

Building Courage to Leave Builds Character

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I just got back from one of the most beautiful cities in the world. No, I'm not talking about Paris, Texas. I'm talking about Paris, France.

My class learned a great deal in class about the "Roaring 20's" and "The Lost Generation" of Paris. We talked about Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald on our tours, as well as Picasso and Langston Hughes. We went to their famous bars, houses and graves, as well as touring Paris' most famous architectural places.

It was my first time out of the country and I was scared of the overall experience I was going to have. I have watched TV shows, movies, etc. over the years on Paris and knew a lot of the stereotypes about the city and country we were headed to.

The biggest ones I was afraid of were, "Well, French people can't or won't want to speak English to you," or "The French people are rude and dislike/hate Americans a lot." Well, I'm glad to say both of those are extremely false. A lot of French citizens speak English, some very well.

What I learned was that they learned English in high school and actually watched a lot of American TV shows to learn English. I really thought this was very interesting. As for Parisians and French people hating or being mean to Americans, that's a false stereotype as well, too.

Our coordinator, Fatima is one of the nicest, if not the nicest person I have ever met. She guided us for 10 straight days on where to go, what place was what, what to do and not to do in Paris. She even got us gifts for the way back and said to text or call her if we ever wanted to chat with her.

The city reminded me a lot of Chicago with all the lights at night and it was very beautiful. One night I jogged to the Eiffel Tower from our hotel and it was one of the best experiences I have had in a while. It was very peaceful and not loud from cars or the traffic. I was just jogging and listening to good music. When I got to the second floor, I saw the whole city and it was very magical. It was one of those moments where it's just you and the city.

Paris has some differences from the United States and when I was over there I kept thinking about why the United States doesn't try to change and take different ideas from other countries and apply it to our own. I mean, we have taken a lot of food, art, and technology ideas from other countries and applied it to America over the years. Why not do things that can improve our country? France has universal healthcare, a great economy, way less school shootings, and way less OWIs and alcohol related car crashes and deaths. Just to name a few.

Overall, it was a 10/10 experience besides me getting food poisoning one night from eating Subway, almost walking into the women's restroom at the airport (both looked exactly the same: had the same colors), and stepping in dog poop.

It was an amazing experience and I'm happy I got the courage to take a trip outside of the United States. I am a better person for doing it.

Me Pointing to the Louvre Pyramid

