

Hello Mrs Richard,

Here is some information about my experience in the US that you can share with your first year students:

The first thing they should know is that they should begin to search actively soon if they want to travel this summer, I started it quite late and had to pay additional fees to my sponsor. Indeed, foreigners need to go through an organisation to be eligible for a J1 visa. Mine was CCUSA (<https://ccusa.eu/>) but it is not the only one. They helped me to apply to be a camp counselor by doing a few interviews with their team, asking me to do a presentation video and to fill several forms and then they sent it to many camp directors who could be interested in my profile. Then I got an interview with a camp director who accepted my application!

By working in the US you will earn money (about 2300\$) but it also costs a lot to be able to work : the sponsor costs about 400€, the visa about 200€ (plus the back and forth to the embassy in Paris) and you have to pay for your plane ticket.

This is a 9 weeks program, so I missed the last week of school and came back home only one week before the end of August. It means that you need to be organized for your summer homeworks.

I was a bit scared of going that far alone for two month but I am very happy that I did it. On the language part, my grades are far from being multiplied by two but I feel more confident and fluent when I speak. The first days after landing, I struggled a lot understanding everything but quickly I only had difficulties with group's conversations and at the end of the summer, I could almost understand the Scottish accent! The staff was composed of half Americans and half foreigners (Mexicans, Englishs, South Africans, Australians, Hungarians, Brazilians, and many other nationalities), which made the experience not only American but truly international. I was scared to be with many French people there but I was the only "real" one (except a few kids).

How was the camp life ? The first week was the "staff week", there weren't any children and we attended training and prepared our activities and studios. For the rest of the summer, I was almost always with kids, we were sleeping in the same cabin, eating together, doing activities all day together... We had one hour per day, about two nights and one day per week off where we could leave camp to visit the surrounding cities or national parks for example. Camp in the US was very different from what I did in France before: firstly it was a very big camp with a lot of staff and secondly we had a class system: kids had to choose an activity for each hour of "class" (there were six a day) and as a counselor I was almost only teaching my activities (fencing and rockets making for me!). However, that's my own experience and it's certainly not the same everywhere...

If some students are interested, I will be happy to give them more details!

Best regards,

Gaétan Schulz