

Vacation of a lifetime history essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Have you ever went on a vacation and never wanted to come back? I traveled to France in June of 2010, and it was the most beautiful place I have ever been to. I went with my high school French class and we took along eighteen students and six adults. We visited beautiful villages, towering cathedrals, and majestic palaces. This trip forever changed the way that I view the world, I realized that there is so much more to the world than our country, and that beautiful places await us just a place ride away.

Our journey began in our high school parking lot where we loaded our bags and took a 4 hour bus ride to Washington D. C., once in the D. C. airport we sat in the airport for several hours until it was time for our plane to begin boarding. We boarded our plane and took our seats, the flight attendants instructed us on safety measures and we then waited for our plane to begin its journey to France. The pilot came over the intercom and informed us that we would now begin our ascension. The plane was soon speeding down the runway, and I was being pushed back into my seat, and then we were in the air, I felt my stomach lift as we left the ground and I knew that the next time I step on earth, I would be in France.

Our plane ride was boring and uneventful, filled with many movies and unpleasant food. We began our descent and soon landed at the Airport just outside of Paris, though this was not our final destination. We then got off of the plane and continued to our next plane that would take us into the south of France, to Nice. We again waited in an airport for several hours until boarding time, once on the plane and up in the air, I realized that France is beautiful, it has picture perfect landscapes and farmland as far as I could see. This plane ride would be only one and a half hours long, only a fraction

of the 8 hour flight to get to Paris. Once we were near Nice, I looked out the window and saw the most picturesque landscape I had ever seen, We were overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, the water was a gorgeous turquoise blue and the sun beat down onto the water making it shimmer like a sapphire. Once on the ground and our luggage retrieved, we got on a bus and drove to our hotel, the hotel was small, but quaint, and it felt like home. Later that day we went to the beach and laid in the sun and water for hours, after that we went shopping throughout the city for souvenirs. We spent three days in Nice, it was a laidback city, and there was not much too do, however it is still the most beautiful place I have ever visited.

After our three days in Nice, we got on yet another bus, for a fourteen hour bus ride to the city of Tours. When we arrived in Tours we checked into our hotel and I had my daily breakfast of orange juice and a croissant. After breakfast we got on another bus and traveled for an hour to the Loire Valley, where most of the castles and palaces are located in France. We first went to the Châteaux of Chenonceau, a gorgeous castle situated over a river. After walking down a long path with tall trees lining the road, we emerged at the front door of a gorgeous white stone castle, complete with two gardens, and a hedge maze. After our visit at Chenonceau we went to the Châteaux of Chambord, a massive 16th century castle, rumored to be designed by Leonardo da Vinci, this castle has a marvelous double-helix spiral staircase that winds all the way up to the roof. On the roof you can view forest landscapes or examine the architecture of the building closer. Once we were done at Chambord we went to the Chartres Cathedral, which is considered one of the finest examples of gothic architecture in all of France. Inside the

cathedral we climbed the many hundreds of stairs to the topmost tower, which also provided us with a closer view of this fantastic piece of architecture. The stained glass windows at Chartres are among the greatest in the world, which are known for their vivid blue color. Upon seeing the blue, I was immediately transfixed and walked around examining each window until I finished. After leaving Chartres we returned to Tours and had ourselves a much needed night of sleep.

After getting on yet another bus, we then moved on to the walled city of St. Malo. We did not get to do much in this city as we arrived in the early evening hours. During World War II almost the entire city was destroyed, but the townspeople wanted to rebuild and they did so, they rebuilt it the exact same way as it was originally built, so this city was essentially built twice.

After our night in St. Malo we traveled to Normandy. We toured the Normandy museum and then went to the American Memorial on the beaches. The memorial was extremely emotional, but serene at the same time. While on the beaches I imagined the carnage that took place where I stood. I could not believe that just 70 years before the sand and water was stained red with blood and there were thousands of bodies lying on the beach. As I walked around the memorial I looked upon the cemetery and saw the thousands of people that fought and died on the fateful day. While walking through the cemetery I saw one tombstone with a Jewish star on top instead of a cross, I instantly felt a flood of emotion, I thought that while Hitler was killing so many Jewish, the Jewish were fighting and dying for the United States, I will forever remember that image and will always be grateful for what the soldiers have done for us.

We then returned to St. Malo for another night of sleep and the next morning began our journey to Paris, the city of lights. When we entered the city we immediately went to our hotel and then went to dinner. We had dinner at Chez Clement, which is located steps away from the Arc de Triomphe. After our dinner we went into the Arc and went up yet another endless flight of steps until we reached the top. At the top of the Arc we saw a panoramic view of Paris, the Eiffel Tower glowing in the distance, and Parisian nightlife beginning. Every night on the hour the Eiffel Tower sparkles, thousands of blue lights illuminate and last for one minute, while at the Arc we witnessed this. It is without a doubt one of the most beautiful things I will ever see. It filled me with delight and at that moment I knew that I never wanted to leave the country.

During our next day in Paris we went to the Châteaux of Versailles. First in the morning we took a forty minute bus ride to Versailles and began our tour of the building. The building was the most elaborate thing I have ever seen, it was dripping in gleaming gold, and shimmering crystal. The walls were lined with expensive silks and priceless tapestries. Although this Palace has a gorgeous appearance, it has a dark history. Versailles is the palace in which Marie Antoinette and Louis XIV lived, an angry mob descended upon the Palace and took the royal family to Paris, where many years later they were killed. Even though the building itself was massive it had even larger more extravagant gardens that stretched miles. It has several fountains which all were running while I was there. While sitting on the steps watching the fountains I imagined everyday life here in the 18th century, what it would be like to live there, to walk around the gardens at a leisurely pace and not

have a care in the world. Versailles is and forever will be the most gorgeous building I have ever visited. Not just because of its expensive décor, but also because it is a supreme example of architecture and a fantastic example of traditional French gardens.

After our visit to Versailles we went back to Paris and toured the Louvre Museum. At the Louvre Museum we walked through the marvelous glass pyramid and immersed ourselves into a building filled with gorgeous pieces of art and rich in history. The first thing I wished to go and see was the Winged Victory of Samothrace, it is a second century BC marble sculpture of the Greek goddess Nike, to me it is one of the most beautiful sculptures in the entire world, and it amazed me that something so perfect could be created without any modern technology. The only other sculpture that can rival the Winged Victory of Samothrace is the Venus de Milo, which is where I went to next. The Venus de Milo is arguably the most famous sculpture in the world, most people can recognize the armless figure. The Venus de Milo is a fantastic example of Greek sculpture at its finest, and will forever influence the world as we know it. The highlight of my tour of the Louvre is that of the Mona Lisa. The Mona Lisa painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the early 16th century, it is the most famous painting in the entire world and also one of the most visited. The Mona Lisa, to me it a fantastic painting, and will forever continue to influence artists around the world, and also continue to be a major icon of the world also.

On our last day in France we packed our things and went to the airport and began the long and tedious flight home to the United States. I was extremely unhappy about leaving and wanted to extend my stay permanently. I learned

so much on my vacation, some of which I would not be able to learn without being in the country, and I hope to return many times in the future. Also, the trip gave me a whole new perspective on the world, and taught me to look at the details in things and not just what they appear to be. From the cities, to the churches, and even the castles, France made me want to learn more about art and architecture, and in particular the renaissance works, it also made me realize that no matter what country you live in, you can always find a masterpiece.