Kalamazoo College Center for International Programs
1200 Academy Street Kalamazoo, MI 49006 USA

Passage
2003–2004

images and reflections of study abroad
Though we travel the world to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson
The whole object of travel is not to set foot on foreign land; it is at last to set foot on one’s own country as a foreign land.

-Gilbert Keith Chesterton


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While I was in Australia I learned that Kalamazoo College’s Study Abroad program had been rated number one in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*. I think this confirms what most in the K College community already know: study abroad is a pivotal experience in the lives of a majority of students here. For months after arriving home my friends, classmates and I would continually tell stories about our adventures abroad in order to relive the experience. Study abroad can be an amazing experience in a variety of ways. It is a way to immerse yourself in a new culture and natural landscape, to learn foreign language skills and grow as a person. It can be exciting, challenging, frustrating, rewarding and a lot of fun.

While the study abroad experiences of the class of 2004 can be said to fit with K’s tradition of study abroad programs, there are also ways in which these travels are different from years past. Talk of a war with Iraq began while many of us were in other countries, a war which did commence with the support of few other nations. I know that my time spent outside the States gave me a new perspective on this issue, as I began to see the diversity of cultures and ideas and learn that the “American way” is not the only way. As you will see in several of the pieces presented in this magazine, many students’ study abroad experience involved reflection on the society they grew up in, with feelings ranging from pride to a questioning of the political and cultural aspects of American life. Studying abroad during this time of international turmoil makes it clearer than ever that it is vital to learn both about other cultures and ourselves if we want to make any progress toward understanding and harmony.

Peace,
Sara Vasilenko
*Passage* Editor-in-Chief
Outside of the university and tourist destination, people live, breathe and go about their business

Ali Bakerman, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Lighting a fireballoon in celebration of Loy Kratang,
Matt Pieknik, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Approaching Mae La

An hour outside of Mae Sot, you are driving past Mae La. From the van, the refugee camp resembles any number of mountain villages you’ve passed through. Huts constructed of sunburned bamboo, bland dirty cream-colored homes schooled together like plankton, churning across the surface of a mountainous sea. Brightly colored clothes and blankets occasionally materialize on a clothesline or along a wooden porch railing, protesting their monochromatic surroundings. There, smoke rises from a roof and lingers in the air, the sun’s rays shoot through it, paralyzed for a moment. Gone. A simple bamboo fence races alongside you. The camp seems almost like a natural occurrence, the huts taking root like the seedlings of the surrounding trees and vines, yet somehow it is distinctly unusual. You need a moment to realize it. There. Where are the fields? The gardens? Every previous village you’ve seen has been peppered with small gardens between the homes, and circumscribed by rice paddies and sometimes fields of corn or beans or sugarcane. Here there is no space for cultivation. The homes are too close to each other, elbowing each other for space. They’re folded in on themselves, like a group of self-conscious friends who don’t know anyone else at the party. But their number and proximity are too conspicuous, and they fail to blend into the background, as wallflowers do. Instead they are wildflowers, blanketeting the undulating hills as thick as daisies. Except they do not look you in the eye like daisies. No. They keep their heads down, avoiding eye contact as you hurtle past.

Why We Laugh

Whenever we recall Sai Mung’s arrest, it is necessarily with a certain amount of humor. Laughter makes the tenuous bearable. It’s thermal underwear against the icy rasps of fear that I’ve learned will not leave us alone here. Even during the miserably humid nights of the rainy season it loiters just beyond the office gate. Our constant barrage of chuckles, shortles, cackles and hoots issuing from within the house holds it at bay, we know, and so we are generous with them. We offer them up the way Ko Yel leaves food and drink on the steps of the spirit house nestled in the corner of the yard. We know that when we are silent we open the gate. Then it comes in and wreaks havoc. Aung Char Moe howls in his sleep and kicks Aye Min without ever waking up. So we laugh as much as possible, until the unknown seems knowable, until arrest or repatriation, or the loss of friends, or the possibility of remaining there forever, seems too absurd. Bo Kyi said: "Burmese people, we are always laughing. Laughing to stay sane. We are always suffering, and always laughing."

Matt Pieknik
Chiang Mai, Thailand
A Love Letter to My Family

Looking into the sky from Machu Picchu made me look outside of what we are so used to looking at: human creation. So used to looking at things that doesn't have much significance; material things. I'm beyond fortunate that I have a family that I can seek guidance and love from. Lillie and I decided to fast from 12 AM of the 31st until 12AM of the 1st.

We wanted to go to Machu Picchu with a clear mind and we hoped to increase our appreciation toward what we have in this new year and test our discipline. We wanted to go on the 1st of January, but the agent that we booked our trip with came knocking on our hostel door saying there is no space for the 1st so we have to go today, the 31st. So we got up, in a bad mood because we had plans to go to the market. But we tried to understand it as some sort of calling.

When you get there, you understand why the Spanish Conquistadors never found it. It was raining when we got there, but when we were on top the sun started showing and we could see the snow-capped mountains around Machu Picchu. The flag of the Inca, color of the Rainbow, stands at the highest point. As expected, Machu Picchu was spiritual. The combination of the incredible ruins and the overwhelming beauty of the mountains. No words, just feelings.

Mario Anton
Quito, Ecuador
Upon the summit of the long Incan Trail hike, the valley of Machu Picchu awaits all visitors

Phil Kotzan, Quito, Ecuador
El Metro

Yo bajo corriendo por las escaleras
Caigo en un río de gente en nudos
Es un mundo cortés, mas sin saludos
Somos anchoas en lata, conservas

Hay estudiantes y familias enteras
Luchando por los asientos desnudos
Un carrete callado, todos mudos
Una Guerra en serio, no de letras

Todos asumen posturas muertas
Y no hay sonido más que el susurro
Sobre el campo de cadaveres yertas

Cual es mi destino, no estoy tan seguro
Dejo que abran y cierren las puertas
Hasta que llegue un día, el futuro

Emily Greenman
Santiago, Chile
Añ in Sénégal

One of my favorite times of the day is lunchtime because everyone eats together out of a great big metal bowl. Often there are visitors who stop in and are encouraged to sit down (out of politeness) to have a few bites of yassa or cheb or jeen. A lime is passed around to squirt in everyone’s eating area inside the grand bowl. As I take a bite slowly I am encouraged by my host mother, yow, leekal waay. We look into the bowl as we eat, men eating with large spoons and women eating with their hands, quickly and tenderly squishing the food in the right hand and rolling it to the tip of their fingertips and finally pushing it into their mouths, all in one quick moment. My mother kindly breaking off pieces of the "good stuff": meat, potatoes, carrots, yam, yummyn. During lunch everyone comes together and enjoys the food and one another’s company. Although it is so simple it is still my favorite time of the day in Senegal.

Alxhumdulilay.

Kristin Hirth
Dakar, Sénégal

Cooking with my host family
Kirsten Rosenkrands, Dakar Sénégal
El Camino

So we all finally made it to our destination of Copacabana, Bolivia, which is on Lake Titicaca, the most incredible body of water I have ever seen. First, Mario and I took an extremely blustery boat ride to Isla del Sol, which we were able to spend about twenty minutes on before it was time to head back so that we could make our bus to La Paz. Much to our surprise we were pretty much the only travelers on the bus. It was all local people—a drastic change from our travels throughout Lima and Cusco, where we were part of a colorful mingling of travelers from around the world. The view as we traveled yet higher into the mountains was unbelievable. We had a birds-eye view of the lake, which seemed to be around every corner. The sun was ready to set, and the lake was like texturized glass. The water was given intricate form by cookie-cutter scraps of shoreline.

Eventually, the indescribable reddish-pink color started to seep through the space between the mountain range silhouette and the clouds after the rain. Soon we laid eyes on something that made my heart skip a beat—the Bolivian mountain ranges covered in snow, with faces of black rock poking through. And all the while the whole bus quietly dozing as we sat there, absolutely stunned by the landscape in which these locals live their daily lives.

Before nightfall we stopped in a pueblo where we had to cross some straits in order to get to La Paz. We all climbed into a little wooden boat that I swear was going to be eaten by the enormous waves. But we swayed over each one successfully and made it to the other side where we awaited the bus, on its way over on a platform barge. How that didn’t tip over, I do not know.

Back on the bus we headed in the darkness toward a glowing sprawl of city lights. We were graced with a lightning display in the distance and when we arrived in La Paz at about 10 PM, we got off on a foreign intersection in the pouring rain. Finally we caught a cab and found a hotel. We slept like rocks and are now about to begin our explorations.

Lillie Wolff
Quito, Ecuador
En route to Otavalo, travelers become overtaken by the amount of scenic overlooks along the ragged roadways through the mountains

Phil Kotzan, Quito, Ecuador
At the Health Project for Tribal People Day Care
Ali Bakerman, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Bare feet grip the tree far above our heads. Appee, the one who doesn’t want to come down, climbs higher and higher. Appee, the Lahu word meaning "big", is the nickname of this tiny girl, named as if to spite her tiny body and round belly. Just as her luminous smile, enormous laugh, and bold stories contradict her stature. She does not tower.

She climbs, gentle foot, the branches bowing only slightly under her light weight. I fear more that she will take flight than fall to the earth.

Appee: a bird, hollow bones and awkward wings.

Appee knows she can’t go home, she cannot go to Bangkok, cannot leave here, the most tender garden-enclosed shelter. She will fail English class.

She will not come to America, though she grasps me so tightly around the waist, grabs my hand, pulls me to her, asking me to carry her away up in an airplane giant rumblers that shake the wooden house each day, stopping lunchtime prayer, stealing the breath of a laugh in the afternoon, almost making the delicate flowers, coconuts, tamarinds, and their tree-perched pickers fall to the earth. Appee grips on tight with her toes, going higher and higher.

Nora Hauk
Chiang Mai, Thailand
Turkana

The Turkana region is one of the most desolate, underdeveloped and ignored places anywhere in Kenya, or the world, for that matter. Located in the northwest of Kenya, bordered by Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia, Turkana is isolated physically and psychologically from the rest of Kenya; indeed, many residents of Turkana claim Kenya only really starts after one exits the Turkana region. Described as semi-arid by those who do not have to live there, the climatic conditions of Turkana can best be described as difficult; searing heat during the day gives way to intense cold at night, with no rain at all until the two or three months of the year when the entire region floods. The only animals I saw during my travels in Turkana were camels and goats, because they are the only large animals able to survive on the limited desert offerings of a few shrunken shrubs and low lying trees that dot the landscape.

Internationally, the only mention of the Turkana District is in connection with the Kakuma refugee camp, located about 120-km north of Lodwar along the road to Sudan. The fate of the over 200,000 refugees fleeing from the war torn nations surrounding Turkana is often discussed by news agencies from CNN to the New York Times. News of the "lost boys" from Sudan walking hundreds of miles to the Kakuma camp had mobilized aid and attention to the area on an unprecedented scale. However, due to the war in Iraq, donor support for the UN-run camp is drying up, causing the daily rations to be reduced to only seventy-five percent of what is required for long-term survival. The Kakuma refugee camp is just one more reminder of the harsh conditions of the area, and the harsh realities of the refugees fits all too well into the harsh realities of the area.

However, unlike the refugees, many of whom may be granted citizenship in a developed nation, or land in more fertile areas of Kenya, the permanent residents of Turkana have little hope of leaving the region. With no electricity outside of Kakuma and Lodwar, chronic food shortages, few formal educational facilities, and little to no contact with the outside world, the people of Lodwar are caught in a cycle of underdevelopment and poverty, where mere survival is the only realistic goal for many families. Along with their fellow pastoralists in Northeast Kenya, and the residents of Nairobi’s worst slums, the Turkana are among the most marginalized people of Kenya.

Yet, despite having every reason to be unwelcoming and bitter victims of modernization, the Turkana are the most friendly and accommodating group of people I have ever met. In every home I visited, the people were gracious beyond any expectation, offering the little they had with no qualms or conditions. Though I did not always want the "best" part of the goat (I’d tell you if I knew what it was), I could not have asked for a better reception than the one given to me by the various Turkana I met during my travels.

For example, on the twenty sixth of December, Lokol, a Turkana native I was traveling with, and I arrived in Kakuma to visit a family Lokol had known before he moved away. Only a few minutes after we arrived I was amazed to be offered a full meal of rice, pasta, and large chunks of goat meat, the most nourishing food available in the region. Though I felt guilty comparing my meal to that of my hosts, who ate only corn meal with a much smaller piece of meat, I was overwhelmed by the generosity of the family. With no warning
whatsover, they were willing to offer the best of everything they had, with no expectations from us other than the same hospitality if they were ever in need.

This type of selfless gesture was repeated time after time, whether it was a meal if hungry, tea if thirsty, a place to sleep if it was late, or just a conversation if we needed none of those things. Reciprocating, we offered a ride to anyone and everyone who was headed in our direction; at one point we squeezed fifteen people into Lokol’s modified Land Rover for the two-hour drive from Kakuma to Lodwar.

Having simple conversations in our mutually weak Kiswahili, eating simple fare, sleeping in village huts or in empty churches, and experiencing a feeling of acceptance and unmitigated welcome from everyone I met during my time in Turkana, these joys are utterly indescribable. The cliché that one can be poor in material goods but rich in spirit and camaraderie certainly holds true for the Turkana. Although these people are forever on the brink of starvation and catastrophe, I can think of few happier times in my life than those spent traveling among the Turkana and sharing with them whatever came that day.

Will Dobbie
Nairobi, Kenya

Children from the Turkana region on Christmas Day
Will Dobbie, Nairobi, Kenya
The Feeling of Hope

It was a typical beautiful day in Madrid, Spain that September morning when I woke up. The white clouds dotted the forever clear blue sky and the temperature was only slightly below 80 degrees. I quickly got ready and left the apartment of my madre in order to start my one-hour venture to La Universidad de Nebrija, where I took all of my college courses. Upon arriving with the rest of the American and other foreign-study students, we entered our Cultura de España class and took a seat. To our surprise, the dean of students entered the room and asked to speak to the American students only. We left the room and huddled around the dean. She went on to ask us how we were all coping, being so far from home on such a tragic day for all Americans. The date was September 11, 2002.

Leading up to that day, the Spanish newspapers El Mundo, El Pais and ABC had pictures of the Twin Towers, victims, and President Bush plastered all over them. I was surprised to discover that the event that had shattered so many lives in America was so deeply felt all the way across the Atlantic. When talking to the dean, she also reiterated the letter we had received a couple of weeks earlier telling us that as Americans we may be in danger of targeted terrorist attacks and should avoid public places if at all possible. This was something I didn’t want to do, as being an American is something I am proud of. After school Drew, also on the study abroad program, told me that we needed to go to La Plaza de Colon, a central location in Madrid where the governmental buildings are located.

The sight that awaited us at the plaza was a breathtaking one for me. I felt the stinging of tears in my eyes as I looked up at the beautiful red, white and blue flag flying in the sky. The Spanish government had decided to show their support for the United States by waving a large American flag right next to their own Spanish flag. In addition to the American flag, there was a huge banner, which anybody could sign showing their sorrow for the many victims of the tragic event. When I wrote my name down, I had noticed that messages in all languages were written on the paper, something I thought was amazing. People of all different races, religions, creeds and genders were coming to the plaza to sign their names on the banner.

I would not classify September 11, 2002, as a day filled with a feeling of loss. Rather, I was overcome with the sensation of newfound hope seeing how a different country and different peoples were standing together to support the United States of America. I was overwhelmed with my pride as an American, especially as a young American studying abroad.

Jacqueline McClellan
Madrid, Spain
Architecture in Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Bruges and Brussels, Belgium

Molly Danner, Madrid, Spain
The Refugee Camp

On the Thailand program, all students participate in experiential education, such as field visits to a variety of non-profit organizations. At the end of the program students can choose one of these organizations to work as an intern for their Integrative Cultural Research Project. The following piece describes a field visit to a Burmese refugee camp near the northern border of Thailand, led by one of the professors, Dr. Christina Fink. She is an activist for Burmese human rights and has lived in Thailand for several years.

I felt the saddest part of this camp is that these people have nowhere else to go. Most were farmers in Burma and that is the only type of work they know. Yet the Burmese government charges a rice tax on all farmers. This means every year they are forced to sell a certain amount of rice to the government at a VERY low cost. If the farmer has a bad crop and cannot pay the tax, he must buy the rice from the market at a high price. This causes many farmers to go into debt and begin to starve because they don’t have enough rice for their families. Other people have fled because they are branded as anti-government and therefore risk being put in prison for a trivial reason for years and years. Christina told us that most of the adults basically sit around in idleness at the camp; they cannot farm and they have nowhere to go. They also cannot pass on their valuable farming knowledge to their children, which is a big loss too. I saw many of these adults just sitting around, basically trapped. They have been forced to trade independence for security and food. Such a sad situation...and one that unfortunately exists in so many parts of the world.

That afternoon we visited the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP). I thought this was one of the most sad and informative visits we did. All of the people we met had spent from 5-15 years in Burmese prisons. One young man had just escaped one month ago after having spent 10 years in prison since 9th grade! The reason many went to prison is because they participated in a non-violent protest against the government in 1988. Basically, the protest was made up of university students, and a majority of them are still in prison today or have been killed because they dared to criticize the government. Imagine, the prime of your life wasted in jail because of one small action. The people we met could speak English well and told us about some of the horrible experiences they had in prison. Political prisoners are treated much worse than actual criminals.

The psychological torture was even worse than the physical torture. One former prisoner described one incident where some prisoners were told they were to be released after having been in prison for around 10 years and they even led them to the gate, then the officials told them they had changed their minds. Mind games like this were used to torture the prisoners and keep them submissive. They told many more stories that continued to shock and sadden me. One man told of how he was released after five years and became a private teacher, but the government was suspicious of him. So they "searched" his house and found a supposedly anti-government poem. He had not written
it and told them so. They told him if he did not admit to writing it than they would have to arrest his father because he was the only other person living there. So this man was forced to admit to something he'd never done and go back to prison again. Also, some prisoners can't even think about escaping because they know that the military will arrest their families until they come back.

I could go on and on, but I think that you get the point. After we left I felt so--what is the word- unreal, horrified. I've heard these types of stories before, but never met people who experienced them first hand. The men have all these pictures of their friends who are still in prison or are dead. Currently they are stuck within the house we were at. They cannot leave because they risk being arrested by the Thai government and sent back to Burma where prison or death awaits. It is an odd feeling leaving such a place, knowing how much I take my freedom for granted when these people live such uncertain, trapped lives. I will always remember one man saying, "This is our life, we have to live it," when he was talking about ways that he and others used to stay mentally strong in the prison. As we were leaving someone asked what we could do to help, and one man said, please tell people in your country, because the more people aware of our situation, the better.

Michelle Harburg
Chiang Mai, Thailand

School for Burmese Refugee Children
Michelle Harburg. Chiang Mai, Thailand
Por Autobús

You should immediately imagine rides of great complexity. Constricted thought from too closely compacted crowds. Rough rides from ridiculously ragged roadways. Outdated transportation so improperly controlled and appreciated. You will notice that Ecuadorian bus riding causes the clashing of cultures, the demonstration of impoverished life and the pondering of realities.

The first thing you’ll notice on your ride is the natural resplendence that comes free with each ride. For this 30-cent ride, Ecuador offers its Andean peaks that force the passageways to permeate these rough, rocky difficulties. The buses so easily slide down these cliff edged roadways, guardrails non-existent. The brownish green forestry and brush that decorate the mountainsides throw back to the sun its radiance, providing a yellow tinted blinding.

Whose Reality?
Pay closer attention and look to the seat on your left. That lady with the basket of fresh toasted corn most likely earns less than a hundred dollars a month. Smile back at her. Her compassionate glance is honest and sincere. She would never demand more than the respect you’ve just given. A life of survival in her economic situation has been enough gratification in her life to live on, knowing the first day of giving up means her three children will be begging for change on the streets again.

Whose Reality?
And those kids sitting a few rows in front of you, maybe seven and nine years of age, unable to attend school. Did you stop to think that this is their career, already begun at these young ages? These children are third-world chocolate, newspaper, or gum pushers yearning for any amount of change offered their way. They have no sympathy for themselves, why should you? This is daily life, to help support a family all off working, no time to think about the blessing of an education.

Whose Reality?
And then there is you. Examine your existence in this setting you know education you know mesquite steak dinners you know Bill Gates much closer than most of those around you. Ecuadorians use this bussing as a means of accessing physical locations. I’m asking you to use it as a means of accessing destinations within each passenger’s mind. Reflect upon from where you come from and relate it to the life you now witness. Which is reality? Whose reality?

Philly Kotzan
Quito, Ecuador
A woman selling necklaces and purses along the lakeside of Atitlan in Guatemala

Carla Kaiser, San Jose, Costa Rica
Rice at harvest time is beautiful. It turns slightly yellow in the shoots and the wad of grain, brown in its chaff, hangs heavily, drooping towards the mud. Whole valleys in Thailand begin to change color together. Green and yellow as far as you can see, broken periodically by resting huts, berms, or solitary trees that seem to be wading through their front lawns.

I’ve always seen pictures of people out working in rice paddies with sun hats on, wading through a field of green, and today, that was me. Today I harvested rice. I went out to the fields about nine with my host mom and brother wearing rubber paddy shoes with studded soles for the mud, long pants and shirt and a black bucket hat. My mom handed me a pair of white cotton work gloves and a small, hand-held sickle. She had a big grin on her face as if amused at the farang going off to work in the fields, about to make a fool of himself.

We set out and walked through the town, past large beautiful wooden houses with whole tree trunks as posts alongside smaller, less glamorous wooden constructions. We passed a few cattle—brahmans—white-hided with odd sagging fins of skin under their necks and large black eyes that peered about like black marbles on a cream colored tablecloth—the kind of cattle that look like they’re starving no matter how much you feed them. Their pelvises just stick out funny—bony boxes attached to long swinging limp tails.

We arrived at the fields and set out along a wide berm between paddies that had a narrow dirt track in the middle of it. We walked to a paddy far into the complex of rice, berms, and irrigation canals where we found a group of men and women already working, taking the rice with their sickles and laying it behind them at each step in small bundles. They all stopped their work as we approached, both to greet my mom and to check out the farang in his white clothes and black bucket hat coming out to work. Lots of smiles and laughter and hellos.

It took a while for my mom to teach me the proper technique of gathering each bunch of stalks with my sickle and bringing it to my left hand to hold, then pulling the serrated blade back through the stalks until the top half of the bunch, full of sagging rows of white rice in its chaff came off and rested free in my left hand. She showed me how to use my sickle to open two bunches of cut stalks jutting from the ground behind me to create a stand to set my new bundle in, keeping the grains from touching the ground. She had to stop me several times to correct my technique, using gestures and a lot of Thai I couldn’t understand. She kept pointing to her finger and then drawing another finger across it and shaking her head. I finally got it down to where I didn’t fear losing my pinky, and we began working westward through the field, leaving rows of bundled rice behind us, lying at an angle between the clumps of cut stalks rising from the mud. I worked in between my mother and an older man to my left, both of whom had obviously done this all their life. The scritch-scritch of their sickles nearly double-timed mine as we waded, stooped over through the rice.

Around noon or so, as the sun was really starting to cook, we walked to a resting hut to eat lunch. It was a small bamboo structure with a split bamboo floor and a roof made of flat tiles. It reminded me of Appalachian Trail shelters but was more open to the breeze. We ate sticky rice, a spicy frog salsa, snakehead fish
soup, and some other shared dishes that one of the women had brought out to the field for everyone to eat. I ate, lingering on the intense flavors, and then passed out on the floor for half an hour, back flat on the bamboo. It was killing me after a whole morning spent bent over working with my hands.

The afternoon went fairly quickly, but I couldn’t conceal my exhaustion, or the odd way I had to stand up from working. The knots that had formed in my back eroded my posture and I winced as I worked. We got to the last set of paddies to cut and the workers all took some green pickled leaves that someone had brought, wrapped them around some salt, and stuffed them in the corner of their mouths. There was more looking at me and joking with each other, which I gathered was their doubt that I’d like what they were sucking on. Wanting to prove that I could hang with these hilarious sickle-laden villagers, but wondering what exactly those leaves would do to me, I convinced the old man I’d worked next to before that I’d try it. He took a leaf, put a wad of rocky salt in the middle and folded it up. I put it in the corner of my mouth like a wad of chew and sucked a little. It tasted like I had taken five green olives, wrapped them in grape leaves and tucked them in my cheek. It wasn’t all that bad and reminded me of my grandfather for some reason, so I smiled at the grinning villagers, let a little juice slip down from my lip, and chewed on. They were all impressed, I think, as I got several thumbs up before we set ourselves upon the last paddy of the day, the sun approaching the mountains at the western rim of the yellowing valley.

Jonas Traxler-Ballew
Chiang Mai, Thailand

U Bein’s Bridge in Amarapura, Burma
Matt Pieknik, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Lara Roney lights a candle in memory of her loved ones in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris.

Lara Roney, Rome, Italy
"She felt that those who prepare for all the emergencies of life beforehand may equip themselves at the expense of joy."

A quote from *Howard’s End*, an excellent book that I’ve been reading the past few days. How nice it is to get back to reading for pleasure. Never have time for it at K College! As is evident from the preceding quote, it is a book about a thoughtful and good young woman. I realize that so much of my ideal for myself has come through reading books like these: the *Anne of Green Gables* series, *Little Women*, *Emma*, Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, etc, have given me a mental picture of a sensible, honest, loving, intelligent, good-natured, self-reliant woman whom I’ve always wanted to emulate. This book’s main character, Margaret, is similar, with an added element which is not exactly impulsiveness, but an embracing of unknowns and enjoyment of the present in order to get the most out of life that comes through in the quotes above. I think I was attracted to this aspect of her character because of my present circumstances: this experience in Rome – coming here in the first place, and daily life here – has challenged me to become less of a planner and more adventurous than I ever thought possible, and I’ve only been here a month!

Anyway, today was a great day. Caught the bus to school and arrived about 30 seconds before class started—but the new me doesn’t worry about being late for class! I had lunch at the café near school today, and felt rather proud of myself after very expertly ordering a "cappuccino é tramezzino" and eating it by myself there. A tramezzino is a triangular sandwich on white bread with no crust. They are more like fancy little British finger sandwiches, in contrast to the panino, which is a sandwich on a roll. I got one that had mozzarella and mushrooms (funghi). She asked, "calda?" and I said "sí, per favore" and she toasted it up for me. It was GOOD. The cappuccino too.

Home for awhile between classes, then went back to school with Katie, got there around 4:30 and decided to spend the half hour before la classe d’Italiano reading in the park instead of the closet-sized AUR library. It was SO NICE. Weather today was awesome: brisk, cool, fall feeling in the air—my favorite. Partly sunny with big, puffy cumulus clouds and breezy. Fall is coming! Yippee!! I sat on a bench in the park and loved it with children playing behind me and a fountain to my left and Italy all around. Mmm, life. After class I came home and Lara, Katie and I invited Katie C. over for a dinner of spaghetti with chicken, zucchini, and onions. Not bad. We also went down the street for some lovely gelato for dessert. I did my homework and now I’m heading for bed. It was really a fairly normal but for some reason very satisfying day. Tomorrow we’ll wake up and do it all over again!

Ciao,

**Becky Warner**

Rome, Italy
I smelled it. I smelled it as soon as I stepped off the train from Luton into St. Pancras Station. The scent like a museum filled with people or a clean wool sock pressed against my nose. I breathed in and smiled and let it follow me along busy streets and walkways spanning the river. It enveloped me like pea soup fog that curls around both native and traveler like crowds of comfort food spilled out of the overturned bowl on top of St. Paul’s. It smelled like a crisp ten-pound note fresh from a cash machine. It smelled like Earl Grey tea and Starbuck’s coffee. Like curry, pizza, shepherd’s pie, fish & chips. Like cigars, pipes, cigarettes. It smelled like the bread burnt to a black stone in a bakery in 1666. Like little curls of smoke rising out of a bullet hole in Bosie’s uncle’s body in Euston Station and like the uncountable dead of invasions, plagues and war, both civil and world. Like the beaches of Jamaica, the highlands of Scotland, the incense of India, the tears of Africa.
It smelled like the breath of someone saying "wicked" or "bollocks" or "lift" or "Tube."
Like the yellowed pages of Dickens whose print has turned brown.
Like Shakespeare’s ink or Beckham’s sweat.
Like the perfume of Henry VIII’s beheaded wives.
It smelled like Doc Martens and Roman sandals.
Like businessmen in grey pinstripe suits riding their bikes along the Thames.
And as my week in London drew to a close and the recirculated scent of an airplane was about to tickle my nostrils,
I noticed a new smell.
It smells like my wet H&M peacoat pressed between my backpack and my body as I cross Tower Bridge.

Carol Flanigan
Bonn, Germany

An Irish church in the December chill
Tessa Betts, Dublin, Ireland
Accustomed

It’s amazing what you can get used to, given enough time. Like taxis. It only took a few weeks, and we stopped being surprised by the ancient Fiats and started being surprised if we rode in anything newer than an ’87. Like when my parents visited, and in the taxi to their hotel, my door flew open as we raced across the highway, and I didn’t even notice--until Mom, appalled, managed to point it out while crushing the bones in my hand. Things like that I learned to expect.

Even the police, the soldiers, you got used to. The riot police lining the streets with shields and bats and machine guns. It surprised me that I ignored it and the new students still were uneasy. We got down from the bus one morning and a girl beside me, still a few weeks new to the city, looked at the troop trucks and phalanxes of soldiers and barking dogs, and asked, "What’s going on?"

"It’s Tuesday," I shrugged, walking on, around the soldiers and through their ranks, trying to cross the street.

She followed, still uneasy, hesitating before dodging behind me through the honking cars, "What does that mean?"

"They always protest on Tuesdays," I said, trying not to be annoyed. Things like that you should know. Things like that you get used to, and you don’t like to be reminded that this is your new reality. You live with it. I never saw a lot of other things coming. The first time I saw a tiny kitten, no larger than my palm, struggling alone and near death on the sidewalk, I almost wept in fury. And I stood over it, not knowing what to do or how to help. By the time my parents came in April, I didn’t notice anymore. Didn’t even see the beggars and strays and misery. Had gotten accustomed. When we were leaving the Pyramids, I sat in the back seat, arguing with the taxi driver, with my dad in the front and Mom beside me. She said, "Tell him to be careful."

I was angry at the driver, at the weather, at the guards at the Pyramids, angry my parents would be leaving in a few days and I had to remain, alone. Angry at everything except them. I snapped, "Why?"

Mom pointed out her window, near the tire, and I saw her, the little girl beside our taxi, with eyes the same green as the insides of cucumbers, maybe two years old. Begging. I hadn’t seen her, had walked past her and her mother, who held an infant. She scared me, that little girl, who watched me so seriously with her impossibly green eyes. We drove away, as I told the driver to be careful and he laughed and told me how good my Arabic was. Mom still talks about that little girl.

People ask me if I was scared there, with what was happening in the world, and I usually laugh and say, "Never." But there was once, when I was terrified, because I had walked past a child in need and I had not seen her. If my parents hadn’t been there, that little girl would never have existed to me. She would have disappeared. And it scares me to think what I overlooked, what those months in the city meant. What they took. What I became accustomed to.

Megan Kraushaar
Cairo, Egypt
Bedouin horserider near the Great Pyramids at Giza
Megan Kraushaar
Cairo, Egypt

Communing with a camel in the Black and White Deserts, near Bahriyyq, Egypt
Megan Kraushaar
Cairo, Egypt
Joy

There is much to be said
for being a tourist
for adventurous treks through the Outback
views of Uluru as a foreground to the sunset.
Pictures can be snapped and sent home—
a shot in front of the Sydney Opera House
another with a kangaroo.
They are proof of all the sights seen
full-color evidence of a rare experience.

But I would rather recall
the Australian woman who asked me
directions from the train station.

Me, with my American passport
and only a few months experience
with public transportation—I
could direct people about the town,
could show them how to navigate
the train north to Sydney.
I remember the pleasure
of being approached with that question,
and being able to answer
and because I didn’t stand out.
I took pride in being invisible.

I saw amazing sights,
but found no greater joy
than in the monotonous,
in train schedules and grocery stores,
in writing harbour and humour and behaviour.

What it all comes down to
is watching my family enter
the international terminal and fly back to the states
after a visit. I boarded the train south,
sat in familiar ugly green seats,
watched the same towns, the same
cliffs along the coastline, switched
trains in Thirroul, listened
to Grinspoon and Motor Ace on my headphones
and felt like I was almost home.

Sara Vasilenko
Wollongong, Australia

Storefronts in Nimbin, New South Wales, Australia
Jaime Pulling, Wollongong, Australia
Taken at Four Mile Beach in Port Douglas, Queensland, Australia, overlooking the Coral Sea

Bobby Rohrkemper, Perth, Australia
Contributors

**Mario R. Anton** is a political science major. He studied in Quito, Ecuador for his whole junior year. Mario is originally from Japan and he hopes to travel and study more in order to learn about the injustices facing the world.

**Ali Bakerman** is an art and math double major who spent six months of her junior year in Chiang Mai, Thailand. While abroad, her most powerful experiences included the people she met while working at a day care center for hill tribe children and traveling though Burma.

**Tessa Betts** is an English major and theater arts minor. She spent nine months in Dublin being inspired by the beautiful island and its literary legacy.

**Molly Danner** is a political science major and economics minor who studied in Madrid, Spain for three months. During her time abroad, she traveled to various countries in Western Europe.

**Will Dobbie** is an economics major who traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, for his study abroad and returned to Kenya two months later to complete research for his Senior Individualized Project. He describes his experiences in Kenya as among the most rewarding and challenging of his life, and would like to return to Africa in the near future to pursue a career in the economics of developing countries.

**Carol Flannigan** is a senior writing major and history minor. During her six months in Bonn, Germany, she traveled to London twice, and she looks forward to returning to Europe after graduation.

**Emily Greenman**, an art history and Spanish major, had a year long love-hate affair with Santiago, Chile. She is looking forward to returning to Chile and working on a public sculpture project in Central Park, New York after graduation. Her life was forever stretched and changed by that long, narrow strip of land.

**Michelle Harburg** is an Anthropology/Sociology major with a minor in Political Science. She studied abroad in Chiang Mai, Thailand for 6 months. Being in Thailand increased her love for Asia and she hopes to return soon. Her tentative post-graduation plans include teaching English in South Korea in the fall of 2004.

**Nora Hauk** is a theater arts major who studied sustainable development in Chiang Mai, Thailand. For her ICRP, she lived and worked at the New Life Center, a house for hilltribe women at high risk of exploitation in the sex trade. Next year she will work with middle school girls again, this time in South Korea, teaching English on a Fulbright.

**Kristin Hirth** is an international and area studies major focusing in Africa, and she is minoring in anthropology. Her experience in Senegal made her aware of the joys and struggles that differ from people in the U.S. and was introduced to an amazing and interesting culture. She is still unsure of what her plans are for next year.

**Carla Kaiser** is a sociology major, art history minor who spent six months in Costa Rica, dreamed about it for three, then returned to do her SIP. She plans on returning to her second home and family before joining the Lutheran Volunteer Corps.

**Phil Kotzan** is a biology major who went to Quito, Ecuador on the ecology program. His time in the Amazon rainforest, Machu Picchu and the Galapagos Islands created a permanent determination to preserve our wild lands. He will also apply the knowledge he learned about alternative medicines to his future career as a chiropractor.

**Megan Kraushaar** is a political science major, computer science minor, and has a concentration in international and area studies in the Middle East and North Africa, and yet somehow managed to spend ten months in Cairo, Egypt. She recently completed her SIP, somewhat inspired by study abroad, on Islamic political groups and their use of political violence in Egypt.

**Jacqueline McClellan** is a chemistry major who studied abroad in Madrid, Spain. She plans on attending medical school next year. Jacqueline would like to implement what she learned during her foreign study by practicing medicine abroad.

**Megan Mio** is a sociology/anthropology and religion double major. She studied in Oaxaca, Mexico for three months. It was an amazing trip.
Bridget Nolan is a psychology major/ sociology minor. She spent 6 months studying in Bonn, Germany and traveling and experiencing new countries throughout Europe. Next year, Bridget plans to move to Chicago with a few of her best friends.

Matthew Pieknik is a senior English major with a writing emphasis. He studied in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where he returned last summer to continue working in a Burmese human rights organization. His experiences within the Burmese refugee community became the basis of his creative nonfiction SIP.

Jaime Pulling is a health science major who traveled to the University of Wollongong in Australia. During her eight months abroad she traveled from the Great Barrier Reef to the Twelve Apostles and gained a true love for the culture and the country. After college, Jaime plans to pursue a career in nursing and enroll in the Peace Corps.

Lara Roney is an art history major with a Spanish minor and a concentration in classical studies. After studying abroad in Rome, she spent the next two months traveling and exploring Europe. She will never forget all the amazing people, places and experiences that made study abroad such an incredible part of her life.

Kirsten Rosenkrands is a biology major. She studied abroad in Dakar, Sénégal for six months, where the travel bug bit her. She is now planning to work in New Zealand next year.

Bobby Rohrkemper studied at the Curtin Institute of Technology in Perth, Western Australia--an ideal place for a student majoring in physics and computer science. While on study abroad he also enjoyed SCUBA diving at places such as the Ningaloo Reef in Exmouth, WA, and the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland. He has fond memories of traveling with friends and family over the vast and beautiful Australian landscape.

Jonas Traxler-Ballew is a biology major from Ann Arbor, Michigan. He had a great time studying in Southeast Asia and would like to return there in the near future.

Sara Vasilenko spent two semesters in Wollongong, Australia, an experience which became the basis of her creative nonfiction SIP. She is an English writing major and psychology minor who would love to live in Sydney someday.

Becky Warner is a computer science major and math minor whose study abroad in Rome, Italy was an awesome experience, awakening new passions for classics, art and culture. Her journal entry is her thoughts on one day out of her six months of unbelievable experiences.

Lillie Wolff is a human development and social relations major who studied abroad for nine months in Quito, Ecuador. Lillie fell in love with Ecuador and will surely travel there again. Next year she will likely be a volunteer community organizer or immigrant rights advocate for which she is eager to use her Spanish.
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Though we travel the world to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson
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Passage
2003–2004

images and reflections of study abroad