



# My Study Abroad Experience!

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By Abby Chapman



# Intro

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The following slides are a timeline through my study abroad trip as well as some of the things I learned along the way! Deciding to study abroad is without a doubt one of the best decisions I have ever made and it really flew by so quickly!

# Paris

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We had a really busy schedule in Paris but it was so much fun! Some of my favorite moments were when a bunch of us had a picnic at the Luxembourg gardens (we loved it so much that we went back the next day), and when we all bought tickets to a river boat cruise (pictured top right) and got to see the Eiffel Tower light up while on the river! Some other highlights were exploring the Louvre, having fresh squeezed orange juice at the Versailles gardens, and getting tours from the best tour guide ever, Patrick!

# Saint Malo

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After leaving Paris, we spent two nights in Saint Malo. It was the cutest town on the water and we had so much fun getting to stay there! Pictured to the left is the meal I had on the first night. It was the best lasagna I have ever had in my whole life! After dinner, we went and explored around the rocks of the castle behind us in the bottom picture. The next night, we were able to watch a soccer game at a local pub with a few locals and it was so much fun!



# Mont Saint Michel

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During our stay in St. Malo we were able to take tours of Normandy beach and memorial, as well as Mont Saint Michel! While we waited to explore the Abbaye, we all got crepes at a restaurant on the island part! There were a lot of cool walkways around the castle/church that we were able to walk around, we had such a great time!

# Aix en Provence

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Finally, we got to our home base, Aix-en-Provence, which is where we spent the next month. We started class in this town, and stayed in dorms that were about a 20 minute walk from the campus. We loved going to local pastry shops on the way to class each morning during the walk! We were also surprised to see how much there was to do in Aix, including going to the city center, pictured to the left, where there were tons and tons of cafes and restaurants to try!

# Things I got to do in Aix!



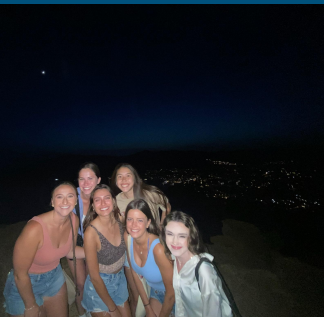
We got to experience a lot of Aix throughout the month! First, they have an amazing farmers market with food, flowers, clothes, jewelry, and so much more that we loved visiting during the week. We also befriended a cat that liked to roam around our dorms, shown in the bottom left photo. Finally, the right picture is our favorite restaurant that we found, Prima Pasta! We went to Prima way too many times! Other fun things to do were hanging out in the park directly across from the dorms, and also going to the movie theater (we saw Top Gun 2 and loved it!)



# Meeting Students from Art et Metiers



We got to spend a lot of time with French students from our partner school, Art et Metiers, as well! First was the gala, where there were several stages with really cool performers and it lasts until 5:00 AM. We had so much fun! Some of the students invited us to one of their campus parties, which was glow themed as well, shown bottom right. Finally, some of the friends we made invited us to their house in Marseille, where they cooked us French Barbeque, swam in the ocean, and listened to music (both French and American Music). On the way there, they took us to their favorite viewing spot about Cassis and we were able to view the city from above. It was amazing! We also had a meeting with the french student where we drew our expectations and what we learned about the French and they did the same for us, and it was very interesting to see how they were expecting American visitors to be and how their perceptions were changed!





# Cannes

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We had a couple free weekends, and on one of them, a group of 8 of us decided visit Cannes, which is a beach town on the coast of France. We spent a majority of our time at the beach, which was so relaxing and fun! There was also a film festival going on at the time in the city, and many famous celebrities were there, including Kendall Jenner, Tom Cruise, and Austin Butler. We got to see the red carpet area, it was really cool! We also walked around and looked at the yachts and got to go to a few restaurants around the city. It was a great trip!

# Verdon Gorges



One of our day trip tours that we went on was to Verdon Gorges. This was one of my favorite days on the trip. The verdon gorges are absolutely beautiful and we got to kayak down them, definitely a highlight! Before we got to the water, we visited a nearby village, where I got an amazing salted caramel crepe and then we hiked up to the top of church with an amazing view! Shortly before this we went to Marseille on a day trip, where we went to a beach and got a tour of the city!

# The Calanques

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Another day trip that we made was to the Calanques! We got a boat tour of the 8 Calanques which were beautiful, and then we got some free time. During our free time we found a pebble beach and got to jump off the rocks around it and relax on the shoreline. It was my first time going to a pebble beach and I really enjoyed it! At the end of the day, we had an amazing group dinner. I tried duck for the first time, and we finished off the dinner with Creme Brulee!



# Switzerland



Finally, we had a four day weekend on the last weekend of the program, and a group of 10 of us took a trip to Interlaken, Switzerland! It was the most amazing trip! We actually stayed in a cute Airbnb in Ringgenberg, right outside of Interlaken, and we had free bus passes throughout the city with our house! We were able to ride a vertical train to the top of a mountain to get to a really cool viewpoint (bottom left), and then some of us submitted the mountain and got an even better 360 view of the area. We also found a small entrance right on the lake right by our house and even swam there once (it was very cold). A highlight was paragliding, it was one of the coolest things I have ever done, I would highly recommend. I was also blown away by the city of Interlaken, I loved the German Architecture and how pretty the view of the mountains and water was, I think it was my favorite city I visited on the trip! Some other fun things we did were hiking, paddle boarding and hanging out by a beach, cooking breakfast while looking at the beautiful our of our balcony, going to a local german pub, and being able to watch the Aggies make it to the College World Series from a different continent!

# Some Things I Learned

- Tipping is not commonplace in France, and tax is included within the price of meals!
- The water cups are very small at all restaurants, and they sometimes make you pay for water so make sure you say you would like tap water!
- Saying “you’re welcome” is not as common in France, so if there is no response when you say, Merci, you should not be offended!
- Students studying in college do not have to pay for their schooling in France! The students liked to joke that we were a lot more serious about our education than them for that reason!
- I didn’t know this, but in Switzerland, they speak some Italian, some German, and some French, depending on what city you are in!
- You have to ask to receive your bill at restaurants in Europe, and meals typically last a lot longer and are not as rushed.
- Athletic wear is not as commonly worn in public, and people dress a lot nicer in general!
- There are McDonald's restaurants everywhere, and I had a lot more burgers than I thought I would on the trip
- People, for the most part, are a lot nicer than people generally expect people to be in France (the stereotype that French people are rude is generally not true!)
- Driving is very confusing and there are a lot of roundabouts and weird intersections (I did not drive, but just by observing). The cars are so much smaller than they are in America, too!

# The End

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My study abroad experience could not have been better! I learned so much about another culture, got to see so many cool things, made a bunch of amazing friends and so much more!