

Education Abroad Returnees of the Month November 2017

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Most interesting class and why? Did you take classes in connection to your major or electives?

I think my favorite class would be Textes du 17e au 18e siècle, a French literature class that I took in the second semester. Basically, we spent the whole semester analyzing two books, Les Egarements du Coeur et de L'esprit by Crébillon fils and Les Caractères ou les Mœurs de ce siècle by La Bruyère. It was a very difficult class because the two books were very abstruse, long and philosophical. The language was even harder. Yet, by taking this class, my French improved significantly as I tried to understand, explain, and analyze the text. The two books also allowed me to gain insights about the French literature culture and its societal values at the origin. In short, the class was very challenging, yet remarkably enriching and rewarding. I am a French and English double major. Therefore, all the classes I took were somewhat connected to my major and electives. Some of the classes I took are Textes du 19e au 21e siècle, Art et Architecture Modernes, Littérature du Monde Anglophone, Textes du 17e au 18e siècle and etc. (*The French Department accepts at most 12 non-UVA major credits though).



How was education abroad different than anticipated?

I would say that while the classes were very challenging, the overall academic workload at Université Lumière Lyon 2 was lighter than that at UVA. Therefore, I was able to take some time travelling across Europe and exploring the European culture. These travels had significantly deepened my knowledge in many aspects and I grew to be more intellectually curious. Moreover, while UVA is located in a college town, Université Lumière Lyon 2 is at the very heart of a metropolitan city. Hence, I had ample opportunities every day to immerse myself in the Lyonnaise city life. It was a completely different studying and living experience that I never anticipated. In terms of academic works, I never expected that the French professors almost never offered



slideshows to the students and everything was based exclusively on class notes (which was hard because of my language barrier). Thankfully, French students have the culture of sharing notes at end of the semester! The teaching style of the French professors can be different too: they can be really straightforward and blunt!

Number one way the experience contributed to your growth

My biggest personal growth is that I have become more and more intellectually curious. As I travelled across France and Europe, I encountered so many things that I had never heard of before and histories that I didn't know. I was constantly asking myself a variety of questions: what are the differences between Gothic and Baroque architectural styles? What are the significant contributions of King Louis XIV? What is the geography of Lyon? How to bake a petite madeleine? Things intrigue me: food, history, art, architecture, literature, religion, etc. My abroad experience transformed me into an active learner who constantly seeking for new knowledge and intellectual challenges. This curiosity and urge to learn enable me to succeed in my academia works at UVA too!

Favorite local hangout, and why?

My favorite place to hang out would definitely be the Place Bellecour, which is a large pedestrian square in the centre of Lyon. In fact, with an equestrian statue of King Louis in the middle, Place Bellecour is one of the biggest public squares in Europe. Events such as concerts, book fairs and fresh food markets take place here all year around. In the wintertime, a huge Ferris wheel with flamboyant light will be installed here too. The streets next to Place Bellecour are filled with fashionable shops, luxurious boutiques, boulangerie, and local restaurants. I love Place Bellecour because it is a public place where you can always find something to do. You can take some wine and sit down in a bench, from where you may catch sight of the Basilique Notre-Dame de Fourvière; or you can go to one of the nearby boulangerie to grab a café and a tarte aux pralines, while reading some romantic French novels and enjoying the gentle breeze. Bonus Point: There is La Statue d'Antoine de Saint Exupéry (The Lyonnais author of the book Little Prince) at one of the corners of the Place Bellecour! Antoine's birthplace was next to the Place Bellecour too. It took me quite some time to find them!

Most interesting/delicious cuisine tried

This is so hard to pick since there are so many lyonnaise desserts and cuisines that leave



my mouth-watering. But the first thing that came to my mind was the pâté en croûte. It is basically a pastry with minced meat and sometimes foie gras on top. I especially love the golden dough crust that wraps the spiced meat. It is a very lyonnaise-styled starter for meat-lovers. I also really love the quenelle. Often served in a hot cream sauce, the quenelle is a potato-shaped fish cake, or maybe called a pike soufflé. Yummy! Lyon is literally the culinary jewel of France!

Most meaningful experience abroad

I want to talk about something I haven't addressed yet. So I would choose my homestay life as the highlight of my abroad experience in Lyon. I lived with a French family in the first semester. Newly arrived in Lyon and being enthusiastic yet nervous, I was able to have a successful transition to my lyonnaise life thanks to my host family. Staying with them is an unprecedented opportunity for me to familiarize with the French culture. Sometimes, I would go to the weekend fresh market with my host mother and ask her to teach me how to pronounce the vegetables' names. My host mother would prepare dinner during the weekdays, and her home-baked quiche (a pastry case made with cheese, egg, seafood and vegetables) is the best! I would ask my host father to help me with my French essay, and oftentimes his feedbacks gave me confidence in using the French language. My host parents would give me local guidance on where to explore and update me when there were some cultural activities nearby. Thanks to them, I got some first-hand knowledge on French culture!

Sum up the experience in three words

unexpected, enriching and explorative



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