

MYMADISON

“THERE ARE TWO THINGS CHILDREN SHOULD GET FROM THEIR PARENTS: ROOTS AND WINGS”

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Morgan Robinson ('13) studied in Germany during the Junior Year Abroad and now lives and works in Italy.

A year of living bravely

From Oktoberfest to Glühwein – my Study Abroad year in Germany taught me to live like I've never lived before **BY MORGAN ROBINSON ('13)**

After spending a year abroad I can truly attest to the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe quote above. And, my parents have done a great job applying it. A year abroad will no doubt change a person. You will learn to spread your wings and embrace the endless opportunities presented. As you learn to live in a foreign city, you will recognize your roots at home.

I spent just shy of a full year living in Munich, Germany. I say living rather than studying because a Study Abroad experience is

so much more than actual studying; it's living like you've never lived before.

Living abroad will absolutely leave you asking yourself 'is this real life?' Hopping on planes to exotic locations for weekend trips, taking advantage of the incredibly rich culture — \$10 world-class operas, yes please! — and connecting with people from all over the world never gets old. But it's not all glam. As Americans we are used to a pretty cushy lifestyle; foreign bureaucracy can be quite stressful. There is culture shock, and a bit of homesickness



Morgan Robinson ('13) says her Study Abroad in Germany and travels in France motivated her to move to Europe and study culinary arts in Sicily and Italy.



'A Study Abroad experience is so much more than actual studying; it's living like you've never lived before.

— MORGAN ROBINSON ('13),
Junior Year in Munich Program

I experienced the organized chaos that is Oktoberfest and loved every minute of the Christmas Markets — I don't know what I'll do without Glühwein! And the majestic castles and landscape of the region never ceased to amaze me. I love the language and found the Bavarian dialect oddly charming. My class schedule allowed for a great deal of traveling; I made it to 11 countries throughout the year and became quite a savvy traveler. I learned from experience the right and wrong ways to pack a suitcase, how to book tickets and that it is a good idea to always bring a *Lonely Planet* book to get the most out of a trip. I had an incredible year. It far exceeded any expectations.

In my experience, it was the year in Munich that really taught me the incredible value of home. I went to Europe with the mindset that I could possibly live there full-time. The inner-Euro girl in me came out big time, and I found myself wondering if I'd like

to live in the cities I visited. More often than not that answer was yes. After that initial excitement of the first months in Europe faded,

I began to realize that expat status would be really difficult. I am not necessarily a homebody, but there is no way I could ever get used to the idea of starting a family 3,000 miles away from my home in Virginia. And, of course, I'd miss living in the good old U.S.A. Being away for so long made me realize everything I had to appreciate at home and how important family is. I think this was probably the most valuable lesson I learned.

I absolutely advise every JMU student to spend time abroad. It arms you with experience that gives you a real can-do attitude. Study Abroad challenges you to follow your dreams and to get the most out of life. I was a little worried about what I might miss at home over the year, but the things I got to do and the priceless life lessons I learned made it worth it.

I graduated in May with a degree in Modern Foreign Languages, concentrating in German and French. I originally planned on attending graduate school to study literature, but I changed plans. During my last semester, I learned Italian and decided to put it to use studying Italian cuisine. I am currently in San Vito Lo Capo, Sicily, working as an intern for a chef. I plan to move to Florence soon to learn more! **M**

***Follow the Sicilian culinary adventures of Morgan Robinson ('13) on her food blog at twoburnersandaminifridge.com.**

is bound to happen. You are pretty much independent — you pay your own bills, make your own plans, deal with consequences on your own. You learn a whole lot about yourself and learn some serious real-world, relevant lessons.

I went to Germany through the JMU Junior Year in Munich Program, and my trip was funded by the merit-based German Academic Exchange Service Scholarship, Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst. I lived in student apartments in the city and studied German, French and Norwegian at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. I quickly fell in love with Munich and all of Bavaria.