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Bonjour pour le Dernier Fois!

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Mary Beth Jones
Aix, France
December 18, 2015

Bonjour pour le dernier fois!



AUCP Students in Aix, France

Well, our days in Aix are numbered. Wrapping up classes, staring at the empty suitcases waiting to be filled, and avoiding saying good byes make this finals week a little more challenging. Externally, life seems normal as always. We continue going about our business, but now knowing that it's the last time eating at that restaurant; that it's our last time at the market; that our days as AUCP students are few and soon we will be new alumni. It's a sad reality to be ending our chapter here but there is a happy reunion waiting for each of us in the States.

It's been a wild ride, that's for sure. It was everything and nothing I expected it to be. It was the best and worst to be so far away from home. It was so easy and so stressful to jump into this new, beautiful culture. This semester feels like it has lasted a lifetime but ended in a blink of an eye.

Thinking back to those first days of painful awkwardness, stunted conversations, and frustrations figuring out the winding roads in town, it is astonishing that we are leaving France with such confidence in our abilities and ourselves. We have come so far in our language, in our friendships, in our understanding and acceptance of new cultures. And that is so exciting. That was the goal, right, to broaden our minds and become immersed in a new way of living? It was a brand new educational experience: for the first time in our academic lives it was more important to step outside of the classroom and truly learn from experience.

There are so many things to miss about this semester and the goodbye will be a hard one but it is time to go home. It's time to not live under a constant cloud of misunderstanding and slight confusion. But it will be interesting to see how much we have changed. It is hard to know, but when we are back in our homes and in our maternal culture and language, I wonder if we will find that our habits and preferences have already changed. There are so many things I love about the French culture that don't exist in American culture, but how can I integrate them into my American lifestyle? It is hard to even put into words: the appreciation for time, respect for relationships, the emphasis on quality of life and food. The little things that we have learned and experienced here, I am excited to share them with people at home. *On verra*, we will see.

It's sad, it's hard, and it's lonely to leave Aix not knowing the next time we will come back. Aix-en-Provence is truly a special place. And we had four extraordinary months to discover this city and make it our own. It has been just amazing and words cannot describe living with such history, such beauty, and such vibrancy.

As Lilli, the director of AUCP told us on the first day, this semester is entirely unique. These people at this time, it's untouchable. "C'est magique," she said. And she was right.

- Mary Beth