

leslie elson

Cuernavaca, Mexico

LESLIE'S MAJOR(S): journalism and Spanish with a minor in criminal justice

YEAR/TERM ABROAD: summer 2003

REASON YOU CHOSE THIS PROGRAM: It was to get credit in Spanish — to get two semester's credit of Spanish in six weeks was really appealing. At first I wasn't sure about going, but when I went to the meetings and started talking to people, it sounded like it would be a good time.



After eating at a restaurant in Cuernavaca, Leslie Elson (front row, second from left) gathers with the other IU students on the program and the resident director for a picture. After her experience in Cuernavaca, Elson realized that she wants to do more than just live and work in one place for the rest of her life.

DESCRIBE THE HOUSING SITUATION: I lived with a family. I was scared at first; I didn't know what to expect, but I got really close to my family. The house was a little far away from campus; I had to take the Ruta.

BEST MEMORY: Everything. I really liked it when I could hang out with my family—there wasn't anything specific, just the time with them. Taxco was also my favorite city.

EXPERIENCES WITH CULTURE SHOCK OR REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK: Coming back, you see such a difference between the lifestyles—their culture enjoys life more and they're more relaxed.

GOING ABROAD VS. STAYING ON CAMPUS, DISCUSS: It was very unlike me to go abroad, but it turned out to be a great experience, so much so that I plan to go there again in another program next

fall. I gained confidence in things that I can do, and I felt a sense of accomplishment. I would definitely promote it; you just have to go. And I wish people would go to more places in South America and Mexico rather than Europe.

WHAT YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE GOING

ABROAD: I consider myself almost two different people. When I got there, I was sick AND homesick, and then I just loved it and discovered how great the Mexican culture is. I have more confidence now.

"I'm glad I did the program when I did (after freshman year) because the other students who did it were older, and they now want to do other programs but don't have the time, and I do."

ADVICE TO FUTURE STUDY ABROAD PARTICIPANTS: Immerse yourself. Don't be afraid to do as much as you can. Don't just sit in your house when you can go out and see and do things. Some of my best friends now I met on the trip, and I was someone who had a hard time making friends during my freshman year. This experience helped me.