



Elizabeth Tooke FR'04

France Young Alumni Country Co-Chair

Current City: Santa Monica, CA

High School: Harvard-Westlake School

College: Sewanee: The University of the South, French Studies & History

Graduate School: University of Southern California, MPL

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

Mr. Bird was my 10th grade French teacher. Prior to Mr. Austin, Mr. Bird had been the head of SYA France. He fostered my love of the French language and culture and encouraged me to apply to School Year Abroad.

What is your favorite memory from France?

Dinners with my host family. Specifically Sunday lunches after church. We'd all head back to the house to enjoy a feast that Brigitte, my host mum, would have mostly prepared the day before. Raclette was always a favorite.

What was your favorite class trip?

I loved the Paris trip! Also, I went on a trip to Normandie with my host family. I will never forget my host dad Francois showing me around Rouen and proudly showing me the chapel in Rouen where he and my host mum Brigitte were married. Of course, the long car ride with my host sisters Isabelle and Marie-Claire was pretty unforgettable too. The Leblond family really became my family throughout the nine months.

What was the most important thing you learned?

I gained a lot of self confidence. I learned that I was capable of much more than I thought I was. Knowing that at age 16 I gave 45-minute art history presentation in French has made many a job interview, or presentation, less nerve-wracking!

What impact did SYA have on your career and beyond?

SYA taught me that there are many ways to do one thing and we owe it to those around us to seek to understand. I learned how to ask questions and listen. As an urban planning professional, I spend a lot of time asking questions and problem solving. SYA gave me a skill set that carries on into my career today.

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

Don't spend time worrying- it's going to be amazing!