

Travelers experience holidays away from home

By **Kylie Stamper**
Staff reporter

Christmas break is the chance to go home, spend some time doing nothing, and catch up on sleep; for some people. For others Christmas break means hopping on a plane to Europe for a 12-day whirlwind, once-in-a-lifetime trip.

A group of 15-20 students and Dr. George Gangwere will depart on Dec. 29 and most will come back on Jan. 9. These students will have the opportunity to explore the European culture after enjoying the Christmas holiday. These students, along with Gangwere, will spend their days touring London, Paris, Florence, Rome, Pompeii, Sorrento, and the Island of Capri.

Becky Gamez, biology sophomore, said, "Basically we're going to sightsee and we're going to visit places. I am for sure going to test try everything. We're going to be learning a lot about the way the culture is over there."

As with any normal trip, the group will be staying in hotels for most of their stay. But this isn't a normal trip. The group will take a train from London to Paris that will travel under the English Channel. One night will also be spent on an overnight train from Paris to Florence.

There will be a full-time tour director that travels with the students to oversee the trip and local tour guides will be present at several stops along the way. The local tour guides will speak the native language and will know about everything on the group's schedule.

The students have been attending a class on Sunday nights led by Gangwere to prepare them for the trip. Gamez said, "The class is just telling us about all the countries we were going to, things we need

to be looking out for like pickpockets, how we need to pack, also about the currency, what we need to wear. We can't look too ghetto or too fancy." She said, "It's like a one-on-one crash course to prepare us."

Amanda Will, biology senior, said, "We all had to do one presentation over something that we want to see or we want people to know about it. I did mine over the architecture."

This trip will be the first time out of the U.S. for Will. She said, "It's a once in a lifetime opportunity for me to go somewhere, for right now. This is my first time out of the United States, my first time flying, too.

It's going to be a lot of fun for me."

The team will be traveling along with Rio Hondo Community College from just outside Los Angeles, Cal. Between the two groups, they will have enough people to fill one bus.

In addition to the 12 days in Europe, several students will be staying extra time in

various places. Gamez, along with her two sisters, her mom, and godmother, will be staying an extra three days in Venice. Gamez and her sisters have done extensive research for attractions, shopping, and things to see while they are

traveling.

They also bought items to help avoid pickpockets and to prepare for the cold weather.

Unlike most tour groups, this group will be visiting in the middle of the London winter. But there is a benefit to braving the cold. Gangwere said, "The good thing about going in the winter is you don't have the crowds that you would have during the summer. Things are also less expensive."

Gangwere has been to several of these locations but it will be his first time visiting Pompeii, Sorrento, and the Island of Capri. He said, "I'm looking forward to the places I haven't been. I enjoy sightseeing and traveling and going places I haven't been before. I also look forward to bonding with this group. When we first met, they didn't talk to each other, they didn't talk to me, and now they're kidding and joking around and they seem to be getting along with each other. It's always fun going on these student trips. To get together with a group of people and to bond and have the same experiences and things like that."

Tours and scheduled events will take place early in the morning and each student will have an opportunity to explore during free time in the afternoons. Will said, "I am going to all the places I wanted to go see. It's going to be an awesome experience bonding with everybody who's going. It'll be a fun experience to look back on with everybody and see-

ing all the funny pictures that hopefully we'll have."

This trip won't be like other school

The trip, including all excursions, flights, tours, and everything else included, will cost around \$4000.

One thing students were surprised about was the currency in Europe.



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where students have

to learn something or where there are requirements. Will said, "It's not like other trips that are school-related where we're supposed to learn something. I mean, yes we're learning something, but it's also just something fun for us to experience and remember and show off to everyone else what we did."

Gamez said, "I think this is a good opportunity because I love to travel, I've been out of the country a couple of times and I just don't like staying in one place for a long time, besides home. This is just an experience that you will not forget. It's something where you can be like I've done this, I have that experience. It's being able to be like I did it, I loved it, and this is my experience, my memories, something you can keep with you. It's not just a trip that you're taking. It's a trip that you're going to remember with memories and stuff like that. There's more behind it than just a trip."

Gamez said, "I'm used to going to places where everybody praises the dollar but it's kind of like our dollar is weak over there. So I had to pay more for the currency. That surprised me. That and how expensive Luis Vuitton is going to be." Just like any other trip, memories will be made, friendships will blossom, and students will get a taste of another culture. Gangwere said, "I want them to see how things are done in other countries and it's different than the way we do things here. It's not bad, it's just different. Maybe they can find some things they do in these other countries that they do better and find ways of doing things better than they do here and the chance to make some good friends, maybe some life-long friends, who knows. Maybe this will set the stage for future travel."

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