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PRESS RELEASE

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CSUSB Palm Desert Campus hospitality management students pose for a group photo in Italy during their study abroad program in April 2026.

CSUSB Palm Desert Campus students gain global perspective through transformative study abroad trip to Switzerland and Italy

PALM DESERT, Calif. – Hospitality management students from the California State University, San Bernardino Palm Desert Campus (PDC) recently returned from an immersive short-term international study experience across Switzerland and Italy, where classroom learning came to life through cultural exploration, global engagement and meaningful human connection.

Traveling through Geneva, Gruyère and Neuchâtel in Switzerland, and Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Florence and Modena in Italy, students experienced firsthand how global perspectives shape leadership, sustainability and hospitality.

In Geneva, a visit to the United Nations inspired students to see themselves as part of something greater than their own classrooms and campuses. Standing in a place where nations meet to address conflict, human rights and global development reminded them that change begins with informed minds and courageous voices. The experience reinforced that leadership is not limited to presidents or diplomats; it also belongs to students who choose empathy, purpose and action. Leaving Geneva, they carried an important lesson: the world's future depends on people willing to listen deeply, think boldly and work together for peace and progress.

In Neuchâtel, students visited L'Aubier, an eco-hotel and organic farm where food is grown on-site and community is central to daily life. Now celebrating 47 years, the property integrates a hotel, restaurant, café, retail shop and multi-generational housing that includes families, a centenarian living independently, and individuals with disabilities supported with dignity and meaningful social connection. L'Aubier reflects a progressive philosophy aligned with the United Nations Tourism framework of social, economic and environmental sustainability, offering students a powerful example of how compassion and business can coexist to create a more humane and resilient way of life.

The journey continued in Italy, where hospitality came to life in its most authentic form. Often described as making strangers feel like friends and friends feel like family, the Italian experience reinforced this idea through shared meals, cultural immersion and personal connections. Visits to iconic destinations, including the Ferrari Museum — newly added to this year's itinerary — along with cities rich in history and culture, further deepened their appreciation for craftsmanship, tradition and innovation.

“This program is about more than travel — it's about transformation,” said Joseph Tormey, director of the CSUSB hospitality management program. “Watching our students engage with different cultures and hospitality practices in Switzerland and Italy, you can see their perspectives shift in real time. They begin to understand that true hospitality is rooted in intentionality, empathy and a deep commitment to people. These experiences challenge them to raise their standards and think more critically about their role in the industry. Our goal is for students to return not only with knowledge, but with a renewed sense of purpose and the confidence to create meaningful impact wherever their careers take them.”

PDC student Allen Pahl said that the experience completely changed the way he sees hospitality.

“I learned that there's a real difference in quality — from the food and service to the way businesses present themselves,” Pahl said. “What struck me most was how much care and simplicity go into creating a truly enjoyable moment. Studying in Switzerland and Italy showed me the level of investment it takes to make an impact on someone, whether through food or guest interactions. There was a moment of culture shock, seeing how differently people approach hospitality in Europe — the way they greet guests, the attention to detail and how valued I felt as a customer. It made everything we've studied in class come to life. I also noticed how much care

is put into employees, which helps them perform better and stay longer. What surprised me was the genuine warmth and extra effort people consistently gave, from business owners to staff. That level of hospitality felt more natural and widespread there, and it's something I now want to bring into my own work.”

Across both countries, students returned with more than memories — they gained a deeper sense of purpose, global awareness and a renewed understanding of the role they can play in shaping a better future. The program's international study program continues to provide transformative opportunities that bridge academic learning with real-world experience, preparing students to become thoughtful, globally minded leaders.

To see additional photos from the travel abroad trip, visit the [CSUSB news site](#).

Visit the [hospitality management webpage](#) for more information about the program.

About the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus: The [CSUSB Palm Desert Campus](#) is dedicated to providing a transformative educational experience in the Coachella Valley. With a focus on academic excellence and community engagement, the campus offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its students and the region.

For more information about the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, contact Mike Singer in the Office of Marketing and Communications at msinger@csusb.edu or (760) 341-2883, ext. 78107, or visit the PDC website at www.csusb.edu/pdc.