

# #studyabroadbecause



## Nicole Melancon thirdeyemom.com

Going to Europe for the first time was a new kind of adventure. It was 1984, I was young, and I was filled with a rush of anticipation of what I would discover. The moment I stepped out onto the streets of Paris, I made my decision right then and there that I would someday live in France and spend a semester studying abroad there. I returned home, enrolled in my first French class and continued to study French in college to prepare me for the day I'd live in France.



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In college, I applied to a study abroad program in Paris and was accepted. My dream had come true. In January 1993, when I saw the international campus for the first time, I felt like a little kid in a candy shop. There I was surrounded by students from all over the world speaking every language imaginable.

My time in Paris was a time of significant growth and transformation. My first month living abroad was filled with ups and downs. My classes were all in French and there were so many words I didn't know or understand. I was struggling to meet new friends and oftentimes didn't feel like they understood my "American-ness". I was homesick and missed the easy things about life that I took for granted. Yet these challenging moments were shadowed in comparison to the multitude of awe-inspiring moments of an American girl living in Paris.

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Life in Paris was exhilarating, romantic, and a thrill. Mastering French and wandering the magical streets, exploring the endless museums, and testing out new French and ethnic restaurants thrilled me. I felt like I was on top of the world.

Then there was the travel. My friend and I bought a Eurail pass and traveled every weekend we could to a new destination with our Lonely Planets in hand. We called the Lonely Planet our bible, as it opened our world to new places, cultures, and people. We went all over Europe. The more I traveled, the more I wanted to see. My appetite for travel was never satiated.

Over the past two decades since I lived in France, I have traveled around the world more than I ever dreamed possible. I have visited every continent except Antarctica and have truly become a global citizen through my advocacy work and travel and social good blogging. I never once hesitated or had any fear. Travel has transformed my life and has made me who I am today, and I am so absolutely blessed to have the opportunity to see the world.

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*Nicole Melancon is a freelance journalist, blogger, and social good advocate living in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with her husband and two children.*



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