

Coming into college, I knew I wanted to study abroad and see a bigger piece of the world than I already knew. To be honest, I had high hopes and was excited to see all the places I had read about in a book or seen on an episode of *The Amazing Race*. Looking back, it was everything – and so much more – than I could have hoped, dreamt or asked for. There were moments of discomfort and a few growing pains along the way, but I am truly left with many lessons and a lifetime of memories.



I attended the University of Bath in Bath, England, for logistical reasons and, upon arriving, realized this was a place unlike anywhere I had experienced, and I was in for a treat. Bath is unique for many reasons. The same architect who built Westminster Abbey also built Bath Abbey. Bath is named as such due to the Roman Baths being located in the city. The city itself was originally built and developed by the Romans! Bath will forever be home to the best coffee shop, the most delicious Cornish pasties and the best street performers...at least in my eyes. At the same time, however, Bath will also be home to the loudest alarms for opening a door you aren't supposed to open when trying to fold laundry, the longest walks home with the heaviest bags of groceries, and the steepest hill to climb on the way to campus. No matter the day or the experience, studying abroad afforded me the opportunity to wake up in a new country, gain a new perspective and embrace a new culture I never knew existed.



It is easy to talk about all of the places I went and the sights that were seen, but less frequently do I reflect on the experience as a whole. Studying abroad gave me the opportunity to understand just how large, and small, this world really is. From hearing words such as knackered, bangers and mash, and cheers, to seeing that iconic Boilermaker "P" in an Italian train station; I quickly learned what it meant to be a human inhabiting this planet. At times, this world felt

incredibly small and, in other moments, I was awestruck at how universally connected we all are. However, despite these similarities, we are all so very different as well. I am still surprised



at the differences in cultures and perspectives that our country and the entirety of Europe can and do have.

More personally, I am surprised at the lessons I learned and the ease in which these lessons apply to so many other facets of life. My best advice is to learn to laugh at yourself. Every day, it seemed like something would happen in or out of my control, and I could do nothing but laugh at myself. If that meant being stuck in a place for longer than expected or roaming the streets of

a small town in Switzerland, it is all part of the amazing journey. Next, the world is what you make it. Through all of the adjustments, the language barriers, the currency differences and the plethora of other complexities facing a new person in a new place, it is all about mindset. I often would remind myself that this experience, no matter what is happening, is something I will never do again. Every day and every experience is a gift.

Whether it was the food, the sights, the smells or the people, studying abroad is one of the greatest gifts Purdue has given me. After taking part in my own version of *The Amazing Race*, it is great to be back on U.S. soil and in the heart of Boilermaker country where, no matter the length of time that passes, the experience will forever live on.

