

TRIP PROPOSAL

This summer, my desire is to experience European cultures. I want to sleep where they sleep, walk where they walk and eat what they eat. I want to be more than just a tourist; I want to be resident, even if it is only for a short time. My ideal destinations? Anywhere a Eurail and a backpack can take me! More realistically, however, Italy, France and Germany will be my intended destinations.

Of course, my dreams are endless for what to do in these countries. I want to ride a gondola through the canals of Venice; touch a remnant of the Berlin Wall in Germany; stroll through the streets of Paris while munching on a baguette. As incredible as those prospects sound, I don't want to just sightsee. Again, I don't want to be a tourist. I have very specific reasons for wanting to visit each of these countries, the basis of which begins with my faith and moral growth during high school.

Educationally, high school history classes offered instruction on the rise and fall of nations and empires. I was fascinated by how rulers governed, and how absolute power could either benefit a nation or lead to its downfall. Outside of the classroom, I was lucky enough to spend all four of my high school spring breaks on international mission trips to some of the world's poorest countries. My experiences abroad during this time included Panama, Nicaragua and Guatemala. Our goal on these trips was to have a life-changing impact, both spiritually and physically, on the lives of the people. Due to that stated mission, we were never tourists and we lived, ate and slept with the people. During that time, I learned more about other peoples' walks of life than any World History/Geography class could have ever taught me and saw the beauty of their countries through their eyes. I learned to see my friends not as "indigent people" who needed *my* help, but rather as generous people who would invite me into their homes and share their meager food with me, as I attempted to give *them* food. I often wonder who was ministering to whom, as they left a lasting impact on my life, spiritually and emotionally.

My impetus for choosing Italy, France and Germany is to build upon the deep impact that my previous experiences abroad have had on me. Rome, Italy will be first on my list of places to go. I have been fascinated with Rome ever since I read *A Voice in the Wind*, by Francine Rivers. It is a book about a young Judeo-Christian woman taken as a slave by a wealthy Roman family. The book follows her as she struggles to live out her faith in the face of Christian persecution. In the book, she met with Christians in catacombs, shared the gospel in the face of death and eventually fought for her life in the Coliseum. Although this book is fictional, it paints an incredible picture of the faith of the Christians during this time period. As a Christian myself, I deeply desire to get a firsthand glimpse into their experience. I want to put into perspective the marginal degree that I "suffer" for Christ compared to those who suffered to the point of death for their faith.

My next stop would be Germany. I have always found the country of Germany such a paradox. The nation itself is breathtaking, with mountains, streams and castles. It has given great thinkers, inspiring music and even Great Britain's ruling house. Yet to most youth in America, when Germany is mentioned, it is almost synonymous with the Third Reich. When

reading of the atrocities committed during this time, I think people are universally aghast, but what of those who had no part in the evil? It is easy to fantasize that I would have been noble enough to stand for what is right against a tide of people doing what is wrong. I, however, haven't been challenged to that degree yet. I search myself to see if I would have gone with the flow (I am a rule follower at heart), or would I be a Dietrich Bonhoeffer who had the strength to speak out and die for his convictions. Just as I learned not to see my friends on my mission trip as "indigent people", I want a chance to learn about myself and my strength of character while visiting Dachau and yet at the same time be rubbing shoulders with the locals at beer halls. I want to humanize a people group that has been anything but human in my history books.

My backpacking adventures will have taken me on a religious history tour in Italy, an ethics journey in Germany and the motivation for my final destination, France, albeit less noble, is a reflection of the self-indulgence of Louis XIV. I want to go to France to sightsee! I want to see the palace, the art at the Louvre, climb the Eiffel Tower, and stroll along the Seine. I want to see the city of lights and then journey into the countryside and to see the magnificent chateaus. However much it pains me to admit, a trip to Europe wouldn't be complete without a smidge of tourist-like sightseeing, and I aim to strap on my fanny pack, and do just that in France.

Thankfully, I will have plenty of opportunities to see Spain this summer by walking the Camino de Santiago. I am doing this walk through an A&M study abroad program that will take us 500 miles along this historic route. However, I don't want my first time in Europe to be limited to Spain as part of a large group. I yearn to experience more. More than a study abroad can offer, and more than any teacher could possibly lecture.

I have recognized through my mission trips that my learning is not limited to a classroom; that the accumulation of life experiences that can never be written in a textbook is more valuable than any lecture. I view experiencing Europe as a furtherance of my education, not a distraction or break from it. Therefore, with your help, I would love to stay in Europe for an additional twenty-one days.

TRIP BREAKDOWN

Tentative Itinerary

May 15-June 27: Walk the Camino de Santiago

June 27: Study abroad ends and tour of Europe begins!

June 27-July 3: Leave Spain and visit Italy. Here, I will tour Rome and visit the Roman Coliseum, St. Peter's Basilica, the Trevi Fountain, and Roman Forum. The catacombs, of course, would also be a priority. Next, I would travel up to Florence and see Michelangelo's David sculpture and have great Italian cuisine. Lastly, I would travel to Venice and explore a city that has always intrigued me.

July 3-July 10: Travel to and visit France. Here I want to explore as much as possible. I would, of course, spend a few days to soak in all of Paris. After that, I would love to see some of the famed French chateaus such as Chateau de Versailles or Chateau de Chambord. These gorgeous

structures were built for the French Royal Family in the 16th century as hunting lodges or homes and are great examples of French architecture. Additionally, I would love to be able to see Normandy if time permits.

July 10-July 18: Catch a train from France over to Germany. Head over to Munich where Dachau will be stop number one. That is my main priority. After that, I would love to explore the city, go to the Neuschwanstein Castle, the Linderhof Palace and the Englischer Garden. From Munich, catch a train to Nuremberg where I will fly out of. Before leaving, however, I want to visit the courthouse where the post-war trials took place.

July 18: Fly home!

FINANCES

Airfare	\$1000
Eurail Pass	\$486
Flight from Madrid to Rome	\$50
Hostels (21 days X \$25 per night)	\$525
Food (21 days X \$15 per day)	\$315
Emergencies	\$250
Tourist and Museum Fees	\$250
Boat in Venice	\$50
<u>Expenses for random fun</u>	<u>\$250</u>
Total Cost	\$3,176
<u>(Personal Savings)</u>	<u>(\$1000)</u>
Total Need	\$2,176



Tossing the frisbee in Panama



Mission trip in Nicaragua



Making friends in Guatemala