

## A week in Paris

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BA History of Art undergraduate, Stephanie O'Neill-Winbow, writes about the annual European study trip:

'For prospective students considering [\*\*studying History of Art at the University of Birmingham\*\*](#) ([/schools/lcahm/departments/historyofart/undergraduate/index.aspx](#)), the study trip should be your deciding factor.

I could not have had a better time. My main module in the second year was Visual Culture in Eighteenth Century France. We went to Paris and I can genuinely say that whilst I have had the most amazing university experience, the week that I spent in Paris for my course has been the best week so far.

When studying History of Art, one of the challenges is being able to put the works of art you study into the context of who they were painted for, the

reason for commission and the place and circumstances at the time that would have influenced the outcome.

Looking at the paintings on a projection screen in the [\*\*Barber Institute\*\*](#) ([/schools/lcahm/departments/historyofart/facilities/index.aspx](#)) is convenient and makes it easy for discussion and observation, being able to imagine the paintings in their original contexts is never easy in such surroundings.

[\*\*Dr Richard Clay\*\*](#) ([/staff/profiles/historyofart/clay-richard.aspx](#)) led an interesting schedule, visiting churches, galleries, aristocratic houses, palaces and museums, including the Musée Carnavalet, Versailles, and St Sulpice.

We spent a full day in the Louvre and saw countless paintings that, previously, had just been images projected up on the screen in the Barber's Photograph Room.

Going to Paris made the module come alive. It put the works in context and by seeing them in 'real life' made me appreciate the beauty and importance of what we had been studying all year.

We were also given plenty of free time to explore our own interests, in which we went to the Musée d'Orsay and the Jardins du Luxembourg.

We used the trip to form the basis of an end of year, 20 credit presentation of a piece we had seen and studied from first hand observations. Not only did I find a topic for my presentation that I enjoyed and found myself wanting to work hard on, but I also developed a new understanding and appreciation of why and where a painting was created and the importance of the role that Paris played in its creation.'

