This fall, when Joan Quinn unpacked her suitcase in Rouen, France, she joined a burgeoning number of IU Business undergraduates who are satisfying their International Dimension requirement by enrolling in IU Business School programs abroad. Joan’s curriculum at the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce included International Marketing, Crosscultural Management, International Strategies in Eastern Europe, and Intensive French, with classmates from Germany, Finland, Austria, and Japan. In this international educational environment, discussion of European Union no longer seemed theoretical in the lively interchanges with European students.

Despite the difficulties of adjusting to an unfamiliar academic system and struggling with a foreign language, Joan said, “It was the most incredible experience in my life. I learned so much about other cultures, and also my own. This is definitely a learning device unlike any textbook available.”

Rouen is only the most recent of the Business School’s undergraduate study abroad programs. In 1981, the IU School of Business established its first program in the Netherlands, and today has six programs around the globe, extending from France, Finland, and Slovenia, to Singapore and Chile. Thus, IU Business undergraduates in Maastricht were already studying the impact of the European Community agreement before the treaty was signed there, making the Dutch city’s name synonymous with European economic unification.

Now the Business School sends 25 students to the Netherlands for the spring semester, and another 45 for a six-week summer program. There, the students explore the growing interdependence of American and European business through special English-language courses taught by the University of Limburg faculty. This program takes advantage of Maastricht’s strategic location on the narrow peninsula of the Netherlands, stretching between Belgium and Germany, to visit NATO headquarters in Brussels, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament in Strasbourg, and the World Court in the Hague, as well as multinational companies and international banks in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

In 1993, the Business School inaugurated a nine-week program in Mikkeli, Finland, a city located 150 miles northeast of Helsinki. The curriculum in this program includes Russia and Her Neighbors: Tradition and Change in the Former USSR, a topic with particular relevance for the Finns, who share a border with the former superpower. The course was followed by a week-long fieldtrip to Russia, where students met with St. Petersburg’s Deputy Mayor and Director of the Department of Foreign Investment. While there, they also discussed issues of privatization with the general director of a Finnish construction company doing business in Russia. Despite the fact that Finland’s May weather forced them back into parkas and the Finnish language presented a formidable barrier, IU students say the Mikkeli program is a “wonderful experience for a person that wants to broaden his or her horizons,” as well as the “best and most exciting summer I’ve ever had.”

IU Business undergraduates Francisco Cayere and Pedro Romero share this enthusiasm for studying business in an international setting, describing their fall semester at the business school of the Universidad Católica in Santiago, Chile, as “extremely worthwhile.” During the fall, they enrolled with Chilean students in the advanced courses, Capital Markets in Latin America and Administration of Multinational Corporations. While in Santiago, their international immersion was complete, as their university courses were taught in Spanish and the students lived in a Chilean household as well.

On the other side of the globe, IU students were enrolled at the National University of Singapore, where classes are conducted according to the traditional British lecture/tutorial system. In addition to reading about the politics, history, banking systems, and economies of Southeast Asia, these IU business undergraduates also adjusted to a very different educational system.

Instead of regular homework assignments and midterm exams, these students learned to write essays and prepare for final exams that counted for most of the semester’s grades.

Upon returning from their semester of international study, student participants in the Business School’s study abroad programs had basic survival tips for future IU participants, such as: “pack light”; “bring two credit cards”; “bring a supply of Kraft mac-and-cheese and peanut butter”; and “get a Eurail pass.” However, these undergraduates have also offered more profound advice for those students who want to get the most from their experience overseas: “be open and willing to have new experiences”; “try to assimilate into the culture as much as possible”; and “be open-minded and accept everything for what it is.”

LIBBY GITLITZ
Associate Director, Overseas Study

For further information about the IU Business School’s study abroad programs or other overseas study programs, contact the Office of Overseas Study, Franklin Hall 303, IU-Bloomington, 855-9304. In addition, Overseas Study coordinators on each IU campus can answer student questions and provide flyers and information.