



# FROM BEYOND THE NEST: *STORIES OF SAGEHENS ABROAD*

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*Artwork made by various artists is displayed in Viñales, Cuba*

## *Culturas, Conversaciones y Conexiones*

Shani Paul Navigates Life and Communication in Havana, Cuba, with  
the Sarah Lawrence College Program

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Before arriving in Cuba, I had very limited knowledge of what to expect, what kinds of people I would meet, how I would be perceived or even how the currency in Cuba functioned... With all of my pre-conceptions and Internet searches on what being black in Cuba might entail, I was frightened to embark on this journey. However, living life here and finding out for myself has helped shape and change my point of view in the most rewarding ways possible.

Living without Internet constantly at my disposal has been one of the most frustrating themes of life in Cuba, yet it is also one of the factors that has shaped my time here the most. Hotels are the most convenient way of accessing the Internet for Cubans, tourists and students; one Internet card gives you a passcode for an hour of use. As a result, I'm strategic about the amount of Internet I use and what I use it for. In addition, because Internet is a highly valued commodity for Cubans, many of whom simply don't use it, spending a semester here has caused me to appreciate and take advantage of the Cuban life around me even more.

I'm involved in a "baile folklórico" class held at the National Theater for three CUC (basically three dollars) a month. The class meets three times a week with Cubans who, to me, dance professionally—although they might state otherwise.



A mini-lake in the "Las Terrazas" bio-reserve beautifully reflects the Cuban landscape.



The region of Viñales, where we went to ride horses for a weekend excursion

I was able to watch the International Ballet in Cuba for less than an American dollar a ticket, experience horseback riding with my host program in Viñales over the weekend and continue to enjoy the peacefulness this island brings.

Living without wifi forces me to understand why there's a culture of conversation and an openness and willingness to talk to all types of people about any and everything; generations of people here were raised without being hooked to a computer, iPhone or, for some, even a TV. Currently, I'm working on writing a ten- to fifteen-page paper on race and representation in Cuban television before and after the revolution, and beyond learning about the subject, I'm re-learning the importance of not relying on the Internet and how to have patience and learn from the information around me.

Living life simply is a beautiful thing. With no one way to sum up "Cuban culture" or my adventures, hopefully, after four months, I can string together the experiences I've had, ranging from art to the people, to music, to dance, to the fifty-cent pizzas we eat for lunch, to the *tranquilidad de la vida* and to the politics of being American in a country facing a blockade from its powerful neighbor.

—Shani Paul



## Carretiando por Santiago

Charmaine Garzon-Luzuriaga - CIEE Santiago, Chile: Liberal Arts Program

Turning in my study abroad application, I didn't really know what to expect. Arriving at the Comodoro Arturo Benítez International Airport in Santiago, Chile, I still had no idea how to explain how I felt upon arriving to this new country. Even when I started school at La Universidad Católica, taking all classes in Spanish, I still couldn't find the right words to express what I was feeling.

Before coming to Chile, I had managed to ward off most "Why Chile?" questions, but now that I was finally here, that question became the opening question to every conversation.

At first, I was disappointed because I found none of my responses satisfactory. The truth: all I knew was I had found myself at a time in my life where I needed space and time away to discover new adventures, relationships, and, most of all, to free myself from the Claremont bubble. Although I didn't have a specific reason for choosing Chile, the reality is I found multiple reasons along my study abroad journey.

From traveling to San Pedro de Atacama and discovering the geysers, salt lakes, and alpacas to roaming the streets of Valparaiso and admiring the artwork lined along the colorful displays of houses, I found beauty in the landscape. From meeting new people on metros during rush hour while jam-packed next to each other to practicing my Spanish on a daily basis in class, at home with my wonderful host family, or whenever I was lost and had to ask directions, I built new relationships. Every day became my new adventure, and every day became a day I learned more about my strengths and weaknesses.

Studying abroad in Santiago was a struggle, but most of all it was a journey of constant self-discovery. Initially, I didn't know what to expect, nor how I should feel, or even why I was in Chile, and I realize now that that was okay. Everyone has different stories, feelings, and journeys when studying abroad. Some know exactly where and why they want to study abroad, and others, like me, don't have fully defined reasons, and that, too, is okay. What's not okay is letting your hesitance toward those pesky questions or your incessant need to have all the answers inhibit you from even trying to find answers. Wherever you choose to study abroad, make it your own: create your own questions, approach them, and work toward answering them.



## "Guten Tag!"

Sergio Rodriguez - IES Freiburg, Germany: EU Program



I am still in awe at the fact that I am in Freiburg, Germany.

As a first-generation college student, my goal was to take advantage of all the resources that would be offered at Pomona College; however, study abroad had been out of the question for some time. I couldn't find the right program or the right experience. I was looking for more than just an academically rigorous environment—I was looking for personal growth, for adventure, for a multitude of perspectives and for a challenge. Part of that challenge is being in a country where I don't speak the language and where I find myself lost—a good type of lost because this is where learning takes place firsthand.

Thus, I chose the European Union Program based in Freiburg, Germany hosted by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES) Abroad. Besides traveling to approximately 10 different countries in Europe and visiting some of the international headquarters for the different EU offices, I found this program to be a good fit for me. Now that I've started classes, I realize that there are many things that I have yet to learn about how the European Union works. For a while, I saw the EU as just its own entity without realizing that the domestic national policies and states' interests could, in fact, shape the identity of the entire intergovernmental organization and redefine its historical trajectory. It's been great to deconstruct the views of specific countries and see their influence in the international arena. As an International Relations major, the entirety of this subject fascinates me.

It feels like I've only started this adventure last week, but in reality, I've been here for two months now. The food I've tasted, the many city walks I've taken and the driven students that I meet every day make this experience more valuable. Just like my German professor stated yesterday:

*"Freiburg hat was alle suchen."  
"Freiburg has what everyone is looking for."*

And it does!

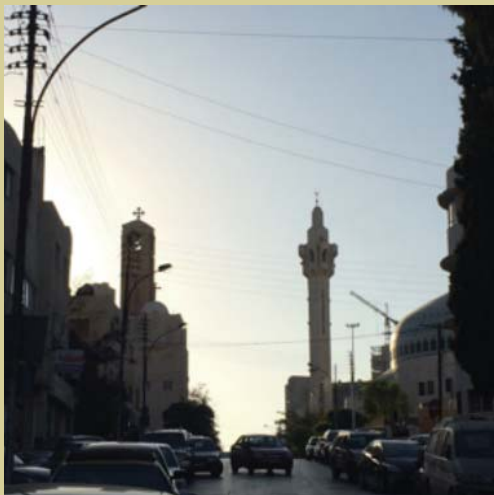
### A Break From the City:

Sergio explores a lake in Neuschwanstein, Germany, near the German Alps.





The City of Amman, Jordan, through the eyes of Khyle Eastin



A mosque in the city of Amman, Jordan.



Khyle explores the Jordanian desert with his two new 'brothers.'

## Snapshots of Jordan:

Khyle Eastin - SIT Amman, Jordan: Modernization and Social Change Program

### Religion

Religion, while a bit of a taboo subject in the US, is imbedded in every aspect of Jordanian society—most noticeably within the Arabic language. The Jordanian population is split between Muslims and Christians. If you aren't one, then you're guaranteed to be the other.

As the son of a devoutly Christian family in the US, the host son of an Armenian Christian family in Jordan, yet personally identifying as a non-religious individual, I have been more inclined to quickly explain my family is Christian in both the US and Jordan. However, as I have grown more comfortable with my current place in this particular society, I have begun to push the boundaries a bit and claim to be closer to Buddhist in my beliefs than anything else.

While this statement has often halted people in their tracks, the conversations that follow are generally very level-headed and end somewhere in the ballpark of "all religions and philosophies in the world stem from peace."

### South Jordan

At the end of September, the 20 or so students in the Modernization & Social Change program each did a five-day stay in the South Badia portion of Jordan. Dressed in more traditionally Arab clothing, we each set out for South Badia, staying individually with host families who welcomed us with open arms, stuffed us with some of the most delicious food we've had, offered us nothing but the sweetest of teas and coffees, and showed us as much of their villages and surrounding areas as possible within the limited window of time.

With classes officially over, we returned a month later, this time to the more famous parts of the South, including Petra and Aqaba. This trip has given us our "nature fix" - endless mountains, valleys, and desert mixed with good deal of free time makes for hours spent appreciating the natural landscape.

### Relationships

Forming new relationships is perhaps the biggest reward of studying abroad. I would say this has a to do with a mixture of being in a new environment with the knowledge that you'll be there for a relatively short period of time and will potentially never see the people on the program ever again. This all has a way of quickly breaking down the walls we tend to put up when meeting new people.

I have been fortunate enough to meet some of the most talented, experienced, and driven individuals over the course of my time here in Jordan. My classmates—but more readily referred to as my older brothers—have made this program what it is for me: an experience to be looked back upon fondly in years to come. With years of real-world experience and the "non-traditional" stories not often heard in Claremont, my two 'brothers' have taught me much while growing with me. While language, culture, academics, and research will be remembered as a part of my time in Jordan, the memories tied to them pale in comparison to those tied to my closest friends here. This is the real magic of study abroad, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.



# The Medieval Fair in Meersburg, Deutschland

Jacqueline Fernandez - IES Freiburg, Germany: EU Program



**Above:** Excitement filled me as we arrived in Meersburg to visit the Meersburg Castle and the Medieval Fair. Although the castle was the main attraction, I surprisingly found the Medieval Fair most impacting. It proved to be an exciting immersion into German culture.



**Above:** We finally got two yummy coconut Baumstriezel. They were made by rolling dough around a thick, round cooking utensil; the dough was buttered, put in the oven, and covered in coconut shavings. By the time we received them, they were warm, smelled delicious, and ready to be eaten!

**Right:** After walking around the fair for a bit, we spotted a Baumstriezel (which really has no direct translation) station. They sold different types of Baumstriezel, such as chocolate, sesame, and coconut. Many German people worked on baking the bread and were really friendly. Having waited in line for some time, I was truly looking forward to eating the Baumstriezel.



**Right:** As we entered the Medieval Fair, Medieval-dressed people and a musical band instantly greeted us. These people stood out from the crowd with their medieval wardrobe and contributed to the setting. It was during this moment that I was directly reminded that I was in another country, and even in another time. The atmosphere and culture of the Medieval Fair was an experience like no other. It demonstrated to me another aspect of German culture and how they celebrate.



**Left:** The Baumstriezel were definitely a dish that added to the German/Meersburg/Medieval atmosphere that surrounded us. I was really grateful to have the opportunity to eat such traditional Medieval Fair Meersburg food along with great company. The German music, the medieval dressed people, the Baumstriezel, and basically Meersburg in general had such a huge impact on me that I had a euphoric time.