018)

Travel Log

Age 0-12: Based in Florida. Long family road trips and sailing trips (1-2 months each). Visited almost every state in the U.S. by RV as well as Toronto, Berlin, London, Ireland and Belgium.

Age 12-14: Moved onto a boat in the Caribbean. Spent 3 years exploring the islands and cultures of St. Martin, Anguilla, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, the Grenadines and Grenada.

Age 14: My best friend and I lived on the boat by ourselves for the month of November as I was teaching a tap class on the island of St. Martin.

Age 15: My family moved to Portugal, bought an old Volkswagen van and traveled through Portugal, Spain, France and Morocco. During that time, I also traveled to South Africa with my dad. That fall I spent the semester in Tennessee, going to a public school and living with friends.

Age 16: Bouncing between Europe, Mallorca, New York, Florida, Canada, Tennessee and Alaska. I spent 7 weeks on a teen travel program in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Age 17: Portugal, Spain, Greece, New York, Florida, Tennessee and Canada. My journey continues as we move onto another boat, this time in Greece.

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Arts Background

Instruments. Piano (lessons & recitals), oboe (lessons & performances), ukulele (self-taught).

Jam band. Performed in a jam band at bars and open mics in the Caribbean. 15+ shows. ([video](#))

Singer-songwriter. Introduced to the ukulele at age 13; with 2 weeks, learned to play, wrote original song, published on iTunes ([song](#)). Also performed covers of hit songs with friends ([video](#)).

Musicals. Performed in a musical at Frenchwoods Festival for the Arts summer camp. Personally studied bootleg copies of most modern musicals.

Dance. Danced 10-20 hours a week in classes and studios from age 4-12. Tap, ballet, jazz, musical theater, modern/lyrical. For 4 months, served as the opening number for a weekly dance performance at a Caribbean restaurant.

Performance. Performed in five total dance productions, eight competitive dances, and four plays/musicals.

Outdoor Achievements

SCUBA diving. Open Water certified (PADI). 20+ dives. Further certifications ongoing.

Free diving. I can free dive to 12 meters, which means people call me over the radio if they've dropped anything. I've picked up pans, towels, snorkel gear, and—my favorite one—my friend's flute off the bottom of the ocean.

Sailing / Boating. 2.5 years full time experience on 43 ft catamaran. Navigation, docking, anchoring, foul weather, boat systems. 2 years experience with small sailing dinghies.

Hiking. Volcanos, rainforests, waterfalls: you name it, I've hiked it!

Volunteer & Work Experience

Boat hull cleaner. Scraped the barnacles and gunk off the bottom of boats. Paid in cash; spent it on plane tickets. ~2 years part-time / 20 hrs total.

Literacy coach. Helped children learn to read and write in Grenada during hurricane season. 25 hrs.

Dance teacher. Taught tap dance at studio in St. Maarten, paid hourly. 25 hrs.

Math tutor. Tutored 4th grade math in Tennessee while attending school. 25 hrs.

Restaurant launch assistant. Interned for family friends, helping them open an Indian restaurant. Worked with their computer systems, took inventory, decorated, and worked front of house. 60 hrs.

My Somewhat Crazy Life

by Kate Alonso

While my life now may seem quite nontraditional, the first 12 years of my childhood were quite “normal.” I excelled in elementary school, becoming one of three sixth graders in Florida to make it to the state science fair, and filled my time after school with extracurriculars. I participated in competitive dance, piano and oboe lessons, voice lessons, and after school activities such as starting a robotics club. Shortly after finishing the sixth grade, I found out we were going to move onto a boat for what we thought would be a year.

I wish I could say I wanted to homeschool on the boat in the beginning, but leaving school, friends, dance and a schedule I was used to, was quite upsetting for a twelve-year-old me. I was not enthused. As the months went on, and I finally met other boat kids and made friends, I grew to appreciate and love my new opportunity in having a say in what I learned. My classes were a combination of topics taught by my mom and online courses. I created projects and displays on sea life, got SCUBA certified, and experienced life in multiple countries.

At this point, I thought I was going to go back to school soon, so we were fairly structured in our daily schooling. I took seven standard classes, which included the 4 core subjects and 3 electives. While I enjoyed learning traditional academics, I also loved learning about obscure topics like deep sea creatures, old cars, how chocolate is made, and why the winds blow differently around the world.

As the years went on and we decided we wouldn’t be returning to “normalism” (brick and mortar school, living in one place year-round), our homeschooling style became less structured. I started focusing more on thing things I loved for their own sake, especially reading, math, languages, and the arts. I began taking classes that interested me, not just those that everyone else was taking. I dedicated more time to practicing music, taking dance lessons, creating lasting friendships, and traveling independently to visit those friends.

While I loved being homeschooled and living a nomadic life, there was a part of me that felt I was missing the “American high school experience,” so I went to live with some friends in Tennessee for the first half of my sophomore year. Going to high school was everything I thought it would be and more, and since I wasn’t graduating from that school, I was able to take the exact classes I wanted to take. I became friends with the librarians, went to Friday night football games (mostly for the marching band), joined the bowling team, acted in a play, played the oboe in an orchestra and went to homecoming. I joined clubs, befriended school staff, and fell in love with theater. I loved my high school semester, but I was ready to go “home,” be with my family, and partake in the amazing adventures they had planned.

Being homeschooled (which is a funny term, considering my nomadic lifestyle) has taught me to not confine myself to a lesson plan – to branch off onto another subject if something interests me. I love learning alongside my family: We have non-stop conversations about what someone saw on the road, heard on the news, read in a book, or just something on our minds. Having conversations with multiple family members of all ages, as well as conversations with adults and kids from many cultures, has allowed me to see more than one person’s perspective on different topics and issues. This is something that I have treasured from living on the boat, in Europe, and meeting other boat kids and kids who live a nomadic lifestyle. To me, it feels as if I have 30+ teachers. I have learned something unique and different from each place I have visited, and every person I have spent time with: how to play a ukulele, bake bread, make sea glass necklaces, or play Settlers of Catan. I’ve learned how to fit three families into one small dinghy and have no one get wet.

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I've learned how to paddle a kayak fast enough to beat a storm and fill a gas tank while stranded in the middle of the lagoon to get home. I've learned about different cultural practices such as Carnival in St. Maarten, how the Berber people acquire and make food in the desert sands of Morocco, the role Buddhism plays in Thailand, and how almost all cultures I have experienced are welcoming and open to teaching others about their lives and cultures.

Perhaps what I've learned from my winding educational journey is that there is more than one path to get to the same place. Curriculum-based homeschooling, online school, self-directed learning, and traditional school have all been successful for me. I'm excited to continue my learning in a challenging 4-year university and take advantage of everything it has to offer: interesting courses, conversations with professors, clubs and organizations, study abroad programs, research opportunities, and building relationships with my fellow students. It feels like the right next step in my somewhat crazy life—and I can't wait!

Why Kate is Ready for College

by Michelle Bruce, Kate's mother and homeschool teacher

As Kate's mother, and for the past 5 years, her homeschool teacher, I know I have a well-informed (and biased) view of her traits. From the time she was a toddler, she has had a fascination with learning new things and telling everyone about what she has learned. Over the years, there have been many adults who have worked with her who have provided anecdotal evidence beyond my own as to what an empathetic, approachable, positive, generous person she is. While these are all commendable traits which make her a joy to have around, they are not the ones which she has that make me believe she will have no problems navigating the world of university studies or post-college options.

Kate has always been an extremely independent person. From the time she was 3 and explained to me that I could leave her at the dance studio for the next couple of hours, as she was perfectly capable of tying her tap shoes or using the restroom without having me around, to driving her dinghy across the St. Marteen lagoon from our boat to her dance classes a few nights a week when she was 13, to venturing out at 16 on a 7-week adventure with other teenagers through Southeast Asia, she has always had a desire to be able to do things herself and prove to her and us that she was more than capable of figuring things out. She is a resourceful, intelligent, curious, and determined person with a love for new experiences and new people.

One of her best traits, which will help her to do well in university, is her ability to build positive relationships with the people around her. She works well in both small and large groups, is able to quickly problem-solve, and is willing to voice a solution when no-one around her can or will. At the same time, she has great understanding of the people around her and recognizes when to let others shine. She has conviction in her beliefs, but is also able to see things from someone else's perspective and is willing to modify her stance. This ability, along with her sense of humor, quirky style and sunny personality, have always made her someone people want to be around.

Kate has always loved music, singing, dancing, and performing. From the time she was 4, she was a member of competitive dance teams, which required a commitment of anywhere from 10 to 20 hours a week of dance practice. She continued this commitment until she was 12 and we moved onto the boat. At that point, she was always looking for opportunities to dance and learn from different instructors wherever we were located. Kate is also a natural with instruments, as learning and playing music comes easy to her.

While traveling all through her high school years has not been easy, she has continued to study her interests which include languages, math, and chemistry as well as find ways to perform or take courses in performing arts. She has impressed me with her willingness to step into new social settings full of people she doesn't know and languages she can't speak, whether it's a dance studio in Canada or Portugal, or a joining a French language class in Paris and navigating the city by herself for 4 weeks as a 15-year-old.

When Kate was in public school, she excelled at all subjects. As a homeschooler living a traveling lifestyle, she has adapted to our eclectic schooling while living on a boat in the Caribbean, in a house in Portugal, or as a nomad in an old Volkswagen van in Spain, France, Portugal, and Morocco.

Kate will do extremely well in a college setting. She is motivated, a self-starter, driven, empathetic, intelligent, and curious. I have absolutely no concerns in Kate's ability to do well in any classes or course path she elects, and she will prove herself an asset to any university.

Why You'd Be Crazy Not to Accept Kate

by Blake Boles, Kate's education coach

In addition to helping Kate prepare this portfolio, I had the pleasure and honor of serving as her trip leader during a 7-week adventure in Southeast Asia in late 2017 through my company, Unschool Adventures.

On this trip Kate joined 10 other teens as we explored Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Unlike other youth travel programs, we did not set up everything in advance: each day was a blank canvas for the teens to design as they saw fit.

This level of freedom and responsibility is not for everyone. But as you may suspect from the above essays, Kate handled it beautifully. She joined a brand-new group of highly intelligent and socially adept young people—many of whom already knew each other—and made friends instantly. She organized small group activities, proactively researched the areas we were visiting, and took it upon herself to learn basic phrases in the local languages. Everyone loved being around Kate: her positive attitude, affable extraversion, and ever-present smile made it easy.

On our 2-day “slow boat” down the Mekong river, as we traveled from Thailand to Laos, I recall waking from a nap to hear Kate laughing. She had befriended a traveling couple in the seats behind her—they were perhaps ten years her senior—and engaged them in friendly conversation for a full half hour. I snapped a photo of that moment, and it serves me as a reminder of the kind of young people this world needs more of.



As both an international trip leader and the author of *College Without High School: A Teenager's Guide to Skipping High School and Going to College* (New Society, 2009), I see the parallels between foreign travel and higher education. If Kate can land in a brand-new culture, surrounded by new people, and instantly adapt to her surroundings and thrive—then she can do the same in college.

While Kate doesn't have as many traditional high school credits as a normal student, she has a proven academic track record and the test scores to back it up. While living on the boat, her day-to-day activities have rivaled other students' wildest extracurriculars. She's held true positions of responsibility, cared for herself in highly unpredictable environments, and managed to build an academic life, arts life, and outdoors life—all at the same time, all while living a hectic traveling lifestyle. She's the opposite of a college-prep automaton, and she will enrich any campus on which she sets foot.

How much more convincing do you need? You'd be crazy not to accept her!

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Selected Reading List

These are a few of my favorite books from my reading as a homeschooler. (indicates in progress)*

9th Grade

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck
Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare
Pygmalion, George Bernard Shaw
Animal Farm, George Orwell
The Pearl, John Steinbeck
Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen
The Giver, Lois Lowry
A Wrinkle in Time, Madeleine L'Engle
Looking for Alaska, John Green
Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë
Short Stories, Edgar Allen Poe

10th Grade

Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury
Speak, Laurie Halse Anderson
Antigone, Sophocles
The Outsiders, S. E. Hinton
The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini
Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe
To Kill A Mocking Bird, Harper Lee
The Old Man and The Sea, Ernest Hemingway
A Court of Mist and Fury, Sarah J. Maas
Night, Elie Wiesel
Short Stories, Ray Bradbury

11th Grade

The Alchemist, Paulo Coelho
The Nightingale, Kristin Hannah
The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne *
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald *
Lord of the Flies, William Golding *
I am Malala, Malala Yousafzai *
The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan *
A Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansbury *
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings,
Maya Angelou *
Diary of Anne Frank, Anne Frank *

Current All-Time Favorite Book:

The Phantom Tollbooth, Norton Juster

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A Few Photos from Life on the Boat



Racing with weekly sailing club (St. Maarten, 2014)



Open mic night at Lagoonies (St. Maarten, 2015)

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Free diving



Driving to a jam session