

Student Spotlight: Dafne Ostermuenchner
My incredible experience studying at Sciences Po
Aix en Provence in France this Spring 2023



Dafne Ostermuenchner



“Le Marché aux fleurs”— Aix en Provence

Dafne Ostermuenchner, a senior in the Honors College International Relations at Florida International University, tells us about herself and the incredible experience she had studying at Sciences Po Aix en Provence in France and discovering France and other European countries this spring 2023.

MFJMCE: Could you tell us in a few words who you are and what studies you are pursuing at FIU?

My name is Dafne, I’m originally from Venezuela and I moved to the U.S. 6 years ago. I grew up in fully French schooling and because of such, I am fluent in French, as well as English and Spanish. I’m currently a senior studying in the Honors College International Relations and will be obtaining a certificate in European and Eurasian studies when I graduate next semester.

MFJMCE: In Spring 2023 you went to France to study at Sciences Po Aix en Provence. What did you study? What did you initially expect from the program in France? How did it meet or exceed these expectations?

I continued my studies of International Relations, taking courses fully in French (with the exception on one that was taken in English). My classes ranged from French foreign policy to a course on Europe seen through the prism of religion and secularization. I initially expected to have very challenging courses with great amounts of homework and multiple readings. I also expected many discussions and debates. While some of the courses I took were challenging, many were quite simple. There was no homework, and all the readings were optional; this did add more pressure because my final grades were determined by only the final exams taken at the end of the program, but it was good to not worry about homework. In terms of discussions, I am sad to say my classes were fairly

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Fontaine de la Rotonde, Aix en Provence, France

quiet. There wasn't much space for debates to take place, and the experience was rather hearing the professor speak for a couple of hours and writing down as much as one could.

MFJMCE: Did you have a favorite part of the program? If so, what was it?

The best part was definitely meeting other study abroad students and making bonds that I believe will last me a lifetime. My friend group was very large with students from Belgium, Australia, Mexico, Canada, Czech Republic, and many other countries. We all traveled together, hung out in Aix a lot, and they truly became my home away from home while I was there. Every single one of the close friends I made there, I'm sure I'll see again- our 'goodbyes' were definitely more 'see you later's'.

MFJMCE: Which European countries were you able to visit during your studies and the ones that impacted you the most (that stood out to you the most)?

I traveled a lot throughout the South of France, and got the chance to travel to Spain, Italy, and Portugal while I was there. They were all incredible experiences, but I completely fell in love with Portugal (Lisbon in

particular) and Bilbao in Spain. My adoration for Portugal made me want to get serious about learning Portuguese, and I'm now an intermediate speaker! Bilbao was magical for many reasons, but mainly because I had never felt more at home in a city I had never visited before. Since I loved it so much, I'm now looking for Masters programs there and hope to permanently move to Northern Spain one day.

MFJMCE: Did this program change or impact on your career goals?

It made my career and life goals more clear. I had always known I wanted to study and eventually live in Europe, but this program made it clear to me that I wouldn't want to live in a big city for a long time, and that perhaps Spain and Portugal might be better for me to live in than France. In terms of career goals, I am still set on wanting to work in foreign affairs, but the experiences I had there taught me to be more flexible and made me understand that no path is linear

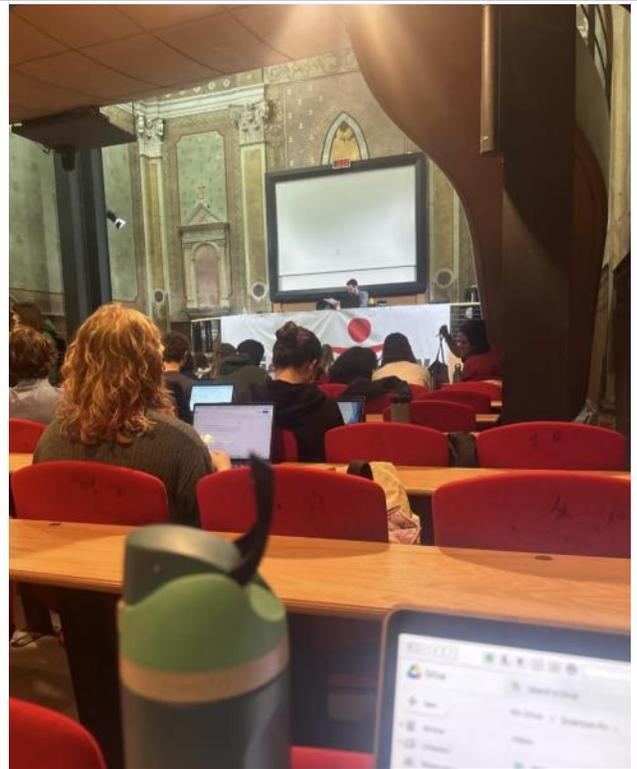


Dafne with friends from Sciences Po at the Calanque de Sugiton, Marseille, France

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Dafne with her friends in Aix en Provence, France



Sciences Po Aix (course inside cathedral turned auditorium), Aix en Provence

a break. Something that I don't feel is quite as present in the U.S.

MFJMCE: Would you study abroad (in Europe) again? What would you recommend to a student who would like to study in Europe, at Sciences Po Aix en Provence?

I absolutely would, but not studying abroad, I would rather just study and live there for the rest of my life. I am currently looking to apply for Erasmus Mundus and other graduate programs, to study and then hopefully just stay there.

For anyone that would like to study at Sciences Po Aix in Aix en Provence, I would recommend being as much of a local as you can. Go to the daily open market, befriend the families selling the most delicious fruits and vegetables you'll ever have (they'll give you free herbs); walk around town, don't waste money on the bus; talk to everyone; drink a good glass of wine and consume copious amounts of cheese daily; visit every single small town in the south; take the 30min bus to Marseille often and go to the Calanques- there's truly few views more beautiful than that of the Calanque de Sugiton; bring really good shoes, and most importantly, don't close yourself up out of fear,

this is your chance to explore and try new things, don't be afraid to do so!

MFJMCE: Do you have any last thoughts to share?

I urge everyone to study abroad at least once. Doesn't have to be in Europe but go to any city that interests you and see how life is there. It will change who you are and your life outlook. Also, reach out! Find people who have studied abroad where you want to go and ask about their experience, they can be great resources to have before making your choice.

By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez



- ▶ For more information on **Sciences Po Aix en Provence**, [click here](#)
- ▶ *Pictures courtesy of Dafne Ostermuenchner*