Tori Roser  
Paris and Brussels Study Abroad Journal

Number 3  
Group

The pillars of KBS set us up to be a completely diverse group. Based on flexibility and opportunity, we have the capacity to grow in any direction that we chose. Ultimately, we map out our success through the opportunities that we find, are shown, or create.

You can tell a KBSer apart from many other scholarship groups on campus. We are boisterous, creative, inspiring, passionate, and intelligent. Combined, we build an unstoppable program. In any given scenario, our personality traits are tested and evolved. In one given scenario, I may sit back and let another lead. In another case, I may voice my opinion graciously. But this is how we work. This is why we are successful.

All of this held true during our study abroad this spring break. Ross, Alex, Ryan and myself were easily considered the masters of the trams and subways. We helped the group get to whatever locations set for our arrival and we took smaller groups out to places on the map that would be harder to navigate at night. There was a definite leader for each of the small groups that split up.

Within the small, broken down groups there are some definite roles carried out during the study abroad. Someone was constantly mitigating, letting everyone else bicker and then making the final decision. Another person was the complainer. This part of their body hurt one day and that part hurt the next, they’re hungry and tired, and they’d rather go somewhere else. Then you, of course, have the camera happy tourist. Snapping photos at every opportunity and posing in front of every sign they see (this spot may not hold true in male dynamics). Finally, groups have the “I don’t care what we do, let’s just go” individual, who just lollygags around with no clear opinion on any matter from lunch to the tourist site. I say this as if you pick a role and keep it for the trip. Let’s get real, these are roles that every group sees and every individual switches to and from.

Even in the larger group, we could see a split in personalities. You could tell who had traveled often. These were the more laid back personalities. They were constantly watching and aware, but never over worried or fretting. Of course, we had the well-studied French speakers, our translators who saved the day (especially with the train fiasco) on many occasions. The followers were the students who just went with the flow. They were often curious about where were headed and when to get off, but never had input or doubt on whether or not that was right. Again, some of these roles are interchangeable and many students made their way into each role throughout the trip, but there was a definite divide in personalities and mentalities that was noticeable to me.

I’m not exactly sure how to break this down into the cultures that are seen. I suppose the laid back mentality would fall under an Italian or general European stance. The attentive follower is very much a Midwestern USA personality trait. The bustling leader with a place to go and something to see falls under a quicker paced culture, that of New York or LA. And then the culturally aware, the well traveled, could be from any country. Someone who has been to enough places to know when they are talking too loud for that city, or when to split off into a smaller group to cause less of a commotion.

Regardless, our group reflected back upon KBS as a whole. We are definitely unique and completely individualistic. We all create our own experience and tailor it as we go to fit the study abroad that we envisioned. Our program gives us the opportunity to grow in the areas that we see fit, and learn the concepts necessary to succeed. Every single person on the trip from Dean Lewis to the transfer KBSer experienced being a leader and being vulnerable. We grew as a team and as individuals. We represented our American culture while attempting to adapt to and blend in with that of the cities we were visiting.