



Five Lessons from Studying Abroad: Pat Messenger

Pat Messenger is a study abroad alumnus from Fall 2012. He studied abroad at the University of the Sunshine Coast, in Brisbane, Australia.

Studying abroad has been an extraordinary experience. I'm not sure how I can highlight the past four and a half months, so I will explain the five biggest lessons I've learned from studying abroad.

1. Life goes on without a phone. That is right. Life. Goes. On. Before I left for Australia, I was glued to my iPhone. I have a horrible disorder. I call it SMA, that stands for "Social Media Addiction." I used to be on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Youtube all of the time. I mean, I'd be at dinner or in a meeting and guess what I was doing? You're right, I was on my smart phone checking social media sites, emails, or texts. How sick. When I came to Australia, I no longer used my iPhone (besides running) and I bought one or three prepaid phones. Okay, the total number of prepaid phones I bought in Australia was three. Don't ask me why or how I lost them, you don't want to know the answer. Anyways, I lost my third phone in Sydney, so about one month ago. That means I have lived without any type of phone for one month. I would recommend this to anyone: try going a week without your smartphone. Delete all social media applications and shut off your email for just ONE WEEK. You'll miss it at first, but after a while, it is refreshing to turn off the technology and really have a conversation (or martini) with no distractions.

2. Trust yourself. Cliche, right? I know. Trusting my gut got me to Australia in the first place. I felt in my heart that I needed a change. I needed to explore the world and try to figure myself out. I learned quickly that if I was going to actually experience Australia and have fun, I needed to trust

my instincts. When you study abroad, there are many things thrown in your way at the same time and it is so easy to get caught up in the excitement. Having fun is always a priority while abroad, but when you feel that pull in your stomach or hear that little voice in your head or see the angel and devil battling out your options on your shoulders, take a step back and recognize what you want to happen. Taking advantage of opportunities and testing your limits is what studying abroad is all about. Don't be quick to dismiss something that is "different" to you, but make sure to think before you act. I always think, "Would I want to tweet that I'm doing this?" It's sad, but remember: I have a problem...

3. Say "hi." It is that easy. Hi is only a two letter word. It isn't one of the nasty four-letter words. It doesn't start with an "f." You don't have to say "double hockey sticks" when you're spelling it out in front of toddlers. All you have to do is say "hi" and a relationship is born. Don't believe me, try it. Okay, I might have lied. After you say "hi," try to follow it up by introducing yourself and finding common grounds by actually talking about life and experiences. I found success in talking about going to the pool, shopping at the plaza and future travel plans. I guess those are obvious choices because everyone goes to the pool, shops at the plaza and is planning a trip. Saying "hi" is another way I pushed myself to step outside of my comfort zone to continue making friends and learning about myself.

Best, Pat!

4. Money matters. Being abroad has taught me a great deal about financial planning and budgeting. I traveled a lot in the past four months and I only had one hiccup with finances... Dam you, Sydney. Besides that, I was very conscious of my spending habits. General brands at the grocery store are just as good as the name brand and



Sophia Viglione:
Photo Contest Winner,
Spring 2013

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY OF YOUR STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE?

"You can't tell us to choose just one favorite memory! How about spending a year climbing, planking, and parkouring on everything, Geocaching, bike riding, traveling, and learning something new every day?"

-Melissa Erikson, Germany, 2011—2012

and cheaper. Obvious choice = general brand. Going out to eat once a week = \$25-30, making the same meal at home = less than \$10. Obvious choice = making my own food. Money does matter. If I wanted to travel, buy new clothes, and have internet (we have to pay for internet every month), I had to manage my financials. Part of managing money is finding tricks where you can save and then finding the appropriate time to splurge on a steak or a trip to New Zealand.

5. Smile. Everyone loves to smile. When I would feel homesick or sad for missing a birthday or holiday, I made sure to start of my day by smiling for five minutes. My cheeks would hurt after two minutes or so, but it was hard to complain when I was smiling. All of my experiences challenged me in different ways. The people I most respect have always

me that a situation is what I make of it. I've always been a positive person, but for a while, I was becoming negative and just meh. I'm not sure what it was. Maybe the Australian sun was making me crazy or I just missed home, but when I decided to smile more often, all of my problems vanished. Sure, I might sound crazy right now, but really: try it.

My experience abroad has been, well, I don't know how to explain it. It leaves me speechless. Never have I been in a more relaxed atmosphere for such a long period of time. Never have I trusted complete strangers so quickly to consider them my friends. Never have I thought about leaving home for home.

Australia has been my home for the last 142 days. Incredible. I will miss this. A lot.

My year in Baldwin Wallace University

Lucille Guihle la Combe deVillers is an international exchange from MICEFA in France. She is studying abroad at BW for the entire 2012—2013 academic year.

Choosing a university in another country without the possibility of going there to visit is really hard because you can never know what you'll be confronted with once you're there. It will be a new country where no one speaks your language, where you know no one, where things work differently, and where people have a different idea of what is normal than in your home country.

I decided to come to Baldwin Wallace University because I wanted to be in a relatively small University, where I could have a home-like feeling, where people would know my name... I wanted to have a real American-student experience, meet "real" people, see "real" things.

And Baldwin Wallace seldom let me down on those expectations. After six months here, I deeply feel like I belong, like I am accepted even when I am not really understood.

No, it hasn't been easy. I have missed my family, I have been homesick and sometimes even depressed. But meeting new people and trying new things, having new experiences made this year an unforgettable journey. I feel like I understand and accept difference more, I feel like I have learned how to be true to myself without the presence of my friends and family. I feel like it made me appreciate what I have more, and it gave me more hope for the future in general. What I began to view as a dead-end street now appears to me like a field of endless possibilities. Also, on a more practical viewpoint, I feel like I now understand American culture a lot more, and what I knew in theory I now really get; and I know how much, and how deeply, your beautiful people can offer love and acceptance.

After my year in Baldwin-Wallace, overall, I have more hope, for myself and for the world.



Spotlight: Robyn Spangler

Robyn Spangler is a study abroad alumna from Fall 2011. She studied abroad at Hong Kong Baptist University, located in Hong Kong, China.

What was your favorite memory?

Robyn Spangler (RS): I loved getting to know both the city and the more rural areas of Hong Kong. Camping on the beaches on the weekends was one of my favorite things I did while abroad.

What was your thing about living in the city of Hong Kong?

RS: Hong Kong has the BEST dim sum and public transportation. It is so easy to get from restaurant to restaurant to try great Cantonese foods!

What did you learn from your experience studying abroad?

RS: Learning to be more flexible was inevitable. My roommate was a local and did not speak much English. Learning to communicate with her was challenging, but always entertaining for both of us.

What is your role in the International Student Services office?

RS: I am currently an International Student Ambassador.