

Oceana Hangret

Middlebury French Language Program

In the summer of 2022, I participated in the Middlebury French Language Program. The program had a duration of 7 weeks, from July 1 to August 19. Becoming fully immersed in the language, I signed a pledge to only speak, read, and write in French.

In the first week of the program, I struggled with communication and expressing my feelings. However, eating lunch with my professors and doing extracurricular activities like theater and yoga quickly helped me pick up on many words, and my conversations became more engaging. For an assignment, I made brochures of fun travel places in francophone places with my classmates. From this collaborative activity, I gained insight on how the lives of people differ from France to Romandy, a French-speaking part of Switzerland. I also learned about the Algerian War, which exposed me to a history that I was rarely taught before.

Being pushed to expand my boundaries, I began to feel more confident in speaking French. Surrounded by professors who genuinely cared for my progress and friends who I could laugh with when making poor grammatical mistakes allowed me to have fun with learning the language. I thought of how much my comprehension and speaking skills have improved from before. Taking back everything I learned from the summer, I walked into my Advanced French Through Films class and understood most of what my professor was saying. This is something I would have continued to struggle with if it weren't for my experience at Middlebury. I no longer hold back my thoughts from fear of sounding « stupid » and have found an unknown confidence from speaking French. I started my summer hoping to enhance my knowledge of French and ended it wanting to major in Francophone studies.