

Fraser's Top 10: An ASP Reflection and Advice Column

The post-travel blues have well and truly set in as I struggle to return to a more mundane existence after experiencing what I could argue as the best three weeks of my life.

To better express my MSU experience, I condensed my time abroad into the following list. This list is no where near the extent of what the program fully involved, and is not intended to be a list where each experience is better than the previous. All my experiences at MSU were equally important, however these, I think, are more significant in understanding the true impact this program had upon me, and what you can take away from the program.

Number 10: The actual study

I start this list with what you might consider the most boring part of the program, the study. It's quite easy to get sidetracked by all the fun things going on around you and forget that you're at MSU for actual education. I know I personally had to remind my parents several times (usually when asking for more money) that 'yes, I am studying' and that 'no, why would I Instagram myself in class when I was just at Niagara Falls?' I'm not meaning to sound like *that* guy, but the study component did help fully round out my experience. My program, on Digital Marketing and Social Media for Business, was by no means a walk in the park, but it was a challenging and highly educating course. Our classes, under power-couple, MSU royalty and international professor duo, Dr. C and Dr. V (#couplegoals), made the course hard not to love, not to mention the other students who were dedicated to their studies (while open to have a bit of fun along the way).

Number: 9: The food

If there's one thing I encourage you to pack for a study abroad to MSU it's your runners and activewear, because you're going to need it after all the food you'll eat. With a substantial amount of Spartan Cash loaded onto your student ID, you can eat your way through campus and East Lansing to your heart's content (shout out to Chipotle). The on-campus cafeterias have a variety of options to choose from, and I encourage you to forget about that carb-free diet until you return home. If you have time, force a MSU ambassador to take you to Golden Harvest, the breakfast location of kings. My life was split into pre-GH and post-GH after my trip there and I cannot recommend that Lansing institution more (Thanks Ronnie and Kelsey for changing my life). No trip to MSU however, would be complete without a trip to the MSU Dairy for a scoop of their on-campus made ice cream. That's right. MSU has it's own cows and dairy for (among other products) ice cream. Do yourself a solid and make your way through their absurdly large selection of ice cream.

Number 8: East Lansing Loving

While I love my university back home (shout out to the University of Queensland), one thing I know I'll miss about MSU is the surrounding area of East Lansing. I don't know about your own university, but mine certainly doesn't have a town surrounding it catering almost entirely to students. Your college experience doesn't end the moment you leave campus, more rather, your college experience doesn't start until you do! What the campus doesn't provide for students (however small that list is), EL does! Want Chipotle? EL has your back. Frozen Yogurt? Just across the road from MSU (Tutti Frutti; particularly good for those hot days). A bar to catch up with your mates at? You guessed it. EL has you once again. I know for me, university ends the moment I leave campus (to go home and procrastinate my work), but in EL there is no escaping MSU. Spartan blood runs deep wherever you look. MSU gear (see number 4) can be seen by approximately 50% (not actual statistic) of people you'll see off campus, and shouting 'Go Green!' will always get the ritual, 'Go White!' response. While there's enough entertainment on campus to keep you occupied or your whole time at MSU, I

encourage leaving the confines of paradise to explore EL, get some food, and experience a town made for students, by the students.

Number 7: The trips

If there's one thing I learned during ASP, it was how to survive excruciatingly long bus trips. With weekend trips to Niagara Falls and Chicago (both 5 hour plus trips one way), not only did I make up for the sleep I lost, but also learned how bad I was at the mind games the MSU students threw our way in an attempt to pass the time. After surviving these trips, the real fun began. As with all travel, it's one thing to read about something and another to actually experience it. The trips to Niagara Falls and Chicago were exactly this. While Niagara Falls blew me away with its sheer size and magnificence, Chicago delighted me with a city full of great food, people and culture (shout out to Boystown Clubbing). I won't go into too much detail and ruin any surprises, but these places definitely made ASP one to remember!

I cannot forget to mention the best-unplanned trip, the bus breaking down in front of an ice rink in Canada! Who can forget the four hours of watching ice hockey, football, and draining the sports bar for all it has. Oh the memories.

Number 6: Dorm Life

Ever since watching the classic Nickelodeon series, Zoey 101, (starring everyone's second favourite Spears sister, Jamie Lynn) boy have I wanted to live in a dorm. The experience to make your own family (#level6fam), live alongside them, see them at their worst, and cry over upcoming assessment at 3am in the morning, was definitely an experience in itself.

Number 5: Nature

If you love squirrels, come to MSU. They're everywhere. They come up to you. They bite you. They're cute. I love Squirrels. Squirrels love me.

Number 4: Shopping

I don't know about you, but I personally love to get back from a trip and have a whole new wardrobe I bought while away. Opportunities to humble brag, 'what, this old thing? I bought it while in America on abroad. It's nothing really', really makes you seem the coolest kid on the block. If you're like me, then MSU is the place for you. As mentioned in number 9, your ID comes loaded with enough money to place a deposit on a house in East Lansing. Aside from food, you can spend these funds at the Spartan Bookshop, and get your fill of MSU swag. I know I did. Do yourself a favour and get your Nike branded gear and imagine the compliments you're going to get back home.

Number 3: How to lose a pound in 10 days

This links back to number 9 and my advice to bring your runners to campus. MSU is a massive university. Walking is the easiest and cheapest way to get around and this does help burn the calories you just gained by eating those two burgers and fries for lunch. Not only is MSU massive, it is as beautiful as you look in all the MSU gear you'll be wearing. Walk along the river; see the ducks (or geese. Who knows what they are); appreciate the trees and gardens and feel like you're in an American college movie. If you particularly want to impress your friends, go for a run in the morning before it heats up and feel superior in the fact you've seen more of the campus and got your 30min of exercise in.

On a side note, did you know MSU's art gallery, The Broad, was used in Batman versus Superman? Forgettable movie. Unforgettable university.

Number 2: The Ambassadors and Stewards

Who better to show you the best locales in East Lansing than the locals themselves? The ASP ambassadors and stewards were the gang of cool kids there to help you party/ drink/ eat/ have fun/ explore and make your trip even better. It's hard to explain who they are and the actual impact they made because it goes deeper than what I can write. Without the ambassadors and stewards the trip would have been a bunch of international students (particularly Australians) trying to find their way around. The ambassador and stewards added the flair, spontaneity and fun to our already crazy group and made a 10/10 trip 20/10. I need to mention Ronnie, Alex, Glenn, Kelsey and Jessie for the being a great clique, and inducting me into semi-ambassadorial status and dubbing me the Ambassador For Not Being An Ambassador.

Number 1: Friends

When I said this list is not placing anything greater than another, I kind of lied. Without a group of friends to party and make inside jokes with how could you survive time away from your own family and friends? All the trips, classes, eating and drinking with my ASP squad lead to the creation of a group of friends for life. From the first friend I made on the plane to Lansing to the other students, ambassadors and stewards I met throughout the program, I managed to form a great group of people, there to support me and have fun with at every turn. You know you have a great squad when even the Alpha Beta's won't mess with you. The friends I made during the trip were what really made ASP great, and chatting and seeing them is what keeps my ASP experience alive.

I don't really know how best to summarise what I've written and what else I should say except that ASP was truly an amazing experience and made a profound impact upon my life. This trip was more than an educational and cultural program, it was an experience that helped me learn more about myself personally and what I hope to achieve through my studies and life.

I encourage anyone who is interested in such an experience to embrace this opportunity and make your own top 10; I know yours will be different, yet equally memorable.

So thank you, ASP staff, Ambassadors and Stewards. Thanks for the memories.

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