

When I studied abroad in Lyon, France during the summer of 2022, there was a lot of change I had to adapt to including the language, the customs, and the way of life. This was especially prominent in my experience since I stayed with a host family during my time in Lyon. However, despite the challenges I faced in navigating the new culture and country, I overcame the challenges I faced and I achieved some of my goals for study abroad.

I have previously spent time in France as I did a French Exchange program in middle school and from that, I kept in touch with my friend Lise who now lives in Lyon. Despite this, I still faced my own challenges in navigating Lyon and its unique culture. One of the challenges that I faced immediately was the lack of conversational vocabulary. Most of my previous French courses have been on grammar and literature rather than typical vocabulary that is used in daily life. The first time I went to order something from an ice cream shop, all I knew how to say was « je voudrais une petite glace au chocolat » but when it came time to pay, the worker asked me « sur place ou à emporter » and I had a very confused look on my face because I was not sure what it meant or what to say so I simply just pointed to the table behind me. I later learned that the worker was asking me was it “for here or to go?”.

Another adjustment that I had a difficult time adjusting to was speaking French all of the time. At first, it was a tough adjustment because I felt like I could not express what I wanted to say well and I was frustrated at not picking up the language in the way I wanted to. However, my dedication to learning more French eventually paid off. I felt that my accent was improving and my vocabulary was expanding, and I began to feel more comfortable living in France. As a result, I knew that I wanted to come back and study abroad for a longer period of time to continue to learn and improve my French.



Furthermore, living with a host family for the summer pushed me out of my comfort zone, especially when it came to speaking French. At first, I was self-conscious of my French level but throughout the summer, I began to feel more confident and was able to participate more in conversations with my host family. It was also an adjustment to the differences in lifestyle in France versus the United States, particularly when it came to expectations. For example, in the United States, it is common to leave a light on in a room after you leave however in France, it is not because the utilities are much more expensive than in the United States. Another difference I adjusted to was the length of the meals. At my own home in the United States, our dinners are typically around 45 minutes and we usually just have the main course. However, when I was with my host family, it was more common for the meals to be over an hour with more side dishes and different courses.

Over the course of the summer semester, I was able to achieve some of the goals that I wanted to accomplish, including improving my French. French has been a language I have been learning for many years and by the end of my study abroad experience, I felt much more comfortable speaking and understanding French with the help of my intensive language courses at Université Catholique de Lyon and my host family who helped me expand my vocabulary and to practice what I learned in my courses and apply it to real life. Another goal I was able to accomplish was to improve my cooking abilities through taking a French cooking course. This was also another experience that pushed me out of my comfort zone because cooking at the time was a daunting task for me since I felt that I was not a good cook. However, I was able to practice different recipes with my classmates with the help of a professional chef and be able to expand my culinary skills.



Overall, my summer in Lyon, France was one of the best summers of my life with many amazing, new experiences. Although I experienced some difficulties, such as navigating the French lifestyle, but I would not trade these experiences for anything. My experiences abroad in France allowed for personal growth and to be able to have a new and unique perspective on what it is like to be a part of, and participate, in a global society. I am looking forward to my new adventures to come in the spring semester of 2024 as I return to France and I will forever cherish my first time living in Lyon.