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ITALY TRIP WIDENS LENS

STUDENT STUDYING ABROAD LEARNS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | January 11, 2024*Above: Photo courtesy of Abbigail Traylor**Read time: about 2 min*

Viewing the world through a camera lens has intrigued Abbigail Traylor since she was in high school. The challenge of capturing images of the world fascinates her and brings her great joy.

"It's definitely something I've loved for a long time," said Traylor, who graduated with a degree in psychology in '23 and is now pursuing her [Master of Arts in Teaching \(MAT\)](#) degree.

So when Traylor heard about the opportunity at Christopher Newport to go on a study abroad trip to Italy that was focused on art and photography, she was on a mission to make it happen. The nine-day journey has had a huge impact on her and her ability as a photographer.

Abbey in Italy Episode 1



“It was such an amazing experience,” she said. “Being able to explore a new place while doing what I love was just super exciting for me.”

The trip was led by Dr. Michelle Erhardt and Professor Kristin Skees. The group was composed of both [art history](#) and photography students. Italian cities such as Rome and Florence served as the backdrops for photography and art history lessons.

“For art and art history students, it offered students first hand exposure to some of the world’s greatest works of arts and museums. Immersion in different environments can inspire new ideas and creativity while fostering global awareness,” Erhardt said. “Meanwhile, photography students had the opportunity to capture photographs during a variety of unique scenarios - from capturing landscapes during day breaks and sunset to street photography, architectural photography, portraits, and night photography.”

Each day, the students were given a topic and they had to construct the right image to represent it. They explored light, texture and camera settings in order to capture the perfect shot. They conquered landscapes and portraiture, among other styles.

“Each place was so different. They all had their own unique thing. The photography was also different in every place,” Traylor said. “I think Venice was my favorite because of the beauty of the canals. The subject matter there made capturing visually pleasing photographs easy.”

In addition to taking photographs, the group also saw the works of famous Italian artists and learned about their lives and art. The students, many majoring in studio art and art history, all brought different knowledge to the trip and shared it with each other.

““We learned from each other as much as the professors,” Traylor said. “It was really neat. I definitely think it changed me. It allowed me to think outside of the box a little bit. It’s definitely a valuable experience to see different cultures and to do different things.”

It was the second time that Traylor has studied abroad. During her junior year, she traveled to Belgium, Germany and Amsterdam to study the psychology of alcohol and culture. Study abroad is one of the [four pillars of a Christopher Newport education](#) along with service, internships and research.

“Studying abroad can transform students’ lives,” said Erhardt, who hopes to take students on a study abroad trip to Paris and Northern France with Skees during the spring of 2025. “Study abroad courses can create new and innovative ways for students to engage with course material, in formal and informal learning environments. This course provides a unique opportunity for students to appreciate the culture of Italy.”

Photography is just one of Traylor’s passions. She is excited about her career goal of becoming an elementary school teacher. Her time at CNU has allowed her to pursue and develop her love for both education and art.

When Traylor was looking at colleges, a friend suggested she explore Christopher Newport. It didn’t take long for her to realize it was the perfect place for her.

“I knew I wanted a small school. When I toured CNU, I fell in love with it. It was close to home, it had small class sizes and it was a place where I could build relationships with professors,” she said. “A big draw was the teaching program and the five-year master’s.”

