

# #studyabroadbecause



## Eric Stoen travelbabbo.com

Hi, I'm Eric. I grew up in Colorado and traveled abroad a couple times as a kid, but it was always about family and less about the destination. When I headed to college, I was given the option of studying my sophomore year in Florence, Italy, Heidelberg, Germany, or London, England. I had always liked Renaissance art and history so Florence was the easy choice. It was the best decision I ever made.



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My freshman year of college I had friends. In Italy, in a villa with 35 other students for a year, I had a family. Twenty five years later I'm still incredibly close to everyone. We meet up around the world whenever we can.

In Florence we learned Italian, and we became locals – the opposite of being tourists. We had Italian friends and got invited into their homes. We talked about everything. Everyone in the world has a unique story. The more you hear those stories, the more you understand about their cultures, and it changes you. You can't get that in a classroom anywhere in the world, but you can get it in every neighborhood in the world. Studying abroad when you're young is the best, easiest possible time to do this.

Every weekend that year was a three-day weekend. We left in small groups every Thursday night and took overnight trains to somewhere in Europe. We became comfortable exploring new cities, staying in hostels, and delving into those cultures – even just for three days. I made friends from all over the world and I still have those friends. When I've gone back, they've taken me all over their countries and shown me the local perspective. If I hear a news story about somewhere far away, it's personal since I've been there and know people there. The world is small; you just need to take the first step to see it.

And I've kept that mentality with my kids. I have three kids under 12 and they've been to 47 countries. They are who they are because of travel, growing and changing in small ways with every trip. I was having so much fun doing this, and trying to do it as inexpensively as possible, that I started writing about it to inspire others. And it quickly became my career. I get paid to travel! And it goes back to my year in Florence.

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DESTINATION:  
**Florence, Italy**

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*In 2014, Eric Stoen left the corporate world to turn his passion for travel into the full-time blog, Travel Babbo. He's been to more than 80 countries, and brings his wife and 3 kids along whenever possible.*



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