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Linfield College: Study Abroad in France

John F. Herrick

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A contribution from John F. Herrick (studied abroad 1995-1996)

To the Linfield Student Considering Studying Abroad:

Imagine my surprise at the end of my sophomore year of College when I found out that I had been accepted to the University of Minnesota Junior Year abroad program in Montpellier, France. I guess all of the hard work on my application paid off except for one thing: I was excited and I also was fearful as well. It suddenly occurred to me that I would be separated from my Linfield friends for a whole year, yet I was excited because I was looking forward to new adventures such as meeting new friends, living with a host family and seeing monuments and museums as well as traveling all over France.

Before I left, the University of Minnesota sent me a letter to address my fears and concerns. The program head let me know that I would be attending a pre-stage program for 1 month at the University so I could become acquainted with the University system in France. She also let me know that I would have the opportunity to make new friends who were also studying abroad as well. I also managed to find a way to keep in contact with my Linfield friends through the use of e-mail and I managed to read the *Linfield Review* which was sent to me during my time abroad.

Once I arrived in France what really made a difference during this year is that I had no set expectations for myself. I basically allowed myself to be open to this new culture and kept a positive attitude throughout the whole year. I also allowed myself to have as many new adventures as possible, such as skiing in the French Alps with new friends, taking trips to local monuments and museums, and eating fabulous French cuisine every night with my host family. I even kept a positive attitude during the student strike and wrote my Senior Thesis on the University system in France and what needed to be changed.

After my arrival back in the United States, I wanted to continue to travel in Europe, see new cities, experience different cultures and continue to expand on my Liberal Arts education. During my senior year I started to think of what I could do with my French-How could I put to use the time I spent abroad? I thought about going into teaching, although that wouldn't allow me the opportunity to travel and it wouldn't really give me the freedom I wanted to explore new cities and cultures. The other option I thought about was entering the airline industry. I became intrigued with this due to several advertisements I saw that airlines were looking for Flight Attendants that could speak a second language in addition to English. I thought this would be the perfect opportunity for me. After all, working for an airline I could travel for free and as a Flight Attendant I would be able to continue to fly to exotic places. During my senior year I ended up interviewing with a couple of airlines for a Flight Attendant position to no avail. I graduated from college uncertain about my future as I didn't know what else I could do with my French.

Finally it dawned at me when I was sitting at home one day that I did not have the skills needed to enter the travel industry yet. I decided to attend a five month program at the International Air Academy in Vancouver, Washington that would give me the necessary skills and training to obtain an entry-level position in the airline industry. Sure enough I managed to obtain a job working in reservations for Delta Air Lines. After two years in reservations I was able to transfer to our in-flight department and am now a Flight Attendant using my French by traveling to Paris, Brussels, Lyon, Zurich, and Montreal. Now I am expanding on my Flight Attendant career and my career at Delta Air Lines as an Onboard Leader (purser) and also using leadership skills I gained from attending Linfield.

My time spent abroad had done more for me than I can possibly imagine. It helped me decide what I want to do for a living and also most notably it taught me to be open to different cultures and races as we have people from all over the world flying on Delta Air Lines. When I return to France on one of my layovers, I find it incredible to believe that I studied abroad in France. The time spent abroad was well worth it. If I had the opportunity to study abroad again I would definitely go through this experience again.