

Comparing US/French Agriculture  
Intag 497A  
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## My French Experience

Location: Paris, France

Date: May 15- June 2, 2010

May 15, 2010 began the start of my first international experience. As I began to board our flight for Paris, France I could not believe the day I had been dreaming about all year finally arrived. I had never traveled abroad before, so I was a little nervous how my first experience was going to be in a country where I could not even speak the language. I had read as many travel guide books I could to prepare myself for this unfamiliar territory. In addition, the length of my stay would only be two weeks. I wanted to make the best of my time by familiarizing myself with the extraordinary city of Paris.

Even though I had read about the history, general facts, and current events of Paris I was still nervous about a few aspects. I wasn't sure if I was going to have a complete culture shock or be able to immerse myself in local traditions. I didn't know if I would be able to intermingle with the locals and make new acquaintances. I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to understand their customs and get use to leaving the comforts of home. All I knew about France was what I

learned from our Intag 497A course at Penn State, as well as the clichés I had learned from books, television and other peers. I was hoping this trip would open my eyes and ears to new insights.

Upon my first glance of Paris I was surprised to see how beautiful it truly was. Sure there was some graffiti, but behind the scribbles were beautifully persevered buildings with engraved designs, original scaffolding, and always at a modest height. I truly appreciated how important it was to their culture to preserve the past in a world that is always looking towards the future. I believe this is also why I truly enjoyed sightseeing and visiting many museums. My favorite museum was the Musee D'Orsay. Even though I had never liked to make art myself or ever took an art appreciation course, this trip gave me the opportunity to view art in a whole new perspective and truly enjoy it for what it was intended for, to look at. I loved visiting The Louvre, Pompidou, and the Rodin Museums. The churches were also pieces of art within themselves.

Another facet that surprised me about France was its food. Before traveling, I had always the impression that French food was very complex with many layering flavors, various sauces, and multiple components. However, when I began to eat like a true Parisian I discovered that French food is actually quite simplistic. Rather the French culinary arts emphasize the techniques used to prepare a dish. It interested me to see how a few simple ingredients can taste really great together if

it is just prepared correctly. In America we like to cover our sandwiches with thick salty condiments to bring flavor to tough bland meats and plain sliced white bread. In France, if you use quality ingredients and skillful techniques nothing extra is needed.

Before coming to Paris, I was really interested in learning how important agriculture was to the citizens of France. In America, it is the preconceived notion that many US citizens are partially unaware of where their food truly comes from. In America there is a lower priority to educate where food comes from and how to provide proper nutrition through a well balanced diet. In France not only do children learn where their food comes from at a young age, but some schools are specially built to teach agriculture. Throughout the two weeks in class I learned that food is a very important part of French culture. Quantity is not the emphasis of the French food system, rather it is quality. Nutrition, taste, and freshness are carefully considered in French agriculture.

AgroParisTech was our host school while we were in Paris. We had class everyday during the week and also took field trips to other regions of France on various days. The speakers were some of the top experts in their fields and presented very interesting topics. I enjoyed hearing their opinions and explanations about French agriculture, policies, and industry in comparison to the US. I now am more aware of agricultural issues not only in France, but also in the E.U. and other

parts of the world. I learn that there are many similarities between US and French agriculture, and that we share many of the same struggles and successes.

I believe this experience has allowed me to view agriculture from a different perspective. This experience will help me in the future because it has taught me to become more aware of agriculture in other parts of the world. This will help me understand and explain to others the importance of international interaction in agriculture. I was able to witness how US agriculture affects other parts of the world, and how other parts of the world can affect the US. Through this knowledge I will be able to make wiser decisions and understand the impact I can make globally in my future career as a Food Scientist in the food industry.



Eating a crepe



Notre Dame



Outside of Musee D'Orsay



The Louve