

FIU Study Abroad, Sivananda Ashram, Paradise Island, Bahamas Student Comments and Testimonials

The week I spent studying abroad at the Ashram was one of the most beautiful and unique experiences of my life. I was fully immersed into a setting where everyone there was relatively on the same page. For once, I could comfortably smile to a stranger and expect a smile in return. The experience gave me much insight on how to live my life with less judgments and more acceptance. I felt much more confident in pursuing my personal goals after meeting the many people from around the world staying there. The Ashram attracted interesting and amazing people who were well aware of the global climate and offered superb perspective when trying to understand the world and how to live in it.

Dr. Seidel is a very loving and compassionate woman who cares deeply about the conscious development of her students. Her teachings come with open arms, yet with firmness and stability. During her workshops over at the Ashram, we were guided through a series of movements and visualizations that allowed the people partaking in the class to revert their mindsets back to when they were children. Starting slow at first, the class ended up feeling very connected with one another and shared many moments of communal bliss. Several students had tears in their eyes due to Dr. Seidel's workshop instructions. Dr. Seidel does a wonderful job as a teacher in filling her student's hearts with emotion, clarity, and love.

Philip Bourgi, FIU

In a world where we are constantly interacting with people but barely get to have heart to heart connections, where we constantly have the same routine and actions become automatic, we look at the mirror and identify with only our physical being. The Study Abroad Program to Sivananda Ashram, opened my spirit to wake up to a new tune of discovery and healing. Every morning I met my inner self in deep meditation, I learned breathing techniques to allow energy expansion, I saw how they honored chanting mantras, every moment felt eternal. We discussed topics spanning from ethics to our concept of the Ego. I connected to my higher divine essence at the ashram and brought it with me to this game we call life. Namaste, and may your path lead you to eternal bliss.

Andrea Seidel's workshop, took us into the realm of connecting with our own inner rhythm of cosmic flow and how movement flows through our DNA, chakras, auras and throughout this infinite Universe. The concept of waves, spirals, and the never-ending circle of life or samsara was intertwined through active group activities, vibrational music, and guided meditations. This allowed for the union of body, spirit, and mind to continuously be grounded as a willow tree but at the same time fluid like a waterfall. Andrea Seidel, taught us the core of being a cosmic dancer and how

vital it was to connect to the source of energy, which is always moving and flowing within us.

Nelvis Golan, Psychology Major, FIU

The Study Abroad Program in the Bahamas, Sivananda Ashram has been such a wonderful experience. I am so grateful to have had the chance to experience such love and peace with myself and with the amazing group of people that went with me. The connection of friendship I was able to receive is such a gift within itself. I would have not been able to achieve those things without them. I will carry this experience forever in my heart. There was so much knowledge gained throughout but still so much more to learn. The beauty of nature and the beach allows your eyes and mind to open to all your senses, the food is fantastic, the workshops are enlightening and the yoga classes are relaxing but powerful. I cannot express enough thanks to Dr. Seidel, to the Ashram and to the Study Abroad Program for such an amazing experience. Namaste!

Dr. Andrea Seidel's workshop during my ashram stay provided me with such empathy. The workshop allowed me to open up my mind and to release locked up fear so I may feel joy. Her guidance during my stay was motherly. She helped me understand certain customs that I was not aware of. Dr. Seidel has a passion, a gift of sharing her knowledge and experience in a way that does not feel lectured. She connects with her students on a different level, a respectful but playful inner light that I will cherish always.

Stephanie M. Insua, Student, Nutrition and Dietetics Major, FIU

It's been almost a week since I returned from the Sivananda Yoga Ashram, which I can easily say was the most memorable and educational week of my college experience. First of all, the accommodations and surroundings are unbelievable. The island and ocean are absolutely gorgeous and together helped me get into the peaceful mindset that is needed to take in the lessons that the week had in store. I was expecting to detach from a fast-paced Miami lifestyle, but I gained so much more than that. The daily meditations and yoga were the core of this spiritual journey, so to speak. They instilled discipline and grounded me, which I have upheld for the past week since my return. The lessons on Yoga philosophy, the workshops, the music, the conversations and laughs with my classmates and others at the ashram, working with the staff of the ashram, the beach and sunshine times, and the peace and quiet times for writing and reading all rounded out the trip and made this trip a learning experience in every sense of the word. I took so much of what I learned home with me to incorporate into my daily life, and what better age than the beginning of adulthood to start cultivating healthy, compassionate, disciplined, and self-loving habits. My outlook on life has absolutely changed from this trip and with the help of meditation and further reading about Yoga philosophy, is changing every day. I didn't have the money to go on this trip, but something told me to just make it happen. I did, and what I gained was absolutely priceless.

Alicia Doolin, Dietetics and Nutrition Major, FIU

I have not yet been able to accurately describe to anyone just how unforgettable this experience was. When I decided to attend this trip, my expectations were very simple —

yoga, meditate, relax. However, I gained 100x more than I could have ever imagined. Yes, I certainly relaxed, did some yoga and cleared my mind, but the highlight of my trip was the bond I formed with the students I went to the Bahamas with. Although most of us were strangers at first, we became a close knit family almost instantly. The Ashram provided a place for us to tackle our individual battles, while providing each other with advice, support and encouragement along the way. We learned together, talked for hours, swam in the ocean, tanned on the beach, ate together, laughed together, cried together, and most importantly— we grew together. My Ashram experience in two words was ABSOLUTELY AMAZING. - **Alicia Dobson, Public Relations major**

I would like to thank the entire yogi community at the Sivananda Ashram for welcoming us and allowing us to take part in such a sacred and transformative experience. I have come from this a new person. The Ashram experience allowed me to open my heart to so many incredible teachers and teachings that I will carry for the rest of my life and will share with those who are also on the path of awakening. May we all find peace, Om Shanti.

I would like to highlight one of the most expansive experiences I had on this study abroad trip to the Sivananda Ashram, which is the workshop led by the indelible Dr. Andrea Seidel. Her mastery in the art of movement was a new and enlightening experience. She really brought the mind and body together in her workshop to bring awareness into our physical vessels of consciousness, something I have never before experienced. Not only did she bring our individual minds and bodies together in this cathartic process, but she also brought our collective group into a space of community and oneness, and for that I am eternally grateful.

Adrian Yi-Hernandez, Liberal Studies major with concentrations in Education and Psychology

This was definitely an intense week of spiritual development. The trip to the ashram in the Bahamas was full of emotion, joy, and peace. I wasn't sure what I was getting into when I signed up, but now I suggest this trip to everyone I know. Not only is the ashram located on a beautiful island with amazing sunsets and sunrise, but it also allows you to find peace within yourself. The ashram feels like a different world, where you begin to enjoy simple pleasures and amazing people from all different walks of life. Everyone is so pleasant and helpful; you just never want to leave.

The movement workshop taught by Dr. Siedel was great. It was interesting to put your body into a different space where it could be free and natural. I have dealt with body issues most of my life and for the first time in a long time I felt comfortable in my own skin. I moved and I didn't think about it. It was a unique experience that everyone should have. Having Dr. Siedel as our professor was great. She helped guide us through the ashram. **Myriam Rose Knigge, Nutrition and Dietetics Major, FIU**