Program: CIEE Business, Communications and Culture, Spring

Melissa’s Major: International Studies

Academic Life: I was enrolled in Vesalius College, in classes that included other Americans, foreign students and local Belgians. My classes were in an American style much like at UW. Teachers spoke English but were from a lot of different countries around the world. I took classes on the European Union, United Nations, European economy, Belgian culture and the French language.

Advice for Someone Considering Belgium: It is such an important and unique place. It has all of the beauty of Paris or London without being as expensive. It has been at the center of some of the most important moments in world history. The relationship between the Walloons and the Flemish affects all of Belgium life and is a fascinating example of non-violent civil unrest. Belgium is one of the quirkiest places and has such a unique feel to it.

New Discoveries: Studying abroad has already made me a more independent and self-sufficient person who does well in new and different places and cultures. Studying abroad also makes me a more confident and adventurous person.

Brussels as Home: My host country definitely became a second home. I was very comfortable with traveling around and had a good grasp of the cultural aspects of Brussels. I especially realized how much I loved Brussels when I visited other countries. When I got back I would realize just how much I missed the everyday life in Brussels.

“I have a new excitement for things that I’ve never done before.”

Melissa (back row, third from left) and friends at a Belgian national soccer game.