

Lauren Valad – UF in Rome

Major: Biomedical Engineering | **Minor:** Business Administration

I studied abroad because...

I wanted to have a chance to travel independently, expand my horizons, learn about different cultures, and because it sounded fun!

My favorite spot in my host city was...

My favorite spot was a walking path that went down along the Tiber River. It was very quiet compared to the rest of the city and a nice place to get away to, but you could still admire the beauty of the city's bridges and domed skyline. Also, on the weekends they set up food stands and little shops with tents that were fun to walk along.

The weirdest food I tried while abroad was...

Beef Tartare (it was so good)

One volunteer experience I had abroad was...

One day we participated in handing out sandwiches to the homeless (that we made beforehand) near the Vatican with a St. John's grad student.

One cool experience I had abroad was...

When our local guide took us to a beach near Rome, we biked in the woods and stopped along the path when we saw wild deer that walked right up to us. They were used to humans, so we were able to get close enough to touch them and take pictures right next to them.

The strangest thing that happened to me ...

I crashed a Vespa in Florence and had to get a check up at the hospital in Rome!

Something I took away from my time abroad is...

I became more aware of different cultures and that there are many different ways to approach life depending on your culture background. I also became more outgoing, confident, and willing to take risks and try new things.

Lastly I would like to tell you...

I know this may sound obvious, but do everything you can to make the most of your experience while you are abroad. When you first get there, it seems like you have a huge expanse of time to get everything that you want to done, but you will be surprisingly busy and time will fly by, so make sure to prioritize what you want to see/do. And be sure to take it all in and live in the moment!