UNC Charlotte
Niner International Country Guide

Learn more about where you'll be living from a UNC Charlotte student who has already done it.
Which city and country did you live in abroad?
Lyon, France

What is the climate like in that location?
(Describe the weather when you were there. What are some things students should take with them to prepare for the weather in this location?)
During the summer time the city can get very hot. It is important to remember that air conditioning and fans are not commonplace, so being okay with heat even during the night is a major thing to remember. It can be very cold near the water sources like any other city near water.

What was the city’s public transportation like?
(Describe how you got to and from the city center or the university day-to-day. Did they have a subway line, buses, could you walk most places? What were the costs of these transportation options? Were they easy to utilize? Did they have Uber/Lyft available in this city? Did you have any challenges navigating through the city?)
Public transportation is extremely reliable even using Uber/Lyft is reliable. I found that buses, metros, and trams were easy to navigate. Walking, however, is more common for people as it is cheap and the city is very walkable.

Describe the types of food that are common in that city.
(What were the types of foods you could find at most restaurants? What were some delicacies of that city? What were your favorite or least favorite foods?)
The food is surprisingly very American feeling, because our cuisine is very close to that of the French. Much of our food even came from French Cuisine. I enjoyed trying Lyonnaise cuisine that is very filling, but is not very vegetarian friendly. Vegans and vegetarians are able to find food for them, but it can be a challenge at times.
Are there any particular restaurants you would recommend students try if they are in that city?
(If possible, list the name of the restaurant and a link to the website)

I found that searching for American equivalents of food was the most fun. Palais du sourire was a nice Franco-Chinese restaurant to try out.
https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g187265-d12557770-Reviews-Palais_du_Sourire-Lyon_Rhone_Auvergne_Rhone_Alpes.html

Was it easy to travel to nearby cities and countries?
(If you traveled in your personal time, what modes of transportation did you use (e.g. bus, train, airplane, etc.). How did you book these travel plans? Online? Local bus station? Generally what was the cost of travelling in that region? Where did you stay (e.g. Airbnb, hostels, hotels) when you travelled?)

It was very easy to get around using blablacar a ridesharing app that is cheap and trusted by most-all French people Ouibus is very reliable for traveling around France. Airbnb was somewhat cheap especially if you travel with others, but hostels are the cheapest option, but you lack privacy at times and space for certain.

CULTURE

What are some of the differences between U.S. culture and the host country culture?
(Are there any gestures or differences in communication style that is different from the US that you noticed? (smiling, eye contact etc.))

Smiling at strangers on the street is seen as you wanting to swindle someone. It is not normal to smile when making business exchanges as it shows that you might be scamming the person. Try to be mindful of your attitude about people complaining. Expressing discomfort or being upset with something is a normal thing for French people. Complaining isn't seen as bad more so as a fact of life.

Generally, how would you describe the locals in the host city?
(Were the locals friendly and helpful? Would you recommend approaching the locals for help?)

French people are very kind as long as they are respected. If a French person is disrespected in some way they are not afraid to speak on that. As long as one is calm and respectful of public spaces the locals are kind back. It is frowned upon to cause disruptions or be overly-loud in public spaces that includes the dorms.
Are there any cultural events that you attended during your stay that you would recommend to students (e.g. festivals, holidays, etc.)? 
(How did you find out about these events?)

La fête du musique is a widely celebrated holiday in France where musicians and artists fill the streets with songs and fun. The theatre festival in Avignon during July is a lot of fun, and students have many opportunities to see fun plays or musicals for low costs.

Describe any culture shock that you experienced while abroad. 
(If culture shock was present what would you recommend for future students to avoid or lessen the shock?)

Smoking is extremely commonplace and not as well-managed. Those with asthma may have a hard time in the area. I found that going to places like a mall or inside a restaurant led to less chances of having to deal with smoking.

Did you find it difficult to meet locals of the host city? Why or why not? 
(In your experience were the locals open and welcoming of tourists? Where and how did you befriend the locals during your stay?)

It was very easy as the local French university students enjoyed speaking with American students and even took us out to different hotspots. It was easier to find locals to hang out with in social clubs or cafés where it was seen as more common to strike a spontaneous conversation.

What type of housing did you live in (e.g. homestay, dorm, apartment, etc.)? 
(Why did you choose this style of housing? Did you have access to a kitchen? How often/what was the process for doing laundry (in house or local laundry mat)?)

I was in a dorm where a laundrymat was inside the building. There was a communal kitchen and each student had a room completely to theirselves. It was the perfect size for single students and I enjoyed the freedom that some of the homestay students didn't have. I did have to buy my own food which was difficult at times due to cost.
Describe your accommodations.
(Did you have access to hot water? Wifi? Did you live with roommates?)

I had a single bed dorm room with an attached bathroom. I was given a minifridge and an ethernet hookup. Wifi was not provided, so I had to use an ethernet adapter and connect my computer which I then made a wifi hotspot for my phone. I had no roommates, but had to share a kitchen with those who lived on the same hallway as myself.

Where was your housing located in regards to the city center or host university?
(How long did it take, using public transportation or walking, to get to classes every day? How long did it take to travel to the center of the city or any other major locations in that city?)

I stayed in the residence hall closer to the university side of the city. I was very near a metro station and was able to walk to wherever I needed to go within twenty to thirty minutes. I found walking to be the most convenient form of transportation with taking the metro as a close second. It took me around twenty-five minutes to walk to the business area of Lyon and around thirty to get to the old part of Lyon, Vieux Lyon.

OTHER RESOURCES

What was the cost of living like? What ways can you keep costs low in that city?
(Compared to the cost of living in the city of Charlotte was it more or less expensive in that city? Were there any student discounts you took advantage of?)

The cost of living can feel a bit more experience as the Euro at this present time is stronger than the United States Dollar. The best way to cut costs is to cook your own food rather than go out every night. It is a good idea to get a monthly metro card instead of paying for every ride as the savings are worth it. Also, getting the billet d'étudiant or student ticket all you will need to do is show your UNCC ID when asked. Overall, living in France is not impossible, however, it requires more planning and budgetting.

Are you expected to tip servers or taxi drivers abroad?
(If so, what was the common tip rate? Was it the same rate as here in Charlotte (10-20%)?)

Tip was not ever expected and oftentimes seen as rude to servers or taxi drivers. However, when using the Uber app it is okay to tip, but only as that is asked of you.
How did you communicate when you were abroad?
(e.g. did you use your own phone, did you only communicate if there was access to Wi-Fi, did you purchase a phone abroad, etc.)? (Would you recommend any helpful apps? Maybe whatsapp or a currency exchange app?)

I unfortunately did not have access to my data plan without incurring a large cost over time. I was able to get by using whatsapp, facebook messenger, and other social media to communicate when I had wifi. I think it's helpful to download the vatefaireconjuger app for help conjugating verbs on the fly. Having google maps is lifesaving. You can download maps of the city roads and find your way around without wifi or data. Also wordreference translation dictionary has a wonderful app even for those very confident in their French abilities.

What would you recommend students bring to be able to charge their electronics?
(Describe the electrical outlets, tips to keep in mind, etc.).

Students should purchase an American to European outlet converter while in America. Students can find USB adapters at malls and convenience stores in France for a low cost. However, an adapter to charge computers is a must before arriving. Having a portable charger is a very important thing to have in case of emergencies.

What do you know now about the location or program that you wish you would have known before going abroad?

The metro closes earlier than Americans expect it will close closer to 11pm. The food is very similar to what we are used to, but it will have less grease and often you eat less while still feeling full.

What’s your first and last name?
DeVanté Thomas-Pittman

Which semester and year did you go abroad (e.g. fall 2016, summer 2017, etc.)?
Summer 2018
Which program did you participate in?

USAC French Language & Cultural Studies Summer Program

What was your student level when you went abroad (e.g. freshman, sophomore, etc.)?
If you would be open to being contact by other UNC Charlotte students who are interested in your experience abroad, please provide your contact information (email, phone number, social medial, etc.)

Junior

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