

**From our alumni: Anne Patterson, Leiden University / Iowa State University
(Spring 2012)**

I first heard about the Euroscholars program during my fall semester at my home college. I had been previously interested in studying abroad, but just hadn't found a program I could get passionate about. I heard about this opportunity through my university Honors program and decided to pursue the once-in-a-lifetime chance. I applied to work on a project with the Behavioral Biology group at the Institute of Biology at Leiden University. The project I worked on was studying zebra finches to see if we could determine whether each bird had a distinct personality, and if so, whether other birds could detect that personality. I'd never observed animals for several hours a day while simultaneously registering all their actions on a small handheld data registration device before, but I learned quickly and soon was designing and implementing my own project. I was initially nervous that I wouldn't know what I was doing, but my supervisor Dr. Katharina Riebel was very helpful and was always willing to sit down and work through any issues with me. I was lucky in the fact that I decided to apply for this program to participate in the spring semester because the biology bachelor students at Leiden University were beginning their final projects as well. I got to work with a lot of people around my age, and was able to make some good friends that way. I was actually partnered with a Dutch student on the project, and that worked out well because then we both could learn more about each other's language and culture, and it made my transition to Dutch life that much easier. I learned a lot about the research process and how to solve any problems that arose, which are very valuable lessons that can be put to use in any future research work I might do.

As a student at Leiden University, I lived in the city of Leiden. This was a very nice city to live in as an international student as it was easy to find my way around (well, after the first week) and the city had everything I needed to live comfortably for my six-month stay. I didn't know much about living in the Netherlands before I arrived, but I quickly adapted and was eating "stroopwafels" (Dutch snack made from waffles and caramel), Gouda cheese, and herring with the locals in no time! I didn't have many issues with the language barrier, as everyone spoke English at least decently well. The city itself was convenient to travel from, with a large central station that had trains going all across the country and to other countries as well! I was able to make several trips to the surrounding countries, such as Germany, Belgium, France, the UK, and Ireland, both by myself and with the friends I made during my stay.

Overall, I had a fantastic experience with this program, and highly recommend it to future students who are thinking of studying abroad. I am planning on applying to graduate school soon, and I believe this experience will definitely serve to set me apart from the other applicants. I hope I can return at some point in the future to see all my friends again and maybe do some more traveling!

