

My Time in Paris

By Kristin Shust

Paris was my first trip out of the United States; I was never even to Canada or Mexico. So you could imagine I was kind of nervous on the flight over. It just so happens that I end up getting sick on my way over. I was sick pretty much the whole flight so when we landed in Paris, I wasn't too excited.

On the metro ride to our dorm, I was pretty surprised at the sights I was seeing. There was graffiti everywhere and shack-like houses along the railroad tracks. The trees and buildings were smaller than what I was used to. I expected Paris to look like New York City for some reason and it didn't. So, my first day was a little rough.

The next day some of my fellow classmates had a long list of things that they wanted to do and I tagged along. We did a lot of walking and sight seeing. We went to the Pompidou which is a modern art museum, and I love modern art. When we visited they were showcasing Dreamlands and Lucian Freud. The Dreamlands exhibit seemed to be making fun of and loving everyone at the same time. Lucian Freud was mainly self-portraits. After the Pompidou we had lunch and walked to the Holocaust Memorial. We were starting to get tired and needed a pick me up so we decided to get ice cream at Berthillon, a famous ice cream shop. While eating the best ice cream I have ever had, we walked down the block and ended up at Notre Dame. We waited in long lines to finally make it inside and were able to see a mass being held. When we finished walking around Notre Dame we went to dinner and on our way we stopped by the famous

Shakespeare & Co. bookstore to have a look around. By the end of this first day I felt like I saw all there is to see but boy am I mistaken!

Then began the first week of class. Classes were fun! We elaborated on topics that we covered in the United States. The teachers were educated on their topics and were willing to explain anything that we needed to understand better. Many classes were field trips. Some were all day trips, like to the Champagne Region or to Versailles. Other trips were a few hours to half-day trips including the Rungis Market, Musee d'Orsay, INRA, and the Gallery of Evolution.

Of all our AgroParisTech field trips, Versailles was my favorite. In landscape design classes we talk about the history of gardens and design, and Versailles is always mentioned. When I saw it in person it took my breath away. I could not believe the size of it and the beauty that unfolded as you walked through each room, and I had not even toured the gardens yet. When we made it outside it was like I was in a dream. When I saw the gardens they were everything I have studied. The design structure with lines, movement, and flow; I was speechless.

Once class was over for the day we went out at night to see as much as possible. We went to the Pantheon, Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and the Army Museum. We went to Luxembourg Gardens, the Garden of Tuileries, and the botanical garden in Paris. Other than Versailles, the Military Museum was my second favorite place to visit. Before I even walked into the museum I stopped at a nearby café and ate the best pizza and donut I have ever had. I purchased my ticket to see Neapolitan's tomb, and the sight is just amazing. You walk in and

look down on this beautiful tomb made out of marble. After seeing a sight like this I realized how glad I was that I went there.

I did not just do sightseeing, I did a lot of shopping and eating too. I went to the Champ-Elysees, which is a famous street for fabulous shopping. On this street I spent many Euros. On a side street in this area I felt as if I were walking through the pages of Vogue magazine.

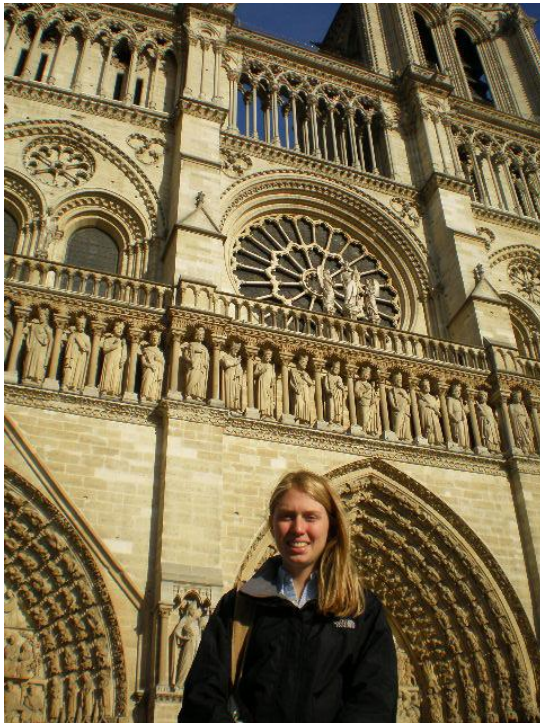
I knew no French upon arrival so going out to eat was sometimes tricky. When ordering I would pick something out with a pretty name and point and hope. Luck was on my side because it was always some of the best food I have ever eaten. I ate a lot of fish, crepes, French grilled ham and cheese sandwiches, and tons of deserts. Some of the best food and cheapest food I had was at lunchtime in the cafeteria by our classroom. The fruit was always so fresh, because much of it was shipped in from Spain.

All in all, I had a wonderful time. I was almost in tears when we had to leave. Paris is a wonderful place and I felt right at home. Many of the students on our trip complained that they were not treated well, but I had no trouble. I believe I was treated better in Paris than I have been in New York City. I would just smile and point and people seemed ok with that and would even laugh with me...or I hope they were laughing with me.

Paris is my new favorite place and I would do anything to go back. But, the next time I go back I will try to learn more French to try to be more respectful. Paris is beautiful and full of history. Around every corner I wondered how many people have turned that same corner over the years.



The gang at Notre Dame



Notre Dame



Garden at Versailles



Versailles