

# UNCW PLS

## STUDENTS ABROAD



Elizabeth Nelson and friend, Danube River, Budapest, Hungary

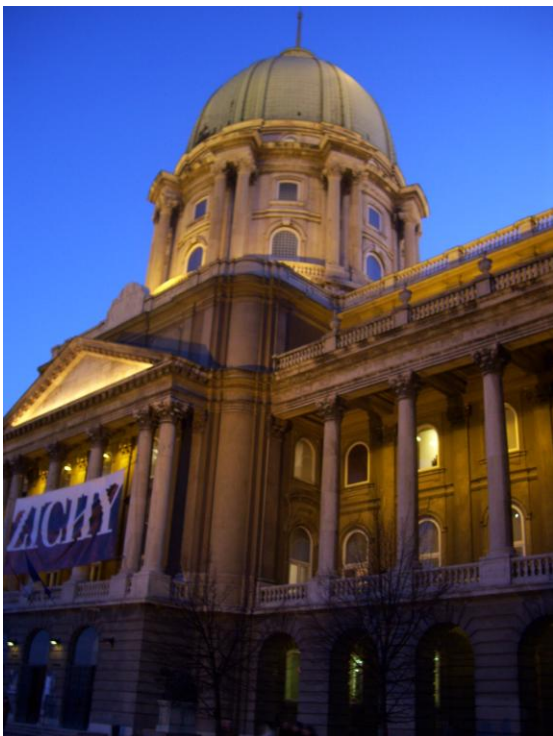
**Student:** Elizabeth Nelson

**Country:** Hungary

**Duration:** Spring 2009

### What do you feel you learned on study abroad that you couldn't learn at UNCW?

First off, I was able to grow on an academic level. I am a political science major interested in Central and Eastern Europe. I was able to get a local perspective on issues such as EU integration and expansion and transitions from communism. You can most certainly learn about how foreign governments operate at UNCW. However, being in the country, seeing things like a parliamentary style government breaking down play out while you are there really drives the lesson home more so than reading from a textbook.



I was also able to hear a speech given by Serbian foreign minister Vuk Jermic about Serbia's desire to join the EU and to peacefully resolve the Kosovo issue. It is highly unlikely Jeremic will visit UNCW, and I was able to gain a new perspective on the Kosovo issue. Furthermore, because I was so centrally located, it was possible for me to visit other places of interest in the region. For example, I traveled to Belgrade, where I met many Serbians who shared new perspectives with me on regional issues and taught me a little about how their government works. Study abroad is also essential for language acquisition! I was halfway trying in my Hungarian class, but being immersed in the language, I couldn't help but pick it up!

At left: Buda Castle, Budapest, Hungary

I was able to grow on a personal level as well. I had been abroad before, but I had never actually lived abroad. Since I did not go with an organization or program provider, I dealt with all the initial formalities myself (housing, transport pass, phone, hauling two big bags home from IKEA) all in a relatively new place where I did not speak the language.

Another important way I grew was, out of necessity (overseas, Subway is quite expensive and not very filling) I learned how to cook for myself. Confidence in the kitchen is essential to making any study abroad affordable! Additionally, I stepped out of the American way of life and walked in someone else's shoes for a few months. Americans, as a consequence of geography, are very isolated. By no stretch of the imagination is Wilmington a cosmopolitan, international city. Travel overseas and study abroad allowed me to interact with a wide

variety of people and appreciate what I have back home. For instance, I lived in a very "retro" student flat complete with an old style Hungarian washing machine and a Russian fridge I'm pretty sure was manufactured by the dinosaurs. Now that I am home, I appreciate my family's nice, new appliances more so than before. Another experience I had made me question some things about home. While in Budapest, I used their excellent public transport system to get around. In rush hour, a tram runs down the main road every two minutes. In the middle of the night, a bus comes every fifteen minutes. I wonder why it is that while Wilmington traffic continues to worsen and climate change does not stop, we are not improving our own public transport.

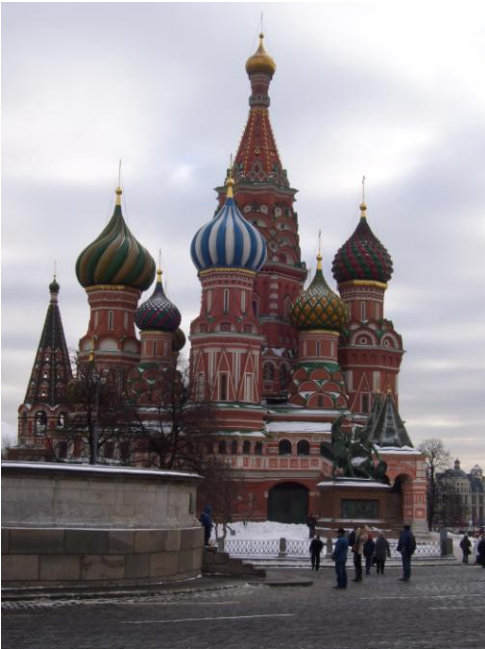


Photo above: Houses of Parliament, Budapest, Hungary

### **How were you able to make friends?**

While overseas I was able to meet and connect with many new friends. Even though I was alone, I found it easy to make friends. There is a study abroad club, or ERASMUS club at my university and pretty much every European university. The club organized meet-ups and activities so there is always a chance to make friends, foreign and local! In fact, one of the best experiences of my study abroad was meeting a special Englishman who has become more than a friend :). International relations put into practice!

St. Basil's Cathedral, Moscow, Russia



### **Where else did you visit?**

I can't forget the travel possibilities that studying abroad offered me. Budapest is very centrally located. Belgrade (Serbia), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Vienna (Austria), Bratislava (Slovakia), Prague (Czech Republic), Berlin (Germany), Krakow (Poland), Warsaw (Poland), Wroclaw (Poland), Lviv (Ukraine), western Romania, and other Hungarian cities like Pecs or Gyor were all possible weekend trips by train or bus!

### **Would you recommend study abroad to your fellow PLS students?**

Studying abroad has been one of the best experiences of my college career and my life! I recommend studying abroad to EVERYONE! You will have so much fun and grow personally and academically. If you plan correctly, your study abroad can cost the same as UNCW or be even cheaper! If you can't take a whole year or semester off, just travel independently (it's more affordable than you think) during the summer or after graduation. Somehow, some way get your passport, get on a plane, and go abroad! You won't regret it!!!