



## Bonjour, World

### Francy That...

It's funny how quickly it all happened.

When we met, I was interested. Semi, anyways. But, at the time, it was more about the adventure. It was the idea of experiencing something different, of going and seeing and doing the things that few people have heard of, what few people have done. It was about proving to myself that I could make it outside of the thriving metropolis of Brenham, Texas...and then outside of the developed world...and then outside of my familiar Peruvian neighborhood, where I chose to intern and live last summer.

It was always about a grand adventure, a new blog, a decent story...then BAM. Just like that, it happened.

I could almost feel the shift in the air. Suddenly, I wasn't just walking on a street. I wasn't just standing in a neighborhood. I wasn't just passing random strangers on my way to a random house. Just like that, it was MY neighborhood, MY street, MY house...for the first time, another country felt like home: MY home.

Not that I was cheating on America or anything. The good ol' U.S. of A. would always be my one, true love...but I needed to – had to, wanted to, couldn't-spend-another-day-thinking-of-anything-else – become acquainted with the world: its people, its food, its architecture, its history...its teeny, tiny intricacies

that would inevitably become a part of who I am. It was no longer just about a story or a Facebook profile picture; it was a voice in my head that was urging me to discover the world, so that I could better discover myself.

I ignored that voice for a while. I went on an intense job hunt. I was blessed with fantastic offers. I stressed about which one I should take...and then one day; I bumped into a man who off-handedly remarked that, "if I weren't married and didn't have kids, I would be a fly-fishing guide in Montana."

I wasn't sure if it truly was great advice, or if I just wanted it to be. Nonetheless, I called every single company and turned down their offers. Call it destiny. Call it fate. Call it whatever you want...but not 24 hours later, I had a plan.

**"Yes! Definitely. Positively. Absolutely. Count me in!"**

That, my friends, is the story of how and why I turned down my job offers, stumbled into an au pair position in France, and embarked on a mission to travel the world. I mapped out 10 weekend trips (one for every month of my job) and 2 longer trips – each designed to expose me to a different piece of the world's culture and to help me discover a differing perspective on my own life.

***Bonjour, my new world...***



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### **My Master Plan**

Beginning in June, I will move to Andilly, France, a small town nestled in the French Alps and located a mere 20 minutes from the Geneva, Switzerland airport. During the week, I will work as an au pair for a French family – Flo and Ives – taking care of their 2 children. Free food. Free housing. Free French lessons. And a nice stipend to help fund my travels.

One weekend per month, I will travel to a different area of Europe to learn about a unique perspective of the world's cultures: religion, art, architecture, gastronomy, fashion, music, language, dance, etc. The budget for these excursions was based on the average of the suggested funds for European travel (derived from multiple, multiple, multiple internet sites).

In addition to my weekend adventures, I will have two weeks of vacation. One will be spent in Germany – a tour of grand castles and lively, bustling cities. The other, in contrast, will be spent in Italy – a particular focus on natural landscapes and their serene magnificence.

And with that, I will say “Bonjour” to...

### **Gothic Art in Prague**

In addition to marveling at puppet masters and hitting up the Prague House of Photography, a great deal of time will be spent touring the Prague Castle, Old Town Hall, and the cathedrals – and also admiring the Baroque clocks.

### **Architecture in Budapest**

A walking tour of the historic Castle Hill is at the top of my “to do list”...along with the Budapest Opera House, the Chain Bridge, and the famous baths.

### **Classical Music in Vienna**

I will most certainly be dropping by Mozart's residence, listening to a classical concert, and strolling through the musical parks.

### **Historic Houses in Amsterdam**

Anne Frank, Rembrandt, and Van Gogh in one city? You can bet I'll be at those. A stroll along the canals and a peek at other famous houses is also a must.

### **Food in Copenhagen**

Home to the best restaurant in the world, three years running. Between boat tours, cycling trips, and snapshots of the colorfully decorated houses, I will pay particular attention to Danish pastries and open-faced sandwiches.

### **Religion in Rome**

St. Peter's Basilica. The Vatican. The Sistine Chapel...and, naturally, the Colosseum and a lot of gelato. Need I say more?



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### Romance in Venice

Riding in gondolas and sipping coffee in local cafes are both high on my list, but I'd also like to have a rendezvous with the city's Jewish architecture and explore the city's ghost stories.

### Fashion in Milan

Milan is a haute couture hotspot. When I'm not hunting down catwalk treasures and trotting through the oldest mall in the world, I plan on viewing The Last Supper and exploring the labyrinths.

### Pastries in Paris

French cuisine is world-renowned and will help me power through long adventures to the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, and the Louvre (among other notable sights).

### Everyday Culture in Lisbon

Lisbon is known for Fado music and ornate architecture...but I find the people and their casual, friendly attitudes (or so I've heard) to be most appealing. I plan on kicking it like the locals and soaking up any and all pieces of the Portuguese culture.

### Estimated Budget

Flight to Geneva	\$800
Weekend Travel (approx. \$100 round trip X 10 trips)	\$1,000
Weekend Food (approx. \$50/day X 2 days/trip X 10 trips)	\$1,000
Weekend Inner-City Travel (approx. \$20/day X 2 days/trip X 10 trips)	\$400
Weekend Museums/Activities (approx. \$30/day X 2 days/trip X 10 trips)	\$600
Weekend Accommodation (approx. \$30/day X 1 night/trip X 10 trips)	\$300
Weekend Souvenirs (approx. \$50/trip X 10 trips)	\$500

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**Sub Total European Weekend Trips** **\$4,600**

Transportation to/from Italy	\$200
Accommodation (\$30/night X 5 nights)	\$150
Food (\$50/day X 6 days)	\$300
Museums/Activities (\$30/day X 4 days in Florence)	\$120

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**Sub Total Cinque Terre and Florence Trip** **\$770**

Travel to Germany (\$100 round trip)	\$100
In-country Travel (approx. \$50 between cities X 4 cities)	\$200
Accommodation (\$30/night X 5 nights)	\$150
Food (\$50/day X 6 days)	\$300
Museums and Activities (\$30/day X 6 days)	\$180

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**Sub Total Germany Trip** **\$930**

### **Total Trip Expenses:**

Combined Sub Total Expenses	\$6,300
Weekly Entertainment (approx. \$75/week X 4 weeks/month X 9.5 months)	\$2,850
Less Personal Contribution (\$9/hour X 36 hours/month X 4 months)	(\$1,296)
Less Au Pair Salary (\$103/week X 4 weeks/month X 10 months)	(\$4,120)

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**Additional Funds Needed** **\$3,734**