

EXOTIC BLUEPRINTS

BY CRISTINA CABELLERO

Bouncing along at 80 kilometers per hour with an open Eurail map in the seat to my left and Spanish fields of yellow sunflowers passing on my right, I am exactly where I want to be at this point in my life. I have never been able to say that with such certainty before.

I've completed my third year in the Division of Architecture, having just survived the long anticipated Analytical Summer Abroad tour

through four major cities and several smaller towns. My studio class of 28 students and three professors—Andrew and Kristin von Maur and Thomas Lowing—departed our comfy home base of Berrien Springs for world metropolis: Rome, Italy. After savoring real Italian cuisine and settling into our temporary apartments, our class would meet daily at 8:30 a.m. for a full eight-hour work-day of touring and analytical sketching. Night-time hours were open for strolling around the various towns and enjoying piazza night life.

The tour railed us to three different countries on a different continent and exposed us to much world heritage and a different type of urban development. As future architects it's fundamental to study the work of our forefathers, and what better way to really understand their work than to visit these places?

With the daily required drawings, we had no choice but to improve our ability to graphically communicate architecture and urban knowledge, while simultaneously advancing our skill in proportional accuracy, rendering and speed. Single drawings, which at first were cautiously started and resulted in twisted impressions of the architecture, became more accurate and informative, and were often accompanied by additional supporting sketches. A real confidence in sketching ability, a “must-have” skill for any architect, was acquired during the tour.

But this trip was also an introduction to many new experiences. For example, I experienced a new level of independence, entering foreign cultures, and living in an apartment, which gave the sense of being a local rather than a mere tourist. And in other ways my independence was also noticeably expanded. The trip had no enforced curfew, no “no-men-allowed” house rules, and gave me a meal cash allowance I could spend however I pleased. Through the experience, I've come to see how sheltered we are at Andrews, and I don't think it's a benefit to students to be unaware of the real world that we live in.

And traveling to a new city each week forces you to learn the ropes of traveling. When I didn't know what to see, I knew to grab a map, step out the door and hope to walk into something worth my while.

This Analytical Summer Abroad has greatly developed my professional sketching skills, has brought me far from my comfort zone, and has caused me to want to travel this vast and diverse world. It's allowed me to stay in Europe for some additional time, meet



Above: The tour enjoyed picturesque nights, including this one at the Eiffel Tower. // **Right:** With sketchbooks in hand, the group took advantage of the famed Venetian gondola rides. // **Far right:** Kristin von Maur leads her students in a sketch critique session at the Piazza Popolo in Rome. Throughout the trip, students honed their sketching abilities while examining some of the finest architecture in Europe.



France/Italy/Austria