

When I first heard that we would be going to Cyprus with the winter Stanford in Berlin program, I knew nothing about it except that it is an island in the Mediterranean. I knew nothing of the turbulent political history of the island nation, the issues it is currently dealing with in the EU, or even the fact that the island and capital city of Nicosia are divided by a wall and UN buffer zone. To me Cyprus was only a place on a map, an abstract concept that had nothing to do with my life in California.

What I found upon arriving in Cyprus was a beautiful island divided because of political technicalities and the unwillingness of two governments to cooperate with each other. I also found a population divided by these same governments, a population that according to the majority of people I spoke with would much rather have a united island than one with two separate republics. As a Political Science and CASA double major, this disparity between the attitudes of the governments and the citizens was interesting to me and it was a great opportunity to be able to meet with government officials from both sides and citizens from both republics.

As interesting as it was, the political atmosphere on the island was far from the only attraction. Leaving Berlin covered in snow and wearing shorts and a t-shirt Saturday afternoon in Cyprus was a welcome change. The food was excellent, though I must admit my favorite meal was neither Greek nor Turkish, but Armenian. Visiting the ruins of a temple dedicated to Aphrodite and a convent in the mountains on the same afternoon was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Likewise, watching the sun set into the Mediterranean from a castle overlooking an ancient harbor is something that I will never forget.

Being scheduled early in the quarter, the trip was also an excellent opportunity to get to know the other students and for us to come together as a group. I now have 15 new friends, including several instructors, that I never would have known were it not for my participation in the Stanford in Berlin program, and our experiences in Cyprus are a bond that we will always share. Though I was sad to have to leave Cyprus, I knew that nothing but good times were ahead of me for the remainder of the quarter in Berlin, and I was absolutely right. Looking back on my time here, I would not trade a second of it for anything!

-Marcus McCutcheon  
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