Traveling once, we walked the plains or upon bareback fingers gripping manes we turned the soil 'neath our soles watching the coming hills - their rolling rolling bodies - mesmerized eyes we cut the country 'neath rust colored skies traveling, traveling never too far traveling once, path lit by stars

Images and Reflections on Study Abroad
Clementines for sale at an outdoor market in Bordeaux
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From the Editor

*We learn simply by the exposure of living, and what we learn most natively is the tradition in which we live.*

- David P. Gardner, educator

2008 marks the 50th anniversary of the Study Abroad tradition at Kalamazoo College. It is this tradition that inspires over 80% of our students to study abroad; it is this tradition that offers us the choice of forty-five programs in twenty-five countries. But these are just numbers; if you wanted to know these statistics you wouldn’t be looking in a literary arts magazine.

The connective theme we would like you to keep in mind as we move through the Passage this year is “tradition.” Without the tradition of Study Abroad at “K,” this magazine would not be possible. You will notice that for the first time, the Passage also includes reflections from alumni who volunteered to share their stories with us; their response was overwhelming. As a year for celebrating tradition, this adds a connective dimension to what it means to carry on our Study Abroad tradition at “K.”

However, while the “K” tradition is certainly a factor in the success of our Study Abroad program, it would not continually renew itself unless the experiences spoke for themselves. We can read each other’s poems, stories, and journal excerpts, flip through photo albums, and ask each other “so, how was it?” But this isn’t enough. Because it isn’t just the “K” tradition that we enter into when we embark on our respective journeys. It is the myriad of once-unfamiliar traditions we encounter, enter, and absorb into ourselves that, ironically, keep our tradition of Study Abroad alive back in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

This year’s Passage speaks to the theme of immersion in a foreign tradition and the responses that result. Some entries are exuberant and celebratory; others are hesitant and curious. The Passage highlights a representative cross-section of the range of emotions, experiences, and relationships this exposure to and immersion in new traditions elicits.

From the reflective poem and solitary pilgrim on our front cover to the whimsical blue webbed toes on our back cover, our metaphor for the Passage embraces the “K” College tradition of physically walking towards “the farther journey.” It is our physical presence abroad—the way our bodies move through the streets, the way we walk into the culture, and the way the traditions of a new place learn to embrace us—it is this that connects us to our host countries. It is this connection that brings us back home to “K.”

The best traditions are the ones we build for ourselves,

Emma Perry, Editor-in-Chief
Anna Weaver, Photo Editor
Sakhi Vyas, Layout Editor
Tina Kosiorek, Copy Editor
Sarah Nicholus
Valparaíso, Chile
*Children laughing in Chile*
As I walked along the street in Nairobi I passed a mosque and saw a little girl with dark brown skin standing outside. She told me that she was eight, and her name was Nyambura. I frequently saw her in the afternoon standing outside the mosque as people left after their mid-day prayers. Nyambura was barefoot and dust stains smudged her turquoise dress.

As our eyes met she began to walk towards me. For months she approached me while I hurriedly made my way on the congested street. When she neared I extended my hand and we walked together to the Uchumi grocery store. Nyambura made her way through the store leading me by hand as she picked bread, sandwich meat, milk and water. When she told me she was finished we then walked to the checkout counter. While waiting in line I saw two pieces of fudge chocolate and placed them on the counter. At this Nyambura giggled and tightened her secure grip of my hand.

After our groceries were bagged I placed two-hundred shillings in her hand. She gave the bill to the cashier and awaited change. As we exited the store Nyambura gestured for my help to open her chocolate, smiling she told me asante mama (thanks mama); her dimples were beautiful. I touched her head and told her kwaheri kwa sasa (goodbye for now). She walked away and I stood quietly watching until she reached her place in front of the mosque.
Finding a Niche
Sakhi Vyas
Beijing, China

I find the park to be somewhat magical. One can seclude oneself on a bench or leaning against a tree and get lost in a private world, but at the same time still be part of what I like to call the “park society.” On my last trip, I discovered a group of elderly people practicing music. There was a wide range of singers and instrumentalists – all playing and practicing at their leisure, but at the same time, providing entertainment to interested passersby. They were situated in a little gazebo surrounded by a bamboo thicket. Then, down a narrow path into the bamboo forest sat a younger guy playing his heart out on an alto saxophone. It was the perfect juxtaposition of two different worlds of music, leisure, and entertainment, situated just a few paces from the other.

I love the park’s ability to create small niches for individual activities. But it’s not only music. Most likely due to the fact that Beijing has few spaces outside of the park that are conducive to leisurely activities, the park is home to a society which puts special effort into free time. Families take children to the park for walks, or for picnics. I especially love watching the different forms of taiji: hackeysack, racquetball, and those circulation exercises. Those people contribute to the park society by patronizing the area, but they are still just another private group engaging in their own personal afternoon activities. As for me, I have my own niche in this park. I'm just another student - doing homework, writing in my journal, spending hours watching the people go by.
Daily chess match in the Plaza de Armas

Tina Kosiorek
Santiago, Chile

Daily chess match in the Plaza de Armas
“It’s all Greek to me!”

Emma Perry
Athens, Greece

The United States is, by nature, a country of immigrants; we are expected to flourish under the guidance of modern mythologies: concepts like the “wild west,” Plymouth Rock, and Abe Lincoln’s log cabin. Before living in Greece, these foundation myths seemed to have accomplished their mission: I was content enough to believe that George Washington really did throw a silver dollar across the Potomac River. But these American myths seemed flimsy when juxtaposed with the rich roots of the Greeks. Last fall, I was sketching at the Temple of Olympian Zeus one afternoon and an elderly Greek man approached me, asking: “do you know what acropolis means?” I shook my head. “City on a hill! Acro-polis, we are the city on a hill!” I guess John Winthrop was wrong.

I began to adjust to the basics of becoming “Greek”: waiting until 10pm to eat dinner, taking a massi meri during the middle of the afternoon, shamelessly dancing the traditional Ikariotikos to an accordion, buying fresh fruit at open air markets, realizing that the hospital closes on Sundays, and most importantly: the lost art of relaxing. I took a crash course in Greek and attempted to chat with Vassilis, my favorite taverna owner on the island of Spetses. Although I was intent on “getting it all right,” treating our interactions like some sort of twisted language lab, he kept reminding me that my name, Emma, meant “vampire” in Greek. In a very overt way, Vassilis taught me to laugh at myself. As much as I tried, for six months I couldn’t even introduce myself to anyone without them chuckling at my fauxpas of a name. Yet, the fact that I understood what they were laughing at sometimes helped.

There was a particular Athenian that I never needed to tell my funny-sounding name to: his name was Fatty, and he was a stray dog. Athens is teeming with strays that, to the average tourist, appear to be wandering pets – each dog wears a collar and vaccination badges provided by the city. However, after walking down Vassillias Sofias every morning for a few weeks, I began to take note of the packs of personality-laden dogs roaming around the city: the Temple dogs were lazy and almost always sleeping in the street; the Agora dogs were like rowdy teenagers looking for attention; the Kerimeikos dogs were shy and liked to hide behind the 5th century grave steles; and the Acropolis dogs were the wily old-timers who’d steal waterbottles while we were trying to take notes for our on-site archaeology class. Fatty, my favorite, used to follow us through the wet marble streets of Athens, a renegade who’d grab day old fish from taverna garbage cans and drag it from historical site to site. Fatty never fit in with the other dogs; I felt bad for him, but in a way, I identified. As I meandered through the winding roads without a map, it looked like I belonged. But, like Fatty, I didn’t fit in with any one pack: the Greeks knew I was there, but I wasn’t one of them yet.
I left Vasillis and Fatty one weekend to climb Mt. Olympus. I stayed in a cabin halfway up the summit and followed the Greek signs through the freezing clouds. It was about thirty degrees with violent winds at the top, and the sheet of sweat I’d acquired along the hike up quickly evaporated into teeth-chattering shivers. I thought how the Greeks who’d climbed these peaks searching for the Olympians thousands of years ago also sweated hard, shivering in the film of gray clouds. They, too, must have sucked in the thin air, looked around for the gods, and found them sleeping elsewhere. On the way down, I passed a group of Germans who were on a similar quest to catch a peek at Zeus. We smiled at each other as we passed on the narrow trail, exchanging a brief Greek greeting in neither of our native languages. Once I saw these other hikers, it made me reflect on why that mountain, that mythology, was so paramount to a non-Greek identity and individual mythology.

Back in Athens, while laughing with the sandwich shop owner down the street about the difference between regular American mayonnaise and his “special” mayonnaise, it struck me as remarkable that the Greeks could be responsible for so much Western achievement and still find time to laugh: to flip worry beads at a café, relax with a Greek coffee or a pagato, swim in the Aegean sea, and smell the moussaka that won’t be ready until 10pm. As citizens of a country in its infancy, Americans still feel they need to prove themselves, but the ancient Temple to Hephaestus, standing in the center of Athens with bullet holes in the side that the Nazis used for target practice, speaks for the Greeks’ resilience; no need for anything more. Greek culture showed me that you can enjoy the places you see, the gods you don’t, and the people you meet – even if they’re laughing at your name – without panicking if an item or two gets pushed to the next day’s calendar square. After all, the Greeks managed to build the Parthenon in 20 years with just a string and a chisel. And when someone tries to get cute with me and say, “it’s all Greek to me!” I smile and laugh and tell them, “you have no idea how true that is.”
A young boy enjoying the solitude of the Great Mosque, Touba, Sénégal
Boats used for tours, fishing, or living, on the Howrah River near Kolkata

Rose Grose
Kolkata, India
Ariel and I had a particularly rough week at one point after a few months of living in Erlangen, Germany. I was chilling in my room and she came over, needing to talk. We both ended up crying after about half an hour of relating frustrations with our situation. Right about that point, I said, “Ok, let’s make a list. We’ll make a list of everything we miss from home, and everything we love from here, and see which one is longer.” That way, I figured, we would find out how much of our unhappiness was genuine and related to things we missed, and how much was just being tired and lonely. So we got out a sheet of paper and started listing.

We talked about brunch at the caf, not cooking for ourselves constantly, Beaner’s and the library, smiling, study groups, Bunny, Jewish Students Organization and Asian Students Association, and free laundry. We talked about food: lemon bars and pumpkin rolls, chicken patties, Teddy Grahams, Goldfish, peanut butter, and Ben & Jerry’s.

Then we started talking about Germany, about having our own room and bathroom, about being able to cook, about public transportation and train passes, feeling safe in the city, the little club down the street, small children speaking German (better than us), Schlossgarten (the public gardens), Stabilo pens, and our potlucks. We talked about hot chocolate and paprika-flavored food and cheesy noodles and Doener and Emmentaler cheese and the Sunday rolls our Program Director brought us.

As we continued listing, we started to notice something. Many of the things we loved about Germany—the trains and the ease with which we could walk nearly everywhere—corresponded to things we missed from home, like having our own cars. Although we could get Taco Bell at home, we couldn’t get the delicious hot chocolate served in Germany. So some of the things we loved/missed were not only particular to place, they were sort of mutually exclusive. That is, they only occurred in that place because of the way the whole culture evolved. German hot chocolate is more chocolatey and less sweet because they don’t use as much sugar in their food there, whereas no place can do fried cheesy goodness quite as well as Taco Bell.

We said goodnight shortly after that. I knew we both felt a lot better. We had come to an unremarkable yet important study abroad moment; the moment where you know that you have to be happy about the differences between the two places you’re learning to call home.
Gravestones of American soldiers killed on D-Day during WWII in Normandy, France
One of the largest Christmas Markets in France, over 430 years old

Eva Melstrom
Strasbourg, France
A kri kri at the bottom of the Samaria Gorge in Crete

Emma Perry
Athens, Greece
Today I joined my host father, Patee Chachai, at church for 11:30 mass. The church itself was charming with its corrugated tin roof and handmade wooden podium and crosses. There were no walls to this structure, so a constant breeze slipped across the arms and faces of the attendees as small triangles of sunlight turned on the edges of the pews. All of the villagers wore their best traditional dress, some of the men even sported thin dress shirts beneath their traditional Karen tops. The wide spectrum of color in their apparel complemented the simple wooden benches and bamboo stage, their bright threads of reds, yellows and blues caught the corner of many an eye. If one sat on one of those benches and took a look to their left, their eyes would fall upon a stretch of sun-soaked mountains and a stretch of young, fallow fields, still bright green from the previous year’s harvest.

The atmosphere was the most open-armed and relaxed of any Christian community I’ve ever experienced. Children played in the back as the adults made up most of the congregation. No one glanced over their shoulders when the children’s screams flooded over what the Pastor, Patee Tahpoh, had to say that Sunday. Every now and then, the adults engaged in their own side chatter or even let out a belch or two, and still, not one dirty look shot in the direction of the noise, not even a small fit of stifled laughter. Church was meant to be like the home: comfortable and communal. Even the sermon itself was more like a conversation, villagers inserting their own small jokes or comments.

Once Patee Tahpoh was finished, a woman named Ella took his place behind the podium. Moogah Ella spoke with such animation that even I, with my very limited Pgagyong, was nodding along with her ideas. She engaged her audience like a star-filled night does a midnight stroller, polishing the edges of an already golden air. At the end of the service, Patee Sajue explained in English that Moogah Ella was a guest speaker from a nearby village who was leading Huay Hee in “Family Day”. To celebrate this, willing members of the village were invited to hike to Doi Pui, the highest point in Mae Hong Song, reaching 1,772 meters above sea level. I was invited to come along.

I started my hike with the children and ended it with the adults, my host family included. Being the only farang among a variety of Karen people is something that I’m sure not even K College expected I would encounter. Hugs, arm squeezes, smiles and laughter were in constant exchange. I fell in to their circle with ease. It was as if I had always been a factor in this human equation. All of the women became my mothers and sisters as the men became my fathers and brothers, ensuring I see their land from every possible angle. They asked me, “Mee ti America, mai?” I shook my head and answered, “Chai, daywah pookow low ni suay maak gwah.” They smiled, a warm hand wrapped around my shoulder and we continued on to the top.
Once we reached the top we took a lot of pictures, the children doing what they pleased with my digital camera. I was directed to stand in several different places holding flowers my host sister, Manilat, had picked for me. She unknowingly covered the lens with the tip of her index finger and told me to smile. Ella called us to the center of the mountain top to start the last portion of the service. Moogah Ella motioned for me to sit beside her in the circle that began to form. Prayers were spoken, songs were sung, and a guitar was played, all somehow louder than the volume of the crisp wind that wrapped around us. The mountains rippled into the horizon below us, as the sun warming the scene below cast shadows of profiles and shoulders side by side in the middle of our circle. Moogah Ella’s hand squeezed my knee and I knew it was time to go.

On the hike back I barely said a word as my ears were over-stimulated by natural sounds. Our feet crunched the grass beneath our shoes, a slight breeze whispered past my ear lobes, the children giggled as they floated down the steep slopes, the women joined in harmonious song despite the people that marched the trail between each of them. They all weaved into one chord that I never heard before, but somehow knew.

We finished the last portion of the hike guided only by the moonlight that poured onto the trail through the cracks in the tree canopy. We all lost our footing at least once to be picked up again by laughter and helping hands that snaked through the darkness. When we reached the village road the women danced in celebration, their hands in the air, the bright beaded necklaces applauding their finish as they bounced against their chests.

Later that night, I think I saw more stars than sky as I sat around the fire with my host family. Patee Chachai held an exhausted daughter in his lap and asked me, “Mee ti America, mai?” pointing to the star sprinkled sky above us. I shrugged my shoulders and said, “Chai, day wah low ni dow suay maak gwah.”

***

Patee: a Pgagyong term which translated into English literally means “uncle”. This term is used mostly by the young or by someone who wants to show respect or honor to the elder male they are addressing. The male does not necessarily have to be one’s uncle or even related for this term to be used.
Moogah: a Pgagyong term which translated into English literally means “aunt”. This term is used in the same style as Patee but used when addressing an older female.
Farang: a Thai term borrowed from the French used when referring to Westerners or anything Western.
1 Translated from Thai to English this reads, “Do you have this in America?”
2 Translated from Thai to English this reads, “Yes, but these mountains are much more beautiful.”
3 Translated from Thai to English this reads, “Yes, but these stars are much more beautiful.”
In a Mexican Market

Ellen Chenoweth
Oaxaca, Mexico

What might this woman think of me as I walk through this market?

Flashing her knotted blond hair brazenly around here.
Muttering with her friends in English as if we cannot understand them.
My husband could probably understand them if he were here.

I was never that young.
I bet she has never ridden a bus.
How much did that camera cost her?

She makes fluttery eye contact and a weak smile
Then awkwardly drops her eyes.
Are they blue or green? I can’t tell.
I bet she will buy one of my weavings without even haggling.

Americans will buy anything... 

She shakes her towhead
Americans never buy anything
She turns back and asks how much
I answer and she pulls out the bills

You see? Americans always change their minds...

There aren’t any real weavings in her country
They just have T.V.s and fancy cars.
They have to travel this far just to find some real culture.

Maybe I should teach her to make tortillas and tejate...
Maybe I should teach her to dance...
If she comes back.

Ah! Americans never come back.
Hands

Sarah Nicholus
Valparaíso, Chile

Hands
Young monks at a monastery in Tibet
The Eiffel Tower light show, at night in Paris
Anna Weaver
Chiang Mai, Thailand
*Prickly Fruit for sale in Thailand*
Folk singers known as Bauls in the town of Santiniketan
Elizabeth Lamphier
Cáceres, Spain

A view of the soaring ceiling of the New Cathedral of Salamanca
Sakhi Vyas
Beijing, China
Gazebo in the Purple Bamboo Park
Meghan Hall
Hikone, Japan

Youth culture and street fashion on display in Harajuku, Tokyo
Australians show their patriotism during Australia Day.
From a Buddhist temple in Thailand, these statues surrounding the temple "hold it up"
I've been trying to figure out the best way to explain this first week to you. It is difficult to try and give details, explain the way the city smells like a mixture of horrible bus pollution, empanadas, and the red flowering trees that line my neighborhood; how frustrating it is to sit at a table full of people and be able to follow the idea of a conversation, but not be able to find the words to express your opinion, so you just sit there, or if you do try and interject something, it takes so long that the conversation basically dies; to express the complete fear I felt when I couldn’t get into my locked front door at 11:45 at night; or the simple satisfaction when I negotiated the bus system myself to go sightseeing in another barrio (neighborhood.) It has been an interesting week...

...In Ecuador I learned to value the small things. My host mother would bake and very carefully scrape every last bit of the yolk out of the eggshell to conserve it all. We saved scraps of paper and reused them over and over until there were no more white spaces. Showers were a quick five-minute in and out, often without hot water. It’s not that my host family couldn’t afford to buy more eggs, new paper, or that I couldn’t have taken a ten-minute shower - we had wireless Internet after all - but it was simply the idea that waste was disrespectful. They were so grateful for everything that they had and aware that they had more than others. I was struck by this awareness every day. No matter whom I met, the majority of people in Ecuador were so willing to give of themselves, of their time, and of what they had.

Relationships were crucial. It was not uncommon for someone to show up thirty to forty minutes late to an appointment simply because they had gotten caught up in the conversation with their neighbor. We had family gatherings every Sunday, and there were usually at least one or two cousins stopping by every night. My host mother often reminded me to call my friends or my family, saying that in life, our relationships are what ground us in reality.
On the Baseball Diamond
Joshua Curry
Clermont-Ferrand, France

Having lived in four different countries before going on study abroad I already knew what to expect and how to make the most of this new experience. However, this did not stop me from taking something from this experience that I could never have learned elsewhere. When I went abroad my goal was to integrate myself into French culture and to become as fluent as possible, and as to be expected from study abroad, I found an “in” where I least expected it: on the baseball diamond. During my first month in France and in my extensive search to play sports, I happened across my future Canadian coach at a sports convention, where he surprised me not only by talking to me in English, but by telling me all about the baseball team that I didn’t think there would be in France.

Don’t get me wrong, that was the first and last time we would speak English; in fact he was very considerate about the fact that I was there to learn French. Being a part of this baseball team was the greatest thing that happened to me on study abroad. From the first day I came to practice I could tell that these guys were not just there to play baseball, but rather to have fun and enjoy this awesome American sport. Since baseball has only been around for about thirty years in France, and the general public hasn’t quite gotten around to knowing anything about the sport, those who play do so for the joy of the sport rather than the possibility of becoming a professional. For a guy who has spent most of his life on the bench due to so much competition, this was a perfect opportunity for me not only to play baseball, but to speak to the guys and learn about French culture while doing something I love.

I’ve been playing baseball since I was about six years old, and have always enjoyed the sport, even sitting on the bench. Playing in France, with teammates who were as nice and fun on the field as they were off the field, allowed me to truly realize that it didn’t matter what I did, I was good at baseball as long as I wanted to be. After having gone from bench player to starting pitcher, I began to notice a difference that I felt happier and more excited to talk with the guys and share anything about baseball that I could. I was able to explain myself better as the season went by, and even when I knew I was making mistakes in French, they would just correct me without making any judgments.

Success on study abroad is finally letting go of what you are required to do, and participating as much as possible in what you love to do, because when you are doing what you love, you know you can’t make any mistakes.
James Mickley
Perth, Australia
A rugby game in action in Australia
An old Greek woman washes her windows

Emma Perry
Athens, Greece

She reaches backwards out her window five stories above the motorcycled street, twisting her torso towards the shutters like a laurel tree.

She doesn’t notice the soapy water dripping from her sponge as she cleans, the concentric circles leaving gray streaks on the yellow stucco walls.

She admires her work in a contorted position; now her window seems to shine the brightest - at least through curling cigarette smoke and the glare of a Greek September sun.

She shrinks back through the frame of her apartment, ready to clean something else with the damp sponge, her gray face absorbed by the wet shutters her features dripping down the windowsill.

I watch this from my balcony across the alley through the grime on my glass through the streaks on my face the soap clouding my wet eyes.
Geneva Garcia
San José, Costa Rica
A finca *in Pavas*
Amha and Jeff in the Orongo Orphan Village
Only In Ecuador...

Katie Waldeck
Quito, Ecuador

The thought occurred to me, as fell through the air, that it was a long way down and this was going to hurt.

How had I not thought through that before? Suddenly there was complete silence. And it did hurt. My skin screamed from the impact with the water. My ears ached from the depth I had reached and as I struggled to surface, I thought that my lungs might implode from the cold pressing in from all directions. I finally did reach the surface and I gulped in the fresh air. My whole body hurt. I would not be doing that again. But I didn’t regret it. It was a one-time opportunity. The kind that you can’t pass up. Who could miss the chance to throw oneself thirteen meters into an icy cold pool at the bottom of a waterfall, taking care to miss the rocks on either side? Only in Ecuador.

Only in Ecuador would I watch a woman carefully get off a bus while cradling a small goat in her arms.
Only in Ecuador would I see a man selling colorfully dyed chicks next to a man selling bootleg copies of every software program known to man.
Only in Ecuador would I fry cow liver for 100 people.
Only in Ecuador would I find myself lost in the confusion of a national holiday declared and then later revoked.
Only in Ecuador would I be told that this was an election year, not a coup year.
Only in Ecuador would I attend a rock concert on the steps of a colonial-era cathedral and monastery.
Only in Ecuador would I pass malls filled with items that would break my American-sized wallet while on a bus ride that cost me 25 cents.
Only in Ecuador would I barter over a difference of 50 cents.
Only in Ecuador would I watch a group of monks give haircuts to homeless men in the main plaza of the capital city.
Only in Ecuador would I fear for my life each day upon entering the shower since it was heated by an electric heater with exposed wires very near to my head.
Only in Ecuador would I learn the meaning of words like chévere, frescaso, and fregado.
Only in Ecuador would I truly become part of a second family.
Only in Ecuador would I know what it meant to feel like an insider in another culture.
Only in Ecuador would I discover a part of myself that I will never let go.
Anna Weaver
Chiang Mai, Thailand

A farmer in his field in Huay Hee, a village in Northern Thailand
I Stood

Miles Sarvis-Wilburn
Chiang Mai, Thailand

I stood
Arms in front clutching my staff
The noise all around
Bred by the night
Among the flashes of light
I stood
Arms behind my head
Staff resting on my shoulders
The fog seething down the hills
It's coming
I thought
It'll be here soon
I looked
In front at my shadow
My shadow in the night
Alas how bright the moon
Behind the clouds
Behind the trees
Behind my body

I felt
The loneliness and fear
Of all those who feel
The fog wrapped around the trees
Around me
Invisible close
And blinding far
I touched
The threads of my staff
Rain tree strong
Curved with imperfection
And perfect
As only all can be
I closed
My eyes and breathed in deep
The fog of night
My being and all
Which I felt around
I am
Seated and calm
My eyes fixed on this page
Lit by the little candles
Around me
And inside my mind
ALUMNI REFLECTIONS ON STUDY ABROAD
Celebrating the 50th anniversary of study abroad at Kalamazoo College, past participants reflect on their experiences...

Evan Loudenback
Perth, Australia
A Buddhist temple in Thailand as it reflects off lily pads
Mickey Huang ’82 France

Still to this day, the flavors and textures I savor most are the foods I discovered while on Study Abroad in Strasbourg, France. I recall my first taste of tarte flambée in a little half-timbered restaurant along the canal in Petit France... the delicate crisp of the thin wood fired crust, the richness of the white sauce, and the delectable fattiness of the lardons (hey, at twenty years old back then, who was worried about fat grams?). Even now, living in Chicago, I can’t bear to order a Chicago-style deep dish pizza... When the mood for pizza strikes, I still want my crust thin and crisp... just like an Alsatian tarte flambée! And the list goes on... tarte à l’onion... couscous royale... and of course a hearty Choucroute!

Chris Reynolds ’83 France

In the fall of 1981 and the winter and early spring of 1982, I lived as a Foreign Study student in Strasbourg, France. It was the catalytic experience of my routine eighteen year old lifetime. When I arrived in Strasbourg, I was the only student sent off to a university dormitory in a remote part of town -- no host family and no other K students. I thought then that this was an utter disaster. Within weeks, I realized what a gift I had been given. Talk about "immersion"! I had no choice but to learn the language, make friends, locate the student café; in short, I had to adapt and make my way. What I now remember and value most is not the constant travel to other countries and cities -- travel that relied upon "Hotel Eurailpass" and a steady cheap diet of beer, bread and cheese. Instead, I remember and treasure the sense that, for the first time, I was truly on my own. If life is a series of high-wire acts, this was my first. I had stepped off the platform of who I was at home. My safety net was thousands of miles away and all I had to balance me was an open mind and a tattered plaid jacket that did triple duty as coat, blanket and pillow. Over the course of those several months, that high wire ran from Copenhagen to Marrakesh and points in between both geographical and existential. I didn't fall off, at least not hard. And I picked up a real jones for that wire.

In the summer of 2007, my family and I packed up our Brooklyn home into a moving van and left behind twenty years worth of life, roots and routine in New York City. We moved clear across the continent to Los Angeles on what (for us) could only be called a bet. My plaid jacket was long gone and wouldn't have fit me if I had it. Instead, I took as balance three children and the woman of my life. She wondered aloud (often and sometimes loudly): Tell me again -- where exactly did I get this habit for turning my back to the safe, steady platform? And why was I grinning as I stepped out on that wire?
Jeff Palmer '76 France

I enjoyed shopping at the fish market and running errands around Caen, France, with my French “father,” Michael Robineau, during my study abroad in France. I was one of about twenty Kalamazoo students at l’Université de Caen in spring 1974.

Monsieur Robineau, my host father, was a terrific guy. Generous and kind...but a horrible driver. He had an aging Citroën Deux Chevaux (Two Horses) with solid rubber tires, a leaky canvas top, and bad brakes that he loved to drive too fast around the narrow streets of Caen. I never complained, but I know my fingernails dug deep into the hard seats. He spoke no English and my French was rudimentary, but we understood each other perfectly when he shouted 'Richard Petty!' each time he passed a sports car.

Jerry Saylor ’61 Return boat trip from Europe

The return boat trip from Europe was a memorable experience for the 1960 Light Scholars. The voyage was scheduled to take seven days but in fact lasted eleven days as we were lashed by the remnants of Hurricane Donna. For four days we bobbed like a cork as up to forty feet waves battered us. The prow would go under the water, pushing up the stern and taking the propeller out of the water. When this occurred on a ninety second cycle, the entire boat would shake making sleep or deep thought impossible. If one stood on the stern, one could experience the cheapest ride in town moving up and down nearly 100 feet. Most passengers and crew were sea sick leaving drinking rather than eating the preferred activity. Many passengers thus joined in the lounge where many songs were sung, most memorable being the Titanic theme which included the following chorus:

Wasn't it sad, wasn't it sad.
Wasn't it sad when that great ship went down (to the bottom of the....)
Husbands and wives, little children lost their lives.
Wasn't it sad when the great ship went down.

I know there are other versions of the chorus but that was the version preferred on this trip. I don't think anyone ever thought we were in serious danger, we were too young and invincible to have such thoughts. I doubt whether any of us will ever forget that voyage either. I would also note that Hurricane Donna was a Category Five storm and impacted more states than any other hurricane in recorded history. The name Donna was retired in 1964, replaced by Dora. A memorable storm indeed.
Robert Jacob ’71 Germany

I went in the spring of my Junior year to a widowed German mother that had three boys (ages eleven, nineteen and twenty-two). I was turning twenty-one that May of 1970. I had only six months of German before I went to Muenster, so when I first arrived at my German Mother’s house, I could NOT speak German that well. She realized that and immediately sat all four boys down to their kitchen table and pulled out her rolling pin. She sat the American boy (me) on one side of the table and her three natural sons on the other side of the table, with her at the head of the table. She then pointed to me and said:

“You my son will ALWAYS speak German when in my house talking to my sons or me and you my three German sons will ALWAYS speak English when talking to my American son and if any of you DO NOT DO AS I SAY, then you’ll get my rolling pin.”

Needless to say that was how I learned to become fluent in German and my German brothers fluent in English.

Stephanie Anderson ’06 Ecuador

Three and a half years ago I used to joke about having caught *Ecua bichos* (Ecuadorian bugs). As perhaps common for many who live and travel abroad, my *bicho* references were typically associated with stomach discomfort and the occasional round of strong antibiotics. Yet what started as a joke – and perhaps a cry for sympathy – has evolved into adoration for a country that has tried, frustrated, prodded, exposed and ultimately loved me. The *Ecua bicho* got me good.

When I arrived on Ecuadorian soil fresh after graduation with two large suitcases, no place of residence, and no solid income, I decided I was crazy – or at least masochistic. The question of why I decided to (continually) go back is one Ecuadorians frequently ask me. And it is a question to which I still have no answer. True, I love *ceviche*, $1.50 lunches, speaking Spanish, and the breathtaking landscape; but I didn’t go back to Quito to visit: I went to live. I went to live in a country where sexual harassment can be the rule rather than the exception, where traveling can result in confrontations with “bus pirates,” where I am at times mistaken for a *señor* because of my short hair, and where I’ve been hospitalized because of something I ate. Could it be the *bicho?*

It’s easy to romanticize a way of life that one no longer lives. Yet, my recent third trip to Ecuador only reaffirmed what it is that I love, hate, and miss about that country. I am not disillusioned nor have I closed a chapter. My relationships flow seamlessly from Spanish to English, English to Spanish, from Ecuador to the United States and back again. My *bicho* remains restless.
Sonja Dean '94 India

I was the first K-College student to go to India for study abroad. In the late summer of 1992, I was traveling independently through the south of India, staying at a Vivekananda ashram. I eventually met up with Jennifer, a Pune program colleague, in Bangalore. She and I explored the city for a few days and then prepared to head back to Pune to start classes. We went to the train station to catch an early evening train, thinking that we would get there in time to be able to exchange money at the bank at the station, so that I could buy my ticket. However, when we got there, the bank was closed for yet another holiday and I was stuck there with only enough cash to buy a third class ticket, with no hope of being able to exchange money on the train to upgrade my ticket. Third class was not, at that time, a safe place for a woman to travel alone, Indian or not. I bought the third class ticket, while Jennifer purchased a first class ticket, which used up all of her ready cash. We were not sure how we were going to pull this all off, but I boarded with her into first class and we waited.

After we boarded, a middle aged Indian gentleman entered our car with us and sat down with us to travel. We were a bit of a novelty for him and he seemed pleased to have our nineteen year old company and was asking a lot of questions about who we were, where we were from, where we were going, what we were reading. My companion and I answered his questions, while sitting there reading a religious text we had brought (we happened to have been from the same faith background going into our study abroad), trying to look as inconspicuous as possible. The train started to go and we thought that maybe the conductor wasn’t going to come, as they usually came through before the train started. The train conductor came by in between stops to collect tickets and was very irritated that I was in first class with a third class ticket and insisted that at the next stop I was to move immediately to third class. I tried to negotiate with him about taking my travelers’ check as payment for an upgrade, but he would have nothing of it. Just then, the Indian man in the car with us spoke up and said, "I will pay for her ticket" and pulled out the cash needed to upgrade the ticket. Should I accept the gift? Would I offend the man by refusing? Would I offend him by taking it? Should I suck it up like a good independent American and just move? What would he expect in return for his generosity? Jennifer and I just looked at each other, not sure what to do. I thanked him profusely for his generosity and promised to wire him the funds later, still stunned that someone would do that for another person with no real guarantee of being repaid. We all traveled together through the night and most of the next morning. He was very intrigued by our religious materials and asked to read them, taking copious notes all evening and through the next morning.

He disembarked the next morning, but not before I took his name and address, so that I could send him his money when I returned to Pune. And then he was gone. I of course did send him the funds in a registered letter a few days later and received notice through the mail system that he had received the funds, but I never heard from or saw him again. I think about him often and wonder who he really was, what he told his wife and children when he got home several hundred rupees poorer, and why he did that for me. He certainly restored my faith a little that day that kindness can be given and accepted free of expectations.
David Anderson ’63 Germany

As part of our experience we took a bus ride to Berlin in East Germany. Everyone in the bus was very silent as we crossed the border into Communist East Germany. The uniformed East German officials boarded our bus and after a dramatic, animated conversation with our German guide, they were directed right to me! After I had brief a moment of fear, they explained they needed to stamp a passport and since my last name started with A, they stamped mine! By chance, it was the Fourth of July, a day when we celebrate our freedom, and we were driving into Communist territory.

On August 13, 1961, a month after we left Berlin when we could walk freely from side to side, the East Germans started building the Berlin Wall. I remember vividly sitting in my Bonn family living room and watching black and white television reports of the Wall going up, of people trying to cross from east to west and getting killed. Most poignantly, I remember the tears in my host father’s eyes as we watched the wall go up together.

Jen Feuerstein ’93 Germany

I did my study abroad in Bonn, Germany from late ’91 to early ’92. The timing between the end of the semester in Bonn and the beginning of the spring quarter in Kalamazoo allowed for about a month of travel throughout Europe. I opted to travel alone for the majority of my trip, and had a wonderful time travelling through Austria, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and the UK. I did this on a shoestring budget, often sleeping on trains to save money. Near the end of my trip, I was looking pretty ragged, with my ill-fitting navy blue full-length coat in need of a good wash, or perhaps a good toss into the trash. I also had a favorite pair of woolen socks that I wore so often the heels had holes in them. This was my attire as I slept in a compartment on a train from Barcelona to Paris, shoes off as the conductors frowned upon resting one’s shoe-clad feet on the seats. At one stop I heard a passenger enter my compartment, but being mostly asleep did not bother to greet my new traveling companion. The passenger began speaking to someone out on the platform through our window, and my ears perked up at the sound of English being spoken. "There's a bum sleeping in my compartment", the young woman said in a lovely accent that sounded British to my untrained ears. I turned over at this, admittedly a little embarrassed, and reassured her, "Don't worry, I'm not a bum." The woman did not respond to me but said to her companion on the platform, "Never mind, it's not a bum. It's just an American."

As a postscript to this little vignette, in the morning I attempted a little light conversation, not having been in the company of an English speaker in awhile. "So, what part of England are you from?" I asked brightly.

"I'm from Northern Ireland," she responded icily. That was the end of a beautiful friendship.
Amber Whittington is a Political Science Major with an emphasis in African Political Affairs. She studied abroad in Nairobi, Kenya. “I am appreciative of my time in Kenya, it was a growing and coming home experience for me in many ways. I hope to once again live in Kenya.”

Anna Weaver is a Political Science Major. She studied abroad in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Ariane Reister is a Biology Major and a German Minor. She studied abroad in Erlangen, Germany.

Brad Bidwell is an Anthropology/Sociology Major. He studied abroad in Strasbourg, France.

Caitlin Paul is a Biology Major. She studied abroad in Dakar, Sénégal. “One of my favorite memories is the women in colorful boubous whom I admire for their powerful beauty.”

Elizabeth Lamphier is a Political Science Major and a Spanish Minor. She studied abroad in Cáceres, Spain.

Ellen Chenoweth is a Biology Major. She studied abroad in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Emily Dayton is a Human Development and Social Relations Major with a concentration in Environmental Science. She studied abroad in Dakar, Sénégal. “As challenging as my experience was, it was incredibly rewarding, and I look forward to going back after graduation.”

Emily Harpe is a Theatre Major and Anthropology/Sociology Minor with a concentration in Media Studies. She studied abroad in Kolkata, India.

Emma Perry is an English Major, Classical Studies Major and Theatre Minor. She studied abroad in Athens, Greece at College Year in Athens. “Yamas!”

Evan Loudenback is an Economics Major and Art Minor. He studied abroad in Perth, Australia. While studying abroad, he took the opportunity to travel through Asia on a program run by Curtin University in Australia, called the Asia Study Tour.

Eva Melstrom is a Human Development/Social Relations Major. She studied abroad in Strasbourg, France.

Geneva Garcia is an Economics Major and Art Minor. She studied abroad in San José, Costa Rica. “I am happy and grateful to have had the experience to study abroad.

James Mickley is a Biology Major. He studied abroad in Perth, Australia. “I jumped at the chance to document a new and different culture, to show Australia both the way Australians see it, and as the way we as visitors see it.”

Jeff Crapko is a Political Science Major and a Theatre Minor. He studied abroad in Nairobi, Kenya.
Joshua Curry is an Economics Major. He studied abroad in Clermont-Ferrand, France. “I love experiencing the world through all sorts of cultural lenses.”

Katie Krezoski is a Health Sciences Major and a French Minor. She studied in Strasbourg, France. “Studying abroad in France was both a blessing and a challenge. What I miss most, other than the cheese and wine, is the sense of absolute freedom I had there. My only agenda was to live life to its fullest.”

Katie Waldeck is a Spanish and International & Area Studies double Major who studied abroad for 9 months in Quito, Ecuador. “I loved my time there and am hoping to return after graduation.”

Katy Maiorana is a Biology Major. She studied abroad at Universidad San Francisco de Quito as part of the Environment & Ecology program in Quito, Ecuador. “My travels in the mountains of Ecuador provided some of the most beautiful vistas I have ever seen.”

Megan O’Neill is an English Major who studied abroad in Erlangen, Germany. “I miss the bakeries, Biergarten, and my German friends, and I look forward to returning soon.”

Meghan Hall is an East Asian Studies Major and a History Minor. She studied abroad in Hikone, Japan. “My time in Japan could be summed up in two words: strange and beautiful.”

Miles Sarvis-Wilburn is a Political Science Major and a Philosophy Minor. He studied in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Nora Seilheimer is an English Major with an emphasis in Creative Writing. She studied abroad in Chiang Mai, Thailand and learned to “try everything twice.”

Rachel Brainerd is a Psychology Major. She studied abroad in Quito, Ecuador. Reflecting on her study abroad experience, she quotes Henry Miller: “If we are always arriving and departing, it is also true that we are eternally anchored. One’s destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things.”

Rose Grose is a Psychology Major with a concentration in Women’s Studies. She studied abroad in Kolkata, India. “I left Kolkata with a greater determination to further my own knowledge and work for all women regardless of geography or circumstance.”

Sakhi Vyas is an International & Area Studies Major, Chinese Minor and International Commerce Minor. She studied abroad in Beijing, China. “I greatly miss the parks, the wonderful street food, and my unending explorations around the city.”

Sarah Nicholus is a Spanish Major and English Major with a concentration in Media Studies. She spent twelve months studying abroad in Valparaíso, Chile. “While studying in Chile and traveling across South America, I enjoyed taking photos and using photography as a way to interact with people.”

Tina Kosiorek is an International & Area Studies and Spanish double Major. She studied abroad in Santiago, Chile. “My biggest lesson learned abroad? Flagging down and boarding the correct micro (bus).”
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Passage is a Kalamazoo College publication containing writing and photography by students who have participated in the study abroad experience. The magazine circulates to students and their parents, alumni, friends of the college, prospective students, and members of the Kalamazoo College community. Students are invited to submit poetry, photography and artwork for consideration.

Front Cover Poem: Miles Sarvis-Wilburn, Traveling Once

Front Cover Photo: Katy Maiorana, Descending from a lookout over the crater of Guagua Pichincha, an active volcano lying above Quito, Ecuador

Title Page Photo: Emily Dayton, Senegalese schoolgirls watching American visitors in Dakar, Sénégal

Back Cover Photo: Aubrey Parker, Blue Footed Boobies on the Galápagos Islands

Darlington Sabasi, Visiting International Student 2007-08
Africa University, Zimbabwe

I came to “K” on behalf of Africa University,
Representing Zimbabwe and thus Africa too.
With the flag in my hands at Convocation,
I could feel the weight of the problems of my country.
With all the eyes of Kalamazoo College students looking at me,
I am a symbol for Zimbabweans, hoping that I can make a difference.
It is as if my arrival has been long awaited,
As if I have the solution to all their questions and worries.

Be a difference maker.
Women attending a party for their cousin celebrating her first pilgrimage to Mecca