

WEST POINT CADET SEMESTER ABROAD PROGRAM





“Looking back on my semester abroad in Morocco, I can truly say that it was the single most important factor in my development towards becoming an officer. I was outside of the protective walls of West Point and needed to operate in an unknown, dynamic environment. The life skills I gained from this are vital for Army officers to possess, and I know they will serve me well in the future.”

— Sarah Epperson '14 (second from the right) with classmates outside of the Moroccan capital, Rabat

➤ SIGNATURE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

West Point is committed to developing a Corps of Cadets who understand that learning is never a purely academic pursuit, but something experienced—something steeped in the classroom but given a fuller life outside the Thayer Gate. Moving outside the classroom, cadets learn unexpected things—about themselves and others—in unexpected ways and in unexpected places.

Indeed, our increasingly interconnected world calls on cadets to take what they have learned and apply that knowledge in unknown or changing circumstances. And bridging that classroom-“real world” divide is arguably more important for West Point cadets, who eventually will make decisions not just in their personal lives, but within the military structure, often while serving internationally and even in times of war or national crisis. As Army officers, cadets will find themselves serving in areas around the world, and they will need to be able to adapt to diverse cultures and environments, to live, work, and communicate with different populations, and to understand and consider new and different perspectives. Travel abroad is particularly important for cadets for these very reasons, as it increases cadets’ foreign language proficiency, regional expertise, and cross-cultural competence. The Department of Defense has in fact deemed these three focus areas critical to its operations and has renewed its commitment to developing a force with these competencies to ensure mission readiness.

West Point’s Cadet Semester Abroad Program has therefore become a priority for the Academy and a key piece of cadet leadership development. Through this program, cadets study abroad at foreign military academies and civilian institutions

and return to West Point with increased language proficiency, regional expertise and cross-cultural competence, among many other benefits, to ultimately become more adaptive and effective leaders. Your support will help increase the capacity of this growing and increasingly popular program so that West Point can compete with other colleges and universities and provide more cadets with these invaluable experiences.

A HIGH-IMPACT EXPERIENCE

In 2002, only two cadets were studying abroad for a full semester, and they were both in France. By 2008, close to 140 cadets were studying abroad in more than a dozen countries, and in the last seven years, more than 900 cadets have studied abroad. While abroad, cadets pursue a rigorous academic course load and participate in numerous experiences that deepen their cultural understanding. Cadets studying at foreign military academies live, study, and train with foreign cadets, while those attending private colleges and universities stay with host families or in student housing. No matter where they are placed, cadets maintain a standard academic load comparable to that at the Academy, with no more than two of these classes conducted in English. They also participate in community-based or service-learning opportunities to further immerse themselves in the local culture and hone linguistic skills. To ensure a high-impact experience for cadets abroad, the Department of Foreign Languages, which facilitates the Semester Abroad Program, has developed a series of pre- and post-assessments in language proficiency, regional expertise, and cross-cultural competence to measure the impact of cadets’ experience abroad.

The experience as a whole contributes to cadets' personal and professional development, and the impact of their travel abroad has both immediate and long-term implications. For instance, Cadet Peter Sienko '15 studied in Ukraine in the Fall of 2013 and witnessed the emerging protests and unrest among the Ukrainian people. "I witnessed the conflict's escalation and understood its significance to the Ukrainian people," says Sienko. "I am now seen as a source of information for classmates and instructors during class discussions." Other cadets see the applications of their experience in terms of their future careers. Matthew Rohrback '14 studied at Northeast Normal University in China, and prior to graduation, he reflected on how he expected this experience to influence his career as an officer: "I will be commissioned as an Armor officer, and my first duty station will be with the 4th Brigade 25th Infantry Division, which is currently aligned with the US Pacific Command. I hope to leverage my language and cultural skills to teach and train my subordinates and peers to enhance our unit's overall regional understanding." Regardless of where cadets study, they inevitably return with new perspectives, skills, and relationships that shape their academic and leadership development and better prepare them for their role as officers.

SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE

While the breadth and scope of West Point's semester abroad opportunities are certainly better than they were in 2002, study abroad experiences are expanding even more rapidly at other colleges and universities across the United

States; at the same time, the availability and security of appropriated funding for these types of programs is shrinking. For the past few years, as talk of drawdown, budget uncertainty, and actual budget cuts have dominated Department of Defense funding discussions, the Academy has experienced the challenges and dangers of relying on appropriated funds for the Semester Abroad Program. In the last two years, semester abroad numbers have dropped from 140 cadets to just over 100. However, nearly 150 cadets remain eligible for the Semester Abroad Program every year, and the Academy and WPAOG seek to ensure that every one of these cadets has the opportunity to participate—and not simply for the sake of experience, but because our world today demands it. To ensure cadets this opportunity, we must secure a steady and reliable funding stream that allows the Academy to plan and execute the Semester Abroad Program, regardless of the availability of appropriated funding.

Now more than ever, private dollars are needed to strengthen and sustain the Semester Abroad Program in order to maintain West Point's competitive edge and reaffirm our commitment to offering cadets the best education and leadership development. Please join us as we ensure West Point's reputation as a leader in all endeavors, and take pride in the transformative power of the generous gift you can make today.



ON THE COVER: Cadet Thomas Perkins '10 in Changbaishan, China. THIS PAGE, left to right: cadets training with the Brazilian Military Academy; teaching English to Mexican school children; and training with Spanish Army in Zaragoza, Spain.



The Cadet Semester Abroad Program offers many opportunities of unique locations worldwide. Cadets attend numerous institutions to include universities, Military Academies, and language centers. These are a few of the institutions that cadets currently attend:

- Peking University in Beijing
- Catholic University of Lyon in France
- Al Akhawayn University in Morocco
- Fu Jien University in Taiwan

- University of Coimbra in Portugal
- University of Granada in Spain
- Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico

GENEROUS GRADUATES AND FRIENDS OF THE ACADEMY WHO SUPPORT THE WEST POINT CADET SEMESTER ABROAD PROGRAM WILL TAKE PRIDE IN THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THEIR GIFTS.

Funding & Recognition Opportunities

Cadet Semester Abroad Program (150 cadets per year)	\$53 million
Country or regional endowment	\$1.7–\$3.5 million
Cadet endowment for one semester	\$355,000
One cadet for one semester	\$15,000

MARGIN OF EXCELLENCE



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