

API believes in the transformative power of studying, interning, working, volunteering, teaching and living abroad. Transformation may look and feel different for each individual, and we think that our alumni's words best express how they changed, grew and developed abroad.

We hope you enjoy these quotes from API alumni, highlighting how participants transformed their lives as a result of an international experience:

Academically:

"Being able to experience education in a foreign country is an invaluable experience in my opinion. You're not objective in your own classrooms until you've studied outside that classroom. The people you meet and the connections you make are truly genuine."

~ Sharjah participant

"The time spent taking courses and traveling abroad directed me towards the field of study I wanted to ultimately major in."

~ Florence participant

"My experience abroad highlighted my interests in academic/student affairs that previously was only an interest (e.g. being involved in residential life). My experience tailored what I wanted to focus my graduate degree on and ultimately lead me on a positive trajectory for something I am extremely passionate about."

~ Florence participant

"... Living in an Islamic culture for 4 months gave me an interesting point of view for the class[es] I took back home."

~ Doha participant

"Studying abroad in Scotland made me realize that my true passion was in tourism, not geography."

~ Stirling participant

"My study abroad experience in Costa Rica encouraged me to add a Spanish minor to my degree. ... My time abroad gave me a focus with what I want to do in life."

~ San José participant

Professionally:

"Studying abroad was a perspective shifting experience for me. Coming from a small, Catholic, liberal arts college in New England, I had stayed very much inside my comfort zone for many years... Following graduation, I chose to attend graduate school in the UK, where I continued to study French literature. I now live in northern England and work in the study abroad industry."

~ Grenoble participant

"When I studied abroad I volunteered at a nursing home and helped a woman with dysphagia. It was something that influenced me to change my academic plans and pursue my master's degree in speech language pathology. I'm in a master's program now and I am very happy with it. Learning Spanish has also impacted my life a lot. I tutor Spanish for teens and teach a Spanish class to retired adults."

~ Seville participant

"I grew to be a more compassionate, caring, and empathetic listener as a result of my study abroad experience. This has greatly helped me connect to my middle school aged students who needs these qualities in a role model."

~Krakow participant

"Living abroad during college gave me the confidence and desire to join the Peace Corps, which I loved, and has shaped my career choices today."

~ Barcelona participant

"With studying abroad helping with my Spanish I have been more confident in pursuing my career in working with migrant Latino students."

~ Salamanca student

"... I have graduated and am currently getting my TEFL certificate in Thailand. I wouldn't have ended up here without studying abroad."

~Barcelona participant

"Study abroad encouraged me to pursue a career in International Education and helped me to focus my interests within my International Affairs major. It also pushed me to start learning a 3rd language, Spanish, because I know how important it is to be multilingual in the field."

~ Paris participant

"Allowed me to take a job abroad with no fear and a European experience in my back pocket"

~ Salamanca participant

"As a result of studying abroad and earning a minor, I was hired as a World Language teacher and am currently finishing a full teaching certificate/degree in Spanish."

~Cádiz participant

"I experienced many wonderful changes and improvements in who I am as a person. Most notably I became more interested in my Spanish roots and the Latino culture. I improved tremendously in my Spanish abilities, and decided to become a bilingual teacher rather than just teach in English."

~ Seville participant

"Before I went abroad, I suffered a deep depression. Since I returned, my confidence has grown and my worldview has broadened. Since I've become more sure of myself, I've realized that my potential can reach further than I previously believed, and I'm now on a path to become a neuroscientist instead of a counselor. I also know now that my future can lead to any location in the world. I've travelled to new places - China, Hong Kong, Germany, Scotland - and plan to see so much more. I've become more politically active, seeing the differences policies make on people's lives."

~ Leeds participant

Personally and professionally:

"... studying abroad gave me a much fresher perspective to continue in the international business field within my career."

~ Barcelona participant

"I find that I can better understand and work with people from different backgrounds than myself in a way that I wouldn't have been able to without this experience."

~ Granada participant

"... [later in life] Upon arriving back to the US, I was offered a position as a Spanish teacher due to my multiple experiences abroad. I have also been sought out and interviewed for government jobs based on my time in Spain, therefore I may have a future career in another field. Studying abroad has affected my life in various aspects and continues to offer new opportunities."

~ Cádiz participant

"Though I did not realize immediately, study abroad changed my worldview in my desire to expand my world beyond what I had experienced beforehand, which ultimately led me to graduate school. More so, it led me to do a year of service after graduation simply as a result of increased growth in my independence and a desire to seek more knowledge of the world."

~ Florence participant

"... it did make me more appreciative of foreign cultures and it helped me relate better to others from foreign countries"

~ Seville participant

"During my time in Italy I took a food and wine course which has changed my life forever. I was terrified of the kitchen before I left and 5 years later it's my daily passion."

~ Florence participant

"My time abroad led me to develop a new perspective on the value of cultural diversity in personal as well as career experiences. After my study abroad, I became more active in seeking organizations and groups that allowed me to continue to be immersed in new cultures and perspectives."

~ London participant

"My worldview was radically changed and I have become more invested in my social responsibility and that of my place of work. I am better aware of how my actions can truly have an impact around the world and I'm striving to be intentional with where I direct my time and energy."

~ Limerick participant

"I feel like I am more globally minded. I think of political issues more as a world citizen now instead of a US citizen as I saw myself before."

~ San Joaquin de Flores participant

"I changed religion[s], [and] became more politically aware of unions due to Granada's political economic landscape."

~ Granada participant

"Absolutely. After leaving Spain my type A personality lessened a bit and I became more practical. My communication patterns became much more direct. And I felt comfortable being myself and speaking more openly about my opinions. On the API excursion to Jerez, we had a walking tour of the town by a local gypsy woman. She explained Roma culture in Europe and in Spain and since then I have shared

those lessons countless times with people all over the world. Denouncing the stigma that hangs over that culture.”

~ Seville participant

“Study abroad gives you the best sense of yourself. It's hard to remember how I viewed the world before having some context to put it all in. The United States is such a small part of something so big.”

~ Barcelona participant

“I've realized the value of being open-minded. I have met new friends from all over the world and from many different ethnic groups, and I love learning from them. I've also found that I have a stronger desire to fight for equality and respect for women.”

~ Salamanca participant

“Study abroad (and the people and culture of Barcelona) helped me finally accept and express who I really was in regards to my sexual orientation. As a result, it led me to be more open with the people in my life as well as more accepting of all different types of people in general. It has impacted my worldview in many wonderful ways.”

~ Barcelona participant

“For me faith-wise, being in Rome and near the Vatican was priceless... I visited there almost daily during my study abroad semester and it was a powerful experience. It grew me in my faith and I am forever grateful for my time there.”

~ Rome participant

“I would say my views have changed substantially. I considered myself to have been an open person when I went, but would say even more so now. I have learned so much about the world (Europe in particular) and now feel like I am comprised of a combination of views from different places, being able to choose the things I like best about each one. It has also altered some of my views about American lifestyle.”

~ Granada participant

“If there's one thing I've walked away with it's this: perspective. Studying abroad allows you to see the world, but upon returning home you see your own country and yourself in a new light. Reverse culture shock is real. You unintentionally learn new things about how the world relates and how you as an individual function as an integral part of your own culture.”

~Grenoble participant

“I am a much more independent person. I also was given an external perspective of American policy through reading foreign news...I went through my study abroad experience with an open mind and have found answers to questions that I had never thought to ask. I am more aware/understanding of religion, anthropology, politics, and economics.”

~Florence participant

“I am more concerned about what is happening in Italy, Africa and Europe, politically speaking because I feel like I was a part of it at one point.”

~ Sicily participant

“More actively politically and eager to participate in activities out of my comfort zone. I would highly recommend a study abroad to anyone looking to expand their horizons.”

~ Madrid participant

“My study abroad experience definitely opened my mind and curiosity to other cultures and countries. And the most surprising outcome of my study abroad experience was that I was able to see and understand my own culture more as an American. Prior to studying in France I did not see the U.S. as having a culture of its own. Seeing 'America' the way outsiders see it was eye opening. I was able to see that others do not 'hate' Americans the way so many people told me they do--and that people in other countries view the U.S. as a vital part of world politics and movements. I mark my study abroad program as the beginning of my social and political consciousness. It did make me want to be more involved in political and social change in the U.S. as well as around the world. Being there during the 2008 election year, I realized that all eyes were on the U.S. and that French people cared about who got elected---probably more so than many of my own fellow Americans. Seeing how so many French people not only valued their right to vote for their own governments but that they had an opinion on other countries' political activity made me want to be more involved back home.”

~ Grenoble participant

“Study abroad strongly altered my worldview coming from a small liberal arts school without much diversity. It opened my eyes to new cultures, interests, and strengthened my independence and ability to plan effectively, in turn making me a stronger leader as well.”

~ Florence participant

“Before studying abroad I had always been a homebody. I went to college less than an hour from where I grew up, was in a routine, and afraid of change. Studying abroad threw everything I was used to out the window and shockingly, I loved it! It allowed me to start from scratch, to live mindfully and in the moment. It helped me see that the routines I clung so tightly to at home, which I thought were maintaining my happiness, were actually holding me back from being truly happy.”

~ Seville participant

“My study abroad experience encouraged me to escape my comfort zone, to expand my worldview, and forced me to become more mature...”

~ San José participant

“During my time abroad I gained skills in the areas of independence, problem-solving, communication, and cultural awareness. I experienced a plethora of learning moments and became a stronger and more capable person by the end of my trip.”

~ Limerick participant

“I think that it encouraged me to grow because it's made me more responsible, as both a person and a citizen. Whenever I was faced with a challenge, I was able to confront it head-on and in the best way I knew how. I learned how to ask for help and how to accomplish things on my own terms.”

~ Florence participant

“I learned how to successfully deal with ambiguity and how to react quickly to uncertain situations. This has enhanced my preparedness and willingness to learn new things that are foreign to me.”

~ Galway participant

“Living in London now, there is a multi-cultural environment. I speak to people on a daily basis who are from all over the world. Studying abroad made me realize how difficult it can be to live in a place where you don't speak the language well. It has made me more patient when speaking to clients.”

~ Granada participant

“The greatest lesson I learned from my experience abroad is that you cannot take a back seat in your life experiences. In order to make things happen for yourself, you must put in the time and effort to make them happen.”

~ London participant

“It [study abroad] is invaluable. There are tangible and intangible gains that can be translated into nearly every facet of your life, from social, professional, and personal aspects. It is a 'life-changing' experience in every sense of the phrase.”

~Galway participant