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A VERY Busy Week

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The actual Garden of the Hospital in Arles

Now, although they tell you about the homesickness before you go abroad, what they don't tell you is that it's a new weird kind of homesickness that results more in confusion and frustration than anything else. Needless to say I was very much homesick this last week. It wasn't like I didn't want to be here or I was unhappy here; it's just that I also wanted to go home to sleep in my own bed and hug my mom. That being said, my tolerance for cultural differences plummeted. Instead of finding things new and interesting they were annoying and pointless. Thankfully, I have gotten over my cultural negativity and am again trying to be an objective participant in French culture. An important thing to know is no matter how much you've read about going abroad or learned about intercultural interaction it is so much harder in practice than in theory. Astronomically harder. However, that being said, I am feeling a lot better this week, only occasionally getting sad at night when I am trying to sleep.

I started my community service yesterday! What I am doing is working with students everywhere from elementary to high school age who are learning English. For those of you that haven't already realized this, English is an incredibly complicated and random language that is impossible to explain. The kids are great and I think it's easier for them because I also make mistakes in French just like they do in English. I am really excited to go back next week and help some more students!

Tonight I start my club! I am joining a choir here that two of the other girls' host moms sing in. I'm a little nervous, but I think it will be a lot of fun and I will let you know how that goes next week!

School has gotten a lot harder. I still understand my teacher and the material, but I have so much more homework than I thought I would have. Also a lot of my homework is reading and writing, which can take me a great deal of time in English, let alone French!! Oh la la. But that is all coming along and the weeks are already starting to fly by. Arabic is still impossible but I'm hoping it will get

easier; stay tuned.

Last Saturday we went with the group from Aix-en-Provence to visit two small villages named Arles and St. Remy. For those of you who aren't art buffs, both villages hold a lot of the scenes that Van Gogh painted. Naturally we went on a tour of all of the landmarks where his paintings were created, and it was super cool! This next weekend I am taking a train along the Côte Bleue (not the same as the Côte d'Azur) and then eating some urchins which I am determined to try even though I hate almost all seafood.

Things are good and here's to hoping they stay that way!

-Lauren Orr