“*Carpe diem*”

When thinking about an Erasmus project, the first thing which usually comes to mind is the destination. And, after all, that was what I thought about at the end of May, when I signed up for the Erasmus selection process. I considered it in order to choose whether to apply for one mobility or another, but I weighed it up being totally aware of the fact that the immense beauty of Nice would have been for sure an important part of the trip, but not *the most important*.

I was pretty confident about this because, if there is something I have learnt during these three years of High School, that thing is what truly matters during a project abroad, and that is indeed not the destination. In fact, I strongly believe that (it can look like a *cliché* but, I can assure you, it is not) the fundamental goal of this kind of project, the aim which could be defined as “Ulysses’s Itaca”, is the journey itself. The goal can be found in the people you meet, in the new diverse culture you get in touch with, the strong bonds you form. These are the ways in which you become “culturally rich” in so many different ways, and the others Italians and I were lucky enough to know firsthand.

We managed to get over the fear of feeling lost and surrounded by people with whom we didn’t even share the language. We overcame every seeming *non plus ultra* imposed by a society which too many times pushes us to distrust every single thing that seems to be a bit distant from what we are used to. In other words, every single thing that is out of our *comfort zone*.





I had the huge luck to find a family who, since the very first day, made me feel home, in spite of being more than 700 kilometers away from my city, and I know for a fact that a lot of other Italian boys and girls have been as happy with their host families as I have been with mine.

Eating dinner at the same table everyday became *home*, chit-chatting about the most diverse topics without even noticing we were talking in English rather than in Italian or in French became *home*, people I have spent my time with, and with whom I have hung out like I had always been part of the family or of the friend group, became *home*. Trivially (or, perhaps not exactly trivially) cooking simple muffins with my host mum and with her youngest daughter became *home*, even having conversations with her, with the need to

use hand gestures because she was way too young to speak or understand English properly, became *home*.



And, for the very first time in my whole life, I became perfectly aware of the fact that I would have given *everything* to remain in Nice, and I realized it when I was still there. Although I indubitably missed my life here in Latina, what I was living was a brand-new experience which I was literally starting to look at almost as if it were a daydream.





Furthermore, everyone of us loved going to the school we attended during the few days we spent in Nice, as we were looking forward to getting in touch with an absolutely new reality, we were looking forward to meeting teenagers so different from us and yet so similar to us, we were looking forward to even taking part in the conferences about the topic we talked about regarding Citizenship Education, i.e. the worrying decline of seas and oceans' conditions we are currently witnessing.

Additionally, creating group PPTs with the French guys and presenting the slides we had made to the rest of the class and to the Italian and French teachers was, without any doubt, something that, besides giving us the big opportunity to spend utterly beautiful moments together, enriched us as human beings, under both cultural and linguistic aspects.

The subtopics we were able to touch were extremely wide, ranging from the impact of human activity on marine ecosystems and the solutions to this dilemma, to the differences between Italian and French beaches and coastlines.

Not only did this activity teach us the significance of cooperation but it also made us understand the enormous value of attempting to understand the other

boys, despite the many differences we inevitably found between us, which strengthened us rather than weakening us.





If someone were to ask me to speak about this whole experience, I most likely wouldn't be able to define it, since I'd want to express way too many things and emotions, and I wouldn't manage to find the right words to describe the week I have spent in France.
Then again, maybe I wouldn't even need to use a lot of words to tell what the Erasmus project has meant for me. Actually, just two words are necessary to say everything that needs to be said. I'm talking about a latin quote that, at first glance, could seem totally disconnected from the trip I'm talking about and that could look like it was chosen randomly, and the quote is the widely known *carpe diem*.
Referring to the so popular latin poet Orazio perfectly sums up the Erasmus project. I "seized the day" and everyone else did so, but I did not understand the quote to mean what the majority of people nowadays thinks it means. That is to say, I did not do every single thing that came to my mind without assessing the potential consequences. Instead, I carefully "weighed" every action I was about to do, aiming to create better bonds with the others and to "seize" everything positive that this experience could give me.
I consider this "mindset" to be the very one reason which led me to enjoy the Erasmus even more. This made the experience become one of the best projects I have ever been part of, a project that was nothing short of wonderful, that wholly exceeded my wildest expectations and that, crucially, taught me *millions* of things, the most important of which was perhaps the one I have just written about, since loads of people, in today's world, ignore how to properly "seize the day".
We live in an age in which the extremely materialistic society we are surrounded by only gives value to the material goods and takes no notice of the much more fundamental interpersonal relationships. A society of people that, first and foremost, tirelessly *runs* without ever finding a single minute to stop, to breathe, to look around and to notice how lucky they are to be living what they're living. A society, in other words, who, while still living the present moment, already thinks about the next, worrying about it and "letting anxiety rise" imagining what *could* happen in the next seconds.
Orazio wrote a lot, but I believe that there is another specific quote of his that can perfectly fit the topic I am talking about, and this quote is "*Dona praesentis cape laetus horae*". It can be translated as "Happily seize the gifts of the present moment" and I'm convinced that this is the most beautiful

thing the trip to Nice taught me. I learnt not to worry about “what will be” and to enjoy the moments I can spend with the others, without forgetting to enjoy a second, *not even a single one*.








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