

Back at home people would most likely describe me as being independent, having strong leadership qualities, and being extremely dedicated to achieving any goal I set for myself. That was back at home though. When I came to study abroad out in Rome, I felt completely out of my element and it seemed that the person I knew so well at home, was no where to be found. I was completely taken aback by how homesick I was and how something such as studying abroad was being easily done by hundreds of students, yet it was one of the most challenging things I had yet to come across.

To me, Italy was one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen, and even though it was characterized by a different culture and presented difficulties especially with the language barrier, that had nothing to do with why I wanted to leave. Instead, it was the fact that I was homesick. It was such an indescribable feeling. I felt like no one could understand how much I missed my family and the comfort of my life back home, because I really couldn't understand the extent of it myself. It was as if I knew it was foolish to feel such a way and the logical side of me would be sensible and tell myself to stay; yet the more emotional side of me was letting my whole experience become affected by my homesickness.

I tried many different tactics and approaches to snap myself out of it, yet unfortunately there was no magic potion to make my problems go away. One thing I had going for me however, was a huge support system, both at home and out in Rome. My family could not have been more understanding, and everyone from my roommates and friends, to the administration and professors at AUR (who were all complete strangers in the beginning), couldn't have been more encouraging and supportive.

Needless to say, I stuck it out and it was one of the hardest and yet most fulfilling things I have ever done. I created so many bonds and molded so many relationships with people to last me a lifetime. The roommates and friends, which I had mentioned began as strangers, quickly turned into my family out in Rome. The hardest part, which began with me remaining out in Rome, suddenly transitioned into having to say goodbye to all these people, and actually having to leaving Rome.

If I had any regret about studying abroad, it is that I didn't fully appreciate the experience while it was occurring. To clarify, in case I am being too misleading, I led a very fulfilled life out in Rome for three and a half months; but looking back at it now, I wish I would have been more thankful and realized how special it was to wake up in Italy everyday.

I feel my study abroad experience was so much more fulfilling for me in the end, because of the fact that my outlook of it changed so drastically from the beginning. I believe that my decision to remain out in Rome only made me stronger and more prepared for future endeavors. It's amazing how a place I couldn't wait to get away from, unexpectedly became one of my most missed memories. More than anything, I am extremely grateful to take from my trip all of those memories, both the good and the bad. All in all, if I were told before I left for Italy, about the hardships I would encounter... knowing what I do today, I would do it all over again in a heartbeat!