

THE EXPONENT^{ONLINE}

Studying abroad outweighs fun in the sun

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Over the last few weeks my friends have asked me many times "Which beach are you lying out on for your last Spring Break?" While many of you will be having your fun in the sun, I will be working in an office or hanging out at home over break. My friends always look at me crazily and ask why.

The simple answer is that I can't afford it; I am trying to escape college with as little debt as possible. So instead of doing something every year for Spring Break, I saved and broke open my piggy bank last spring when I studied abroad in England.

It was by far the best decision I have made here at Purdue, and I encourage other students to make the same choice to spend their time and money on study abroad adventures. Although you could splurge on a trip to Europe for Spring Break, it is not the same as actually living in another country for several months.

The experiences and people you will meet while studying abroad are far more valuable than the experience and people you would meet while spending a few days in the sun.

By living in another country, you are provided the opportunity to network with an entirely new group of people, and there is no telling what kind of possibilities it will open up. For me, it opened the door to working at The Exponent. Exponent Managing Editor Jeff Berglund was the plaid-clad lad I met waiting in O'Hare. At the time he was an Exponent city reporter, and he encouraged me to come work with him this past fall.

Together, the two of us shared many memorable experiences, none of which will top staring into the darkness of a Welsh cave and using nothing more than our hands and feet to climb. Running out of that cave to check in to the park office on time beats running to the hotel desk hungover to check out on the day you leave.

Another great connection I made during my study abroad adventure was meeting my Turkish friend Tuna. He puts that Dos Equis Most Interesting Man in the World to

shame. He has lived in countries all across the globe, and is always there with excellent advice and usually a great story to go with it. I have the utmost respect for him now, as he is doing aid work in Afghanistan.

I know it will sound as if I am stereotyping spring breakers, but I don't think you will be able to connect with people like this while strolling around the beach in flip-flops.

I came back with a renewed interest in practicing my Spanish and my footballing abilities after struggling to converse with the multiple Spanish students who were dancing around me on the football pitch during our pick-up games. I know not everyone is a football (soccer) fan, but in Europe it is the sport to follow and my passion for the game grew after living in that atmosphere.

Standing in Anfield, singing "You'll never walk alone," lost in the sea of red Liverpool FC supporters, brought chills down my spine. Surrounded by the history of the top-flight athletes who previously had donned the red shirt could never evoke the same emotions as a Spring Break vacation filled with drunkenly singing the same five songs at every club you go to.

I have zero regrets about heading home this break. There is no way I could have done everything in just a week. This is why I highly encourage younger students to adopt the same mentality and "sacrifice" their Spring Break to experience a full semester of what the world has to offer while studying abroad.

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