

BADGERS BEYOND ABROAD

alumni interview series

Benjamin King

France

Life After Study Abroad

Since returning from studying abroad with UW in Paris spring 2013, I had a summer in Madison and took a couple of online classes. Towards the end of the summer, I woke up one day to an email saying that I was selected for an internship with the Department of State, and that I would be working for the U.S. Mission to the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) back in Paris the next spring! I was considering adding a triple major in French alongside my double in International Studies and Political Science, but discussed it with my advisors and decided that the internship was more important than the triple major. I then took classes in the fall to nearly complete my double major, and set off for Paris early in 2014.

Impact on Life, Goals & Career

Going abroad made me realize just how different cultures can be, and how many new and fun experiences there are to be had when adjusting to a new lifestyle. When I left Paris, I knew that I had to find a way to return, but I knew that I wanted to pursue something that would benefit my future career choice. I've found my niche in international politics, and I love the diplomatic work that the Department of State does. Going abroad and being forced to adapt to a new culture is exactly the kind of experience that makes International Studies students stand out, especially in my field. I was fortunate enough to find a spring internship with the Department of State, and was lucky enough to be able to work it into my school schedule. It provided me the perfect opportunity to go back abroad.

A Favorite Memory from Abroad

There are far too many to count, and I'm sure it's the same way for anyone who has ever gone abroad. From eating an entire rotisserie chicken in southern France, to watching David Beckham play, to a two-and-a-half week spring break spent in northern Italy... wow, I'm getting nostalgic just responding to this. I'd say my single favorite memory from abroad was spending a long weekend out in the French countryside with my host brother and his friends. We played soccer, rode four-wheelers, watched rugby, grilled for every meal, shot off fireworks, and stayed up until sunrise each night. I even showed them how to properly throw a football. That's something I would have never been able to experience had I not studied abroad and had I not chosen to live with a host family. I cannot encourage living with a host family enough.

Advice for Returning Students

Pursue every opportunity that is available to you. Internships with the Department of State are extremely competitive, but I didn't let that stop me from trying for one. In the end, it worked out! If you want to go back abroad, don't limit yourself. There are plenty of opportunities out there... you just have to give them a shot!

Interview from April 2014



Ben during travels in Cinque Terre, Italy.

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