

# The Gorgeous Unknown

## Two Students' Study Abroad Experiences and Why You Should Go Too

By Anna Paulson

For sophomores Megan Nelson and Josh Smith, study abroad began with an interest in culture. "I've always been interested in Spanish culture," explained Nelson.

"I just like their liveliness; everything is so colorful." Smith wanted to learn more about his Irish roots. After meeting with advisors in the C.A.L.L. Center, Nelson and Smith tackled one of the hardest parts of the process: deciding exactly where to go. Finally, Smith picked Galway, Ireland, while Nelson chose Barcelona, Spain, after Google-imaging different places. "I've always really loved extravagant things, and Barcelona was nothing but that," Nelson said with a smile. Nelson's interest in the Spanish language also prompted her to choose a place where she could practice and develop her linguistic skills.

Besides providing an exciting opportunity to engage a different culture, study abroad sets students apart by increasing their responsibility, confidence, and awareness. "It makes you stand out," said C.A.L.L. Center advisor Kate Larson. With a program to guide them, Nelson and Smith thrived in their new environments. Smith recalled that the scariest part was flying to a country where he did not know anyone, but he quickly made friends. His program supervisor led several excursions to popular sites in Ireland, like the beautiful Cliffs of Moher and was always available for help. "You have someone to go

to for anything that you need," said Smith. Nelson said she had best friends within the first week. She pointed out, "I don't think it has to do with a person's personality. Everyone's so excited to be there; you make friends instantly, even quiet people." Every weekend, Nelson and her group of friends traveled together, taking advantage of cheap plane tickets to cities like Rome, Paris, and Venice.

Smith and Nelson highly recommend study abroad to students. "Definitely, 110%," said Smith. "I want to go again." Nelson advised, "If it even crosses your mind, you should. I couldn't ever underestimate how much I learned about myself and how much better of a person I am. I can say with confidence that any person can benefit from it." Interested students should schedule an appointment with an advisor in the C.A.L.L. Center.

Larson recommends that students stop by as early as possible, preferably a year before they want to study abroad. If finances are a concern, Larson encourages students to stop by. "Don't let finances be the reason you can't study abroad," said Larson. "At least come to the office and find out what your options are, because there are options. We have very affordable programs." After all, Larson asked, "When else are you going to be able to do this? Life gets busy, so this is the time to do it."



"There's no day like an Irish day," said Smith, pictured here at the Cliffs of Moher.



Barcelona, Spain



Nelson lived just five blocks away from this famous church, Sagrada Família.



Galway, Ireland