Liberty - Paris-Sorbonne University, France & Sarmat Investments, Spain (2017/18)

I can wholeheartedly say that my year abroad experience has been fantastic, something that I'm aware not everyone can say after this experience. Of course, I've had my fair share of difficult situations but I feel very lucky to have genuinely enjoyed this year so much that it's completely changed how I'd like to live my future.

For my first semester, although I didn't have quite so many friends and I got a job outside of my Erasmus placement which was far too demanding, I fell in love with the city and lifestyle I was able to live and just waking up in Paris each morning made me incredibly happy. Most of all, I was over the moon with how my French developed and I felt like I'd made the progress I'd hoped I would.

In contrast, my second semester was everything that I missed in my first; I lived in a shared flat of 10 people who became my Erasmus family for my time there and I worked as a TEFL teacher which challenged me yet didn't impede my social life and I met some more wonderful people. However, while my social experiences were brilliant, I feel as though my Spanish has barely improved after living and working in a predominantly English environment and the culture of Madrid doesn't suit me quite so much. But, overall, I couldn't be happy with my experience over this past year!

My main piece of advice for future YA students would be to lengthen your year abroad by as much as possible, especially for those splitting theirs between two countries like I did. 3 months in one place is not enough to learn the things you need to, improve your language and to understand the place you're in. I started my stay in Paris 2 months early and that's when I got to know the city and become adjusted to the lifestyle, THEN I actually started my Erasmus uni placement! It felt like home and that was so important in my experience.

Sometimes opportunities don't come to us, we have to make them, and it'll be so worth it when you do.