
2009-10 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

5-31-2010

See You Later Oslo

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Recommended Citation

Leith, Brian, "See You Later Oslo" (2010). *2009-10 Postcards*. Article. Submission 16.
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Journals from Oslo, Norway

2010-05-31 See You Later Oslo

I can't believe how fast 4 months has gone by. I am not ready to go back home because this has been such a great life-changing experience. Life must go on and I will never forget this and for those of you who are interested in studying abroad Oslo, Norway is very unique program that you will enjoy a lot. The weather is something to consider, but just do it anyway: push yourself to get out of your comfort zone because you will thank yourself later. Studying abroad is more than just getting good grades; it's about being in a new culture on the other side of the world with other people your age and getting to know each other's cultures. I am not only more aware of my own American culture, but I have a new world perspective because I have had conversations in class, over dinner, and casual conversations with fellow international students.

Living in a new different country is a class on its own because you learn as you go and get to know a new strange city, but after a while you get comfortable. Being in this environment pushes you to learn more about yourself and your beliefs and values, and to figure out what's important to you. I have matured a lot being able to sit down and think about how I really feel or what I want out of life. Depending on where you are when you study abroad, you will have a good amount of free time, and I spent a good portion of it thinking or having conversations with other international students because I didn't have a T.V.

That is what I am going to cherish the most: the time spent after a good dinner talking about whatever is on your mind. I have gotten to know a German guy, Ole, and we have had great talks about everything. I am going to miss this when I go home. I can't stress this enough go and study abroad: come to Norway, which will be like nothing you ever thought about or could imagine. This is a very safe city with excellent transportation and a great culture to be a part of. The people are beautiful--and it's expensive.

With that said I will leave you with something I wrote in my final report: I have been in Norway for over three months now, and it has been an amazing multicultural experience. I have met a lot of people from all over Europe and have made a lot of friends that I will stay in contact with. Honestly, it is not much fun being an American in such a multicultural setting because I can only speak English and very little Spanish. So I am at a huge disadvantage when interacting with other international students from different countries whose mother tongue isn't English. It has been very humbling for me just trying to read people's body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. My classmates are usually good at speaking English instead of their mother tongue when I am around them. This experience has showed me that I really want to learn Spanish to become fluent because I am so uncultured and one-dimensional. There are a lot of Spanish international students that I have interacted with and I have class with one. So I can practice my Spanish some, but my vocabulary isn't very big. I have more appreciation when talking to other

international students who have trouble finding the right words to express themselves, because I can't do that well in Spanish.

Another interesting aspect of being an American who can speak perfect English is the fact that my friends and other international students always ask me questions as if I were an English dictionary. I appreciate their willingness and drive to learn English, especially how to use words properly as well as the right tense they should be in. My friends keep me on my toes, because I have to stop and think about my own language and then figure out an example in a sentence that shows them how the word is used correctly. This is my identity right now in Oslo, getting to know other cultures, languages, and traditions while I stay true to who I am and express myself to others showing them me as a person.

Who I am? Well, my name is Brian William Leith, I am white, 5 feet 10 inches (don't know what that is in meters), half Canadian, shy around new people, quiet, sometimes suppressing emotions until I explode; went to private schools, live in a small multicultural neighborhood, have a small family, have had to work for everything I have earned to this point academically, an ex-athlete, have a learning disability, am a people pleaser, passionate, goal-driven, independent, hardworking, reliable, fun to be around, taking things too seriously sometimes I have a pretty good sense of humor, and I think I am a pretty good communicator as well as listener. I listed all these because you cannot put yourself in a box and only identify yourself as one or two things. That's impossible; people have multiple attributes whether they take the time to recognize them or not. For the most part I only interact with other international students and not Norwegians because there are only international students in the class as well as where I live. I have not gotten the real Norwegian experience by interacting with them and getting to know how society works here. I talked to Endre, the coordinator for the International excursions, on an excursion about this. He brought up the topic of how the International Office is trying to figure out a way to integrate Norwegians into the classes with international students. I feel that would make the multicultural communication process a lot more rewarding by getting to know someone from Norway. The issues that Endre brought up were how Norwegians are so passive and shy, and already have formed their own cliques, participate in extracurricular activities, and may not want to let someone new into their lives. I would have taken the Norwegian course if I could interact with other Norwegians who would be willing and open to help me try to speak their language correctly.

I would then be able to go out into Norwegian society and speak to some locals. I am not sure how much of it would really stick in my brain because of how complicated the language is. So I feel at a disadvantage, but I am making the best of the situation. My vision before coming to Norway was that it would be a much bigger university compared to mine in the U.S. I thought that I would interact more with people and get to know them. I am saying this because until this point I have been affiliated with a group of only international students that is a very small community. I wanted to get away from that, but it is what it is and I have had to accept that. So it would be great if the university could figure out a way to integrate some willing Norwegians into classes with other international students. I would

like to thank the great international programs staff, my professors, my advisor, and my parents for always supporting me. This experience has been legendary.

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