



Amanda visiting Saint Martin, a commune on the archipelago island off the west coast of France.

Alumna finds herself and happiness in France

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Phoenix Contributor

Four years ago, my best friend told me she wanted to travel to France and teach English. Never could I have imagined that France would become her new home.

Amanda Webb is an alumna member of the Delta Epsilon Chapter from Mansfield University, PA. During her last year at Mansfield, Amanda's French professor informed the class of an opportunity to travel abroad and teach the English language to elementary school children in France. After inquiry, research and self-determination, Amanda applied for the program sponsored by Pennsylvania State University.

Upon graduation Amanda moved home and secured a full-time teaching position at her high school alma mater Lewistown High School, PA. In May 2004, she received her acceptance letter for the program in France. Amanda left the security of her family, friends and a full-time job for an opportunity that would lead her to find her true self.

Amanda left for France in August 2004, not knowing where she would live,

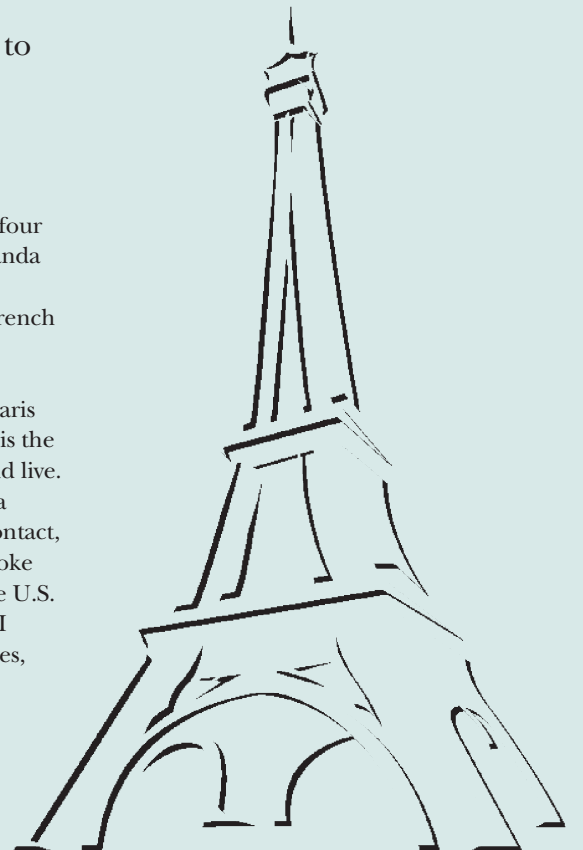
whom she would live with or how to speak French. Although she passed four semesters of French in college, Amanda did not speak the language fluently. "My name is" and "ham" were the French words Amanda could speak.

She describes the experience: "I packed my bags, got on a plane to Paris and then a train to Nantes." Nantes is the town in France where Amanda would live. Upon her arrival in Nantes, Amanda knew she would meet her French contact, a person whom she never met or spoke with prior to her departure from the U.S.

Amanda admits, "I was terrified. I sat outside the train station, in Nantes, thinking 'what have I done,' 'what's going to happen?' I was very overwhelmed."

As she waited, Amanda began to notice a man lingering

Continued on page 12



The City of Nantes is located on the banks of the Loire River, at the confluence of the Erdre and the Sèvre Nantaise, and 35 miles from the Atlantic Ocean.



Amanda and her friends, Tracy, Aaron and Meredith, at Mont Saint-Michel, a rocky tidal island in Normandy, France.

A town square in Blois, France. The town of Blois was a favorite royal residence and it is also one of the most historic towns of France.



Continued on page 12

around the train station. Not knowing how to speak the language, Amanda thought, "I hope he doesn't sit next to me." Ironically, the man sat next to her, looked at her luggage and asked if she was Amanda. The man was Thierry, her French contact.

They showed Amanda to her apartment, a small room where "assistants" (as Amanda's position was titled) stayed while teaching in Nantes. Once settled in her apartment, Amanda had to complete paperwork to establish residency, insurance and her working permit.

Amanda explained, "It took about three months to notice a difference. I was beginning to comprehend more French, and I began to do things on my own." As she found her way through her new town, Amanda began to appreciate and love the French culture and its people.

At the end of her first year, Amanda had an option to return to the United States or reapply for a second year as an assistant.

Amanda said, "I had such a great experience and made great friends. I couldn't just walk away from this experience." Despite missing her family and friends back home, Amanda was accepted for a second year in Nantes.

"With the unconditional support of

my family, I was able to return to France for a second year. I knew I had to come back," she said. "This was such an amazing experience; the culture is wonderful. I couldn't give it up, and I just felt this is where I should be. I knew I could live here."

Amanda returned to France for a second year, and at the end of that year, she began looking for a new working opportunity so she could stay in France. Through one of her new friends in France, an Englishman who lived in the country nine years, Amanda learned of a teaching vacancy at the University of Nantes Medical School. Amanda was hired under a two-year contract to teach English to medical students.

While teaching at the elementary and medical schools, Amanda had many breaks from teaching. During each break, Amanda vacationed all over the globe. She said she has traveled to 11 countries, including England, Ireland, Scotland, Poland, Czech Republic, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Spain and Italy. She also returned to the United States several times during these four years. Amanda is currently planning a month-long vacation to Australia with a friend she met during one of her many trips.

Having lived in France for four years, Amanda is beginning to look for another position that will allow her to stay a little longer.

Amanda says she wants to stay in France because, "I found myself here. I miss my family and friends, but this is where I want to be."

Although finding a new job may be difficult, Amanda is confident, "with luck, long hours, and research I hope to find a job and will begin paperwork for dual citizenship in France and the United States."

"I am most grateful for the unconditional love and support of my family and friends in the U.S.," Amanda says. "Despite how difficult it is to be thousands of miles away from them, they continue to encourage me to stay where I am happy."