Junior Sarah Rettig studied abroad in Barcelona, Spain, through the ISA Barcelona, Spain: Spanish Language, Liberal Arts and Business program during autumn 2017.

"I believe study abroad is an opportunity that should never be passed up. Travel exposes you to completely new and unfamiliar environments, ways of life, ideas and cultures. Making my way in a foreign country in another language was a huge challenge and gave me greater confidence, independence and whole new view of the world. I think the challenges that living abroad poses and the memories you make on such a journey make study abroad a great opportunity for everyone. You never know how study abroad will change you and enable you to grow."

Major: Actuarial Science, Spanish
Minor: Statistics
Rank: Junior
Program: ISA Barcelona, Spain: Spanish Language, Liberal Arts and Business at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, autumn 2017

I participated in the STEP program and chose study abroad as my project. Originally, I was not planning on spending more than a few weeks abroad. Spending time in my cohort, participating in guided
discussions about what we each might take away from our projects and reflecting on values and goals allowed me to realize not only that Barcelona was the perfect city for me, but also that a semester-long program would allow me to better challenge myself and reach for my goals.

I spent a semester studying Spanish language and culture at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, Spain through ISA. I chose this program for a variety of reasons. Catalonia as a region has always held a particular interest to me due to its cultural and linguistic diversity and how different it is from the typical image of Spanish culture. My main concentration is in Iberian Studies, so travelling to Barcelona allowed me to both enhance my Spanish language skills, witness how Spanish and Catalan languages interact and coexist in the region and experience the unique character of an artistically, historically and culturally rich city. My program also included travel to a few other Spanish cities, southern France and Morocco.

An integral moment in my experience is when I came to the realization that introversion and reflection are not things I need to change or avoid. In this moment, I was watching the silhouettes of caravans inch in front a red Saharan sunrise. I had woken early to the prayer calls in the nearby village to write in my journal and think. It was a very surreal experience and very peaceful. My trip to Morocco marked the beginning of an effort to allow myself the reflection and quiet time that I need, and it has sparked huge positive changes in how I spend my time, interact with others and in how I view myself. It has brought me happiness and confidence that I hadn’t thought I’d be able to achieve. This change has carried into every aspect of my life, including my studies, career and relationships with others.

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