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Law school offers some perks

I've recently completed my bar application and I know I am not alone when I say I have never been so relieved to have completed anything in my entire life. Not only did it require me to do more research into my life than an autobiography would necessitate, but it also caused me to relive many of my more painful past experiences. Like that time in college when I lived in a house with seven people and one bathroom.

The tedium of documenting every event over the course of the last 10 years of my life nearly caused me to rethink my decision to sit for the bar exam. This reaction was overly dramatic of course. But in the midst of what I viewed at the time as the most traumatizing thing I'd ever had to do, it was easy to forget that I've actually put a lot of time and effort into my legal education and that despite the minor peripheral annoyances, I truly do want to practice law.

As the end of my last semester nears, I've been thinking about how many rewarding experiences law school has offered. In the midst of the day-to-day workload, it's easy to forget that my legal education definitely has its perks. For example, I don't think I've lost an argument with my parents since my first semester of law school.

One of my more rewarding experiences occurred early last summer when I had the good fortune to participate in a Comparative Politics class in the Czech Republic.

I have always been interested in global issues.

I feel that a greater understanding of global concerns not only gives me an insight into other cultures, but also helps me to get a better grasp on domestic issues. I even briefly considered getting a second major in international relations in college until I settled upon

graduating in a reasonable amount of time instead.

The course offered a chance to learn about the law of the European Union, the Czech Republic specifically, and also focused on how the Czech Republic transferred from a communist economy to a capitalist economy. The class was led by professor Michael Seng who has travelled and taught extensively in the Czech Republic.

The first week of the program was in Prague. I had been to Prague prior to this for fun, but the experiences this trip offered were above and beyond my earlier travels there. We attended a number of lectures that focused mainly on economic issues in the Czech Republic, but also highlighted various social issues as well.

In addition to these lectures, our group had the opportunity to visit with the American Chamber of Commerce, the Czech Bar Association and other sites in the large metropolitan capital.

One of the highlights for me personally was our visits with individuals who studied or practiced law in Prague. On one such occasion, we visited a former John Marshall student who is currently licensed to practice law in both the United States and the Czech Republic. She offered great insight into the differences in the practice between the two nations and how one can transition to practicing law in a foreign nation.

We also had the opportunity to visit the American Embassy to speak with the staff. In addition to lecturing on American-Czech relations, they also explained their responsibilities as individual ambassadors. Although a law degree is not strictly necessary, the staff presented foreign service as an interesting alternative to practicing law.

The second week of the program was conducted in Brno. Brno is the judicial center of the Czech Republic. The constitutional and supreme courts are there and it is, appropriately, where we learned about the legal structure of the Czech Republic and the European Union.

We also got the chance to meet government officials and court justices. The last two days of the trip we visited Bratislava, Slovakia, to learn about commercial law in the European Union, which included a guided tour of one of Europe's largest supermarket and home goods chains.

Although the study abroad experience certainly offered a wealth of information about a different legal system, there was ample opportunity for play as well. In addition to the time we were given to take in the sights of Prague and Brno, both inside and outside of the lectures, there were optional side trips as well. One such trip was to the Moravian region of the Czech Republic where we were able to take in the beautiful sites of the countryside and visit a local winery to sample some of the region's wines. We also took a short trip to Vienna, and managed to walk nearly the entirety of the city over the course of a seven-hour walking tour.

So, it is a tradeoff. Although my time in law school required many tense and agitating moments, I, in turn, got the chance to see and learn about things that not many people do. And these experiences are what make the stress all worth it. While I'm looking forward to finishing up my last semester of school and joining the profession I've been preparing so long to be a part of, I am grateful that I will have these once-in-a-lifetime experiences to look back on and draw from. ■

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