Jessica Lawrence Explores Europe on a Study Abroad Trip to Switzerland

by Faith Price

Senior Jess Lawrence (Yakama), shared stories and photos from her semester in Switzerland with students in the Native American Student Center on March 23.

Lawrence, a hospitality business major, studied abroad with 13 other WSU students at the César Ritz College in Brig, Switzerland during spring of 2015 through a program arranged by the WSU Carson College of Business. The College of Business requires all of its students to gain international experience through either a study abroad, foreign language classes, or other additional coursework.

“I wasn’t even going to do it,” Lawrence said of studying abroad. The senior went in for an advising appointment and realized going abroad would be the quickest way to fulfill the international learning requirement. “I thought about it for a week, and then went for it!”

Her trip to Switzerland was her first time overseas.

“I’d only been to Canada,” said Lawrence.

Now she has six countries under her belt. She quickly learned the ropes of international travel as she realized she’d save $400 by flying into Milan, Italy then taking a train to Switzerland.

“Switzerland is so close to so many other countries,” she explained.

She traveled nearly every weekend of the 11 weeks she was abroad. In addition to Switzerland and Italy, she visited Spain, France, Greece, and England. She was able to see the Olympic Stadium in Athens, and where “the Cheetah Girls” filmed in Barcelona.

One regret Lawrence had was that she didn’t need to learn another language. While the Swiss have four national languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansh), her courses were all English-speaking. Language wasn’t much of a barrier for her, as most Europeans are multilingual. The only time she had difficulty was once when she was buying groceries and couldn’t understand what the cashier was saying about bagging the groceries.

The city of Brig is surrounded by picturesque mountains, including the famous Matterhorn, which she saw from the air on her last day of school when she paraglided to class. She spent much of her free time hiking.

“The longest day I hiked 15 miles, found the next train station, and rode home,” said Lawrence.

Her first time overseas left her wanting more.

“I’m hoping to go work at a U.S. military resort in Germany,” said Lawrence. She has applied for a 15–month internship and is currently waiting to hear back if she gets it. Lawrence graduates in May and has a summer job lined up first at a fly–fishing lodge in Montana.

She encouraged all the other students in attendance to take advantage of the opportunity to study abroad while they are in college. Depending on where you go, the costs vary, but you can use your financial aid to pay for your studies. Some locations are even cheaper than a semester in Pullman. For Lawrence to study in Switzerland it cost an extra $2,000, however she received a study abroad scholarship for $2,500.

“It’s not that much more expensive,” she pointed out, “and a lot more fun!”