

What is your name: Charles

What do you study?

Business Major, Legal Studies minor

Where and when did you go in France?

I went to Angers, France. August 2015.

How was your exchange?

I know it sounds cliché, but my experience was absolutely life changing. I went in knowing very little about French or even France itself. I've never even made it up to Canada. This trip has opened up my mind in ways I didn't even know were possible. It's one thing to visit a country and stay in a hotel, where you have a sample of what the culture is like, and it is another to completely immerse yourself in it. My first night in Paris I had forgotten to book a hotel, didn't speak French, and had just finished traveling for close to 30 hours. Thankfully I got it all figured out, but that was my first taste of the chaos that is traveling. It felt so surreal the next morning when I woke up and walked around the corner to the nearest café to grab the tiniest cup of espresso that you'd ever seen. Just like that coffee, that was just a small taste of what my experience would be. It was such a blessing to go out every weekend to taste wine or wander around an ancient castle. More than anything else though, I'd say that meeting all of the foreigners who became dear friends was the best part of all. I am now the proud friend to people from Austria to Japan.

What was the hardest thing for you?

The hardest thing for me was definitely the language barrier. Not being able to clearly communicate with people was very frustrating for me, but it taught me a ton of skills. For example I am now the best Charades player in my family. I realized that it'd be impossible for me to travel the world if I had to learn every language, but learning another definitely makes it easier to make life long friends.

Would you recommend your experience to other students?

I would recommend anyone and everyone I ever come into contact with to go abroad. It was amazing. You really can't find a better way to connect with people or even just open yourself up. No matter how mature, wise, or intelligent you are, experiencing the challenges of adapting to another culture will always expand your mind.