

# PSA Scholar Abroad



I have been gifted a great many opportunities in my life thus far. Sure, some of them I have created for myself, but a lot of them have been sheer dumb luck. It is all starting to hit me in my senior year of college now. How well my parents raised me, how fortunate I have been to have certain experiences and opportunities come into my life.

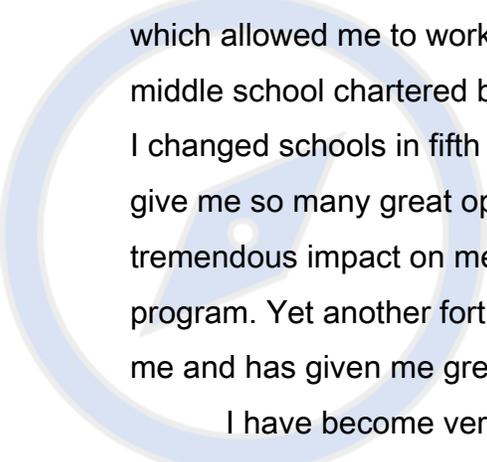


My most recent experience that made me stop and reflect on just how fantastic was brought about by a fortunate set of circumstances that enabled me to take a trip to Iceland. See, my mom works at the airport in my hometown, and so my family gets free standby flights. Yet again, this opportunity was brought on by my mom's hard work and coordination and that there happened to be open seats on flights for the weekend travel. Iceland is such a simple and breathtaking place. I was able to walk behind giant natural waterfalls, gaze upon the black beaches that were created from volcanic eruptions, and snorkel in between the tectonic plates.

We spend a great deal of time in a very small car going place to place on the island. The people there still live off the land a fair amount. Recent tourism has finally made the island slightly more commercialized and electricity more available throughout, but before that, the people lived very simply and off the land. This is still apparent in the culture when you venture around. Iceland is a very quiet, peaceful, and beautiful place. We stopped more than once just to take in the picturesque landscape surrounding us. The very flat overall landscape where you could see for miles and miles, gave way to huge mountains or volcanos.



We were driving along a road very close to a massive protrusion of rock that was extremely steep. In that moment, I felt very small and insignificant. Not in a negative way, but here I was, a mere human being, next to this massive landform, caused by the movement of massive tectonic plates mashing together and causing rock to come out of the earth and form such a massive structure. Yet somehow in our short span of time on this earth, we are starting to drastically alter it.



This trip really made me stop, take a step back, and think about a lot. I have a great deal to be incredibly thankful for. From my parents raising me so well, to living less than two miles from the best restaurant in Traverse City (slightly biased, I know), which allowed me to work there and learn so many valuable life lessons, to attending a middle school chartered by the amazing college I now attend. Little did I know that when I changed schools in fifth grade, that it would enable me to become a PSA scholar and give me so many great opportunities stemming from that. This program has really had a tremendous impact on me and I consider myself blessed to be part of such a great program. Yet another fortunate set of circumstances that just fell perfectly into place for me and has given me great opportunities.

I have become very passionate about traveling because it teaches me so much and I can be an entirely different person and I get exposure to entirely new ways of thinking and approaching life. It allows me to reflect on myself and learn a little bit more about myself.

By Carl Gardner

