

Paola- Padova, Italy - Fall 2008

Many people have asked me why I chose to study Italian over other “more practical” languages. I went to Italy to live and understand a part of my cultural background I had yet to discover. What I had also not discovered was how much Italian I would forget in the months between school getting out and the program starting.

Upon arrival my roommate and I realized we had forgotten how to ask for a taxi cab and my fear set in. As soon as the intensive language program began, however, I was amazed to see how quickly our language skills improved and how helpful it was to be immersed in the language all the time. Every Italian I met was warm and took the time to decipher my Italian with a smile. In that environment I was able to practice my Italian comfortably. Soon enough we were all hanging out with the Italian college students, being invited to events, and truly felt like a part of Padova.

I had the privilege of staying with, who I consider to be, the best host family ever. My Signora and brothers took us mushroom hunting in the Alps, cooked the best meals I had in Italy, and taught us a lot about Italian life.

At the end of my trip, my Italian had improved so much that I felt confident enough in to visit some Italian family members I had never met. I was very nervous during the entire five hour train ride but all the butterflies went away after their warm welcome. My cousin pulled out maps, history books, and old photo albums and took the time to explain our entire family history to me that day. The weekend adventures to visit other EAP friends in Greece, Ireland, and the UK were fantastic and memorable, but how Italy impacted me, what I learned about myself there, and how it changed me are even more important.

I absolutely loved my time abroad! So much actually, that if there were one era in my life I could play on repeat, I would choose my EAP experience.

Meghan - Lund, Sweden - Year 2008-2009

I think I learned more during the year I spent abroad in Sweden than I have in my entire academic career. I boarded my flight in LA wondering how I was going to survive four months in another country and ended up extending my program to a year after the second week.

Being abroad was great personally because I learned to live and succeed outside of my comfort zone. Being abroad taught me that my best resource was myself and with that came a certain degree of trust and self confidence in my abilities. I was more comfortable taking risks and knowing what my limits were, but also with asking for assistance-- I learned to be independent and self sufficient, but also came to terms with the vulnerability that comes with being abroad.

I learned to calm down, to trust myself, and to enjoy where I was and what I was doing, and learned that there other ways to BE than what I was used to.

And I had FUN doing it--I liked stumbling around a new language and the satisfaction

that came with small successes, I liked putting myself out there and the process of making new friends out of strangers. The friends I made abroad are some of my closest. My experience was much more than an academic education and one of the pivotal parts of my self growth--I used to be hesitant about life after college and now I have a plan (to do my Masters in Sweden) and cannot wait to get there.

Jinna- Shangai, China- Spring 2009

Going abroad was one of the best decisions I made during my college career. I studied in Shanghai, China spring quarter 2009. What the most rewarding aspect of going abroad was the daily activities I experienced and the people I met. I thoroughly enjoyed taking the subway to a spontaneous stop and getting lost/exploring the city that way.

Through this I was able to discover hidden antique markets and eateries that are local favorites. The local students that I met abroad also made my experience in Shanghai unforgettable. I frequently went to my friend's home where her mother would make me a home cooked meal consisting of about eight different native Shanghai dishes. When I finished stuffing myself into a food coma she would always, without a fail, come out with dessert (which was usually delicious mochi!). I also experienced my first karaoke outing with my local friends which was so much fun because, although we sang songs in different languages, we would all come together to sing Britney Spears and Avril Lavigne songs (whom they love). Shanghai is also a city that never sleeps. Whether I wanted to get a late night snack of street food, or wanted to go to a club, there was always a wide range of places I could go to at one in the morning.

Traveling was something that I enjoyed as well. I found a great group of friends that I traveled throughout the mainland with. We even traveled around Southeast Asia together after our program ended and are currently planning a reunion next summer! Studying in China not only allowed me to gain a global perspective of events happening around the world, but also made me appreciate many aspects of my life in the US that I took for granted. I had a phenomenal experience abroad and would encourage everyone to go study in a different country!