

Lyz Carmody  
CWIL Grant Recipient  
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### Europe Summer Study Program

I have the fortunate opportunity to travel abroad not only once, but twice in my four-year career at Saint Mary's College. I spent my sophomore year through the Saint Mary's College Rome Program and formed by far the most amazing memories in my life. I was so empowered by my time abroad that I wanted to make the most of it and decided to enroll in the InterCultural Studies course Analysis of Study Abroad Learning. Despite the fact that I already knew that the individual growths one encounters while in a new environment by living it, but I began to understand why. One of the hardest things for me about being back to the United States after Rome was I was Europe sick. I craved a taste of Europe, and that is probably the main reason why I chose the Europe Summer Study Program as my second abroad experience here at Saint Mary's. I gained a different level of appreciation and growth from each trip based on the duration and nature of the program and I plan to describe how in my comparative reflection on my study abroad experiences.

In Rome, I lived in the same hotel for over seven months and definitely by the end of the first semester, I felt Rome as my home. However, I never got a chance to feel situated in one location with the Summer Program. Due to the nature of the program, the course(s) allows to travel to four different countries in one month. It gives the student a chance to learn about a great deal over a wide spectrum versus in depth knowledge on one specific place or thing with the Rome Program.

There is a great deal of free time with both programs so the ability to adventure in the foreign country and interactions with the people are there as long as the student is willing to step outside their comfort zone. For example, the Internet café is a great way for simple interactions with natives and other travelers. Almost in every Internet café that I would visit regularly in my stays in Europe, I have befriended either the owner or a neighbor. In Rome, I had the opportunity to go to a discoteca with the Pantheon Internet Café owner with his friends and mine. We, the Saint Mary's students, were the only non-Italians in the entire place. It was my favorite times out on Rome because of that. While I was in London, My friend and I started a conversation with a person because of something her shirt read. We just started talking and exchanged e-mails and screen names. Now the young man that we met from the internet café in London and my friend are in a serious relationship all because we were open and willing to meet new people.

Having my background in traveling and strong interest in learning about other cultures, I have begun to look at graduate programs abroad. While I was in London, I had an interview with one of my top schools. As a program focused in Modernism and Intercultural Studies, they were impressed by my abroad experience. In recent years, London has evolved into an extremely diverse city. For example, Saint Mary's apartments were located in the Arab part of town. The signs on all the stores would be written English and Arabic. We would pass hookah bars and ethnic grocery stores on our walk to the Tube station.

I feel that taking my first intercultural experience further and return to Europe for a similar experience. My first time abroad, I developed a great sense of self, particularly in independence and confidence. Being an upperclassmen and have already spent eight

months living in Europe, I felt a sense of ease and maturity when with the group. I was able to take the skills that I have previously learned and apply them to each city we traveled through. For example, I felt comfortable enough to walk myself in Paris to take the Metro back to the hostel after only a few days inhabiting the city. It did not matter what my agenda was, as long as I acted like I knew what it was, I was accepted whether anybody knew I was American or not. Once again in Paris, people would approach speaking French. I took French all through junior high and high school, but I remember only a few phrases. I was flattered that if I was French or not, that I was still accepted that they treated me like an equal. I had achieved a level of comfort in a normally uncomfortable situation and thrived on it for the rest of the program.