

In my opinion, traveling is one of the most important aspects of being a human being. It broadens our perspectives on different cultures and ways of life, it can allow us to recognize how fortunate we are, and maybe even help us improve our lives as a whole. Last semester, I had the incredible opportunity to study abroad in Barcelona! I learned more than I could ever imagine, made the best of friends, and gained a new appreciation for Spanish culture.

While abroad, I was taking 5 classes. However, it is safe to say that I learned more outside of the classroom than I did inside. My university was about a mile away from the Gothic Quarters in Barcelona. The quarters consisted of buildings that dated back to the middle ages! It was unbelievable to go shopping and attend churches in buildings that are 100s of years older than America. I was literally walking in living history.

During my 4 month stay, I visited many different places. My favorite visit was Morocco, Africa! I was there for 4 days and 5 nights. We stayed 2 nights in Marrakesh. Here we shopped at the amazing (and massive) market. I bought myself a Keffiyeh (the headscarf) and lots of pretty jewelry. My mom is an interior designer, so I found lots of rug dealers for her! There were also lots of animals at the markets including cats, dogs, snakes, monkeys, and horses. My new best friend, Taryn, and I took pictures with the snakes (she did not enjoy that part very much). After our two days in Marrakesh, we traveled 8 hours on a bus to the middle of the Sahara desert. Talk about glamping! Each tent had 2 twin beds, 2 bedside tables, 2 dressers, and a bathroom with a shower! Staying in the desert is probably my favorite part of my entire abroad experience. We rode 4-wheelers and camels, relaxed by the pool, witnessed traditional Moroccan dances, and ate delicious Moroccan food (which Gordon Ramsay rated the best type of food in the world). Only about 20% of my university traveled to Morocco, so it was much easier to make life-long friends there than it was back in Barcelona. Along with Morocco, I also traveled to a small town in Spain called Girona. If you're a Game of Thrones fan, and you have the chance to travel to Spain, I highly suggest visiting this place. Many GOT episodes were filmed here. It was fascinating being able to recognize the streets and the architecture from the show. My favorite building I visited in Girona was the Girona Cathedral. The cathedral began its construction in the year 1015. That was over 1000 years ago! We visited the cathedral during Holy Week, which was perfect timing. It was incredible to think about how many people have been to this cathedral over the past millennium.

Studying abroad was one of the most life-changing experiences of my entire life. In my opinion, the people in Spain seemed a lot less stressed and happier than I expected. There were a lot of things I did not know about Spain until I arrived there in January. For starters, tipping is not a common practice in Spain. There was also no taxes on clothes or foods, so the price it showed was the price to pay. During the week, they had selected times for 'siesta' (nap). It was very common for companies to be closed between 3-4pm. Also, almost everything is closed on

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Sundays for the Holy day. The social life was also extremely different. Instead of leaving a club or bar at 2am, that is when we would arrive! It took some time to get used to this change, but I got the hang of it after about 3 weeks! If you or a loved one is in college and is thinking about studying abroad, I say take that leap of faith and do it. I have learned that there is no growth in a comfort zone, and no comfort in a growth zone. Getting out of your comfort zone is scary sometimes, but it is almost always worth it.