

# Paris abroad a valued experience

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Guest Writer

Last semester eight juniors from Guilford called Paris, France their home. For three and a half months we immersed ourselves in the culture of "the city of lights" — learning the language, discovering the museums, monuments, and diverse neighborhoods, and of course, consuming gross amounts of French bread and pastries.

The eight of us, Emily Bakken, Amanda Inge, Jessica Mendelson, Jessie Spence, Alicia Therrien, Caroline Weatherbee, Lou Willis, and Holly Winer, spent our first European week together in the quaint residential city of Poitiers. Dean de la Motte, our brave and fearless faculty leader, introduced us to the French countryside, French churches, and French food. We dined with a local family, went to a futuristic amusement park, and gradually learned (with a few tips from Dean) how not to appear so blatantly American (i.e. don't ask for ice cubes, leave a tip, or buy 8 bottles of cheap wine at one store).

After a week of getting better acquainted with each other and France, we took the T.G.V. (the high speed train) to Paris. After lugging a ludicrous amount of luggage to the taxi stand, we were off to the Foyer des Etudiants where we met the other North Carolina students in our program. For the next week, the 20 of us spent a great deal of classroom time learning about culture-shock, Paris history and culture.

After a week we moved into our permanent housing situations. Emily, Amanda, Caroline, and I took up residence in the Pension Ladagnous, a charming boarding house complete with French high school students, artists, and tourists. We were a 30-second walk from the Luxembourg Gardens and within a 5-mile-radius of the Latin Quarter, the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Sorbonne, and the Seine.

Lou and Jessie lived with families in the suburbs. They both enjoyed the comforts of private bedrooms, refrigerators, and television. But they did not always enjoy their daily hour-long metro rides into the city.

Jessica and Alicia shared a room

in an apartment in St. Germain de Pres. They were in the heart of the infamous cafe district.

We all took classes at the Foyer (Art and Literature or Political Science) and one through the Sorbonne. Our Sorbonne course, which concentrated primarily on grammar, met 5 times a week for two hours a day. Since this course was mostly grammar, most of the learning how to socially speak the language took place outside the classroom.

Needless to say this (having such a tight class schedule) made travel a little difficult. But the eight of us persevered — making our way to London for Halloween, Munich for Oktoberfest, Spain, Amsterdam, and Belgium.

Back in Paris, we used the metro and our feet to carry us to museums (Rodin, Louvre, Musee d'Orsay, Picasso, just to name a few), symphonies, plays and operas.

During the week we studied (well, sort of) taking breaks at cafes and patisseries. On the weekends we travelled, went to discotheques and entertained visiting Guilford people, showing them the sights (which always seemed to include the Sacre Coeur, the Louvre, and Jim Morrison's grave at Pere Lachaise).

As Ernest Hemingway once said, "If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man (or woman), then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a movable feast." And what a feast it was.

While one article cannot describe an entire semester there, I can tell you that we learned a lot.

Buy a Euro-rail pass. Go up the Eiffel Tower at night. Be prepared for extreme culture shock — Parisians thought we were a bunch of freaks because we smiled all of the time. Don't wear flashy, bright colors unless you want to be stared at. Try to speak French — even if you're butchering it — the Parisians will appreciate the effort and usually will respond in English. Use the metro — it's safe and takes you everywhere. Take lots of photos. Sit, at least once, in all the gardens for lunch. Keep a journal. Take advantage of all the art. Get an ice cream at Berthillon by Notre Dame. And, perhaps most importantly, leave the beret at home.

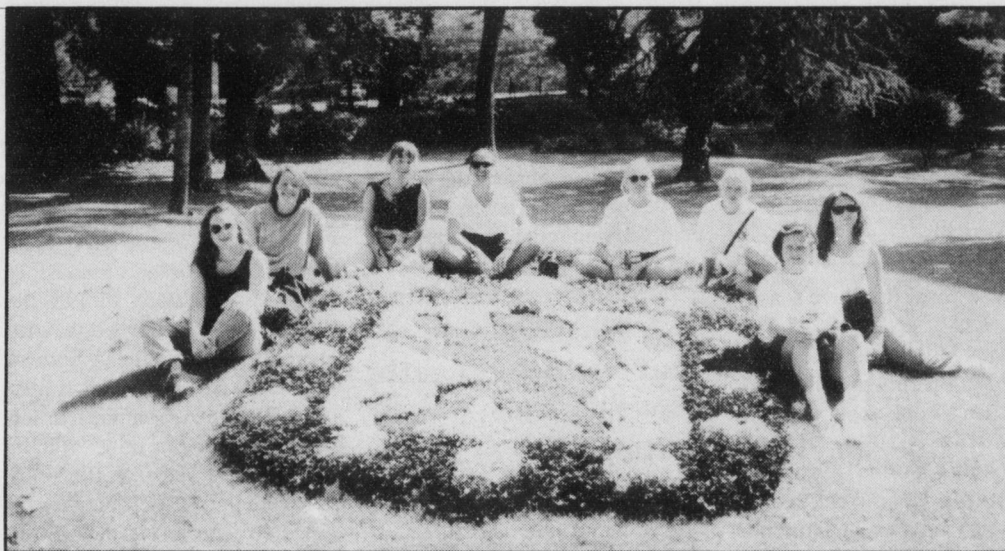


Photo submitted by Holly Winer

*The students in the Paris abroad program at the beginning of the semester...*



Photo submitted by Holly Winer

*... and the students at the end, more refined and better adapted to the French culture.*

**For those of you interested in going abroad to Paris, the students that went last semester listed some of their "DO'S and DON'TS" when you go to Paris:**

## DO'S

- Emily:** go to the Violin Dingue, explore the city
- Jessie:** bring lots of money, go to Mt. St. Michel, visit all the museums and churches
- Holly :** walk the streets in the rain and at midnight, eat tons of pain au chocolats
- Lou:** travel—especially to Oktoberfest & Amsterdam, eat at McDonald's
- Caroline:** go to the Jardin de Luxembourg, travel! visit the other Guilford students in other countries
- Jessica:** buy a Euro-Rail pass, bring peanut butter
- Amanda:** fall in love with a French boy (just kidding), wander around the city, buy cool postcards
- Alicia:** eat at Mandarin Maubert (near Latin Quarter), go to the Rodin Museum

## DON'T'S

- Emily:** get drunk and call U.S. on a calling card, fall asleep on the metro
- Jessie:** bring summer clothes
- Holly:** attempt to cross the street without being at a crosswalk
- Lou:** live in the suburbs, jump on the (electrified) metro tracks for any reason, even a beret
- Caroline:** take every meal at the Pension Ladagnous, play "Circle of Death" with cheap red wine
- Jessica:** be fearful of using improvisation on the metros (i.e. throwing up) when you are approached by strange men
- Amanda:** call home often (it can be expensive), smile at scary men, step in the numerous little brown "piles" on the sidewalks
- Alicia:** eat the dry, moldy toast at Madame Sauvignac's

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