

SAINT FRANCIS UNIVERSITY

Meeting Our Brothers and Sisters Around the Globe



OFFICE FOR STUDY ABROAD NEWSLETTER

FALL 2015

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

Semester in France
ASL Immersion
Diving in St. Lucia
Field Study in the
Galapagos
Hugs United
International Mission
Research in Bolivia
Spanish in Costa Rica
Spring Break in London
Springtime in Italy
Cooperative Center for
Study Abroad Offerings

THANKSGIVING IN FRANCE



*2015 Fall Semester in France group celebrating American Thanksgiving
with guests from the Ambialet community.*

Below are photos from the traditional American football game in the village.



The attacks on Paris on Nov. 13 brought sorrow to people around the globe; to the students in SFU's program in France and their families, they also brought anxiety.

Students were scheduled to return to Ambialet the next day after a two-week travel period that had begun with six days in Paris. As soon as news of the attacks broke, program director Tim Perkins and coordinator Vanessa Hausmann began contacting students, some of whom checked in with them first.

All were quickly accounted for, although they were scattered throughout Europe with some in Florence, Rome, Amsterdam, Ireland and southern France. After it became clear that planes and trains were running as scheduled, the students returned to Ambialet as planned, with the exception of one of the 14 students from Curry College, who had flown back home to the Boston area and chose not to take her scheduled flight.

In the aftermath, SFU provost Dr. Wayne Powel made clear to the students' parents that the university would pay ticket-change costs and do its best to make academic accommodations for any students who were uncomfortable staying in France for the remaining month of the semester. Eight of the remaining Curry College students elected to return home, and they left on November 19. The others of the group (7 Curry students, 1 Curry faculty member and spouse, 16 SFU students, and one SFU faculty member) remain in France.

submitted by Brent Ottaway



2015 SPANISH IN COSTA RICA

by Britta Dieffenbach

The Spanish in Costa Rica program is a wonderful experience that I will never forget. The program is a combination of fun excursions and class time. The school where we attend classes is called Centro Panamericano de Idiomas or CPI. CPI has three different locations in three very distinct regions of Costa Rica. The first campus is in Heredia in the Central Highlands, which is a town about 30 minutes outside of San Jose which is the Capital of Costa Rica. The second campus is in Monteverde which is up in the mountains and the cloud forest of Costa Rica. The third campus is in Playa Flamingo which is the beach on the Pacific side of the country. The first day that we arrived in Costa Rica we went to the Heredia campus and we took a placement test in order to determine which class we would be placed in. The class size is about 2-3 students per one professor. There are two different classes that we take. The first part of the day consists of vocabulary and grammar. The second part of the day is a conversation class where we sit with a professor and he/she brings up topics and you discuss them in Spanish. I received six credits in Spanish, but some of the students took three credits of Spanish and then 3 credits of either biology or photography. Classes ended around 2 pm each day and we would either go explore the area or we would go on a preplanned excursion.



SFU Students in Costa Rica - left to right: Dakota Harlaub, Matthew Herbert, Sabrina Palguta, Rebecca Johnson, Brittany Dieffenbach, Kayla Kawiecki, Taylor Sechrengost, and Nathan Hoover

The majority of the excursions were already paid for by the total cost of the program. When we were in Heredia we went on a day trip to San Jose where we took the public bus to the city, and from there we explored around the entire capitol. We went to a famous enclosed market where we were able to walk around and try all of the different types of fruit and see how the locals buy their groceries. Another excursion that we did when we were in Monteverde was zip lining. This was so beautiful because the first line that we did was cloudy so we



SFU Students in front of the Arenal Volcano.

couldn't see the end of the line, but then as we did more lines we eventually could see all of the trees. It felt like you were flying over the treetops. Also while we were in Monteverde we were able to spend a night at a resort that was at the base of the Arenal Volcano. This was a special experience because we were able to swim in hot springs that were heated by the volcano. Then the next morning we went on a hike through the rain forest where we were able to see monkeys and other animals in their natural habitat. While we were in Playa Flamingo we did a surf lesson and everyone was able to stand up and actually surf. Then one of the last excursions that we did was a Catamaran tour where we were able to do snorkeling and paddle boarding and deep water swimming. It was a great way to end the three week excursion and also be able to celebrate one of our last days there.

One of the most unique experiences was that we were able to live with host families. Each week we would live with a different host family. The first host family that I lived with

had a mom who was in her 60s, a daughter who was in her 20s and a son who was in his 30s. The daughter and the son were not at the house very often so I got to know my *mama tica* very well. We called our host moms *mama tica* because Costa Ricans are also referred to as *ticos* or *ticas*. She was very kind and always made sure she made something unique to the Costa Rican culture. We would always have dinner together and then we would watch the evening news and then we would go to bed. While we ate dinner she would always ask me about my day and what fun activity we did that day. The second family that I stayed with in Montverde had a mom, a dad, and two little girls. One was 5 and the other was 7. They were so sweet. We would always have a family dinner all together. Then after dinner the girls and I would do homework. The two girls would help me with my Spanish homework and then I helped the 7 year old girl memorize a poem in

Study Abroad
REUNION

Students enjoyed an evening of reminiscing at the Study Abroad Reunion on October 7th. Photos were shared, games played, prizes given; food and fun for all who attended.

English because they both go to a bilingual school. They were so much fun because the two little girls would always want to be with me. When I was sitting on the couch they would want to sit on my lap or right next to me. It was fun being the older sister of two little sisters. The last family I stayed with was just a mom and a dad. The dad worked a lot of odd hours so I didn't see him much but my *momma tica* would always eat dinner with me and we would talk about my day. I think living with the families helped me to speak more often because I was constantly surrounded by Spanish. In addition, they were very willing to help me with forming an idea or if I didn't know a word they would help me figure it out. Costa Rica was a wonderful experience and I would suggest that everyone should take advantage of this unique experience to explore a new country.

2015 ENGINEERING IN BOLIVIA

by Lydia Mignogna

The trip to Bolivia, South America offers students credit for a variety of engineering, chemistry, and fine arts classes. I travelled to Bolivia in May 2015 for two weeks. If you want to participate in real field experience, data analysis, and soak in a different culture as well, this study abroad program does not disappoint. Whilst in Bolivia, we studied areas afflicted by acid mine drainage and checked in on previously implemented treatment as well as sampling water, microbial life, and macroinvertebrates of three of the hypersaline lakes in southern Bolivia for analysis.

I can't say that Bolivia was the most glamorous trip, but it was a very educational, fun, and eye-opening experience—I actually think that it is highly beneficial in this sense. Bolivia is the poorest country in South America, with 45% of its people living below the poverty line, which is defined as living on less than \$2 per day ("Bolivia"). Life there is inherently different than it is in the United States, which gave me a newfound respect for my home country.

It wasn't all work while we were there, though. There were many days when we got to visit museums, historical points, soccer games, fashion shows, celebrations, and even roam around the area, soak in the culture, try different foods, and souvenir shop. Bolivian cuisine is definitely different from what I am used to, but there were some dishes I had that I still crave, like *Silpancho*, which consists of potatoes, meat, diced vegetables, rice, and eggs. One of my favorite parts of the trip was travelling to the salt flats in southern Bolivia, called Salar de Uyuni. This is the largest salt flat in the entire world, completely flat and white for miles. The sunrise on these flats was one of the most beautiful, magical views that I have ever seen. We even got to stay in a charming hotel with salt sculptures where the food was delectable. Nearly everything in the hotel was made of salt – the floors, walls and ceilings – and the beds were heated—what a luxurious stay that was.



Walking through the bean fields on the way to the top of Isla del Sol (Island of the Sun).



At the Museum of Tiwanaku Culture.

Left to right: Dr Rachel Wagner, Sarah Yeager, Dr Pedro Muñio, Stefan Long, Jay Pillot, Antón Muñio, Derek Cavis, Xabier Muñio, Lydia Mignogna, Hannah Patton, Sabrina Blake, Christopher Evans and Dr William Strosnider III.

The numerous llama fur sweaters, hats, gloves, and even an instrument native to the area that I brought home (called a charango) as souvenirs are a constant reminder of all the fun experiences I had with my peers and professors, and how those two weeks changed my perspective on life. Without a doubt, my study abroad experience in Bolivia helped me gain a more well-rounded view of the world. I am really glad that I was able to take part in this trip, and would recommend it to any other science majors who are interested in gaining some real-world knowledge and having the experience of a lifetime.

Works Cited: "Bolivia." *The World Factbook*. CIA, n.d. Web. 26 Oct. 2015. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bl.html>>.

REMEMBERING MY TIME IN ITALY

by Christopher Jimenez

The Springtime in Italy trip is a month to remember! I participated in the program during the 2014 program. Director Charles Olson, Ms. Mary Jean Bujdos and Dr. Lori Woods were the 3 professors that accompanied us on the trip. We were also fortunate to meet up with Tony Kosova, who is a long-time assistant to the program.

We arrived in Milan and drove 2 hours to the tiny city of Parma. We roamed the historic streets of Parma and visited at least 3 restaurants, eager to taste all the Italian delicacies. During this first week, we chose a bicycle from the University's private stash near the hotel and continued to take in as much Italian culture as possible. Having a bicycle in Parma was very convenient and gave students many opportunities to see more of the beautiful city. The photography students would ride around to take pictures of the piazzas and parks while the Italian history students found their way to theaters and ancient churches. Other students in medieval history were checking out the outdoor Madonnas and the ancient apothecary just down the street from our residence. As for my Italian class, we participated in social projects such as interviews with local residents, which provided the class with unique stories. We began making friends with the workers at the local markets near the hotel. By the end of the second week, we got so close to a worker at a fruit market that every time we would visit his market, he would give us a free bag of fruit. Many of the workers in the small stores in Parma are very friendly and eager to have a conversation.



Left to right: Eamonn Sweeney, Chris Jimenez

The long weekends in Italy were, personally, the best experiences. Since we only had class until Thursdays every week, my friends and I would plan a weekend trip to another Italian city. We visited Rome, Florence, Venice and my favorite, Cinque Terre. Some of my friends even got a chance to see the pope when they visited Rome the first week. During the third and fourth weeks, we all took a ride to one of Parma's 23 castles in the foothills of the Alps. The tour included a knowledgeable guide who knew every detail about its history, former occupants, and its resident ghost, Bema. Her body was wrapped in a decayed shroud in the final room we visited! Our second field trip was to a newly unveiled wine museum in a medieval wing of another castle. After



I can't say enough good things about the Springtime in Italy program. I loved living in Parma during the week and traveling over the weekends. It was an amazing learning experience. I can't wait to return to Parma to visit friends and eat great food. The gelato is the best. – Grace Smith, 2015 Italy program.

seeing all the relics, we headed to the vineyard for wine-tasting and a tour. Lastly, we took our final field trip to the Parmesan cheese factory, where we came upon the pungent aroma of fermenting cheese and a robot that repeatedly cleans each of the 20,000 giant wheels of Parmesan cheese stacked to the ceiling. If students decided to stay in Parma for the weekend, they would have the opportunity to travel when going on these class field trips.



Florence, Italy. Left to right: Danielle DiCello, Grace Smith, Jill Overman, Jordan Forst, Jordan Hobson, Madison Fiaschetti, Sydney Shearer

We quickly pinpointed favorite establishments where we would frequently visit, such as a café, located down the block of our hotel, where they gave a free beverage with a food purchase. The night life in Parma was spectacular and we began to make more and more Italian friends whenever we went out. It was great to meet new friends in Parma because they were eager to know more about the United States while we were eager to know more about Italy. During the second week, the *Giro d'Italia* (the Italian Tour de France) passed right through the main square, and two of my classmates were interviewed by the

local television station! We were also treated to a presentation of photos by the photography class which was attended by many locals, followed by a musical performance by Chuck Olson and our guitar instructor Rob James.

Parma is definitely one of a kind and by far the friendliest city I've ever visited. From the million store windows to check out, open markets, outdoor tables, beautiful churches, smiling nuns, pizza, prosciutto, gelato and espresso, you will be bombarded with memories that will last you a lifetime!

SCUBA IN ST. LUCIA

by Allison Nedrow

Last May after graduation, a group of 20+ students travelled to Saint Lucia, a small island off the coast of South America in the West Indies. As we arrived safe and sound on the island and embarked on our journey, we all were buzzing with excitement. All the students were excited to finally be certified scuba divers through the PADI Dive Program under the instruction of Nick Weakland and Dr. Sue Shoemaker.

Throughout our 6 days on the island, we participated in numerous dives up and down the coast of Saint Lucia. Several students chose to become advanced scuba divers and embarked on several adventures identifying fish, taking underwater photos, and learning how to properly dive off of a boat. In addition, many students participated in the Research Diver methods class, which exposed them to techniques to perform underwater research. We took roving diver surveys, taking note of the number of specific fish species we saw within a specific dive. The night dive was probably the most exciting portion of the trip. Seeing the coral reefs at night was both a magical and awe inspiring experience!



Left to right first row: Jeremy Arbore, Justin Skipper, Todd Munchak and Bailey Ingram. Left to right middle row: Stephanie Wilson, Ann Belies, Sarah Stillman, Victoria Flynn and Katherine Meurer. Left to right back row: Russell Boyer, Alison Verba, Allison Nedrow, Abbey Link, Rachel LeViseur, Jenna Hammond, Erika Dreikorn, Gabriel Schuler, Andrew Heise, Michael Marshman, Zachary McCracken.

In addition to gaining valuable dive experience and technical research skills and data, we had a lot of fun interacting with the local people. Our boat captains allowed us to help them hunt lionfish, which is an invasive population on the island and destroys coral and reef life. We had several traditional Saint Lucian meals while on the island, and had a typical Saint Lucian breakfast which consists of fried fish and spicy hot chocolate. We also had the opportunity to snorkel on the island and went on a beautiful hike in the forest where our tour guide told us about the rich history of Saint Lucia. We also attended a church service while on the island, which also allowed us to see how deeply the islander's national pride ran.

By the end of our trip, the group had grown so close. We all gained new experiences and had become fully confident scuba divers. In addition, we made a new group of friends that we can call upon whenever we are in the need for an underwater adventure or dive buddy. This trip allowed several of us to go outside our comfort zone and learn the importance of the infamous Jersey Shore acronym GTL, which we translated to: GYM, TAN, LUCIA.

ASL IMMERSION CRUISE

by Kaitlin Mihelcic

I had the honor of attending the American Sign Language Immersion trip to the Jamaican Christian School for the Deaf in May of 2015. This experience brought me out of my comfort zone in various ways, and opened my eyes to a part of the world that I had never seen before. Throughout this trip, I made the pledge to turn my voice off with the rest of my ASL classmates, and only communicated in sign with the Deaf Jamaican residents. Although I was hesitant about doing so at first, before long I noticed that my ability to have conversations with the students in sign and build relationships with them throughout the week impacted me in a powerful way. We were given the chance to assist teachers at the school by helping teach lessons to the children while reinforcing core concepts of learning and presenting new concepts in innovative ways. The students were so grateful that we were able to communicate with them, and it made me incredibly thankful that we have ASL here at SFU.

This experience changed my life, my perspective, and my heart. I truly have not been the same since I attended, and I believe that this opportunity to serve at the Jamaican Christian School for the Deaf was very much aligned with the vision of Saint Francis himself, as well as the Lord's calling for us to care for, to serve, and to love others without condition or hesitation. The beautiful children at that school modeled this love perfectly, and if not for ASL being offered at this university, I would never have had the skills necessary to communicate with them and support them in the ways I was able to on this trip. Ever since leaving Jamaica, not a day goes by that I do not greatly miss the students, and I often dwell



Sign Language group in Jamaica.

Left to right, front row: Stephanie Connell, Krista Swope, Rebekah Pinkowski, Brianna Guy, Jessica Zeak, Kaitlin Mihelcic, Brianna Fairbanks. Left to right, second row: Rebecca Gongloff, Amber Radel, Katie Vena, Gale DeArmin, Deb Hast

Featured STUDY ABROAD STUDENT

Tayler Sechrengost

Physician Assistant Science, Class of 2018

In which SFU study abroad program have you participated ?

The HUGS trip to the Dominican Republic, the Semester in France program, and the Spanish in Costa Rica program.

During the programs, did you have time for personal travel?

Yes, I traveled to Ireland and England during my semester in France.

Did the experience influence your attitude towards your coursework? My study abroad experiences motivated me in my course work, but also relaxed me towards school because seeing different cultures has taught me a lot.

Compare the study abroad experiences with those of a traditional classroom. My study abroad compared to a normal classroom was definitely a different way to learn. It made me appreciate both my professors and the school because it is difficult to imagine running a program so well that my grades did not suffer at all from being in a completely different atmosphere.

What cultural experience was most interesting to you?

The most interesting cultural experience I had was living with a host family in Costa Rica for weeks, it really showed me that there are amazing people in the world who would treat a stranger as a welcome guest and even a member of their family.

Did you experience a language barrier? I did not experience much of a language barrier because I speak a good deal of Spanish, but also people from other countries often know enough English to make communication easy.

on the memories I had with them during that week. It is a gift and an answer to prayers that I can excitedly say I will be returning to Jamaica for the 2016 spring break ASL immersion to continue serving and supporting a place that revealed so much to me about outreach and the importance of selflessly caring for the needs of others.



Sitting on the town hall steps in Albi, France waiting for their appointment to meet the Deputy Mayor are (left to right): Brainna Topolnak, Tayler Sechrengost, Sydney Soberdash and Alex Rivers

Where was your favorite place to travel and why? My favorite place was everywhere I traveled, but one thing I will say is the energy in Barcelona is unique and something I would encourage everyone to experience.

Do you have future international travel plans? My next destination in Europe is Germany, my plan is to go to St. Lucia to scuba dive through Saint Francis, and I plan to continue traveling my entire life.

Would you or do you recommend study abroad? I would recommend study abroad for anyone willing to learn new things because I have learned so much and grown tremendously as a person.



The 2015 Fall Semester in France students recently spent an afternoon at the elementary school in Ambialet. The school invited our students to visit for Thanksgiving snacks and to practice singing Christmas songs in preparation for caroling in the village.



The Archbishop of Albi visited with our students in France

Frankie with his travel partner and photographer, Kayla Heydt



Reach Higher Go Far Go International

2016 STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS:

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| SPRING SEMESTER IN FRANCE | 1/9-4/23 |
| HUGS SPRING BREAK MISSION IN JAMAICA | 4/1-8 |
| HUGS SPRING BREAK MISSION IN BRAZIL | 4/1-8 |
| SPRING BREAK IN LONDON | 2/25-3/5 |
| SPRING BREAK SIGN LANGUAGE IN JAMAICA | 2/28-3/5 |
| SCUBA DIVING IN ST. LUCIA | 5/TBA |
| HUGS SUMMER MISSION IN COSTA RICA | 5/12-21 |
| SPANISH IN COSTA RICA | 5/12-6/5 |
| SPRINGTIME IN ITALY | 5/20-6/19 |
| FALL SEMESTER IN FRANCE | 9/4-12/13 |

Space is limited in each program

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