

9-20-2012

Linfield College: Study Abroad in France

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Recommended Citation

Kaltenbach, Emily, "Linfield College: Study Abroad in France" (2012). *Letters from Returnees: Sharing the Value of Study Abroad*. Letter. Submission 9.

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Emily Kaltenbach
Class of 2010

When I look back at my time at Linfield there are two very distinct parts: before France and after France. It was a huge growing experience for me in more ways than I expected. I spent a semester abroad in Aix-en-Provence in the fall of 2008. I went to Aix with two other girls from Linfield and spent my semester in classes with 25 other students from small private colleges around the US.

My time in France taught me how to use public transportation, budget my money in a foreign currency, and accept the initial embarrassment of trying to speak a foreign language outside the classroom. It was also the first time in my life that I had to acknowledge the American label that was stuck to me and my accent. Overall, this experience got me out of my shell, doing things I never thought I'd have the courage to do.

It's a bit cliché to say, but I really learned about myself during that semester. Without easy accessibility to the comforts of home, I realized which things in my life really mattered. I also quickly learned that I had to trust my gut and do what I myself really wanted because my time abroad was limited. I lived in the moment for nearly four months and never regretted it. Even after I left Aix, I knew that my time in Europe wasn't over. I have since returned to France, living abroad there for a year and another in Belgium.

My second experience in France was in the Loire Valley. I taught English at local primary schools through a program sponsored by the French government. After my year there, I wanted to continue teaching internationally so I headed to Brussels. Since then, I have been involved at an English based primary school while I also work as an Au Pair. Professionally, my time abroad has given me a great interest in teaching English to non-native speakers and working at international schools.

Studying abroad was definitely the most challenging thing I've done but in the end, it was the most rewarding. The combination of travel, new friendships, and cultural identity really impacts a person and their future; the chance to study abroad is not one to be missed.



Me and my 2nd grade French students in Blois, France, 2011.