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Summer 2017 Report

Thanks to the generosity of the Languages and Cultures Department of West Chester University for awarding me with a Study Abroad award, I was able to fulfill an incredible dream of mine after more than six years of learning Spanish and desiring to visit Spain. This opportunity to finally travel to Spain was made far easier thanks to these funds helping to cover the plane tickets as well as part of the tuition as well. Without such a heavy financial burden on my shoulders, I was far freer in my ability to both indulge in the incredible city and the culture of Barcelona. I had many fears, worries and doubts about traveling before this trip, yet by the time a few weeks had passed, I felt as much a native in the city as any other local. I discovered so much about myself on the trip as well, such as my absolute adoration of traveling that has already inspired me take another trip very soon.

The classes I took while in Barcelona were quite fascinating to me, as we looked at the urban development and growth of Barcelona and its culture from its start to the sprawling and beautiful city that is so famous today. From each new district added such as L'Eixample to each historic battle or siege that took place within it, I was fascinated and couldn't wait to come to class every day. As my classes were later in the day, I often found myself leaving my host home and picking a direction and simply walking until my feet refused to go any farther. Taking in the incredible sights and magnificent buildings, seeing the architecture shift and change depending on the direction I chose. I explored from the Ciutat Vella to Barceloneta and more, though not even my desire to explore and the six weeks our program lasted gave me enough time to fully explore everything in the city as I wish I could have!

Perhaps the fear I most fretted about was my own abilities to speak Spanish and how I would handle communicating with the locals. As much as I adore speaking Spanish, using it in my house whenever I can, always looking up new words, eagerly attacking every day in my Spanish classes, I still doubted my own abilities to speak it when with an actual native. As with most of my other fears, they were baseless and just my mind playing with me, as I did just fine when needing to communicate with locals and finally had the opportunity I was hoping for. I was forced to speak Spanish in many occasions and couldn't switch to English as I had in my classes before. My knowledge and fluency exploded, growing as quickly as I dreamed it might when I found myself in a Spanish-speaking country.

One of my fondest memories from the trip was when I made friends with two of the locals, Bety and Grace, who invited me over and another friend of theirs from Britain, Adam, who was in the city as well. The four of us had an incredible time; switching between talking in Spanish and English, talking about our countries, culture, and so many more things. Meeting this incredible group of people and making some friends along the way was something I will not soon forget. It was times such as this that expanded my worldview so far beyond what I thought I had known before this trip, as being in a totally different part of the world was beyond words.

I gained far more than a few credits during my stay in Barcelona. I gained an experience I will never forget throughout my life. I gained knowledge and an understanding for Barcelona, Spain, and the world that I never would have gained otherwise. I learned more Spanish than a classroom environment could hope to provide for me. Most importantly of all, I can now share all of this and more with my friends, classmates and colleagues thanks to the help of the scholarship from the Department of Languages and Cultures to bring me on this fantastic adventure that will forever hold a special place in my heart.