The Importance of Living in the Moment

I think a lot of times people forget to live in the moment. I know I think ahead rather than just taking a second to reflect on where I am most of the time. When I studied abroad last summer, I tried to get myself to live in the moment and to reflect on how I felt. I think I did a pretty good job. I journaled every night and said yes to every opportunity because I knew there wouldn’t be another chance if I missed it. But I did not do perfectly every day with the task I had given myself. I still had school and an internship and the real world to worry about. But one day, one perfect, sunny, warm afternoon in Paris I think I truly understood what it meant to live in the moment.

Just after my friends and I finished climbing all 1,665 steps to the top and back down the Eiffel Tower, we decided to relax for a little. My legs were tired, and our stomachs rumbled reminding us that we were hungry, so we stopped by a grocery store to pick up some snacks. Did you know a bottle of wine is cheaper than a bottle of water in France? So, of course we got some wine and cheese and fruit to round out our picnic. I remember walking faster back to the lawn of the Eiffel Tower with our heavy grocery bags gripped in our hands so we could start our afternoon of leisure.

 We found a spot a little further back so we could be away and in our own little bubble. The sun was hot, and I felt my skin tingle like a sunburn would be coming but I couldn't care less as I sat with my friends. Faintly, I heard the song *Take Me Home, Country Roads*, coming from a speaker a few feet away from our spot on the lawn. I laid back on the grass letting it tickle my bare arms and laughed as I pointed out the song to my friends. Here we were thousands of miles away from home, but we still heard a song that reminded us of JMU.

The conversations, music, and street noise surrounding us became a collective buzzing noise as I focused on our conversation. The wine we sipped straight from the bottle was sweet and the brie we ate was creamy. As I looked around me, the color of the sky seemed like a brighter blue than ever before and the laughs circling my ears were more genuine than they had been in a long time. I felt like I was floating and everything around me was exactly as it was meant to be. Even one of the bright red strawberries we had bought was shaped like a heart. My gut was tight, and my cheeks were sore from laughing. It felt like a scene in a coming of age movie, our little picnic would have been the envy of everyone watching. When I looked in front of me and saw a world landmark that I wasn’t sure I would ever get a chance to see in person, I was in awe. I was so small compared to this massive work of architectural wonder. I remember thinking how lucky I was to be able to have this level of happiness.

It’s funny, you have these expectations of when you will be the happiest in life, and most of the time your predictions are wrong. I thought I would be in a state of bliss walking in some of the most famous art museums in the world, but I found happiness in a simple picnic. The best moments of life come when you are least expecting them too, so don’t plan every second.

Word Count: 633