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## USAC - 33+ Years of Learning in the Basque Country

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# BOGA feature

## 33+ years: Learning in the Basque Country

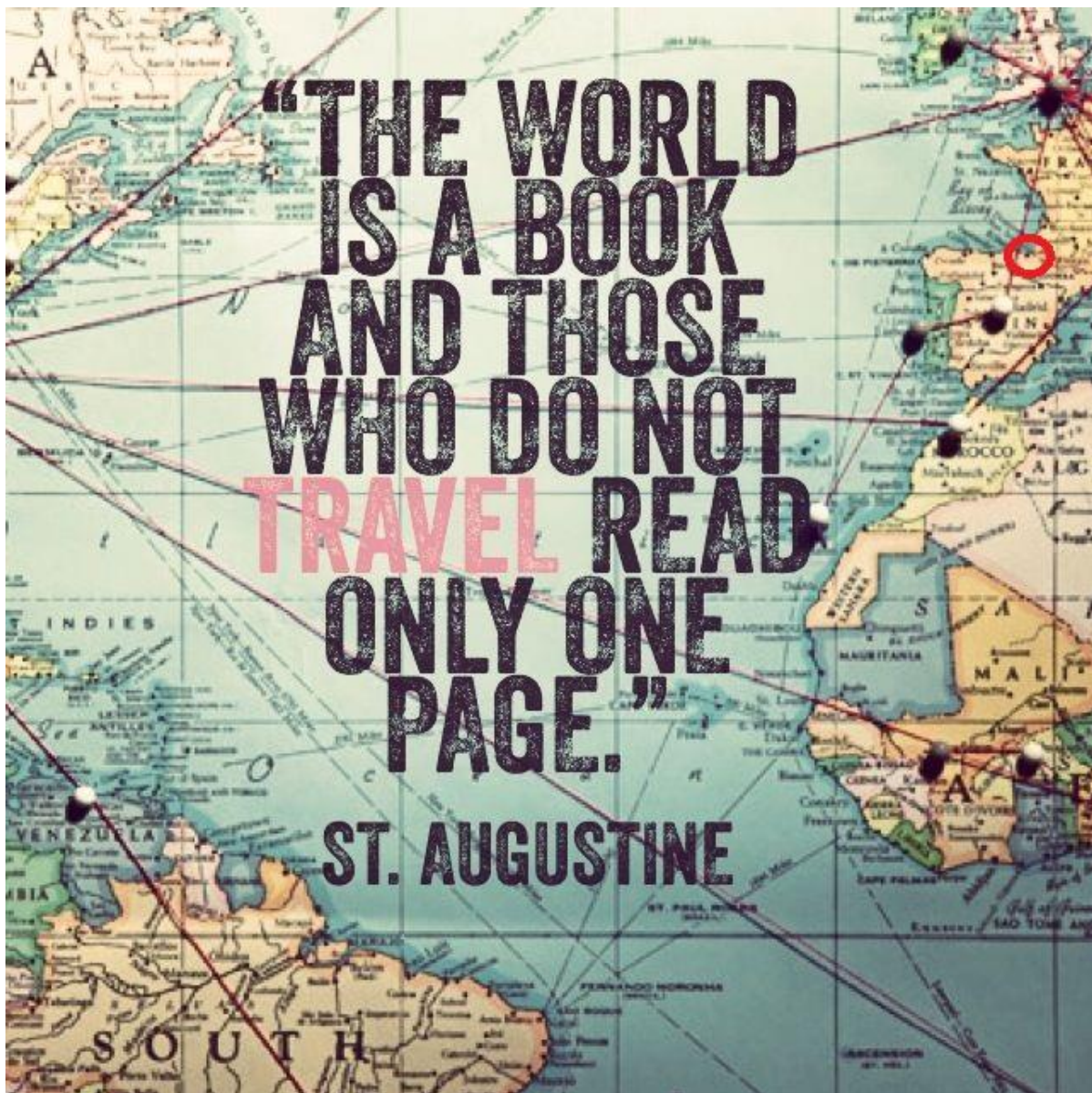


Now with fifty universities in 26 countries, the University Studies Abroad Consortium (USAC) has not forgotten its early origins (per its logo with the Basque “lauburu”) as study abroad program in the Basque Country. Today USAC offers programs in the cities of Bilbao and Donostia/San Sebastian. More than 400 students study there each year; 9,000 total since 1983.

For 33 years, USAC has provided university students with quality, affordable study abroad programs and contributed to the internationalization of universities in the United States and abroad. Students from any university are welcome to participate; and those from more than 800 universities around the world have done so. Boise State University, the

University of Nevada, Reno and the University of the Basque Country established the Consortium.

USAC's mission is to provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to succeed in the global society of the twenty-first century. The Consortium also strives to provide an authentic, quality context in which students may grow into engaged citizens of the world, not only in the classroom but also through fieldtrips, integrated living and academic experiences, sports, internships, and volunteer and service learning opportunities.



ONLINE SOURCE: <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/b0/7e/91/b07e912f4c6bdd022f756cac4f1ef7f2.jpg>



## *Alumni Q&A*



Name: Gabriel Urza

Program site: San Sebastián

*Why did you choose the study abroad in San Sebastián?*

I'd actually lived in San Sebastian with my family when I was in third grade, so I already had a connection to the area. My family is Basque, and so I thought that San Sebastian would be a great place to connect with my family heritage while still being in a beautiful place where you could surf every day.

*What were some of the more unique things you were able to do or see?*

Sebastian certainly doesn't lack for things to do. Just the daily life there was full of action: beach life, a great nightlife in the old part of town, cider festivals, tamboradas. The USAC group I was with took a trip to la Rioja for a weekend, which was a great way to spend a weekend. And I'm not someone who necessarily loves going to see churches, but one of my favorite trips there was to the church at Arantzazu, which was designed by a group of postmodern Basque artists. It's surprisingly avant guard, considering the climate in which it was built.

*What did you learn about yourself while abroad?*

It's difficult to quantify what exactly I learned about myself, but I definitely left my study abroad experience with a greater understanding of the size and multidimensionality of the world, and my place in it. I also made friendships with both USAC students, faculty, and



people from San Sebastian that have lasted for almost twenty years now. I was there a couple years ago and stayed with friends I met during my time abroad.

*If you were to study abroad again what location would you choose?*

Well, San Sebastian is hard to beat, but I think I'd pick someplace in South America—either Argentina or Chile. I'm especially drawn to Spanish-speaking cultures, and the history and geography of the Andes has always been attractive to me.

*What advice would you give students trying to decide whether or not to study abroad?*

My initial response was just to say, "Go!" but I don't think this is entirely true. I think you have to have a base level of self-sufficiency to travel abroad; travel is an amazing learning experience, but it also almost always involves some solitude and loneliness, so I'd suggest that students ask themselves if they are at the point in their life when they can deal with it.

But being uncomfortable is a good thing, too! You'll learn a lot about yourself and about the world in these moments of discomfort.

*How has your time abroad influenced your career choices?*

My time abroad has certainly trained me to think of my career (or "careers") in a more global sense. I was a public defender for five years, and I felt like my language skills as well as my familiarity with non-traditionally "American" cultures was much broader because of my time abroad. And now that I'm writing and teaching Creative Writing, I certainly try to incorporate broader global issues into my writing and teaching.

[ONLINE SOURCE: [http://blog.studyabroadusac.com/alumni-qa-gabriel-urza-san-sebastian-spain/?\\_ga=1.61699812.935583943.1389390750](http://blog.studyabroadusac.com/alumni-qa-gabriel-urza-san-sebastian-spain/?_ga=1.61699812.935583943.1389390750)]



Donostia-San Sebastian looking north to the Atlantic Ocean