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(Thankful) and Having the Time of My Life

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Recommended Citation

Seifert, Meghan, "(Thankful) and Having the Time of My Life" (2016). *2016-17 Postcards*. Article. Submission 10.

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Meghan Seifert
Aix en Provence, France
December 3, 2016

(Thankful) and Having the Time of My Life

Bonjour tout le monde,

These past few weeks have been the best yet!

First, the moon blessing worked and I have gotten a response to my job ad! I started tutoring a young woman who is an absolute gem. We meet twice for two hours a week at varying cafés that welcome those who linger. These are hard to find here. She is so enthusiastic and fun. We have loads in common and needless to say that not only did I find work but I found a friend.

After a productive week and an A on my test for French society I headed out to Montpellier, a lively yet quaint town of college students and families alike. Spoiler: it is an absolutely perfect place with a catchy culture of its own and nature in every direction just outside the city. I used the transportation known as Blahblah car, a luxury not known in the USA. It functions online just as buying train or bus tickets, but you reserve a seat in someone's car that is driving from where you are to the place you are looking to go! My tickets were 9 euros each. The beauty of it is meeting other people, and in my case 4 hours of nonstop French with natives about topics that are interesting and relevant. They also helped me get oriented in Montpellier, as I was alone with no experience in the city.

The weekend got off to a lovely start with a trip to a free nature reserve/zoo. It was a very well done zoo and a very joyful thing to do. I walked to the tram and took that into the centre ville. The tram system is unique to Montpellier and cherished by many, including me because of that weekend. I found my way to an outdoor market in the main square. I zigzagged my way through side streets to the major monuments of the city, ending at the Parc Peyroux. This park is magnificent with its own L'Arc de Triomphe, lines of trees wearing red and orange leaves and another sort of arc monument with a water feature at the edge of the park that looks out upon the city. I visited the old cathedral, college of medicine, le jardin de plants and explored the oldest part of the city where cars can't go. That evening I met some friends of my host for dinner and a concert at a quaint café. The next day we strolled at the beach despite the strong wind (nothing this Oregonian isn't used to) followed by a visit to an old abbey.

I took a Blahblah car to Marseille where I met up with friends from school to cheer on the beloved team of Marseille. The crowd was decently lively and the team had potential. It was a fun environment nevertheless and Marseille won. Soccer is really important to many people here.

School is continuing and classes are still going well. In preparation for our massive Thanksgiving celebration, all of the students broke into teams to handle one aspect of the soiree. I decided to do decorations, which I took very seriously. We made feather banners to hang, and I got up early the day of the party to trespass and pick decorative berries and sprigs of pine from parks and people's bushes. With candles, the ensemble was very cute on the tables. There was lots of champagne for the dinner celebration and I had a lot of fun meeting everyone's host parents and friends. There was a performance of violin and singing before the grand meal. It was beyond delicious. I was happy to hear very good reviews of our traditional meal from all the French people too. After the meal and cleaning up a bit, there was live music at my favorite place to go out in Aix. It was the best Thanksgiving I've had yet.

The Christmas decorations are up, the market is open and the Christmas season is blooming here in Aix. I am absolutely heartbroken at the thought of leaving this place and the conclusion of my French life in three weeks.

Even though it's close to Christmas, you would not be able to tell by the weather, which is 60 degrees and sunny. Today I harvested olives from the olive tree in my host's garden and we ate lunch outside in the sun. It was soul rejuvenating.

Cheers to the new week ahead and the holiday season!

-Meghan