

### Study Abroad Scholarship Reflection

Coming into college as a freshman, I always had studying abroad in the back of my mind. I went to every meeting and every fair and read all the information I ever could on every opportunity that there was. I never really thought my time would actually come to study abroad, it was always just something I thought of as a dream that I talked about but may not ever come true. My sophomore year of college, I applied to the College of Education Milan program after doing a lot of thinking and discussing with the closest people in my life. The day I received a letter of acceptance was filled with an abundance of emotions; excitement, fear, curiosity, and shock just to name a few. Yet, little did I know that this would turn out to be one of the best experiences of my entire life.

I am someone that is a nervous wreck about everything in their life. I over think everything. I anticipate the worst things that can come out of a situation. Add all of this to someone that has never been on a plane alone, someone that has never been out of the United States, and someone that is religiously a homebody. This is me in just a few sentences, the complete opposite of someone who should be studying abroad. I can tell you right now that I did not come back from Milan, Italy the same person as when I left. This is an experience that not only changed me as a future teacher, but also changed who I am as a person in the best way possible.

While studying in Milan, my month-long trip was filled with experiences and life lessons that I never expected, and I know that I will never forget. One of the best experiences in my opinion was being able to be a part of clinical observations at the American School of Milan. Three times a week I was immersed in classrooms filled with diversity. Not just cultural diversity but also diversity among learning and diversity of language. I would always tell my family and friends at home that this school was something that you would see in a futuristic movie. It was just filled with amazing technology, students that loved learning and loved school, and teachers and staff that filled the halls and classrooms with their positive energy and tremendous knowledge. I left this school with immeasurable new knowledge that I would bring with me as a future teacher and also a new perspective on my profession as a teacher.

Another thing that I will take with me forever from this trip is my new profound appreciation for different cultures. I was able to live in a beautiful apartment in the heart of Milan which lead to learning the Italian culture in the best way that I possibly could in the month I would be living there. There were many things that really astonished me about this culture that taught me more than I ever thought about culture. One of my favorite parts of the Italian culture was the food. I do not think I will ever stop talking about how delicious the food was and it is something that I miss every day. Another staple of Italian culture is the tremendous use of public transportation. Just to get to the American school of Milan every day, I had to walk to a metro then hop on a tram then to a bus and then walk to the school. This is something that definitely took getting used to because I rarely use the public transportation systems in the United States, but it quickly became part of my daily routine. My list of cultural differences goes on and on yet, these things really grew my appreciation for the different cultures that can be found all around the world.

Lastly, one of the best outcomes that I was blessed with on this trip was the amazing people that I was able to share this opportunity with. I came into this trip knowing not a single person. At the beginning this really discouraged me, and it was a large fear of mine. Today, I can

say that some of the people that I spent this month with are now some of my best friends and I never could have been able to have the unbelievable experience that I did without them. I will forever have the memories of traveling to Florence, Rome, Venice, Cinque Terre, Lake Como, and Paris with them. I will forever have the memory of the ongoing joke of how many scoops of gelato we could eat in a month (22 scoops). I will forever have the memory of calling the Duomo our home. I will forever have the memory of our favorite restaurants that we would go to for lunch and dinner. These are memories that I was able to share with people I had never talked to in my life and now they are people that I cannot imagine my life without.

Overall studying abroad in Milan, Italy was one of the best experiences I think I will ever have in my life. I know that almost every person will say this that studies abroad, but it is truly an experience that is life changing and one that you should never pass up if you have the opportunity to do so. From this program, I was able to find a new part of myself that I did not even know existed. This was the perfect way to jump out of my comfort zone and find the “me” that I have been looking to find for a while and I know that there is nothing about this experience that I would ever change.



