

France 2023 Study Abroad

Spencer Ravenscroft

Aix

Aix is an amazing place to have as a homebase while studying abroad. Its a small, quieter town with an amazing culture. After class we would walk through the narrow streets of Aix until we stumbled upon something that caught our eye and it never disappointed. It was so interesting to take our classes at the French school each day and interact with the local students. Some of my favorite parts of Aix include the weekly markets every Tuesday and Thursday, the winding streets full of restaurants and shops, and the how nice everyone in the city was to us the entire time.



French Friends

Coming into the trip I had big hopes of making friends with the local French students, and I can say this dream really did come to life. One of the students who guided us throughout our stay (Zoe) introduced us to her friends through a BBQ at her apartment and it was so much fun. Although they were shy at first, slowly we got to know each other and it was really cool to talk to them about life in France. In the end it was so sad to leave all of the friends we made in Aix, but I could not have been happier with the people we had the chance to interact with while we were there.



Day Trips



Calanques and Verdon Gorge



The day trips to the Calanques and Verdon Gorge with the entire program were so much fun. It was really nice to have the opportunity to have everyone from the program get together for the day throughout the trip and made it easy to talk to people we don't normally get to talk to. Both trips had amazing views of southern France. We took a boat cruise through the Calanques where we got to see the locals kayaking, cliff jumping, and rock climbing. A few weeks later we spent the morning canoeing through Verdon Gorge with amazing views of the waterfalls and caves scattered along side the cliffs of the gorge.



Weekend Trips

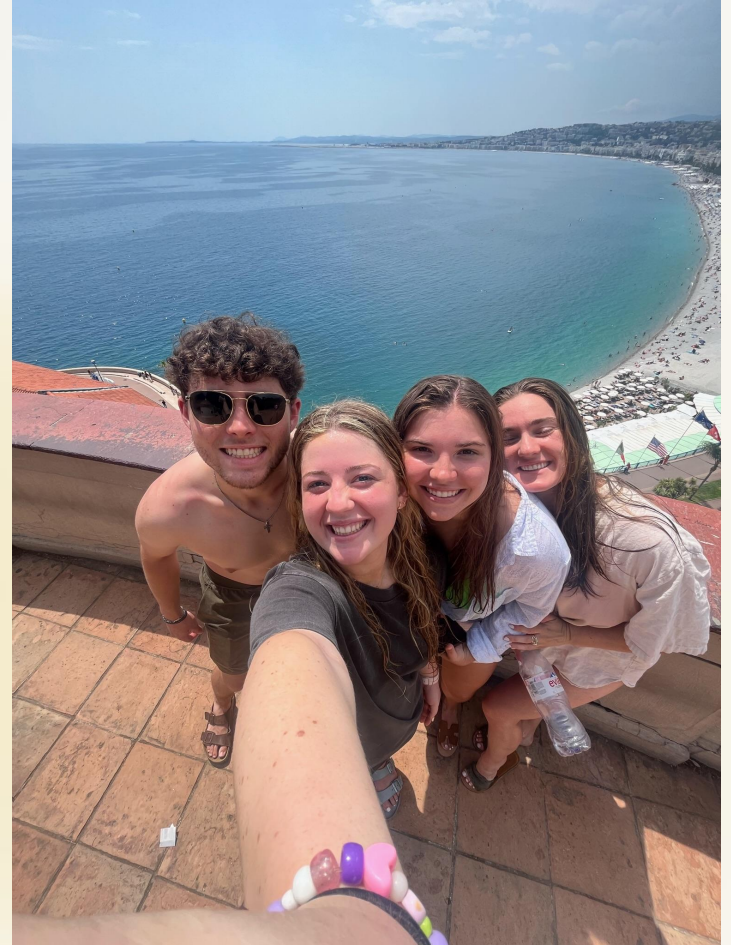
Paris

We started our trip in Paris and it was an amazing opportunity to see the city and meet everyone on the trip. The first couple of days we had tours set up with the program which made it really easy to see all of the many attractions throughout the city. After the first few days we really had the chance to walk around and explore. Paris really lived up to all my expectations through the beautiful sites, amazing food, and great city life. By the end of our 5 days in Paris I was sad to leave the city but excited to see where the next 4 weeks would take us.



Nice

Nice was our first weekend adventure of the trip and it gave us a chance to learn the best way to travel Europe. The beaches there were stunning with some of the clearest water I've ever seen. It was super nice to have a beach day and the weather was absolutely amazing. We had some problems finding a place to stay because of the Monaco Grand Prix but overall it was a great first weekend of traveling. Also at this point we were getting more comfortable being in France.



Barcelona



This weekend was amazing. Barcelona was the most vibrant and live city I have ever been in. We stayed in a hostel in the old gothic district of the city and it was an amazing way to meet other people traveling. The first night there we met a group of australian guys who we spent most of the weekend exploring the city with. The food was amazing, the architecture was so unique, and everyone was so nice and easy to talk to. Also the weekend we were there was a big national holiday so everyone in the city was in the streets celebrating and parading. 10/10 weekend.





Italy

Another weekend of amazing adventures but this one had a lot more going on. We traveled to 4 cities across Italy within 6 days which made for an amazing trip but left us super tired by the end of it. We started in Rome where we spent the day walking through the city and seeing all of the ancient sites. That first day we ended with dinner at supposedly one of the best pasta restaurants in the city, which lived up to the hype. After that we spent the next 3 nights traveling through the mountains, across the coast, and into the big city of Naples. We made many friends along the way from across Europe which made for an interesting trip. Again we stayed in hostels the entire time which I would 100% recommend to anyone traveling through Europe. We even had the chance to meet up with our friends from A&M who were studying abroad in Greece for the Summer.



Marseille

I don't really have many pictures from Marseille because in all honesty I spent our last 2 days really taking everything in. Our last full day all together on the program around 30 of us went to the beach in Marseille and it was so fun spending our last afternoon together hanging out on the beach. At this point in the trip we were sad to leave our French friends in Aix and even more sad to leave altogether but our days in Marseille gave us many amazing memories to close out the trip.



Overall Experience

This program is like nothing else I have experienced at Texas A&M. Not only do you get the opportunity to spend one month living abroad, you spend that entire month with people who will grow to be your best friends. Every aspect of this program was amazing. From traveling around Europe each weekend to meeting local french students to having the opportunity to take a class with Paco - there is never a dull moment on this trip. Although there were times where things didnt go as planned, in all honesty that was part of the fun. I would trade anything to have the ability to go back to France with these people.

