



# The Diplomatic Envoy



**STUDY ABROAD EDITION**  
Summer 2023



# The Diplomatic Envoy

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to read The Diplomatic Envoy's 2023 Special Study Abroad Edition!

Studying abroad is an important part of college for so many students - especially students within Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations.

The struggles and triumphs that come when spending a semester assimilating in a new culture, learning a new language, and exploring the world from a new lens lead to an experience like no other. The growth that comes from these experiences, both personal and intellectual, is often profound. In this edition, we bring you stories from five Seton Hall students whose study abroad experiences had a significant impact on their perspectives of some part of the international system, from reflections on political institutions and protests to the challenges of adapting to new cultures. These students each studied abroad for a semester in 2022-2023.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, we hope you enjoy reading our 2023 Study Abroad edition. If you are interested in studying abroad, please reach out to the SHU Office of International Programs at [studyabroad@shu.edu](mailto:studyabroad@shu.edu). To read more of our work, visit our website, listed on the back cover of this edition.

Hazard Zet Forward!

Andrea Hebel  
Editor-in-Chief



SCHOOL OF DIPLOMACY AND  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

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# FRENCH PROTEST CULTURE: A NATIONAL TREASURE

Eric Bunce | Staff Writer



Courtesy of Roland Godéroy (Wikimedia Commons)

During my four months studying abroad in Grenoble, France, I started to develop a Saturday routine. Weather permitting, I would go for a hike in the morning before grabbing a spot at a café and watching the protests. Indeed, every Saturday, for months, there were afternoon protests. This very French routine was bemusing at first; it does fit the cliché perfectly. But this bemusement quickly turned to annoyance when the trams wouldn't run. Yet, towards the end of my stay,

Protests in France are a  
**different breed...**

the 'manifestations'—as the French would call them—were absolutely fascinating to me.

Coming from the New York metro area, I am no stranger to protests. You occasionally stumble across them in downtown Manhattan, often in front of town hall or the federal court building. Every once in a while there is a truly massive event like the Climate Strike in 2019 or the 2017 Women's March. However, protests in France are a different breed for a few main reasons: their frequency, widespread diffusion, and relatively high success rate.

The frequency of protests in France is shocking. Every weekend from January through May, there were demonstrations in the center of Grenoble. While Grenoble itself is not a particularly important city politically, the same cannot be said for Paris, which weathers almost daily protests. I was only in the capital for a four-day trip, yet I

encountered a different march on the Place de la Bastille each afternoon. Certainly, it is no co-

...the French have turned  
protesting into a **form of  
socialization.**

incidence that modern protesters are drawn to the site of one of the most famous historical protests: the destruction of the Bastille in 1789. When seeking to rationalize French protest culture, many commentators have pointed to a so-called 'revolutionary spirit,' dating back to the 18th-century revolution.

However, a much simpler explanation also exists: the French have turned protesting into a form of socialization. Recent videos out of Paris show protesters pushing grills along their route and frequently stopping for food and coffee breaks. Not

even social justice gets in the way of mealtimes. Regardless of whether it is just to get some fresh air or some latent revolutionary spirit, it appears that the frequency of protests in France is far greater than in the U.S.

The widespread diffusion of protests across the population also distinguishes French protest culture from that of America. People are willing to get out on the streets for issues that do not impact them directly, such as the government's strict COVID-19 vaccine mandate. I assumed that most of these demonstrators were against the vaccination mandate, but after the protest, many would go to a café, still in their high visibility vests, and display their vaccine card to get a table. They were protesting the vaccine mandate despite being vaccinated themselves!

For these activists, it was a matter of principle. Even if the issue no longer affected them directly, they still made their voice heard. During the peak of the widespread yellow vest movement in 2018, 78 percent of people on both the left and



The riverfront in Grenoble, France.  
Courtesy of Stephen Colebourne(flickr)

right supported the protests, despite the massive disruptions it caused. This widespread diffusion of support for protests is far less common in the U.S., where issues, and therefore demonstrations, are often split clearly along partisan lines.

Lastly, these frequent and widespread protests have a fairly successful record. In 2018, the government abandoned a new gas tax and raised the min-

Through demonstrations, the less wealthy and powerful parts of the population **have a voice**, even young people.

imum wage when faced with the Yellow Vest movement. A blockade of the port of Calais in 2009 forced a 66 million euro government bailout for French fishermen, and the National Assembly abandoned labor reforms in 2006 when faced with

overwhelming demonstrations. Though there are exceptions, such as the government raising the retirement age in March despite enormous protests that left Paris's streets covered in burning piles of trash, a glance at modern French politics is flush with examples where the government acquiesced to persistent protesters. Overall, more French movements have achieved their goals than in the U.S., which has seen depressingly few protests achieve their goals in past decades.

While far from perfect, the protest culture in France is a representation of their democracy. Through demonstrations, the less wealthy and powerful parts of the population have a voice, even young people. In just four months of living in Grenoble, I experienced that myself. I walked out of class, one day, into hundreds of picketing students seeking signatures for a petition to prevent the cancellation of summer classes for construction. I attempted to explain that I would not be there come summer, but they did not comprehend my argument, saying, "Well,

you're still a student, aren't you? Show some solidarity." Needless to say, I signed the petition, and the university found a way to keep the majority of classes running.

The takeaway on French protest culture is that everyone, even students, when well organized, has a voice in policy that their counterparts simply do not have in the U.S. The French tradition of protests makes the government more accountable to all of its citizens, even those without financial power. Marching in the streets, everyone, even the poor and powerless, has a voice, and that is more than could be said for Americans.

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Eric is pictured here in a town outside Grenoble, France.



Citizens of Grenoble protest recent pension reforms. Courtesy of Jean-Paul Corlin(Wikimedia Commons)

# AN AMERICAN IN SPAIN'S REFLECTIONS ON THE EU

Andrea Hebel | Editor-in-Chief



Courtesy of Carlos Delgado (Wikimedia Commons)



I have long been fascinated by the very existence of the European Union. Perhaps that statement exposes the true depths of my International Relations nerdism, but as a news-obsessed child who came of age in the turmoil of Brexit, it was at the center of my attention through much of high school. My obsession with the EU was a large part of the reason why I decided to major in International Relations. The intricacies of how a group of states could unite in a way that sacrifices so much individual sovereignty, despite the devastating damage they inflicted upon one another less than 50 years prior to the bloc's founding and had throughout so much of the continent's history, was something I could not wrap my head around. Even though I generally subscribe to a liberal view of international relations, the EU just felt like such a huge jump from what I understood about the history of European development.

In Spring 2023, I spent the semester studying at Universi-

...the EU just felt like such a **huge jump** from what I understood about the **history** of European development.

dad Pablo de Olavide in Seville, Spain. As part of my curriculum, I had the opportunity to take a class all about the EU and its development, functioning, and challenges. This opportunity to explore the bloc in depth, combined with the ways I have seen the EU work in daily life while actually living in Spain, has totally changed my perceptions of its role in the international system and its implications for similar international cooperation.

The EU is, in its most basic form, an economic bloc of 27 European nations with free trade and effectively open borders. Though the EU was officially created by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, some semblance of European cooperation has existed since the mid-1950s. Early European cooperation began for several reasons – to help stimulate economic growth, rebuild war-ravaged industries, and ensure that German reunification could occur without further societal radicalization – but a sig-

[The EU] does not exist **in spite of** the past histories of chaos and war between European nations, but **because of them.**

nificant factor was the hope that intertwining economic and social policies could unite the countries towards common goals and lead to a long-lasting peace. This is one incredibly important factor to understand the functioning of the EU: it does not exist

in spite of the past histories of chaos and war between European nations, but because of them.

Beyond just economic policy, however, the EU exists as a supranational organization. Every treaty works to increase the degree to which the governments of member states coordinate, both inter-governmentally and supranationally. The economic benefits of the EU are clear – free trade leads to more efficient and self-regulating markets, uniting as a bloc makes each individual country have more weight in a massive international system, even a unified currency makes intercountry commerce significantly easier, despite its challenges. However, the justifications behind unified social policies are a lot less clear.

When joining the EU, countries get the right to send representatives to each of the executive and legislative bodies of the organization, which make binding policy for the entire bloc. This policy is, by nature, further reaching and has control over individual state policies, meaning that by joining the EU, states give up some of their



The European Union Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.  
Courtesy of Kyle Wagaman(flickr)



**Brits protest the United Kingdom's secession from the European Union in 2019.**  
 Courtesy of Steve Eason (Flickr)

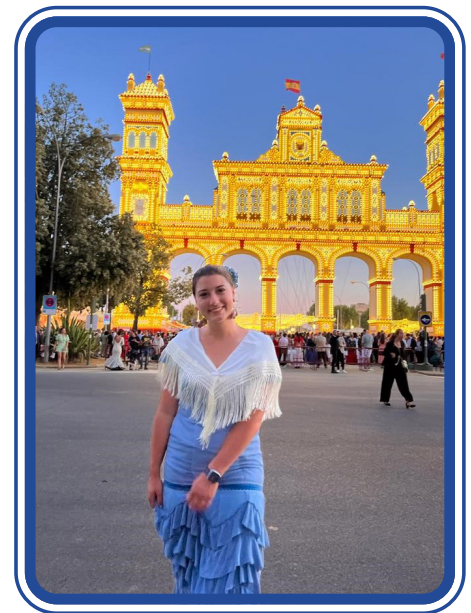
sovereign decision-making power to ensure that their laws are in accordance with EU policy. This is an idea intrinsically

... I have learned that the EU works because it is a **choice** that each country makes **every day**.

backwards in international relations, where sovereignty is seen as the most important factor in all international decisions. However, the primary reason for this is economic. If states are going to be in a true customs union, with a unified trade policy and shared currency, it makes sense that their policies on almost everything that touches trade would at least follow the same standards. And, if they truly are going to be economically unified, then social unification seems like a logical way to ensure that all states are moving in the same

direction with the same goals. Through my experiences in Europe, I have learned that the EU works because it is a choice that each country makes every day – to choose peace over conflict and cooperation over divisiveness. The system is not perfect. Disagreements occur, mistakes are made, consequences are felt, and sometimes, the union breaks, as seen with Brexit. Ultimately, however, the EU is a recognition that sometimes, the only way to stand in peace and prosperity is to lock hands with your adversaries and move forward together. And to me, this is what the heart of international relations is all about.

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Andrea is seen here wearing traditional Flamenco attire. She is standing in front of the Portada during Feria, Sevilla's April Fair.



# GENEVA, SWITZERLAND THROUGH THE EYES OF A STUDENT STUDYING MIGRATION

Patrick Condon | Staff Writer

Sparkling lakeside storefronts, the crystal-clear lake, a cathedral-high jet of water; I return back to the capital of peace. As I descend south bound over the lake's west bank, I look east to the tallest mountains in Europe. The Alps are world renowned: for skiing, beautiful chateaus, and even memorialized in chocolate. Their slopes were once carved by glaciers, which then pooled into the riviera we now call "Lac Lemman." This landscape expands all around me.



The Jet d'Eau rises above Lake Geneva.  
Courtesy of Dennis Jarvis (flickr)

The image of Geneva I now have is **vastly different** from what I first perceived when I studied there, last semester.

It seems that many have been drawn to this place, seeking peace in the mountains or the lake.

They call Geneva the capital of peace because it harbors the European headquarters of the UN, as well as other high-level international organizations. The city pulls together a beautiful community of people from around the world. Yet, Geneva does not represent Switzerland in its ability to bring people together into a community. It represents a place of luxury, of beauty; a place where the world's wealthiest can find peace away from their daily lives.

The image of Geneva I now have is vastly different from what I first perceived when I studied there in Fall 2022. The bewildering beauty still grasps my attention, but only for some time. I lived there just three and a half months, but I was very lucky to have been welcomed during that time. See, most people moving to Geneva won't find a community. It is

the most international place in Switzerland, yet it is unmistakably Swiss, with its luxury storefronts and lake clear-as-glass. I once noted that it felt like "I was living under the protection of a great mountain," like Mount Olympus, an analogy dually fit for the landscape and its relationship with the Swiss people. There are restaurants in this small city of 200,000 people from nearly every country. Yet, Swiss law restricts work permits to a relatively small proportion of people, restricting much of the world from living there.

The good thing for me is work permits are much easier to attain for those in international organizations. I'll hopefully be able to live there after I finish

Yet, Swiss law **restricts** work permits to a relatively small proportion of people, restricting **much of the world** from living there.

grad school, next September. Although, like many young UN professionals, I'll likely be cast out to live in the French towns on the outskirts of the city. I've had a taste of this, regularly buying my groceries across the bor-

der. Though it hasn't been without difficulty, as Switzerland has strict regulations on the quantity of non-Swiss products allowed to be brought into the country. When I think of this practice, I

A city which openly welcomes war-hungry oligarchs shouldn't appear so **innocent**.

am not at all surprised; Switzerland has some of the strictest immigration laws in the world.

My studies in Geneva come with a great deal of irony: I study Mobilities, Migration, and Borders in the European country with the strictest immigration laws (only trailing behind Vatican City and Liechtenstein). This is something which I fear may impact my own perspective. As an American, I feel almost pulled towards living in a place with strict immigration laws. Yet, as a grad student studying migration, I am frightened that this is the goal we seek to attain: a haven for the rich.

One of the more shocking experiences I had in Geneva was the sighting of two luxury, foreign cars. While I don't remember at all what type of cars they were, they both had license

plates from cities I would not expect. I've been on many road trips in the U.S., seeing wildly different foreign plates, but seeing license plates from Moscow and Riyadh surprised me quite a bit. I first thought of the journey it took for those two cars to arrive in Geneva; but that journey means nothing to the purpose of those cars being in Geneva. In those moments, I realized the city was hardly attempting to cater towards a morally-just world. A city which openly welcomes war-hungry oligarchs shouldn't appear so innocent. And yet, have I not also encountered the same thing at home?

There is a certain degree of general ignorance that seems to come with travelling abroad, particularly for Americans. Whether that comes about honestly or not, I noticed that others were far more aware of my culture than I knew of theirs. This is something commonly seen in American expats, but came off rather pointedly to me, a student studying migration. As I learned about the general international routes of migration as well as

the experience of migrants themselves, I also learned about the constructed vanity of Swiss neutrality. To see and meet people from around the world, I perceived the place as inclusive. Yet, I mostly met people from the global north and very few individuals from poorer communities. As I go back to finish my graduate studies, I am relieved to have this clarity of Geneva. I am highly motivated to learn about and work towards a world with a more just system of migration, and so I worry that other countries view Switzerland, with its beauty and luxury, as the most desirable, inclusive place.

Back home in Cleveland, my community is faced with a similar daunting reality. It was constructed purposefully to separate communities, providing space for wealthy citizens to live together. Communities were physically separated to allow for a system more desirable for the rich. While Switzerland has reconciled with a similar fate, offering extensive social programs for its citizens, Cleveland, and much of the U.S., does

not. This is what I have learned, seen, experienced, in my studies in Geneva so far. Perhaps I will leave Geneva after school, to learn from a place more welcome to migration and to the discussion of free movement.

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Patrick is pictured above at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.



Despite hosting high-level international organizations like the Red Cross (pictured above), Patrick found that Geneva is not welcoming to a truly international community.

Courtesy of Tobjorn Toby Jorgenson (Wikimedia Commons)

# EXAMINING FRENCH PROTESTS AS AN AMERICAN ABROAD

Sophie Ulm | Staff Writer

Courtesy of jim Linwood(flickr)



For the past few months, people throughout France people of all backgrounds have been united by one thing: strikes. These strikes have come in response to a recent, unpopular law that implements an increase in the minimum retirement age and changes in pension plans across the country. The strikes that I have seen since beginning my semester abroad have reshaped the way that I think about protests.

In the past few years, there have been a number of notable protests throughout the United States. Perhaps the protests most comparable to those in France are those by workers seeking unionization in different fields. Attempts to unionize

This also means that, for many Americans, the plight of the striking worker is of **no concern...**

corporations like Starbucks and Amazon, among other compa-

nies of many sizes, have particularly grown in popularity. Yet, when workers stopped working in these scenarios, the response of the American people has been vastly different from the responses of French citizens.

When protests and strikes occur in the United States, I have noticed that the response from many consumers is often one of frustration and inconvenience over losing access to services. The American attitude tends to hope for the strikes to end as quickly as possible, regardless of their results. There is little concern about how the strikes end, and more concern with when they will end. This also means that, for many Americans, the plight of the striking worker is of no concern. Sympathy for American strikers is sparse in my experience, as most people prefer to go about their days normally rather than have them be interrupted by a strike.

This is one example, but it represents a principle common in America: if you do not like what is happening to you, it is your job to fix it, not some-

body else's. One of the most common American principles is "pulling yourself up by your bootstraps," the idea that no one owes you any help and that it is best to do things on your own. This idea seems to carry over to the American sentiments regarding protests. Oftentimes, Americans do not want to hear about or be burdened by the problems of others, which leads protests to often be ineffective or a point of contempt for people who are not involved with the issues being protested.

In France, the mentality surrounding protests is quite different. When French citizens

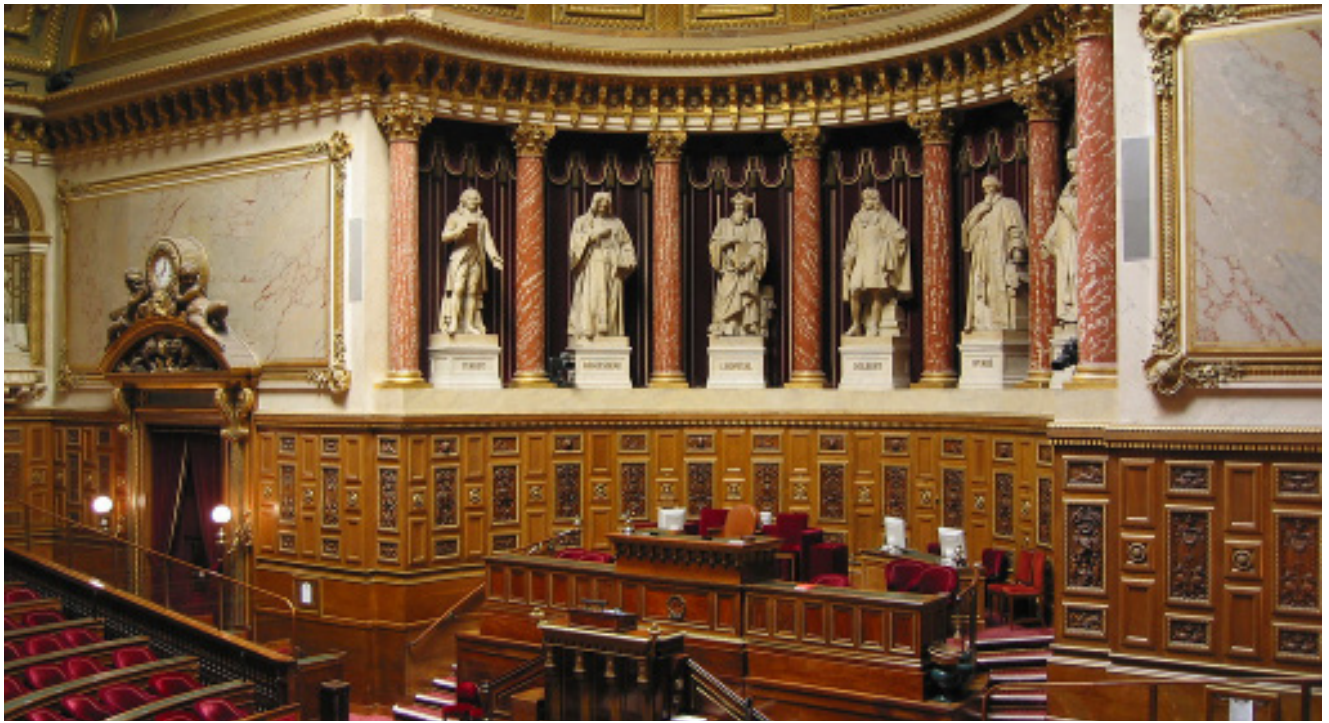
If one person is suffering, it shows that **society** is suffering.

who were frustrated with their monarchy stormed the Bastille and began the French Revolution in 1789, a new mindset of French thinking was born. In France, it is accepted that power lies with the people, and their leaders should respect them fully. If one person is suffering, it shows that society is suffering. When protests occur in a field of work in France, it is not uncommon for people of other workforces to join together and protest with the original group, mostly because of their belief that the rights of the lowest people should be respected.

Another large difference between French and American mentalities is how they try to bring about change. In the United States, people are often urged to show their support for an issue through elections. There is a



Starbucks workers strike in protest of anti-union practices.  
Courtesy of elliotstoller (Wikimedia Commons)



**In contrast to America, the French government is expected to be receptive to protestors demands.**  
 Courtesy of Jim Linwood (flickr)

common mindset that one must wait for the election cycle to vote out a politician that does not represent their views, rather than encouraging change in the moment. The prevailing idea is that ineffective politicians will never change their minds and must be replaced, only giving opportunities for action every 2, 4, or even 6 years, depending on the office.

Yet in France, the idea that politicians can, and should, change their minds based on the concerns of the public is very present. In France, it is seen as the duty of politicians to listen to the voices of their constituents and act on them, not just to stick to the platforms on which they ran. Because of the multiplicity of political parties, there is never one political enemy, and every party has the chance to be allies toward a common struggle, meaning that protests often do create political changes.

With such different mindsets, it makes sense that the goals of protests are often dif-

ferent in the United States and France. In the United States, protests are seen as a way to bring attention to an issue, but not the actionable part of the movement. In France, protests are viewed as the part of the movement that forces change. Understanding these differences shows why the functions and views on protests in each country are so drastically different.

It is hard to say if one way is better than the other, as both mindsets of protesting are a product of their environments. Yet I do think there is something important in viewing the government as a vessel of change that listens to what the people are saying. Though the protests in France do not always change the minds of the government, I find there to be something very hopeful in the notion that if enough people say something, they will be listened to at that moment, not a few years down the line.

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Here is Sophie in Lyon, France while studying abroad in Spring 2023.



# THE STUGGLES OF ASSIMILATION AS AN AMERICAN STUDYING IN FRANCE

Anna Thibodeau | International News Editor



When I find myself in a new city I often try to walk somewhere alone and avoid using my GPS. I love the feeling of belonging as I fall into the crowd of locals on their way home from work. It brings me a sense of peace and home wherever I may be. The only problem I have encountered with this activity is how often people stop me to ask for directions. It is

out of any illusion of assimilation.

This was not the only time I was asked for directions, approached by someone selling something, or a waiter did not follow the exact script I wrote in my head. These experiences always reminded me of my inability to jump into French with no preparation. I had to ask these people to repeat themselves and hope I understood by the second time because I was usually too embarrassed to ask again after that. However, little by little I felt my ability to jump into French growing and the time it took me to think of a response getting shorter. I did not even come close to becoming fluent during my short time in France, but after experiencing so many moments of complete confusion, I am confident I can finally give someone directions in French.

Studying abroad is a quintessential part of many people's college experience, but culture shock is a quintessential part of studying abroad. Studying in a new country is a chance to learn new cultures, practice new languages, and make new friends. It is also a daunt-

ing idea. It can mean feelings of loneliness and isolation for those studying in an unfamiliar place. I chose to study abroad this spring semester and learned a tremendous amount about how to navigate both the good and the bad of it all.

The one thing students are warned about over and over before traveling abroad is culture shock: the discomfort of being thrust into a new culture and environment all at once. Culture shock is very real, and it affects different people to varying degrees, but I am here to say that it is not insurmountable—if you know how to handle it. It is an amalgamation of encountering one unfamiliar situation after another, which creates a large ball of confusion and stress. The worst culture shock comes to those who are unwilling to learn and adapt. I learned from every unfamiliar situation I encountered and found quickly that it is satisfying to feel like you are starting to know what you are doing. Over time, I learned how to navigate my local grocery store, how to order food, and I was riding the metro and giving directions like a local. Culture shock is all about the attitude you arrive with; if you are not ready to exceed your comfort zone, you may have a more difficult time.

This is not me saying I was open to every experience or never felt overwhelmed. I had to learn on my own what it means to challenge my comfort zone and immerse myself in French culture. In fact, I spent a lot of time feeling stuck in my comfort zone. The program I was in brought 35 Americans from all over the country, and we stuck together. It was fun having people to speak English with and relate to about our struggles, but I quickly realized I was inside an American bubble. I had to choose if I wanted to let myself stay in that bubble or if I wanted to give myself the

**Studying abroad is a quintessential part of many people's college experience, but culture shock is a quintessential part of studying abroad.**

always difficult to give directions in a new place. But the first time I was approached by an old French woman asking me for directions in a foreign language I think my brain short-circuited. We ended up looking it up on my phone together and as I struggled through explaining the map to her, I was jolted



A cafe lined street in Lyon, France.  
Courtesy of Pedro Szekely (flickr)

best chance to truly immerse myself in French culture. In the end, I would say I never really chose. I found my-

Culture shock is all about the **attitude** you arrive with.

self in situations outside my comfort zone often, but I also chose to have American friends by my side to take on challenges together. For some people, this may seem like a waste of a semester. To me, I found a balance between comfort and fear that kept me stable and encouraged me to keep experiencing France.

Now, I wish I could say studying abroad was perfect and that I had no bad experiences, but that is not entirely true. Loneliness is real and hard. In the U.S., I live over 1,300 miles away from Seton Hall, so I thought four months without seeing my family and friends would be easy. Before studying abroad, I was always missing home or school. In France, I suddenly was missing both. This in combination with the large time difference brought a feeling of loneliness that would hit at times. It is not like the homesickness I felt freshman year of college or at summer camp as a child. It was an intense feeling of isolation that I felt unable to resolve because I was on the other side of the world. There were days when all I wanted was to go home and sleep in my own bed, so I had to learn quickly what things helped me navigate and move past those feelings. At first, I tried doing things that reminded me of home, such as watching my favorite show or tracking down a store that sells peanut butter. However, I realized after a while that what really helped was doing things to make Lyon feel like a home. Since I was only there for a semester, I did not buy a lot of decorations, but I began saving tickets and photos, and I even made a



**Building your own life away from while you are abroad helps to combat loneliness.**  
Courtesy of ayustety (Wikimedia Commons)

glass water bottle into a flower vase. Little by little, I made my dorm feel like my own place. As I grew closer to my friends, I began going to them when I felt lonely rather than having to wait for my friends and family back home to wake up. I still missed my friends and family in America dearly, but creating a space that felt like home was my saving grace.

After four months on my own on the other side of the world, I can say studying abroad was the best decision I have made in my college career thus far. All the long travel days, struggles to communicate, and difficult days were worth it to create some of the best experiences of my life. I met people from all over the world, created lasting bonds, had experiences that would never be possible back home, and did it all while improving my French. I will always recommend this opportunity to anyone who is considering it and, even with my struggles, I look back on this semester with only joy.

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Here Anna is pictured in Annecy, a town in the French Alps.





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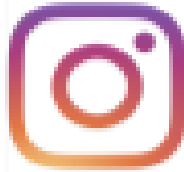
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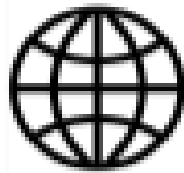
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