

Why teens should travel abroad before college

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Most parents have a protective grip on their child until the moment they leave for college to “face the real world”. What these parents don’t know is how badly they are ruining their child. Yes, protective is good, but why do they all of a sudden feed them to the wolves the second they move out? As a current senior in high school and with lots of traveling abroad without parental supervision, not only did I learn a lot about myself, but I also learned my limits. As a seventeen-year-old girl, I have been categorized as a “homebody” for the majority of my life. It wasn’t until my parents sent me off to France with my school-group for two weeks for me to finally realize that I wasn’t what most people assumed.

I learned more about myself in this specific two week trip than I did in my whole seventeen years of living. This trip took place during the summer of my senior year—just in time for the college process. At this time, I wanted to be as close to home as I possibly could. Believing that my family was my safety-net, I thought that I wouldn’t be able to handle being on my own at eighteen years old. I was the girl who eliminated most colleges that weren’t within a 50 mile radius from my house because I was simply too afraid of distance, so taking on all of France by myself scared me to death. It wasn’t until I got on that plane and started to fly over the Atlantic Ocean for me to realize that everything was going to be alright.

I called my parents almost everyday so they knew I was safe, but not because I couldn’t handle being away from them. Being launched in the real world without my parents over my shoulder telling me what’s right from wrong, I had developed a growth of maturity and independence. I had to learn how to adapt to my new surroundings and be forced to grow up. I had

to make sure I was at the airport in time and pass security, had to speak fluent french for two weeks so I could speak the language of the common people, and had to make sure I got on the right metro and know when to get off. If my parents were there, I would completely rely on them.

Overseas, I felt powerful to say the least and I haven't been more proud of myself. At this time, I would never have thought that in a million years I would have craved that much independence. Within the first couple days of me coming back to the states, all my family would say was that I left the old me in Europe and "brought back the mature Brianna." Coming back just in time for my senior year of high school, I knew then that I had to get out of my home-state for college. This wasn't because I didn't want to be close to my home, but because all I wanted to do in the next stage of my life was to have new experiences like the experiences I had in Europe—new surroundings, new people, and a new environment. Once I came back home, all I wanted was to travel and to see the world.

It is currently the greatest addiction of mine. With that being said, I am going to college six hours away from home, which is the exact distance it is from my home to France via plane. The girl who used to be a homebody and was scared to leave the nest made an enormous life changing decision simply so she could see more of the world.