About-Me
Vinh Luong
_A Hawaii girl with a sense of adventure_

I created ALOHA VINH to share my experiences and adventures abroad. I'm excited to start my new life here in Italy. I'm young and optimistic. Fun seeking is what I like to do; what my passions are; and what's important to me. These past couple of years have been truly interesting and I wake up each day excited for what the day will bring.

xoxo,
vineezzy

_Sunday, April 20, 2014_

Eastern Europe

In my 23 years of living, I would never thought of traveling to Eastern Europe. I was planning to spend my break in Western Europe; popular cities such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris, and Barcelona. Then it came to me; life is too short to not explore parts of the world that is unknown to myself. Changing my plans at the last minute, I booked a spot on the Eastern Europe tour with the Bus2Alps. _Bus2Alps_ is a student travel agency in Europe lead by previous college students. I packed by luggage, met my leaders (King & Chelsea), hopped on to the bus with 40 other students and off we went. I traveled to Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, and Croatia.

Traveling to Eastern Europe was on of the best decisions of my life. I was able to have a the deep understanding of the history of theses countries and a cultural experience that you don't get from text books. The way each tour guides from each country describes the life during and after the Cold War was preposterous and unbelievable. For example the day I arrived to Auschwitz and Berkinau was an experience I could never forget. I personally have no European origin specifically Jewish but I could feel the emotionally connections that the Jewish people had. The sky turned grey and windy, chills and goose bumps ran through my body as I walked though the concentration camps. It felt like a horror story coming alive; screaming pain and sorrow as I looked into the rooms of the victims.

On a happier note, Eastern Europe is not as unsafe as you might think. Traveling, gifts and food are _incredibility affordable_, sometimes cheaper than America. The people are genuinely welcoming and diverse. The geographical landmarks are breathtaking and the nightlife is on point. When traveling, the biggest challenge you'll have to face is the language barriers. These countries all have their own currency so the best to draw money is through an ATM. You could always go to a currency exchange store but their rates are usually low.

Until till next time,

Vineeezy
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Lake Bled, Slovenia
Budapest, Hungary
Krakow, Poland
Auschwitz and Berkinau Concentration Camp

Taken from http://vineeezy.blogspot.com/
Prague, Czech Republic
Tim Burton Exhibition

Split, Croatia
French Riviera

The French Riviera is one of the nicest area I’ve been to; I don't even know where to begin. Located in the Southeast corner of France along the Mediterranean coastline, I headed to Cannes. Cannes is known for the International Film Festival and where celebrities come to spend their summer vacations. The main street reminded me of Kalakaua Avenue in Waikiki, high-end designer stores and only five star hotels. We hopped on the bus and headed to Nice. Nice is another great vacation spot for the young and old. The city is filled with beautiful flowers and amazing mountain and ocean views! I ended my night drinking sparkling cider (champagne) with a group of friends over looking the ocean view.

The next morning, I had the BEST breakfast since coming to Europe. The bread and cheese in France is on point. We left our hotel and headed to Eze, a small village on top of a cliff. We were given a tour at the Fragonard perfume factory then headed to Monaco, land of the filthy rich and famous! Monaco, the second to the smallest country, known for their casino and luxurious cars. I did a little exploring around old and new town. I headed to the Cathedral where Grace Kelly was buried, made my way to the harbor where the start of Formula 1 Grand Prix circuit and ended up making a few purchases along the way to Princess Grace Rose Garden. Hopped back on to the bus and headed to the last spot on my list...Monte Carlo. Monte Carlo Casino and Hotel de Paris looks even better in person. Unfortunately, we're not allow to enter the Hotel unless we're staying there and photos are STRICTLY PROHIBITED in the casino. The Casino de Monte-Carlo is the nicest casino I’ve been to. Exotic cars are parked in front of the hotels; all you see are Ferraris, Lamborghiniis, Mercedes, Maserati even a Bugatti! I was speechless. Hopefully one day, I will return to this luxurious state for my birthday!

Until next time xOxO,
Vineeezy
Taken from http://vineezy.blogspot.com/
Back in America
As I walked onto the plane from Frankfort, Germany to Washington D.C., I knew this was it. I was finally leaving Europe for good and this would be my last time in Europe. It has been an emotional, sad yet exciting experience. There was a lot of emotions going through my mind. I had a lot of time to reflect upon my experience studying abroad for six months. There were things that went right, wrong, could have happened or even could have been improved. This experience allowed me to grow and develop skills not only as a student but as a better individual in the world.

Being in Europe, particularly Italy, has changed my view of the world. I have grasped a new perspective and understand for multicultural diversity all through the world. Studying abroad has pushed me outside of comfort zone and exposed myself to new cultures, people and ideas. Not only did I learn from my academic courses but also studying abroad was an experience where I immersed in a new culture, learning from conversations, observing on personal activities and reflect on life. Living in an entirely new environment or even using a new transportation system is a learning experience. With the work of the Johnson foundation, from the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank you for the best learning experience anyone could have asked for. I feel that everyone should travel outside of his or her native country or comfort zone to experience life. With these experiences, I have gain and will continue to increase the amount of diverse perspectives to deepen my learning environment with the healthy exchange of ideas.