Major/Minor: Global Studies, Geography
Country: France Program: Lyon Immersion Term & Year Abroad: 2008-2009 Academic Year

*What type of student should go on this program (ex: personality traits, major, etc)?
Anyone! If you love great food, beautiful architecture, passionate people, and endless opportunities to explore culture, then Lyon is the place to go!

Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
  As far as personality and teaching styles, they vary just as UCSB instructors do.

- Could you call them by their first names?
  I would say always call them by their last name unless the indicate otherwise.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
  Well I was mostly in large auditorium classes where the professor wouldn’t know you individually and those relationships were definitely formal, but even in the smaller classes I was enrolled in the student/instructor relationship was still pretty formal.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
  They don’t have designated office hours, but if you need to talk to them I’m sure they would make themselves available.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
  No, for the most part there is no busy work at all, and as long as you attend lecture you will do fine on the final exam.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
  The grading system is based on a 1-20 scale, 20 being the best. NO ONE EVER GETS A 20!!

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
  Besides our ILP (Intensive Language Program), which you take during the first semester, I had no other assignments or reading. My grades were based entirely on a final exam or final paper.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
  I had one oral exam, which was by far much easier than the written exams (but written exams were not bad by any means!)

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
  Weeelllll, most of my exams were given on a set date, but professors are pretty flexible with exchange students. For one class we were never given a specific date of when the exam would be taken, it ended up being 3 months after the class was over, but it was all very relaxed and an easy oral exam.

- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
  I got help from other French students; they are very willing to share notes.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
Absolutely! In all aspects of life abroad you have to take more initiative, whether were talking about classes or traveling. The independence and initiative I gained abroad makes just about any situation back in your home country that much easier to deal with.

- **Was classroom participation expected?**
  Not expected but certainly encouraged.

- **How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?**
  Definitely less busy work, emphasis is on lecture not on readings, and there is usually just one big final exam or paper that will entirely determine your grade.

- **Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?**
  Classes were once a week for about 2 hours.

- **What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?**
  You should certainly show up on time, and depending on class size you may or may not be able to eat/drink in class. There is not the kind of “school spirit” endemic to American universities, but students still do organize events and parties.

**Language**

- **In which languages were the courses offered?**
  The courses we took were almost entirely in French, I took one class on the American Supreme Court which was taught in English and was actually very good!

- **What language did you take your courses in?**
  Mostly French.

- **If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.**
  In the beginning it’s difficult to keep up with most instructors, but you’ll feel comfortable in lecture after a month or two…or three. Certain professors are easier to understand than others, some even the French students can’t understand, so good luck! We didn’t have to take any placement exams.

**Host University**

- **How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building?**
  The university campuses are spread throughout the city, there are 3 campuses that you may be taking classes at. Your classes may be spread throughout the 3 or you might get lucky and have all your classes at the same location. For l’IEP, which is the private political science school, I’d say there were a couple thousand kids, and I’m not sure about the public Lyon II, but it is definitely much larger. Two of the three campus locations are right in the middle of the city, taking up one block each and located a couple blocks form each other. The other campus, Bron, is a bit outside of the city center and takes about 15 minutes by tram; it more resembles a big American high school than a university.

- **Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?**
There is no “on campus” living, there are student residences but I would advise against them, they don’t have the kind of student atmosphere that we associate with dorms in the US. Most students either rent somewhere in the city or live with their family if they’re from Lyon.

- **If not located in the city center,**
  - **How far or close is it to the city?**
    Lyon II and l’IEP located right in the city, Bron is about 15 minutes outside of the city, which really isn’t too bad.
  - **What type of public transportation could you take – cost?**
    You can take metro, tram, bus, public bike-the transportation options are endless! It only costs you about 30 euros a month for complete access.
  - **Could students take cabs –cost?**
    Generally you will not take cabs, no need for them with the great transportation system, which is absolutely amazing!
  - **How long would it take to get to the city center?**
    Depends on where you live, I was lucky and was right in the city center. Otherwise maybe it would take 10 to 15 minutes, but again it really just depends on where you live.

- **Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?**
  There aren’t that many student clubs, but they do have intramurals which I highly recommend checking out!

- **Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?**
  On the Bron campus there is a small bookstore, but the couple books I had to buy, I found them at the local bookstore.

- **Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?**
  There is a computer lab on campus, but I highly recommend bringing your labtop!

- **What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)**
  Since the campus is in the middle of the city there are all kinds of establishments in the neighborhood.

**Housing**

- **What types of accommodations are available to UC students?**
  You have the option of living in apartments, houses, student residences, or homestays.

- **How close are they to campus?**
  Just depends on where you end up, you could be a 5 minute walk from campus or a 15 minute metro ride. But even the friends I knew living the furtherst from campus never had to travel more than 20 or 30 minutes which really isn’t too bad.

- **How did you find your housing?**
  Found my apartment using online listing sites.

- **Where did you live and with whom?**
I was lucky and found an apartment very near the city center which I shared with one roommate. I had a great experience with my roommate, but I think having an extra roommate or two improves conversational language skills even more.

- **If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?**
  It was a little stressful mainly because our language skills weren’t that great within the first month or arriving, but we all found really nice places within a couple weeks.

- **Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?**
  Most of the apartments were nicer than I.V. apartments, and you will most likely get a room to yourself.

- **Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?**
  My rent was about the same as my I.V. rent, and again I had my own room. My rent was just around 600 dollars, but the French government will reimburse you for a certain percentage of your rent, sometimes up to a couple hundred euros. NOTE: there are certain circumstances that will make you ineligible to receive that government aid, since my roommate’s dad was our landlord, I was not able to receive government aid. Also, I believe if you were subleasing that disqualified you as well.

- **How/who did you pay for housing?**
  I just gave a check to my roommate.

**Food**

- **What was the food like?**
  AMAZING! Try anything and everything you come across, it’s all so fresh and so delicious and absolutely one of the aspects of France that I miss the most! Make sure to check out your local bakeries and all their delicious bread! A couple of our favorite stops were Space Pizza and the kebabs from the vans by the river..soooo good!!!

- **Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?**
  I ate most of my meals at home, which is by far the cheapest way to go. The grocery stores, shops, and open air markets have so much cheap and delicious food to offer that you’ll be happy to be cooking at home, I’ve never eaten so well and felt so good in all my life!

- **How much was an average meal?**
  You can find great deals at restaurants, sometimes offering 2 or 3 course meals for under 20 dollars!

- **What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?**
  The French tend to eat dinner later than we would, but not really anything you need to worry about.

- **Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?**
  It can be difficult at certain restaurants, especially concerning lyonnaise cuisine which can be intimidating for even the biggest carnivores. But a couple friends of ours were vegetarians or not too into meat, and we rarely had problems finding nice places to eat!
Travel/Safety

- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?

The public transportation was INCREDIBLE!! It was so incredibly cheap and easy to get around with metro, trams, buses, public bikes that I never had a problem. There are multiple options that drop you off practically at the university doors.

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?

I very rarely felt unsafe in Lyon, the only tip I would offer is for girls not to get worked up over what guys in the street might say. It takes some getting used to, but you have to realize that most of those tough guys out there are harmless.

- Describe the public transportation in your host country?

Metro, tram, bus, public bikes that reach all over the city. It costs about 30 euros once a month for complete access.

- Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?

Very easy and very cheap. With cheap airlines you can get flights for as low a price as 20 euro. But also make sure to travel by train throughout the year, if you only travel by plane you’ll miss all the small towns and villages and never see the beautiful countrysides of the countries you’re visiting. Also, going by train gives you more liberty to decide when and where you go as you go, which can be very spontaneous and exciting!

Host City/Country

- What was the weather like?

If you’re a California native like me, be prepared to actually see and live through all the seasons of the year! It was amazing seeing the change of the seasons for the first time in my life, but winter was a little rough, make sure you bring a very warm winter coat with you.

- Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?

I don’t know if I can compare Lyon to any city in the US. Lyon is one of the most beautiful cities I’ve ever seen. There are two rivers that run through the city, beautiful architecture and cobble stone streets, amazing and affordable cuisine, friendly people and such rich culture. And for a decently sized city it’s amazing how clean it is, unlike most large US cities I’ve visited.

- What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?

Ahhh there is so much to do in Lyon I don’t know where to begin! Make sure to check out the restaurants and many museums, take notice of flyers posted throughout the city that advertise really cool cheap events like concerts or shows(ex. Grrrrndzero offers great music shows worth checking out), there are numerous fairs and events all year long, the parks in Lyon are absolutely beautiful, ahhhh there is really just too much to list, but a couple unique things we did that I would advise checking out are: Planitarium in Lyon, the boat bars on the Rhone, Space Pizza, hookah bars, open air markets, Parc Feyssine, ethnic food shops off the Guillotierre stop, hanging out at the skate park on the Rhone, I don’t know just explore as much as you can, hop on a bus and take it to the end of it’s circuit, go for a run with no destination in mind and see where you end up, there’s always something cool around the corner that you’ll never hear about unless you stumble upon it yourself!

- How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
As far as business goes I have no idea, but Lyon is incredibly diverse with people of all different nationalities and religions coming from all over Europe and the Mediterranean, and you see that wherever you are in the city. It’s not a huge tourist hub, which is perfect! It allows you to really immerse yourself with your fellow Lyonnaise and not be taken as a tourist.

**Culture**

- **Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.**
  - **Time & punctuality**
    Be on time and punctual, just as you would want to be here, if you do inconvenience them they will let you know!
  - **Eye contact & staring**
    Ahhh the French and staring, they sure do love them stares. Sometimes it can be a little uncomfortable, but it’s really one of the more amusing cultural differences. Guys will certainly not hesitate in staring at girls, and if you’re doing something a French person doesn’t appreciate then be ready for some daggers! Don’t worry about it or anything, but just know its coming!
  - **Relationships**
    Well girls, just know if you give a guy your number he might take that to mean that you two are in love and should be getting married within a month or two, the “game” is certainly a bit different than what were used to but really fun, the guys are very flirtatious and it’s usually always in good fun!
  - **More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?**
    The sweats and t-shirts don’t quite cut it in Lyon, the French are pretty sharp dressers! That’s not to say you need to go and buy a new wardrobe, everyone still pretty much just wears jeans.
  - **Alcohol consumption**
    French students drink just as American students do, but keep in mind you’re not living in Isla Vista and will probably have neighbors who have kids or work in the morning.
  - **What culture shock did you go through?**
    The biggest culture shock for me was the straightforward and blunt manner of the French. If they are upset or disagree with you they will let you know, which is something I eventually got used to and in the end came to appreciate. You don’t have to worry about mixed signals or misunderstandings because everyone’s opinions and feelings are made clear. The French let their opinions be known but don’t expect you to adopt their beliefs, they love discussion and debate, so don’t take it personally and speak your mind as well!

**Banking**

- **Were credit cards widely accepted?**
  Yes, practically everywhere.

- **Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?**
  We all opened a local bank account, which involved some tedious paperwork, but was relatively easy. Dealing with the bank throughout the year was a bit of a hassle, but a necessary evil.

- **If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM? Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?**
  I am not sure, but I believe Washington Mutual had no ATM fees. I have Wells Fargo and would get a 30 dollar fee anytime I took cash out directly from my American account.
- Were there ATMs on campus?
  No ATMs on campus, but located throughout the city.