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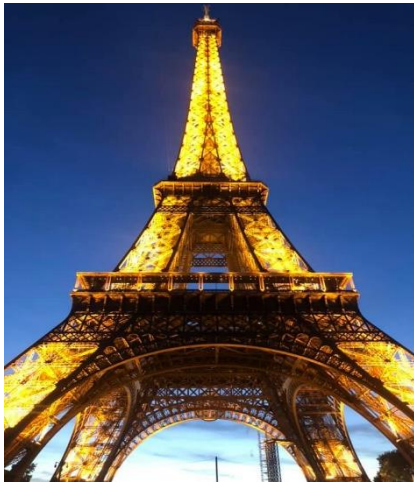
It still seems unreal to me that I had the opportunity to study abroad in Milan, Italy for four weeks. This experience was truly once in a lifetime. Growing up, traveling seemed like a dream that was too good to come true. However, this study abroad program proved me wrong. I was able to travel with nineteen other girls apart of the College of Education. During our time in Milan, we observed at the American School of Milan three days a week. ASM welcomed all of us with open arms. The students from ASM were extremely diverse. Children came from a variety of fifty different countries, speaking thirty different languages, which was unlike anything I had seen before. When we weren't in the classroom observing, we had the option to take two classes online through ISU and travel to different places we chose to. I can truly say this opportunity was a gift and one I could never forget. In addition, I am truly thankful for the scholarship that helped me make my dream of traveling come true.



At ASM, my observations were in high school, elementary, and early childhood classrooms. I found my observations to be very beneficial as ASM is an incredible school to follow as an example. They welcome all their students with so much to offer and I was thankful to get to be apart of that. I had the chance to interact with children and teachers and ask questions I had about their school. While I was there I learned some strategies, lessons, and techniques I would like to someday implement into my own classroom.

For the majority of the time in Europe, Milan was our home. We lived in an apartment in the busy city. It reminded me a lot of Chicago. The streets were always crowded and so many places to shop, eat, and socialize. In Milan we visited the Duomo and explored different places around the city on a walking tour at the beginning of our trip. It was special to me how a place so far away from everything I know could feel a lot like home. Although Milan did remind me so much of Chicago, the historical landmarks and architecture could not nealy compare. Learning about these buildings and the people who built them was remarkable.

While studying abroad, I wanted to take advantage of all the time I had there. Some of the other girls and I traveled outside of Italy. Over the second weekend there, five of us went to Barcelona. This was one of the most beautiful and unique places I have been to. Even though we were there for a short period of time, we made the absolute best of it. I got to see the Sagrada Familia, Park Guell, Magic Fountain, and so much more, including the beach. Barcelona was one of the most welcoming places we went on the trip. So many people were helpful and kind. It was definitely a place I would love to travel to and experience again one day.



Over the third weekend, some of us went to Paris. Paris has been a place on my bucket list since I can remember. The idea of seeing the Eiffel Tower in person seemed unimaginable. However, because of this amazing opportunity of study abroad, I was able to cross this place off. It was an interesting experience meeting the people in Paris and interacting with their culture. We also visited the lock bridge, Louvre, and other incredible places.



A few other cities we explored within Italy were Lake Como and Cinque Terre. Both of these places were some of the most beautiful destinations imaginable. The water in both of these locations was so clear and breathtaking. The pictures I was able to capture were like ones out of a photography magazine. The sites were unlike anything I had ever experienced in my life.

Overall, during my time in the study abroad program I learned so much about other cultures and diversity. I learned what it feels like to be a language minority. By the end of the trip I knew enough words to get me by day by day. This program helped me grow as a student, future educator, and individual. I learned a lot about others, my career, and myself that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to do if I had not studied abroad. Although at times I felt out of my comfort zone or a little too far from home, I would not take a single thing back. Once I came back to the US, I felt a lot more confident in myself and my future. My advice to other students who are thinking about studying abroad is to dive in. It can seem intimidating or maybe a little too good to be true. However, it is an experience that can make your dreams come true.