

Make the most out of a winter term study abroad

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Studying abroad is considered a common aspect of the Elon experience. Ranked the #1 institution for studying abroad by Princeton Review, Elon makes going abroad for a Winter Term or full semester simple. Many students who study abroad will tell you that there were few downsides to their time away, and the benefits they received from living in another country for a semester were life changing. Several students shared stories from their experiences abroad and advice for those currently considering it.

Meredith Citty, junior and Elementary Education major, went to London last spring as part of the Teaching Fellows program. She chose London because of the various travel opportunities it offered. Citty described a particularly fun travel excursion.

"I went to Dartmoor, UK to celebrate my 20th birthday by going to the Dartmoor Zoological Park — the zoo from *We Bought a Zoo*," Citty said. "I was casually eating lunch in the Jaguar Restaurant, just like in the movie, when I look up and see Benjamin Mee, the guy who actually bought the zoo!"

Citty described her time abroad as a once in a lifetime experience that helped her grow as a person.

"You'll miss some American things like food, drinks, and family," she said. "However, the positives completely outweigh the negatives."

Lauren Kepke, also a Teaching Fellow, chose to travel to Costa Rica instead so

she could improve her Spanish skills and live with a host family. She enjoyed being able to work in schools and experience the local culture with a family. Kepke also described an unexpected experience she had while abroad:

"I was invited to an Easter service at the Catholic church and it was one of the funniest services of my life," Kepke said. "Not only was it a 4 hour service, there were fireworks, a statue of Jesus running around the service and the priest soaking everyone with water."

Like Citty, Kepke believes the positives of studying abroad outweigh the negatives.

"Missing home, life at Elon and the comforts of life in America is difficult but it does not compare to the adventures of being abroad," Kepke said.

Senior Molly Curtiss went to the less common destination of South Caicos last fall. "I chose that location because it allowed me to focus on my career aspirations of marine biology," Curtiss said. "It allowed me to go diving every day, and it was always warm."

Curtiss said the biggest benefit of her experience was that it fit well with her plans for the future.

"I was able to concentrate entirely on my major and career aspirations to become a marine biologist," she said. "I did not have to take extra classes that didn't really interest me."

Some people, like Paxton Syrek, find the places they study abroad as possible locations to call home again in the



future. Syrek studied in Australia last spring because she thought it would be a more unique experience than going to Europe.

"I absolutely loved it there, and I realized I would be perfectly okay with living there after my college career," she said.

Syrek also pointed out a positive to studying abroad that many other Elon students have experienced. "I made an incredible group of friends in such a short amount of time," she said. "It was unexpected that I would form close friendships that quickly."

Other students who studied abroad will also talk about the lasting bonds they formed with fellow students and



locals, so don't let fear of not fitting in keep you from experiencing a new place.

David Gwynn, a senior Media Arts and Entertainment