

11-23-2022

The Final Few Weeks

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Recommended Citation

Fulton, Falicity, "The Final Few Weeks" (2022). *2022-23 Postcards*. Article. Submission 3.
https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/intl_postcards_2223/3

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Felicity Fulton

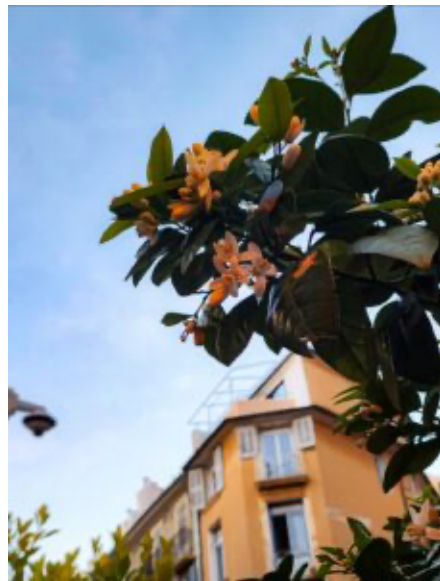
Fall 2022

France

November 23, 2022

The Final Few Weeks

It's December, which means a few things. A (really cold) chill in the air, Christmas decor is sprouting up in every home, and the most dreaded weeks are coming up for students: Finals. Despite the last week of classes being labeled "Finals Week", finals for me started last week, and trickled into the weekend before. We had finals on Saturday, which felt bizarre. Also very uncalled for.



1 of 7 photos submitted for my final photography class. Subject: orange blossoms



1 of 7 photos submitted for my final photography class. Subject: pigeon

I only had 3 scheduled finals, with my 4th one being something I'll get to later. My English Lit class was easy enough: write two in-class essays in accordance with the two questions given in each sentence. It was just our midterm with new questions and different books.

Photography took a bit more prep but was overall easy: edit photos, submit said photos, submit 1 page paper talking about process, show photos and Q&A day of final. My professor was also super sweet and took those of us who wanted to go some vin chaud (mulled wine) afterwards. She even paid. How kind.

I haven't taken my French final yet but it'll just be my midterm with new material. I'll study later for it. Now, the last final I have is the bane of my existence. It's for my music of the Mediterranean course, and this project... I've got some issues: basically, we have until

December **23rd**, which is after we go home, to create a 2-minute song using sounds from around town that we have to record.

Sounds simple enough, except the program she wants us to use, I can't because my laptop broke back in early November. I had two options- either work in the computer lab for hours on end and hope to get it done before I leave, or see if she has any alternatives I can do. I went with the second option, since I have other things I need to do this upcoming week. She let me use my iPad, which at least gives me an opportunity to work from anywhere and even from home if I need to. I have about 20 seconds currently. It's not a fun final. Easy class the entire semester, brutal end. Would not recommend.

Speaking of December, all of the cute Christmas decor is really getting me through this month. Aix as a city seems very cohesive with their decor, decorating all around town with white and gold lights, along with orange and red ornaments – the town's colors. Lights started going into trees and onto buildings (turned off) as early as October. My type of people. They don't have Thanksgiving as a fall back, so it makes sense.

Holiday festivities around town really started back mid November, but it's all in high gear now. The Christmas Market is in full swing, shops are decked out, and the lights are turned on all over town, including on the Rotonde, encompassing the whole thing.



Fontaine de Rotonde illuminated in lights

The Christmas markets are actually really cute, and I enjoy walking through them every time I go to the bus stop. Little booths span the entirety of Cours Mirabeau, selling many artisan goods by locals. Some sell food, others crafted goods. Loads of lavender and vin chaud to be had. At each end it transforms from quaint wooden booths to rainbow carnival, hosting lots of rides and amusement attractions for children. It's really sweet to watch. I've gotten a few things from the Christmas markets and my only gripe is that they don't take credit cards at most booths. I don't carry much cash, if any. I'm not quite sure why they do it, but I know if it was in the states, there would be a square or clover at every booth!



Christmas market at sunset

All these reminders of Christmas only cement the fact that I'm not at home for the holiday season. It's both a blessing and a curse to see all these French families enjoying all the

festivities. Christmas is my favorite season, along with my mom's. It's something we've always shared together, even if I was stuck at my dad's. I should be using it all as motivation to pack and get ready to leave, but it's making me sad and halting my process, not aided by any means by finals.

I am really excited to leave though. As of today, Sunday December 11th, I have 4 days left here in Aix. Well, really 3 and some odd hours as I fly out of Marseille pretty early on Thursday. I really enjoyed my time here, both the ups and downs. I think I've really matured, and I've certainly gotten better at traveling by myself (as much as I hate it still). Whether my french has gotten better is certainly questionable, but I'll blame that mainly on my anxiety more than anything else. France has been such a unique experience, one certainly different than the US.

Things I will miss:

- The cheap bread and pastries. A whole baguette is like... 1 euro, if that.
- Take-away pasta places. Not like Olive Garden door-dash, but like little pasta fast food places.
- The public transport being clean and not difficult to use (and inexpensive).
- My roommates and the other friends I've made since arriving here.

Things I will not miss:

- Their love of thon (tuna). My least favorite fish. It's so gross.
- Everywhere closing super early. I miss my late night delivery.
- Sundays. Everything's closed.

- Stairs. Everything's upstairs or uphill here. I miss elevators. I miss my car.

After today, I just need to pack, take one final, and attend our closing ceremony on Wednesday.

Then back home I go. I can't be more ready.

See everyone stateside

Felicity