

Studying abroad complements the Psychology Major

Peer Advisors discuss study-abroad opportunities for Psychology Majors.

By Katie Saunders, Amy Opilla, Erin Wilkinson, Kristin Sofield, Katie East, Ashleigh Adams
Edited by: Dana Edwards

Studying abroad is a fantastic opportunity available to all JMU students. Studying abroad can be the adventure of a lifetime. This experience can be academically and personally challenging, it can strengthen your education, and it can give a new perspective by learning about another culture. Studying abroad also can help students prepare to enter the global workplace.

Most Psychology Majors can easily include an international experience in their academic program and still graduate on time. Some students use study abroad opportunities to complete or supplement general education requirements in art, music, history, political science, economics, humanities, or literature. Some use their experience to improve foreign language skills required in the B.A. degree or foreign language minor. It's also possible to take some psychology coursework abroad.

Destinations

JMU has several study abroad programs, or students can participate in a study abroad program of another university and transfer the credit you earn back to JMU. Whether traveling through a JMU-sponsored program or a non-JMU program, students have the opportunity to study practically anywhere.

JMU offers many fall, spring, and summer study abroad programs. In addition, students can travel through another university, such as Virginia Tech, George Mason, or UVA, or deal directly with a foreign university through direct enrollment.

The Application Process

There are two deadlines for JMU-sponsored programs, based on early decision and regular decision applicants. To apply for Summer 2003, Fall 2003, and Spring 2004 trips, the early decision application deadline is November 15, 2002 and the regular decision application deadline is February 1, 2003.

When applying, expect to provide information that will be important for the participant selection process such as a transcript, letters of recommendation, and a personal essay describing what you hope to gain from studying abroad. After your application is reviewed, expect to be notified by December 6, 2002 for early decision applicants and February 11, 2003 for regular decision applicants. If you are approved, expect to submit a \$400 non-refundable deposit. Orientation meetings are mandatory and will be scheduled as soon as possible. Accepted

applicants will be notified of these meetings when dates are scheduled.

Sample JMU Study Abroad Opportunities

Semester or summer trips

Martinique Florence

Buenos Aires Salamanca

London Antwerp, Belgium

Paris Ghana

Specialized trips

Argentina Galapagos

Brazil Cardiff, Wales

Chile Germany

Costa Rica Rome

Cuba Russia

China Dominican Republic

Mexico Indonesia

Thailand India

(Source: <http://www.jmu.edu/international/studyabroad/saprogs.html>)

**Sample JMU Study
Abroad Opportunities
Semester or summer trips**

To study abroad you will need a passport and you may also need a visa, especially if you are spending greater than 90 days abroad and are visiting particular countries. Obtaining a passport and visa can take some time, so students should start this process early.

Expenses

Study abroad programs do cost more than studying within the United States. However, many students can study abroad because financial aid is available to help reduce the costs. Because of the additional costs of studying abroad involves, such as housing, learning excursions, and books, financial aid eligibility increases when applying for these programs. For more information about financial aid options, see JMU's website, <http://www.jmu.edu/international/studyabroad/finaidguide.html>.

Sample Study Abroad Experiences

Australia

Kat Holmes as reported to Amy Opilla

I am a senior psychology major and I participated in Australearn, a non-JMU study abroad program. I went to the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia for one semester. I found out about this program from the JMU International Education office and applied to the program online.

As part of the application process, I visited JMU department heads and received prior approval to transfer credit to JMU before registering. I was able to take two psychology classes that were not offered at JMU. Being able to observe the behavior of people other than Americans improved my understanding of social psychology.

There were about 30 students from all over the United States at my school in Australia. I feel that I benefited from the program in many ways: I met new people from all over the world, was able to view a new perspective on life, and formed wonderful friendships. Traveling alone and living in a different country also enhanced my independence.

I would advise students who have the means to participate in a program similar to this one to definitely "go for it." Talk to someone who has studied abroad to gain a better perspective of what to expect. Studying in Australia truly was an amazing experience and I feel that I learned more there than I have learned in my entire college career.

Greece

Erin Wilkinson

This summer I had the opportunity to travel to Greece during a three-week summer study abroad program, and it was an incredible experience to say the least. The program was offered through George Mason University and was led by a former JMU professor, Dr. Anastasia Kitsantas. The program centered on the course Health Psychology and the primary goal was to complete a cross-cultural study of the health practices in Greece and America and exploring how the field of psychology is implemented in their country.



Our professor's homeland is Greece and she was therefore a perfect tour guide. She speaks Greek, but our classes were conducted in English. Classes were held during the first ten days at the beach hotel, Gerakina, right on the Aegean Sea. We took daily trips to neighboring towns including the second largest city in Greece, Thessaloniki, as well as Mt. Olympus. We met people and received a true sense of the culture. I concluded that Americans should learn from Greeks, because like many other European countries, they have a "siesta" from 2-5 p.m. everyday.

The second portion of our trip included a week in Athens. Our hotel roof overlooked the entire city of Athens and is famous for having the best view of the Acropolis. Daily trips were made to the many historical sites in the city. The integration of modern life and ruins was, at times, overwhelming. Walking out of an internet café to look upon the remains of the Temple of Zeus is not an experience you find available everyday, nor is taking a lap around the original Olympic stadium, watching a ballet in a theatre overlooking the Parthenon, or spending late night hours in the Plaka (the center of night life in Athens).

Our final portion of the trip was a cruise through the Aegean Sea with six stops on the islands of Mykenos, Ephesus, Patmos, Rhodes, and Santorini. They say that some people do not like the islands because they are too "picture perfect." I agree they are just that, picture perfect, but I loved every moment I was there! We ended in the island of Santorini, and after riding up one thousand stairs on the back of a donkey to reach the top of the island, I decided I was completely willing to give my ride back down to someone else and remain there for the rest of the summer.

Traveling with two fellow JMU students and ten other girls, I earned three credits during this three-week program. It was honestly one of the most amazing three weeks of my life. Studying abroad is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that should not be passed by.

France and Italy

Kristin Sofield

My study abroad experience allowed me to travel to two countries, while earning three credits during a three-week May course. About 50 students traveled with Dr. Mario Hamlet-Metz, a JMU professor from the foreign language department. Our trip started in Paris, and then continued in the Loire Valley, Nice, Pisa, Florence, Venice, Sienna, and Rome. While we traveled, we kept a journal detailing our experiences. At the conclusion of the trip, we wrote a paper based upon our experiences.

I enjoyed the program because I had the opportunity to see sights that many people never see. I also learned about French and Italian culture by experiencing it firsthand. I was able to understand the things I experienced because Dr. Hamlet-Metz lectured about everything we saw.

This program is a great compliment to any major, especially the Psychology Major. I have a minor in Sociology, and this program was especially beneficial since it made me more aware and helped me to appreciate cultures different from my own. I would definitely recommend a program like this one, especially if you like to travel and you don't want to be gone for an entire semester.

Conclusion

There are hundreds of programs available to JMU students. There are many benefits of participating in a study abroad experience. For Psychology Majors, the knowledge and experience will influence the rest of your JMU career. Being a student with international experiences enhances your marketability when you search for jobs or apply to graduate school.

For more information check out the JMU Study Abroad web site at www.jmu.edu/international/studyabroad. Students can also stop by their office in Hillcrest East, Monday through Friday, 9:00-noon and 1:00-4:00.

Contact Information

Office of International Programs

<http://www.jmu.edu/international/studyabroad>

Phone: (540) 568-6419

E-mail: international@jmu.edu