Looking Back on the China Program, Summer 2012
Craig Bucy

First let me say that going to China as part of the Loyola Study Abroad program was one of the best decisions I've made. Not only did I boost my GPA and make great friends, but I had the time of my life immersed in a culture completely foreign to our own. It really hits you once you land and you go through this massive new airport they updated for the Olympics that you're in a completely different place. All the signs are in Chinese with English subtitles, the toilets are holes in the ground . . . . It's a lot to process.

The flight that one of the guys in the program and I were supposed to take had been cancelled due to mechanical difficulties, so we had to get rerouted. Needless to say we were a little nervous landing five hours after our scheduled arrival. Have no fear, Dean Jean was there! She personally came to pick us up. Thats the kind of relationships you develop with professors while on study abroad. The teachers aren't just someone giving you a grade that you see for an hour a day, it's someone you take the tours with, eat dinner with, and even go out on the town with. You get to know them on a much more personal level, and the classroom experience reflects that.

You're able to have in-depth discussions about things you actually care about since the class size is so small. I know that I posted my highest GPA of law school to date while in China, and I know a few other people did as well.

The campus you stay at is a great place from which to explore the city. It's a Chinese University with a Jesuit Center attached, which is where you study. The Center has amazing centuries-old artifacts, which are on display and you take a tour of. People around campus are pretty friendly too. The group of guys I went with actually made friends with the locals, and we'd play nightly basketball games on the school courts before going out on the town. Which brings me to the nightlife and social scene.
In China, the currency ratio is so slanted that you feel like you have all the power. We went out to numerous bars in Beijing, with Lakers right across the street from campus being a popular stop. We also went to a place called Vic's, a massive club, to celebrate the ending of our trip. Let's just say that everyone had an amazing time at the club and leave it at that.

People in China were a little awestruck by us, as they weren't used to seeing people of non-Asian ethnicity. They were very nice though, and even asked for pictures with quite a few of us. One thing I noticed about the nightlife in China is no matter how much fun or how many drinks you've had, you never had to worry about someone stealing your wallet, or getting mugged, things which we experience in a large city here in the States.

I highly recommend exploring the city as much as possible and going shopping as much as possible. Ho-hai and Sanlitun districts are must-sees. The first is a man made lake in the middle of the city which is surrounded by bars with outdoor seating. You definitely need to watch a sunset there. Sanlitun is an area that caters to Westerners pretty well, but I recommend hitting the back alleys for street food and the good Italian/Mexican place located in it. The shopping there is amazing too. Go to Lisa Tailor for as many suits and tailored shirts as you can carry—trust me, you will not regret it. There's also a massive market there which you can bargain to buy pretty much anything at. No matter what they say, always offer lower and don't be afraid to walk away.

The sights in China were beyond amazing. To stand in a country with a history of over 2,000 years was humbling to say the least. You couldn't turn the corner without running into some 500-year-old temple or an 800-year-old palace. The Great Wall was easily one of the top 5 coolest things I've ever seen or done in my life. The weekend spent in Xi'an was an amazing trip, from the 2,000-year-old terracotta warriors at the Emperor's tomb, to the city walls, to the ridiculously funny night club we went to—they performed over the top skits every thirty minutes or so.

You also have a free weekend to plan a trip, and I highly recommend taking advantage of it. My group went to Beideihei, a Communist Party retreat/beach town on the ocean. All I'll say about that trip is hilarious adventures and great times were had by all. Which brings me to the final aspect of the trip I want to share.

Going over, I knew three or four of the people going. When the trip was finished, you're great friends with pretty much everyone that went. I hang out with my China people all the time now. The bond you get in spending all your time with the same group of people, especially in a situation where your group is the only one that speaks your language, is a strong one. If you're thinking about going to China or study abroad, do it. I still regret not going on the other trips offered by Loyola as well.

If you have any question or would like to contact me personally to discuss our trip to China, please free to contact me via email or Facebook.
I’ll admit, I was definitely nervous as I handed Dean Jean my deposit for last year’s Rome and Strasbourg programs. I worried about how the summer courses would work with my law school “plan” and how the experience would enhance my legal education. Very quickly, I realized that I had nothing at all to be worried about.

As I walked through the gates of Loyola’s John Felice Rome Center, I instantly felt at home. A warm welcome from the staff on campus, my classmates, and the Loyola Law faculty only enhanced the feeling. Right away we were encouraged to get to know one another, and the faculty was genuinely interested in getting to know us. Everything about Rome felt immediately comfortable, with that hint of uncertainty that makes living abroad so exciting.

This was further reflected in our classes. Initially I was nervous that I did not have enough international law background for my Rome classes. However the professors made each class extremely engaging, and accommodated what we were interested in learning and discussing. There were more than enough chances to speak with professors before and after classes. Many times we ended up having conversations with our professors over lunch, or asking if class could go 15 minutes longer. When signing up for the program I was unsure about how my classes in Rome would fit into what I was learning back in Chicago, and I could not be happier with how everything fell into place. The classes in Rome allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the legal systems in the U.S. while learning more about how the legal systems in Europe operate. No matter what classes students chose to take in Rome, it seemed that each person gained something special out of their experience.

Our group was fortunate enough to have many opportunities to go on excursions and explore the city of Rome, as well as travel on our own. Through the Loyola program, we did an orientation tour of Rome, had an Audience with the Pope, and visited both the Avocatura Generale of Italy and the Supreme Court of Italy. These excursions gave us ample opportunities to see parts of the city that we might not have seen otherwise, meet Europeans who work in the legal field, and get to know the faculty and staff. I spent my free weekends traveling throughout Italy—including trips to Cinque Terre, Florence, and the Amalfi Coast. Still, exploring didn’t stop there. Though we had classes and school events often, we still had many chances to enjoy everything Rome has to offer. The food, piazzas, art, nightlife, and history were experienced on a daily basis.

After a couple of travel setbacks, a group of us made it to Strasbourg. It’s impossible not to notice the vast differences between Italy and France, and the change was good. I was excited to spend a week in a smaller town with cooler weather, visiting the organizations I so often read about in the news or in my international law classes at Loyola. While in Strasbourg we all took one class, which was supplemented by visits to The European Court of Human Rights, The European Parliament of the European Union, The Court of Justice of the European Union, the International Court of Justice, and the International Criminal Court. Throughout this portion of the program we were definitely busy, but were also able to truly explore an area of Europe that is so central to any conversation about international law.

Participating in Loyola Law’s Rome and Strasbourg study abroad programs was one of the best decisions I have made in law school. In a unique way, I gained insight into an area of law I might not have otherwise. Beyond that, I built strong relationships with my group and learned more about how a legal career can intersect with other interests. The Rome and Strasbourg programs have opened many doors for me as a Loyola Law student, and I strongly recommend it to anyone interested – especially if you are a little worried, like me.
Beijing, China
Christina Spiezia

Summer study abroad was not something I seriously considered last year until the Spring, when I found out I could choose the start date for my summer internship. I then decided to go to China and plans for the trip quickly came together. Having traveled throughout Europe, China seemed to be something completely different, and I wanted a new experience. I did not expect to become so immersed in a new culture, to learn so much about China in a short period of time, or to truly enjoy a country I had never even considered visiting.

The China study abroad itinerary was great. We visited every site I had hoped to see and more, including the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Terracotta Warriors, the Olympic Grounds, and the Summer Palace. We also spent the weekend in Xian which was a trip I will never forget. There, we biked around the top of the 8-mile City Wall during the day and spent nights dancing and experiencing the atmosphere at local clubs. Shopping and bargaining at the Pearl Market was definitely a highlight of my trip. I returned home with an extra suitcase and still felt like I had barely spent a penny. And the food, which is perhaps what I was most nervous about, was delicious. We couldn’t get enough at the Peeking Duck, our group had a favorite 24-hour noodle restaurant, and there was always ice cream sold somewhere, which was amazing on the hot days. The classes we took in China were interesting and manageable given our busy schedule. I especially enjoyed learning bits of the Chinese language, which was fun to actually apply. We became a tight-knit group as we used free time to explore and be social. Karaoke night was definitively a favorite activity of mine (and Dean Jean was a great singer!).

In China there were some crazy moments—trying to tell a cab driver where to go in a different language, ordering meals without picture menu, feeling like celebrities when people asked to take pictures with us. But this is part of what made the experience so unique, interesting, and at times hilarious. And this is how we learned about and, towards the end of the trip, became comfortable with an entirely different culture. Overall, every moment of the China trip was worth it. It was truly a fun and amazing experience.

Zadar, Croatia
JT Luljak

Following my 1L year, I wanted to take some time off in order to travel internationally as I had not yet done so. Fortunately, I learned about an opportunity to study abroad through my contracts professor, Margaret Moses, who served as a guest lecturer at Touro law’s international commercial law and dispute resolution course offered in Croatia.

A fellow classmate, Sarm Jabra, and I spent four weeks in Croatia where we studied with twenty other law students. The class consisted of 14 Americans and individuals from Guatemala, Brazil, Hungary, Croatia and Albania.

We spent one week in Croatia’s national capital of Zagreb, and three weeks in the beautiful coastal city of Zadar. Each morning we would have a four-hour lecture from professors who are currently faculty members at the University of Zadar, Touro Law School, University of Pittsburgh School of Law, and Loyola’s own Margaret Moses.

We studied a number of international trade treaties, most notably the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods. In our fourth week, Professor Moses lectured on the process of international arbitration. The course concluded with us participating in a mock arbitration based on a previous problem issued by the Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot.

This program provided a fantastic opportunity to not only enhance my legal education, but also experience and learn about an entire culture. In our free time, we visited a number of art and history museums, ate fresh seafood caught steps away from us and indulged in exorbitant amounts of gelato. Croatia served as an unassuming adventure and provided memories that will last a lifetime.