

Art and Gardens Study Abroad - Student Comments 2017

We shared the following quote with the students on their first day of the European Garden Tour so that they would more fully understand the most important goal of our tour. “The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeing new landscapes, but having new eyes.” Marcel Proust, French writer (1871-1922).

The impact of these tours on the students is best documented in the students' own words:

I felt extremely accomplished when I came home and was able to say that a small group of us spent our free days doing exactly we wanted to do with no help from instructors.

I learned to really get out of my comfort zone and have a sincere interest in others that I would not automatically gravitate toward.

I intend to travel even more so I can expand my perspective of the world and gain a greater understanding of how interconnected the world truly is.

As cheesy as it may sound, we became an Arts and Crafts style garden. A wide variety of colorful personality types, majors, and lifestyles were able to grow relationships together in the formal setting of a horticulture class.

This class taught me how to travel, how to appreciate other cultures, how to be open to new things, and most importantly to be a student of the world.

The garden studies taught me to look beyond just what is seen and look for meaning in every detail of something.

But over time the lessons and insights picked up along the way

subtly work their way into your life: in the way you regard other people and cultures, your ability to tackle new and uncomfortable tasks, and the strength with which you address life's great mysteries.

The world is not as big and confusing as it seems. There is a continuous string of connections that runs through all of humanity, even the most disparate of cultures. And isn't it exhilarating to know that we are not alone.

By traveling to new places you become more worldly and have more knowledge of the people and cultures that exist. This allows you to better interact with other humans as well as equipping you to make more informed decisions.

If there was any theme to be taken away from this trip it is: “to inquire into the nature of things.” One must continue to learn in order to survive in a constantly changing world.

At first, splitting off into randomly organized groups was intimidating because, it being early in the trip, I had not really gotten to know any new people yet.

The most valuable lesson I learned was how to become a better person.

At this moment in the trip, I began to realize how much research and exploration is required to truly know a topic... as the class learned before, it takes many different perspectives to truly see something for what it is. I must commit to being a lifelong learner if I want to understand culture and the players within it.

I did not realize until i was abroad, however, just how little I knew.

Finally, as much as we joked about "minding the Gap," it is true

that we must guard the gap between what we want to accomplish what we fear to finish. If I let fear take hold, the gap between what I want to experience and what I have experienced will widen tremendously. Before I now it, I will be filled with regrets and filled with fear. From this trip, I have learned that people are mostly kind, adventures are mostly worth it, and opportunities only come once. I might as well take life for all that it's worth. Thank you so much for an incredible trip!

I also learned that every single person judges one another but once you get past those judgments you will make friends with people you never thought you would've otherwise. I went into this trip only knowing Alexa through my sorority, and I came back to America with over a dozen new friends. Everyone was clique-y at first and we all stereotyped each other. Alexa and I quickly became friends with three other girls when we met them at the airport because I recognized one of them from my Spanish class and after that everyone else thought we were all in same sorority and were best friends and didn't really try to talk to us or include us. Eventually, we all warmed up and saw each other as individuals instead of in groups