This past January, I had the opportunity to travel to Grenoble, France, to co-host an alumni reunion with our Center for International Education and the Perdue School of Business. I was also able to visit with our current students studying abroad for winter term at the Grenoble Ecole de Management. Joining me on the trip were Agata Liszkowska ’89, M’03, associate director for the Center for International Education, and Richard Hoffman, interim dean of the Perdue School. Faculty members Memo Diriker, Bob Dombrowski and Julie Gittelman were leading the winter term session and joined us as well.

I had been looking forward to this event since it was first proposed early last year. Not only was I going to be able to meet some of our international alumni who live in Europe, but it was going to be my first trip off the North American continent. The extent of my travels thus far in life had been restricted to the U.S., Canada and parts of the Caribbean, so this was an opportunity to truly cut my teeth on trans-Atlantic travel.

Some interesting things I learned in my adventures…

- The Swiss take their airport security very seriously. Both arriving and departing was nothing less than an adventure—a very secure adventure, which included my first “pat down.” Geneva is a very beautiful and interesting city, to say the least.

- “Je parle un peu Francais” (translation: “I speak some French”) got me nowhere. I’ve known this phrase since my seventh grade French class, my one and only French class mind you. However, I learned that in France, this is a mere opening to a much quicker and more robust conversation that I could never fully follow. I did a lot of nodding and pointing. It made me wish that I had continued studying this beautiful language.

- The international alumni and the American-born alumni living in Europe that joined us at the reunion are nothing short of amazing. I had so many wonderful conversations with them, hearing about their lives and passion for SU. Even 4,000 miles away, their love for SU is inspiring.

- If you are nice enough to the flight attendant, they will return the kindness with two bottles of wine. Those who know me personally, know my fear of flying. I loathe airplanes. I had assumed all international flights still included free drinks to make my flight more “tolerable.” I was wrong. But befriending a flight attendant early on sure helped to make my fears disappear and my traveling companions happy!

- You can truly survive in France on red wine, bread and cheese. I did enjoy other excellent cuisine, but I think I could have spent a week just consuming those three things. I did learn that there is a huge difference between andouillette and andouille. Similar word, similar sausage? Nope, one is a chitterling sausage. My taste buds were definitely not prepared for that encounter.

- Grenoble is a charming city. The history and culture were lovely. Paris is even more amazing than what you see and read. To experience the Louvre and the Musée d’Orsay is simply overwhelming, but worth the anticipation. I need to thank two alumnae, Pauline Duburquoy ’07 and Elodie Weytens ’07, for being such gracious hosts while I was in Paris.

This experience helped me to realize that Salisbury University alumni, no matter where they end up after graduation, share a similar bond—a love for their Alma Mater. I heard so many great stories and fond memories of our University. It brought a smile to my face. Even across the globe, for so many graduates, it’s a place that they will always call home.