

Why study abroad?

If you ask anybody who has studied abroad, he or she will most certainly tell you that it is a life-changing experience and one of the most rewarding things he or she has ever done. Perhaps you're not certain what benefits you can reap¹ from an extended stay in a foreign country. Here are 7 very excellent reasons why you should take the plunge².

Study abroad is the optimal way to learn a language. There is no better and more effective way to learn a language than to be immersed in a culture that speaks the language you are learning. You're surrounded by the language on a daily basis and are seeing and hearing it in the proper cultural context. Language learning happens most quickly under these circumstances.

Study abroad provides the opportunity to travel. Weekends and academic breaks allow you to explore your surroundings³ — both your immediate and more distant surroundings. Since studying abroad often puts you on a completely different continent, you are much closer to places you might otherwise not have had the opportunity to visit.

Study abroad allows you get to know another culture first-hand. Cultural differences are more than just differences in language, food, appearances, and personal habits. A person's culture reflects very deep perceptions, beliefs, and values that influence his or her way of life and the way that he or she views the world. Students who experience cultural differences personally can come to truly understand where other cultures are coming from.

Study abroad will help you develop skills and give you experiences a classroom setting will never provide. Being immersed in an entirely new cultural setting is scary at first, but it's also exciting. It's an opportunity to discover new strengths and abilities, conquer new challenges, and solve new problems. You will encounter situations that are wholly unfamiliar to you and will learn to adapt and respond in effective ways.

Study abroad affords you the opportunity to make friends around the world.

While abroad, you will meet not only natives to the culture in which you are studying, but also other international students who are as far from home as yourself.

Study abroad helps you to learn about yourself. Students who study abroad return home with new ideas and perspectives about themselves and their own culture. The experience abroad often challenges them to reconsider their own beliefs and values. The experience may perhaps strengthen those values or it may cause students to alter or abandon them and embrace new concepts and perceptions. The encounter with other cultures enables students to see their own culture through new eyes.

Study abroad enhances employment opportunities. Through an employer's eyes, a student who has studied abroad is self-motivated, independent, willing to embrace challenges, and able to cope with⁴ diverse problems and situations.

Adapted from <http://www.vistawide.com>

¹to reap: récolter

²to take the plunge: franchir le pas

³your surroundings: les environs

⁴to cope with: faire face à

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