



Audrey Pomeroy Collins FR'04

France Young Alumni Country Co-Chair

Current City: Charlotte, NC

High School: Lakeside School

College: Davidson College, Political Science

How did you find out about SYA? What made you want to go to France?

I fortuitously picked up an SYA brochure from a bulletin board outside a history teacher's classroom. I hadn't heard about SYA before, but the prospect of genuine immersion and a unique, personal adventure absolutely captivated my interest.

What is your favorite memory from France?

The kindness, generosity, and unfailing support of my host family remains the biggest memory of my time in SYA. They pushed me to engage in the community with Breton dancing lessons, walks in the park, and lots of local exploration.

What do you miss the most about your year with SYA?

I miss the feeling of home walking into Allée Ste. Marie. We all worked through so many good challenges together, fortified by motivation, laughter, and ALL the pastries! I can't say enough about the incredible camaraderie of the group, teachers, and Mr. Austin.

What was the most important thing you learned?

I think SYA was a chance for each of us to take risks and to start fresh during a very pivotal time in our young lives. I grew a much stronger backbone as I grappled with limited self-expression, and learned to balance humility with determination as I mastered the language and rhythm of active life in Rennes.

What impact did SYA have on your career and beyond?

I took a long time to feel a complete sense of belonging in France, and that was a really good experience to work through. In my academic and professional career, I have often called on the gumption and patience developed through SYA. If a concept or goal doesn't come quite like I wanted, I know I can regroup and reconsider. I also remember the feelings of bewilderment and frustration with language, and when I work with my students, I can approach them with empathy and understanding.

If you could give yourself advice before your SYA journey, what would it be?

Many SYA students are highly driven, and reaching out for help can seem like admitting a shortcoming. However, asking for support or assistance is one of the most important ways to connect to the people around you, and shows you genuinely want to improve, so don't hesitate!