

BEFORE

PROMPT: Handwrite on less than one page a concise narrative in which you describe a meaningful event, experience or accomplishment in your life and how it will affect your college experience or your contribution to our campus community. You may want to reflect on your family, your school or community activities, or your involvement in areas outside of school.

The summer after senior year is always thought of as a teenager's last hooray before entering the real world. With this in mind a couple of friends and I decided to take the long leap across the lake and travel to the surreal countries of Europe. It was unnerving to leave all adult supervision for the first time and trust our lives to one multilingual German college sophomore. We arrived in Europe feeling equipped with a few over studied book of phrases and extremely opened minds but we weren't prepared for what was in store.

Trading the comfort and ease of America for the culture and beauty of a foreign country has been the most meaningful experience of my life. Going overseas has opened my eyes and mind to different ways of life and taught me to overcome stupid American things. I learned many life skills I use today in Europe. Being on my own forced me to budget my money, live in close quarters with many different people, and utilize the area around me. The lessons I learned will follow me through life and help me succeed.

Comments from *The EssayLady*:

- Watch the passive voice – any form of the verb “to be” or “to have” as these are weaker verbs and not as interesting to read.
- Be specific wherever possible.
- Think of **ONE** specific example like the one I mentioned above, a lesson it taught you, and how you'll bring what you learned from it to that university setting.
- Or think of something you'll bring to college and work backwards – find a story that illustrates it. Here are some examples of what travel teaches that works well at college—
 1. Appreciation of what other people find beautiful/valuable even when we ourselves do not
 2. How small we are and how big the world is
 3. Being pushed to your physical limits – being tired, hungry, sore, exhausted – and pushing through it to persevere (hello, Finals week!)
 4. Cultural sensitivity (be specific)
- You're very, very funny in your emails to me. That's your true voice! Can you think of something funny that happened during the trip which taught you a lesson?

- I would change the entire last part of the paragraph to give a specific example. Your conclusion will then be much stronger, as you'll relate the example to what it taught you as it relates to attending this particular university.

I also provided notes throughout the draft which the student used to produce this final essay...

AFTER

The summer after my senior year of high school, several friends and I decided to take one "last hurrah" and travel through France, Germany, and Spain with the tour company Education First. For the first time in my life, I left my parent's home and supervision. I trusted my life to a complete stranger: Daniel, a multilingual German college sophomore and our guide. My friends and I arrived in Europe feeling confident, equipped with a few over-studied books of common French and German phrases and extremely open minds. However, nothing could have prepared me for one experience during the trip.

While walking back to a meeting point just past dusk in Barcelona my friends and I were almost swindled by a hustler. A friend stopped to admire a bracelet and the vender knotted it around her wrist, then demanded she pay 15 Euros. This rather large man would not let go of my friend's arm and the situation began to grow heated. Before things spiraled out of control, I gave the man a dazzling smile and haggled with him until we all had bracelets and the tab was 5 Euros total.

That experience showed me how a level head can transform a tense situation into an ultimately positive one. I plan to use a level head at University X as I navigate choosing classes, balancing education and extracurricular involvements, and interacting with people from many different backgrounds.