

A Journey of Growth in Strasbourg

Sponsored by Lone Star College and in partnership with CESI Engineering School, this two-week trip to Strasbourg, France, gave me insight into how artificial intelligence is being used to advance modern innovation, and provided me with a rich, unforgettable experience abroad. This poster will explore Strasbourg's educational lifestyle, environmental conservation efforts, and collaboration across diverse groups. Since I had never been outside of the country before this trip, I was expecting a large amount of culture shock. And my expectations were met, but I embraced it wholeheartedly. I was fascinated by the differences in societal norms, city regulations, and educational culture in Strasbourg as compared to the United States. And although there were a lot of similarities, I found the differences quite beautiful. Overall, my time in Strasbourg taught me to appreciate humanity, embrace community, and make the most of every situation.



Adapting to a New Rhythm of Educational Lifestyle

Because France emphasizes community and interaction, mealtimes are typically taken much more seriously. Back in the U.S., especially in a work or school environment, a rigid schedule may permit thirty minutes for lunch. However, at CESI, we were given anywhere from 1 to 2 whole hours for lunch. Additionally, in Strasbourg and many other places in Europe, most shops are closed on Sunday, which supports this idea. Furthered by the free-flowing nature of the streets of Strasbourg, the academic atmosphere at CESI was much different than a typical classroom back in the United States. Because of this, collaboration was encouraged much more in the CESI classroom than back in the U.S., where educational techniques are more straightforward.



Conservation Efforts through Transportation and Accessibility

Throughout the entirety of the trip, I noticed a wide range of environmental conservation efforts through not only public sanitation measures, electricity conservation, and water conservation, but also through many forms of transportation and the ease of access around the city.

Forms of Transportation

Among other efforts toward energy and environmental conservation, I observed numerous measures through forms of transportation. For starters, there were a great deal of bus and tram stops, usually just around five to ten minutes walking distance apart in the inner city. Although the buses run on fossil fuels, the tram system is a popular electric alternative, but it is used more for travel over longer distances. On the other hand, most everything in central Strasbourg is within walking distance, which is in part due to the city's history and upbringing. Moreover, while half of personal transportation is through cars or motorcycles/scooters, the other half is through bicycles, which is something my peers and I noticed immediately upon our arrival. This represents France's efforts in reducing carbon emissions by creating a city framework that is accessible and easily traversable with a wide variety of transportation options.



Additional Efforts

Aside from the access to various forms of getting around Strasbourg, I noticed a lot of other methods in conservation. In the CESI buildings, for example, there wasn't any AC. This is in part thanks to Strasbourg's beautiful weather, where opening a window will bring enough breeze to eliminate the need for any external cooling systems (the same goes for the dorm rooms we stayed in). Also, there was hardly any trash or debris lying in the areas around the city. I found this interesting, since there weren't many trash cans as well. Unlike back in the U.S., trash cans around Strasbourg are much sparser, which, ironically, may have something to do with the cleanliness. Lastly, in our dorm rooms, water faucets were set with a mechanical "timer." Turning the faucet would only keep water flowing for a few seconds, which displays Strasbourg's efforts toward water conservation.

Embracing Connections through Multicultural Collaboration

Since this trip to Strasbourg was in partnership with CESI Engineering School, there were so many different students from all around the world. Engaging with these students from a wide range of academic and cultural backgrounds was by far my favorite part of this trip, and something I will always cherish. Through a variety of interactions during our two weeks, I witnessed firsthand how different cultures approach problems and interact in both a professional and informal setting.

Inside the Classroom

As I mentioned before, CESI cultivated a collaboration-intensive environment. After every presentation, and even during some, we were encouraged to discuss with our peers and reflect on what we had just learned. By the end of the two weeks, we formed groups, researched a common problem in society, and proposed an innovative solution. Working alongside various cultures strengthened the road to our proposed solution, which sheds light on the idea that advancements in modern innovation are heavily backed by diverse, international perspectives (Pepe et al., 2024).



Outside the Classroom

Collaborating with peers from all over the world is enjoyable in the classroom, but it was nothing compared to the outings during lunch and free time. These were the moments I was able to learn more about each person, more than just how they approach academics. This allowed me to explore rich, abundant insights into everyone's culture, experiences, and life back home. I will never forget moments like these, because they made me realize, no matter how unique we may be, we are all so similar, in so many ways.



Bringing It All Home

Overall, this was the experience of a lifetime, and one I will cherish forever, to say the least. Of course, all the memories I made throughout the trip traveled home with me when I left. First off, I learned a lot more about how different countries approach environmental conservation efforts. Additionally, I became grateful for a new perspective that challenges traditional educational methods. I also left with a passion for engaging with peers across a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds. To tie it all together, I discovered a love for international travel, and I hope to explore additional study abroad opportunities at my future transfer institution.



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References

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