Study Abroad Memoir  
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For as long as I can remember I have wanted to learn German. Why German? My mother is German. She immigrated here in 1991 and married my American father. Unfortunately, for various reasons, she did not teach me German. I grew up wishing to know this mysterious language spoken by my mother and grandparents. I finally received the chance, in the best way possible, when during the summer of 2015 I travelled with a fellow classmate to Dusseldorf Germany to attend language school for two months. I was going all in and decided to learn via the classroom and immersion. This is definitely one of the best decisions of my life (second to only pharmacy school). While in Europe, I made steps towards my other goal of visiting every country in Europe by travelling to Holland, Belgium, England, and the Czech Republic. Not only on this trip did I fulfill some of my dreams I gained new ones as well. I now am looking into career options that will either allow me to travel or allow me to live in Germany. I am also looking into ways to practice and further my German studies on my own time. This is something I had trouble motivating myself to do but, now that I fully understand the basics and know more practice partners I find it easier to do.

Let me explain a little about the class. Classes lasted four hours a day Monday through Friday for three weeks. On the Thursday of the third week, there would be a test. The results were given the next day and if you passed you simply moved on to the next level the following month. If you failed you would retake the previous class. The last week of the month would be a break in which many students travelled. We went to England. The next class would begin the first week of the following month and the patterned continued for however many months a student wanted. The courses were intensive but completely doable. It is definitely an advantage to be in a country which speaks the language being studied. Practice definitely makes perfect. I went with practically no German and walked away with the ability to hold a conversation. My German is pretty comparable to the amount of Spanish I retained after studying it for six years. This experience was infinitely helpful in giving me an understanding of German.

The biggest change I experienced within myself was my world view. It is amazing how going to other countries simultaneously broadens the world to you and shrinks it. It is hard to understand this idea until you actually go abroad. Traveling to different countries makes you realize how many are out there. At the language school I met people from Azerbaijan. I did not even know that was a country and so the size of the world increased for me. Then, I met others from all over the world and having the link to other countries by either going there myself or knowing someone from there makes the world feel smaller. This all provides a sense of belonging to the global community.

No matter how long you are abroad you learn an incredible amount. You not only learn about what you have chosen to study and the culture of the country, but also yourself as a person. You learn what you can handle and who you are and who you want to be. You become a bigger person. You have a global perspective and are more a part of the global community than just a citizen of your native country. No matter what you change and grow as a person. I did not think that I would be learning anything more than German abroad but, quickly I found new ideas and motivations within me. I even walked away with a change in life goals and am excited to fulfill them. Studying abroad is a life altering journey that everyone should experience.