Charli James, France 24 Journalist & Alumna of ILCF

Charli James is a journalist for the French news channel, France 24. She also runs the blog "Am I French Yet?". She was a student at ILCF in 2017, read more about her experience:



E-mail : ilcf@icp.fr



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Why did you want to come to France?

I never imagined I would live in France, but then I met and married a Frenchman and that changed everything! For me it was important to live here so I could fully understand my husband's culture and background. The French language is a huge part of that. Also, Paris is a good place to be a journalist. The world cares a lot about Paris and therefore I have the opportunity to continue working in media.

Why did you want to study French?

It was (and still is) an integral part of setting up my life here. When I arrived, I could hardly say bonsoir, and was looking for an intensive program to help me feel comfortable in my day-to-day life. For me, speaking the language meant gaining independence, connecting more with my French family and the ability to get a job and have a complete life in Paris.

How did you learn about this program? And what is your current level in French, and what level would do you aim to have?

Several French people had told me they heard good things about the program, or that they had friends or partners who went to ICP, and that I should check it out. I figured if a school has a good reputation with locals, that is a good sign. I am still an intermediate, B-level French speaker, but I have made huge gains from where I started. It is a long process and I am measuring my progress in months and years instead of days and weeks. I've always had two goals in my head: to be able to get through an entire dinner party in French without my head hurting, and to be able to conduct an interview in French for my job.

What was your favorite part of the program? And why would you recommend this program to others?

> *The coursework was rigorous and the teacher emphasized speaking and comprehension, which was great for me. The campus is beautiful and I loved studying in the garden after class. It made verb drills a little less painful.*

How has it been adjusting to life in Paris?

A lot of what you find online or in books about Paris makes it sound like moving here is a one-way ticket to a dream life, but that is not realistic at all. I love it here, but Paris doesn't always make it easy on you. Just as I did in the U.S., I go to work and take the metro and have to deal with the minutia of life, although I still feel extremely lucky I get to do these things in such a beautiful city.

Any advice for others who are looking to study in Paris?

You can't only go to class and expect to improve without getting out there and practicing the language with locals. You have to take what you learn and use it at the market, in restaurants, everywhere you can! It is tough at first, but it gets a little easier each time until eventually, it feels like second nature.

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