

# FRANCE

## OHS French students travel to France on school trip

By Karina Patel  
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On March 7–17, French teacher Chelsea Shaffer and 12 OHS students traveled to multiple cities and landmarks in France, including Paris, Rouen and the American Cemetery, as a part of a school trip.

Shaffer began the process of organizing this trip over a year ago, but this was an idea that she had had in her mind for a while.

“Even before I started working here, I wanted to take a group of students to France. I studied abroad in college, and it was life-changing for me,” Shaffer said. “I think traveling to other places and interacting with people from different cultures and kind of seeing a way of life that is different from your day-to-day routine is extremely beneficial and powerful in showing that there are other options, and there are other ways and that people are similar everywhere.”

When Shaffer proposed the trip to her students, any student that was taking French was allowed to enroll. However, it turned out that the students interested in the trip were her upper level French students, which Shaffer thinks was for the best.

“[After] our experiences there, I do think that the students need a little more background knowledge in the language before they go,” Shaffer said. “We did an exchange with another high school and other students, so they had to go to school in French, and they had to interact with French families, so I think just being in that third or fourth year gives more than a strong ability to communicate.”

Shaffer taught at a high school in France before coming to OHS. She reached out to that school and proposed the idea of pen pals for the students, and the French school sent a list of students that wanted to participate.

“The American students had to record a video in French introducing themselves and post it onto a Google Drive, and the French students had to record a video in English,” Shaffer said. “After that point, they were able to get in touch through social media. It depended on the person, but they had the ability to be in regular communication up until we went.”

The students that went on the trip also

had the opportunity to do a homestay with their pen pal if they chose too. According to junior Amya Franklin, this experience was very beneficial.

“It was really amazing to experience a family that speaks another language and is a part of another culture,” Franklin said. “Her family was really sweet and so amazing, and they were all really supportive and welcoming.”

As a part of the trip, OHS students spent the day with their pen pals, which included attending a French high school. According to junior Sophie Quinn, the French school was very different than OHS.

“In the high school, they don’t have computers, and they aren’t allowed to have phones out in classrooms, which I liked,” Quinn said. “Also, students there bring their own scissors and glue and rulers and other school supplies. They don’t have French flags in every classroom, and they don’t have a pledge.”

Shaffer believes that her students handled the communication aspect of the trip amazingly and that this trip really helped her students use the skills they have learned.

“The beginning was a little hesitant, timid, people trying things out,” Shaffer said. “But by the end of it, I think everyone was pretty confident, especially after staying with our pen pals and getting to spend time with them.”

Franklin was surprised to see how calm and understanding French people were with them as they spoke.

“The people in Rouen had like southern hospitality,” Franklin said. “They were very kind and very understanding, and whenever they would hear this broken French with this accent, they thought it was very cute.”

Along with adjusting for the language barrier, the students noticed that the importance of food and meals in France is far different from that in America.

“Part of the meal is to take your time and talk with people and socialize and enjoy your food. I think every night that we went out to dinner we spent at least two hours,” Shaffer said. “The European Union and France, in particular, have a lot stricter guidelines on what things can go into your food, what preservatives and what chemicals. So, everything is fresh and homemade.”

Shaffer also noticed that the French

have a completely different mentality when it comes to work and having a job than Americans.

“In the United States, we have this idea that our purpose is to work, and if you have a good job, then, you are fulfilled,” Shaffer said. “The French mentality is the opposite of that. They say if you work too much, you don’t have a life. They put a lot of value on having a life outside your job and doing things that fulfill you outside your work.”

Shaffer would like to work with the French school to have their students visit America, which she believes would be beneficial for the French students since the French education system has an emphasis on Civil Rights during high school.

“They are kind of struggling with the financing of it. The French education system is much more concerned with equal opportunity, so this trip would be a large financial burden, and they can’t really offer that to their students unless they have a way of offering it to everyone,” Shaffer said. “But they might be able to send students on an individual basis, and we could do an exchange that way. The long-term goal would be that we would go to them one year, and then, they would come to us the next, and we would alternate back and forth with different groups of students, and they would get to make more long-term connections and see the United States.”

Overall, Shaffer and her students believe the trip was a success that gave them new experiences.

“Ms. Shaffer put in so much hard work for this trip,” Quinn said. “I think this trip was a unique opportunity because we got to see the tourist side and a more inside view of France.”



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**Row 1:** Senior Gillian Meyers and juniors Sophie Quinn and Amya Franklin share lunch and smile for the camera. Junior Grace Logan stands with French students from a school they visited on their trip called Lycée Thomas Corneille. **Row 2:** The students on the trip pose in front of the Seine River. The students on the trip smile for a picture outside of the Louvre before going in. **Row 3:** OHS students take a picture with the students from the French school. Students on the French trip received pen pals prior to the trip and were able to meet them in France. Juniors Christina Evans and Grace Logan smile as they bake French macarons. The trip left Mar. 7 and got back Mar. 17. The students also visited many famous French landmarks.