

#studyabroadbecause



Alex Schnee thewayfaringvoyager.com

Studying abroad for me was perhaps even more of an eye-opening opening experience than for many. I grew up in a tiny town in Montana, and it wasn't until I was 19 that I was able to pack my bags and leave with my local community college's study abroad program. I fell in love with Venice—and I mean, fell hard. I drooled over the Palladian architecture, Vivaldi music playing on every street corner, and of course, the food. I was exposed to lives that had been lived before me, those of famous writers and artists and of the everyday families whose seals remained over my apartment door. Marco Polo was buried only a two-minute walk from my apartment, perhaps the world's most famous traveler.

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I learned that I was capable of things I never could have believed. I learned a new language, found I could cook pasta without burning it, and made an unbreakable friendship with my roommate. I found out that I would never be a visual artist, but no matter what I ended up doing after graduation, it would need to involve travel. When it was time to go, I held my tears back, afraid that this would be my last adventure—that studying abroad would remain a blip on my short timeline.

DESTINATION Venice, Italy

I fully credit the experience I had in that magical city to the shaping of who I am today. Studying abroad helped me to realize that there was a whole world out there to explore and to engage with. Since then, my career has been based around that initial experience. I worked as a travel writer for USA Today's 10Best living in Florence, Italy, resurrecting my old Italian and using the initial skills I've learned to make new memories and connections with others. I've traveled to five continents now, always learning and growing. I feel especially lucky that studying abroad allowed me to become a student of the world—which is something that has been invaluable for me.

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Alex Schnee is a traveler, journalist, and author. She eats a lot of pizza.



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