

SAINT FRANCIS UNIVERSITY OFFICE FOR STUDY ABROAD



NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018

A Celebration for 10 Years of Adventure, Beauty, and History in Ambialet

Saint Francis University is commemorating the ten-year anniversary of our Ambialet program with a celebration tour. Alumni and friends of the program will join Fr. Malachi from June 24 to July 2 for the tour, beginning in Barcelona, the cosmopolitan capital of Spain's Catalonia region. Barcelona, known for its art and architecture, will be their home for the first three days, where the group will have time to immerse themselves in its culture, cuisine, architecture, and rich history.

As the group travels from Barcelona to Ambialet, they will stop to visit Carcassonne and Toulouse. Carcassonne is a remarkable example of a medieval fortified town. Its massive defenses encircling the castle and the surrounding buildings, its streets, and its exquisite Gothic cathedral are amazing. Once in Toulouse, they will head off on a walking tour of the city known as the La Ville Rose (the Pink City) after the pink stone used in many of its buildings.

The group will then head to Ambialet, the hidden gem of the Midi-Pyrénées and home to our Semester in France program. Le Prieure, the 14th-century monastery, our students' home in France, will serve as home to the group once they arrived in Ambialet. They will enjoy the region, full of beautiful sights, castles, fascinating history, and exceptional food and wine. In addition to sightseeing, the group have time to relax and bask in the tranquility of Le Prieuré and its 11th-century chapel.

Beyond the appeal of the wonderfully planned tour, the group will have the opportunity to travel with their University classmates and friends who all have connections to another very special place, Saint Francis University, Loretto, PA.

Spring Semester in France

by Dr. Bill Strosnider

Our Semester in France group has been enjoying their time in Europe and much has happened throughout the semester. The group has toured sites of historical significance in nearby Albi and Toulouse; including museums featuring ancient Christian and Roman artifacts. Free travel weekends included a train trip to the coast at Bordeaux. The students enjoyed an immersive weekend with French host families. During our



Dr. Strosnider and some of the students at Brousse le Chateau

4-day excursion to Barcelona, the group toured Picasso, Salvador Dali, and Miro museums as well as beautiful, towering cathedrals. The carnival festival in the city of Albi, in which many of the students were pulled from the crowd to dance in the parade for much of its length, was a fun experience. The group visited multiple castles across southern France, including the famous citadel at Carcassonne (one of the largest and best-restored castles in all of Europe that dates to Roman times), Chateau de Montségur (the last refuge of the Cathar religion), and Brousse le Chateau (a 10th century castle overlooking the Tarn river). The students have also been learning to cook French

cuisine each Saturday evening; with great success! The group is currently in Paris and will continue on to their spring break to multiple locations. Europe has been good to the group so far!

Semester in France Applications

may be found at: <https://www.francis.edu/semester-in-france/>
or email studyabroad@francis.edu



Living in Ambialet has been such a wonderful change of pace for me compared to my busy lifestyle at school. There is no better time than now to travel, and it has opened my mind, and my eyes, to a world that needs to be explored! I feel so independent, and confident in myself to step out of my comfort zone, and enjoy learning about new cultures and meeting new people! I am so thankful I took the leap to study abroad and will reflect on the memories I am making here for the rest of my life!

Mackenzie Case, 2018 Spring Semester in France



Semester in France students excited about the traditional Easter cricket match



Fr. Malachi and some of the students out for a bike ride in Ambialet (SFU's site on the hilltop in the background)

Spring Break for Our Semester in France Students

Following their stay in Paris, students departed for their spring break experience. Students have put the skills they acquired during their first 10 weeks in France to the test. They have traveled throughout Europe exploring many new places and meeting new people. Their travels took them to: Rome, Venice, Munich, Prague, Interlaken, Ireland, Florence, London, and Amsterdam.



Mackenzie Case paragliding in Switzerland during the Semester in France spring break



Spring Semester in France student, Leah Hockensmith



Emily Brazill at the Trevi Fountain, Rome, during the Semester in France spring break

Two New Spring Break Opportunities

Added to the list of spring break opportunities this year included the HUGS program in Bahamas, directed by Lisa Georgiana and Fr. Joe Lehman. The second addition was the Fine Arts program in Guinea, West Africa, directed by Dr. Lauri Chose and Rachel Allen. See the following two articles for details...

A Spring Break trip in Guinea, West Africa

by Dr. Lauri Chose

The recipe is this: Add 4 parts African dance, with 2 parts African drumming and equal parts African history, storytelling, and song. The result? A SFU spring break trip in Guinea, West Africa!

Guinea is the birthplace of the djembe, so it makes sense to study African rhythms and dance at the place where it all began: where drumming and dancing are steep in cultural history, taught by Africans who love to share this history with westerners. That is just what we did: we spent a week with the Mansares, a renowned family of professional musicians whose craft dates back to at least the 12th century. On this trip, students earned 3 fine arts credits and were taught African history, storytelling, song, dance, and drums by professional musicians and dancers. The tone of the trip was set when, early Sunday morning, after 30+ hours of travel and only a few hours of sleep, we were awoken by the blaring of techno music -- very loud techno music, the bass notes thumping into the family compound. While the music may have shocked us out of our sleep, we learned that the neighbors were having a baptismal celebration for their newborn. Within minutes, the group was off to a party, and although we were strangers to





Community meal in Guinea

the neighboring family, we were treated as honored guests. They were delighted we could share their child's special day with them.

See, in West Africa, life is about togetherness, and family is about relationships -- blood or otherwise. On that Sunday morning when we arrived at our home in Guinea at 4:00 am, our hosts woke to greet us with hugs and welcoming wishes. At this first meeting, the senior Mamady Mansare, a world-class African flute player, told us, "You left your home, to come to your home. You left your family to come to your family."

Many times, we were reminded that we were more than

tourists or houseguests: we were now part of the family. Mamady's words exemplify the true meaning of life in Guinea.

We certainly never felt like anything other than family at the Mansare home. In between our lessons, we played with children, danced, laughed, cried, shared meals, shared songs, shared stories, and took a ton of selfies, all without the benefit of a shared language. Even without words, communication was never a problem.

Life in Guinea is sometimes not convenient, as any member of our group could attest. We took "bucket showers" because we didn't have running water, and at nighttime, the only electricity we had came from a backup generator. Yet, we were never lacking. In fact, we all came away from the experience richer than before: we came away as new members of a family. . . we came away as Mansares.

HUGS Bahamas

by Leona Horner and Kelly Beegle

Twenty volunteers spent their spring break in Nassau, Bahamas with the University's newest community partner, the Adventure Learning Centre and Camp.

Fr. Joseph Lehman, Vice President for Mission Integration; Lisa Georgiana, Director of the Center for Service & Learning; and Dr. Laurie Grosik, Assistant Professor of the Masters in Health Science program, led the trip. Five alumni accompanied the group: Kelly Beegle and Lona Horner, Graduate Assistants for the Center for Service & Learning; Connor McDonnell, Graduate Assistant for Study Abroad; and Gabri Pierre and Shelley Gearhart, licensed occupational therapists who oversaw the Level 1 fieldwork experience for the four OT students on the trip.

Students included Marielle Cavallaro, Emily Haupt, and Nicole Lagan (education majors); Maria Figliola, Rachel Kelly, Grace Schartner, and Kaliopi Skevofilax (OT majors); Maddie Bender, Emily Roberts, and Rachel Smith (PT majors); Ashely Hill, PA major, and Elizabeth Dyer, chemistry and biology major.

The group was unsure of what to expect because this was the first HUGS trip to this location, but they welcomed the adventure and challenge with open arms. The group had the opportunity to serve Bahamas Association for the Physically Disabled (BAPD), the Stapledon School, a government sponsored school for special needs students; an emergency youth hostel; the Bahamas Red Cross Center for the Deaf; the Adventure Learning Science Center and Camp.



Rachel Kelly, a senior OT student, reflected on her experience saying, "At the BAPD I was able to use my OT knowledge help the children. My favorite part was helping a teenage girl who had cerebral palsy, stand up from her wheelchair. As she stood with our help, she started to cheer and smile, and said, 'I did good.' It was nice to be able to see that I made somebody's life a little bit better!"

What Students Are Saying About International Spring Break Programs

It was so eye-opening! I know everyone took something different away from the experience but we all agree it was the adventure of a lifetime. I'm still processing the immense joy and pain we saw in Guinea but already am planning on going back.

Amaris Miles, One World Drum & Dance, Guinea, West Africa



I had the opportunity to use my Occupational Therapy knowledge to change children's lives. However, through the smiles and joy of the Bahamian children, they changed my life more than I changed theirs.

Rachel Kelly,
HUGS in the Bahamas



The world and life somehow work in a mysterious, wonderful, challenging way that pushes people to experience and understand others with their circumstances. For example, when you're in Costa Rica and the smoothie vender runs out of cups, their alternative is to give it to you in a bag. Pura Vida!

Alexander Romeo,
HUGS in Costa Rica



We visited a few islands, took a daily hike and snorkeled around the coast of the island. Visiting the Galapagos Islands definitely made me appreciate the natural habitats that these animals live in, and I can't wait to help educate people about the conservation of places like the Galapagos Islands.

Natalie Holt,
Field Biology in the Galapagos

I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn and live with such amazing and grounded people. This was a humbling and expansive experience that brought out the best in me and gives me a new perspective on the privilege I have and also the kindness I am capable of.

Alicia Tiberino, One World Drum & Dance, Guinea, West Africa



The satisfaction I gained from being able to help the underserved residents of the Alajuelita/San Felipe and surrounding communities with not only their healthcare needs but also to provide them with personalized and compassionate conversation during their time at the clinic was amazing..

Jill Overman, HUGS in Costa Rica



The benefits of studying abroad are almost endless. – Michelle Obama