



Lycée St. Vincent – Senlis, France
Sam Ergina '12 (Pre-U'13)

My six-week exchange to Senlis, France was by far one of the greatest experiences in my life. Not only did I learn a new lifestyle, but I also had the opportunity to improve my French. I didn't actually live in Senlis. The exchange family lived in a village called Rully, which was a 10-minute drive from Senlis and had a population of approximately 800 people. A great thing about this school is that many of the students live around that city, in their own unique towns so you never know where you might end up.

Personally, I'm a big fan of history, so visiting this humble area in France was a great treat. Around Rully, there were three world heritage sites, which is insanely cool if that stuff interests you. With the family, I also had a chance to visit Normandy and I even got to go to Bruges, Belgium. Because Europe's countries are all relatively close to one other, visiting another country isn't too taxing. Seeing the "Venice of the North" (Bruges) was definitely one of the highlights of my stay. During my weekend in Normandy, I got to see some WW2 monuments and cemeteries as well as a few older sites too. The sites to be seen, and the places to visit are some of the best parts of going on exchange to Europe.

The school itself was called St-Vincent. It's an old monastery that was built around the 1300s. Its foundation remains the same and it's a really nice campus. As for the students who go there, they were all nice and easy to approach. I had the chance to make many new friends and learn about the kind of things teenagers in France are interested in. It turns out that there aren't many differences. The school was very welcoming. The woman in charge of the exchange helped us feel like a part of the school and we even had conversation classes to improve our French, which really helped me in being more fluent in the language. Every Thursday, a parent would take the exchange students into Paris for the day to see the incredible city. The school gave us a lot of freedom. Wednesdays ended at noon, students are allowed to leave campus for lunch and the days were a bit longer (08:20-17:30) but with spares every day. The cafeteria food was amazingly delicious. The classes were different, in that they were less interactive than the ones at LCC. At St-Vincent you pretty much sit and listen to a teacher talk for an hour. For sports, make sure to ask your exchange before coming! I didn't and missed out on the soccer season there because I didn't bring any equipment.

The social life is a lot of fun. The students are kind and it seems all around France in high schools each grade throws these huge parties with the entire grade and they're so much fun! It's all dancing and laughing and I only had a chance to go to one (since they're once per month), but I had an amazing time. All in all, if you get the chance to go on an exchange to St-Vincent, take the opportunity, it'll be life changing.