

## Study Abroad Experience

During the Fall of 2022, I studied abroad in Montpellier through a program with the University of Minnesota. This was a great experience that helped me learn about what life was like in France. Even though I am French and was born there, I hadn't lived there since I was very small. By living by myself, I got to know about transportation, lifestyle, and best of all, food. It also allowed me to learn about french business, as I interned with the Montpellier Basketball Team. It opened up my mind and taught me a new mindset when it came to how to run a business.

When I first left for France, I had two goals. The first was that I wanted to fully understand French culture. Even though I am French, I had never had the opportunity to live by myself in France as I was only 4 when my family still lived in France. The second was to figure out how open I would be to living there. I was fortunate enough to find the answer to both of these questions. Thanks to the fact that I was living alone without a roommate, I got to understand multiple aspects of what it means to live in France. That meant walks to the store (with a reusable bag), dressing nicely no matter where you went, and the importance of speaking in a respectful manner. Due to my experience, I understood that I was open to the idea of living in France.

What really fascinated me was the differences and similarities in the two cultures. In Montpellier, everything was slower. The shopping, the walking, and the classes were all slower. This is probably due to the French mindset that people need to enjoy life, and that there is no rush when doing things. Sadly, this applied to everything, and I remember when our study abroad director told us that classes hadn't been published a

week before classes were supposed to start. It was a little shocking to say the least! This story brings me to another difference I noticed. The education system is pretty different. Instead of the 45 minute classes three times a week I had at Clemson, the classes were usually 3 hours once a week. Most of the classes were also lectures, where we didn't have homework. Instead we had one or two exams the entire year that counted for our entire grade. This really helped me focus more during lectures when I got back, as it is much easier to focus for 45 minutes than it is to focus for 3 hours.

One similarity between France and the US was the fact that people enjoyed having a lot of different choices. When it came to restaurants, there were hundreds of different choices, and every different type of food was present. This idea didn't just apply to food however, as even bars and clubs used different cultures to help create their identity. You could drink at a New Zealand style bar or go to a British bar. What spoke out to me the most from this was that if someone wanted to open a new type of restaurant or store, they could most likely have some success.

That was one of my favorite parts of my study abroad experience, walking around and seeing all of the different stores and restaurants that were around. Even towards the end of my semester there, I was still finding new places on the path I took every day to get to school. In fact, I vividly remember a little path in Montpellier that had multiple Michelin starred restaurants. My friend and I had decided to go to one, and we had walked around dumbfounded at the quality of all of the restaurants. Sadly, my little college income was not very keen on me going to all of these restaurants, so I will have to go back when I have a bit more money.

Another experience was the 2022 world cup. Being French, there was no doubt that I would watch the games, but I had no idea what that would be like in France. I remember going out for the England Vs France game, and the streets were filled with people. They were completely full of people watching the game. Coming from the US where you didn't really see this kind of activity, I was surprised at the whole event. The craziest part to me was the celebrations after the win. Thousands of people rushed to the middle of the city with fireworks and flags. It was truly an amazing thing to see.

After coming back to the US, I struggled with some of the differences between life in the US and life in France. One thing was the pace of campuses. I had gotten so used to the slow pace that I was surprised at the fact that everyone was passing me on my walks to class. The other struggle I had was with food. Not only were my expectations for restaurants higher because of the food I had had in France, I was also caught off guard by the quality of ingredients in the US. During my time in France, all of the food was cheaper and higher quality, and my weekly shopping trips usually came out to 50 dollars. When I got back, the price jumped up and the quality dropped.

Overall, my study abroad experience helped me to go back to my roots and understand what it means to be French. It is something that I keep with me everyday, and I continue to do some things the same way as when I was in Montpellier. I still walk at a slower pace, I dress up a little more for class, and most importantly, I enjoy higher quality food even more!