LETTERS FROM THE EDITORS

As I count down the days and weeks until it is time for me to leave my Carolina home in May, I have come to realize how the past four years at UNC and studying abroad have changed and shaped me as an individual. While I am sad to leave this wonderful place, I am also eager to see all that the world has in store and apply lessons I have learned in and out of the classroom over the years. I feel so fortunate to have attended a university that has provided me with the insight and resources to become a productive world citizen.

The vast pool of international opportunities that we as Carolina students have at our fingertips is staggering. UNC encourages us to look past our immediate surroundings and realize the global implications that our lives have, putting the “world” back into a world-class education. There are several outlets for students to have global opportunities without leaving campus—attend an event at the new Global Education Center, take a course with an international concentration, talk to an exchange student, join a campus group with an international focus—take a chance and get some international exposure; I promise you will not regret it.

Morgan Hargrove is a senior Journalism and Mass Communication major from Black Mountain, N.C. with a minor in Entrepreneurship. She can be contacted at rhargrov@email.unc.edu.

From the start, students are pushed to have a plan and a clear sense of direction. We choose majors, painstakingly plan our academic schedules, meet with advisors and worry about summer internships. Therefore, I’ll be the first to admit that I feel a little odd answering “What are you doing after graduation?” with “I haven’t decided yet.” However, I believe our moments of uncertainty often lead to more clarity and knowledge than if we simply follow the routes we are expected or encouraged to take. Studying abroad isn’t necessarily an obvious choice; it’s an adventure that’s loaded with uncertainties: new culture, new lifestyle, possibly a new language. Still, diving into that unfamiliar life can elucidate your own character and reveal interests that were previously hidden. For freshmen, I know it’s overwhelming to think about international travel when you just arrived somewhere that already feels foreign. Still, those experiences abroad are undoubtedly the most rewarding moments many of my peers and I experienced in our years “here.” For students who are on their way out, I wish you the best of luck in your next adventure – and it’s okay not to know just what that might be.

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When I was considering studying abroad, I wasn’t sure I could manage to live in a foreign country for even just a semester. But now as graduation approaches and the real world looms ahead, the thought of up and moving to some foreign land seems to run through my mind almost every day. That very thought never would have occurred to me if I hadn’t had the international experience I did. My semester in Italy led me to Passport, which in turn has led me to many more international experiences here on campus. Whether attending an event at the Global Ed Center or just living vicariously through all the story submissions we receive, I’ve managed to continue to broaden my international education even after returning to Chapel Hill. While I may or may not be able to satisfy my longing for more adventure, I hope the rest of you returning to Carolina will take advantage of the great international experiences this campus can provide.

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Confessions of a Lao Wai: A Tar Heel’s light-hearted impressions after a semester in Beijing, China

“By George Hodgin

Describing my experience as a Lao Wai, or foreigner, to those who haven’t braved a trip to China is virtually impossible because of the preconceived ideas many Americans have about the large nation. Stereotypically, after nearly four months of experiencing the Chinese culture and language firsthand, I should feel more independent and well-rounded. I should tend not to think single-mindedly anymore; instead, I might act as a citizen of the world. I should appreciate that globalization is now the driving force behind many phenomena of the human realm. People of the world are all the same; we all love to hug and laugh and cry, etc.

But let’s be honest: did living in China really highlight these global truths? Am I really a ‘changed’ person? I’m not sure. However, you try eating authentic Chinese food for four months and see if it changes you. You’ll probably weigh less and have an intimate relationship with the anti-diarrhea drug Cipro. Instead of describing the commonly accepted effects of overseas study, I have chosen to convey a few anecdotes that help to define my fantastic experience in China. Personal experiences in China differ vastly, but mine taught me that despite becoming an economic powerhouse, China continues to wrestle with political, business and social issues every day.

The sheer volume of recently published material in the West, hailing China as the new Rome, leaves me skeptically wondering, “Have any of these reporters actually been to China?” Some of the true China Hands, which I absolutely am not, have gotten it right by carefully pointing out that the stability of the world’s most populous nation is delicate. Many forces stand in the path of its successful rise to intergalactic dominance. (For an example, think 1989. Hint: starts with “T” and rhymes with “cinnamon.”) In other words, some of the published material is so poor that it would have a hard time doubling as a Charmin double-ply substitute.

Because I had been overdosing on China articles and documentaries prior to my semester abroad, I was all hyped up on the China Kool-Aid. I understood I was going to visit a country experimenting with “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” but the lack of transparency in Beijing shocked me. After my friend’s Chinese roommate walked in the room looking like he just found out the truth about Santa Claus, my friend inquired as to why he looked so flustered. The roommate explained he had seen some of our class notes and had a deep conversation with a foreigner, during which he asked, “What happened in 1989 at Tiananmen Square?” Uhh, come again?! Better ask your dad about that one because I’d actually like to keep the Visa in my passport by avoiding the ‘pollution’ of Chinese minds. That certainly wasn’t the only instance that caused me to curse under my breath and do a double-take.

Have you ever seen someone fall into an uncovered manhole? I have. The municipal authorities in Beijing (and in other Chinese cities I visited) apparently did not see the need to replace the covers on numerous manholes, even those on unlit streets. Some might find guilty pleasure in watching one of their professors take an
Confessions of a Lao Wai: A Tar Heel’s light-hearted impressions after a semester in Beijing, China

“Some might find guilty pleasure in watching one of their professors take an unwanted dip into the sewer system late one evening, but I promise it wasn’t like watching a Three Stooges sketch. To top it off, the professor encouraged us to alert the local authorities that the street was unsafe. Oh, and while you’re down there at the police station, please also inform them that people are selling bootleg DVDs, medicine, technology and clothes on every street corner. Unless you plan on doling out a hefty bribe, alerting the local authorities in China is about as effective as arresting a homeless guy on Franklin Street for loitering—it just doesn’t work.

Do you know what else doesn’t work in China? Having more than one kid! In order to postpone the effects of China’s ticking population bomb, Mao’s gift that keeps on giving, the Chinese government initiated arguably the largest social experiment ever. One of my professors made the analogy that China’s one-child policy is now similar to America’s tax code: it’s full of exemptions and fine print. Although the policy is no longer as draconian as it originally was, the concept of asking the government’s permission to have a child still astonishes me. During the days of extreme communism and the Danwei (work unit), officials monitored menstrual cycles in the workplace to ensure women adhered to the policy. Can you imagine if your right to reproduce rested ultimately with President Bush? Shhh...don’t want to give anyone ideas for an addendum to the Patriot Act.

I confess my tone is cynical and might mislead the reader to believe I did not enjoy my semester in China. On the contrary, I could not be more thankful for the opportunity I had to study in Beijing and experience such a fascinating and different nation. My four months abroad certainly will be some of my most memorable times as a college student, and I feel truly blessed to have had the incredible experience. I simply want to ensure that people do not equate China’s historically unparalleled about-face with the birth of an unconquerable economic titan...yet. The nation must still confront many social and political challenges if it desires to continue its rise to become an economic, social and political leader.

George Hodgin is a junior Economics major from Charlotte, N.C. He studied abroad through CET Chinese Studies, in Beijing, China, a trip paid for by the Morehead-Cain Foundation.
My mom was coming to visit me in Madrid. I’d been there six weeks, and she was wondering what I’d been up to. She also needed a vacation — desperately. I began planning early for her visit. I wanted everything to be perfect.

I decided to go to my favorite spot to draft the game plan. It took me the usual 15 minutes to get out the door because my host mom, my señora, always gave grand send-offs. First, she would inspect me head to toe. I would blush while she adoringly patted my hair, cheeks, shoulders and palms. Next came a series of hugs. Then, kisses followed by hugs again.

Parting ritual completed, I closed the door behind me (quietly, because my señora hated the clicking sound that doors make when you don’t turn the handle to close them). I took the stairs, all 11 flights, and reached the bottom slightly breathless.

At the edge of the street, I waited for the chirping noises. Chirping means “cross the street.” I crossed, dodged a few catcalls and entered the park.

The first section of the park in El Carmen, the neighborhood I stayed in, was not much to look at. Old men played croquet in top hats, a club of female runners stretched, and dogs urinated on signs that read “No Perros.” The dogs in Spain always impressed me; almost none wore leashes. Dogs stuck to their owners, who, in return, chatted with their dogs as if they were human.

I reached my favorite part of the park. The sun still had a few more hours before setting, and the water in the fountain was still jumping. Surrounding me were elderly couples pushing their grandchildren in strollers. To me, everyone looked overdressed for the park. The men carried canes, and the women wore stockings.

I bent my head to focus on my task. What did my mom need to see? The royal palace, the main plaza (Plaza Mayor), the Sunday morning flea market (el rastro), a bullfight, Madrid’s Central Park (Retiro), flamenco and the three famous museums: El Prado, La Reina Sofia and El Thyssen.

Impossible. Four days would never suffice, so I tried to pick only the necessities. What about Madrid defined my experience there?

I knew the answer immediately: lazy afternoons in the park.

That was the beauty of studying abroad. I had more time, which meant time to do everything and then time to do nothing. I had time just to sit around in the park.

Tourists tend to take the whirlwind tour: they read the guidebook, hit the most famous sites, try a new restaurant each night and head home with a sense of everything they didn’t have time for.

The first night, they find a restaurant that is good enough to return to. They would like to come back, but they won’t because they have only five or six nights, which means they can try only five or six restaurants.

The next day they pass enticing shop windows as they hustle to some other attraction. They make a mental note to return one day and check those out.

During the cab ride back to the airport, they pass a quaint park with a fountain and beds of flowers. There are a bunch of old people pushing strollers and playing croquet. The visitors think that if they could have stayed longer, it would have been nice to spend an afternoon in the park.

But that’s the difference between visiting and studying abroad.

For my mom’s visit, I wanted to show her the touristy highlights, but I also wanted her to get a picture of what Spain had been for me.

I had seen the same people on the metro every morning on my way to my internship. The waiters in the coffee shop below the office knew my name. On weekends, I did those things that almost every local does but that no tourist does: slept in and ate in. I had settled down in Spain, at least for the time being.

However, when my mom arrived, I became a tourist again. We visited the famous monuments and tried food and wine in
different restaurants every afternoon and evening. We walked from site to site, stayed out late and accumulated a handful of ticket stubs.

Spain has so much to show off; we had a great time ogling at her various treasures. But we agreed that our best memory from the trip was when we stopped for a cup of coffee and sat along a busy sidewalk. We ignored our agenda and stayed there longer than it took to empty our cups. In Spain, restaurant servers do not rush customers along once they have finished eating or drinking. Instead, they almost expect them to linger.

So, we did. And while we sat there doing nothing at all, we got a real taste of Spain. We sat among Spaniards, instead of being herded through crowds of tourists. We watched people unwind after a day at work. We watched police officers take cigarette breaks. I pointed out that few people jog along the streets; instead, they head to the park to run. I pointed out that most people dress nicely, even for a trip to the grocery store. I showed her how only tourists wear flip-flops. We noticed that couples were not shy to smooch in public, that old couples held each other’s hands when they walked, and that strangers rarely acknowledged one another in passing.

Having time to notice details makes studying abroad unique. It gave me a perspective somewhere in between that of a resident and that of a tourist. I was more intrigued and curious than a resident but more knowing and patient than a tourist. Studying abroad gave me the chance to step away from the guided tour of Spain and get a behind-the-scenes look.

Morgan Siem is a junior Journalism major from Yardley, PA. She participated in the Boston University Summer Internship Program in Madrid, Spain.
A year ago, I was like most other Americans: the Middle East was not very high up on my list of places to visit. With headlines like “More attacks in Gaza” and “Suicide Bomber kills 12 in Jerusalem” gracing the front pages of newspapers and nightly television news, it’s understandable why people never actually make the trip to the area. If it weren’t for Birthright -- a program offering free (yes, really, totally, completely free) 10-day trips to Israel for young adults -- who knows how long I would have waited before booking a flight to Tel Aviv. There are plenty of other places I could more easily convince myself to travel to, but with Birthright, there are no more excuses for not going to Israel: just sign up, leave your preconceived notions at the terminal in Newark Airport, and go.

On day four of my 10-day adventure, my tour group was staying in a Bedouin tent in the Negev desert. At midnight, someone suggested a hike up to the top of a landmass that we could see in the distance. The sky was pitch-black, and although there was no way to determine how tall this mountain was or what was on it, 10 of us made the journey, sans flashlight. Only our adrenaline and the faint light from our digital camera display screens got us to the mountain’s peak. The steep hike up was jovial- full of jokes about tourist-eating animals and little screams as we tripped over the loose rocks. However, once we reached the top, we traded our pointless ramblings for absolute silence. Millions of stars twinkled and danced as we sat staring at them, trying to resist all urges to jump up and grab them out of the black velvet sky. Very rarely in life do you get to feel like you’re on top of the world, but that night, I did.

Earlier that day, our bus picked up eight Israeli soldiers who would join our trip for its last five days. In Israel, participation in the military is mandatory for both men and women after high school. Birthright trips are their vacation. Before we even had time to figure out what our expectations were, the eight of them had already fit in seamlessly with our group of 40 Americans. We played games on their iPhones, compared Facebook stalking stories and swapped music. Yes, they were active Israeli soldiers, some of whom had top-secret jobs that they weren’t allowed to tell us anything about. But out of uniform, they were like us, just with different stories to tell. Despite the country’s geographical magnificence and wonderful culture, without those stories, Israel would not have been as beautiful.

After spending even the smallest amount of time in Israel, it is impossible to deny that the country’s reality is certainly not how the media would have us believe. There are no soldiers with guns lining the streets; people don’t hide out in their homes out of constant, paralyzing fear of suicide bombers; and while the United States talks about building an even higher, stronger and more impervious wall along its border with peaceful Mexico, Israelis truly wish that they could dismantle the barrier.
between their state and Palestine and that they could live side-by-side in peace. Yes, their lives are affected by war, and the deep-seated history and tensions are indeed very real, but the media’s selective portrayal of what goes on in Gaza and the West Bank would suggest that is how it is in all of Israel and Palestine. That’s simply not the case.

I’ll admit it: before I went to Israel, I thought I would see the face of war everywhere, but for the first nine days of the trip, I didn’t see it anywhere. And if you visit, you may not see it at all, unless you are standing among the endless rows of graves at Mount Herzl, Israel’s version of Arlington National Cemetery, watching one of your new Israeli friends crying over the grave of his schoolmate who was killed six months ago. You don’t see the face of war until you are staring at thousands of identical gravestones, and even though you don’t know Hebrew and can’t understand any of the words, the numbers speak louder than the words ever could: 23, 19, 20, 17. Even without knowing anything else about these people, except that they died at just about the age you are now, you are instantly connected. But hearing their stories makes it all the more real: “He was on his way home from the army, and a guy with a big truck just ran him over while he was wearing his uniform. He was a great student. He was very smart and had a lot of friends. His funeral, this huge section of the cemetery, was full of people: his friends from the army, his friends from home, his family and all his family’s friends. I had to stand way in the back just to be here. But it was too hard to just keep standing there. I had to go. I couldn’t stay anymore. After he got buried, I just took off, alone. This is the first time I’m back here because it’s just too hard to stand here.”

Our tears agreed with his.

On the first night of the trip, we were told to fall in love, to take advantage of this incredible opportunity and to fall head-over-heels for Israel. It wasn’t about making us more religious. It wasn’t about pro-Israel persuasion. It was about the hummus, the Wailing Wall and spending New Year’s Eve on a kibbutz. It was about the Israeli soldiers, chocolate bars filled with Pop Rocks, and playing in a pit of mud next to the Dead Sea. It was about feeling something, anything, connecting to it, and most importantly, not letting it go. If you can do that, no matter where you are, you’ll be on top of the world.

Mallory Plaks is a junior International Studies and Journalism major from Ft. Lauderdale, FL. She traveled to Israel via the Oranim Birthright program (www.israelfree.com).
As soon as I arrive in Islamabad, Pakistan, to visit my darling grandmother, I grab my youngest uncle and demand he take me across the street to Melody Market. Other women head to buy cloth or visit the tailor, but my uncle always takes me in the opposite direction.

Through the main market and down a little alley is a wonderful little dessert shop, my favorite place to get my favorite Pakistani dessert – jalaibi. As I enter the alley, the smell of sweetness perfumes the air. We’re close. We’re headed to a shop called Bengali Rasgulla and Jalaibi. The owner of the shop, an artist of countless sweet delicacies, is a Bengali man whose family stayed in Pakistan after its separation with Bangladesh in 1971. As we arrive, the jalaibi vaala (the jalaibi maker) is piping the thin, creamy jalaibi batter into a vat of hot oil in long, whirling strips. He fries it until crisp and immediately submerges it into a pot of sugar syrup. The final result is a light, ooey-gooey, severely sweet spiral of bright orange.

He gives me a pound of jalaibi wrapped in several bags made out of newspaper. The sunny, bright sweetmeat is calling me… I can’t resist! I grab one, hot and crisp, and bite into it, not noticing the sugar syrup rapidly drenching my chin and fingers. I have to capture this moment; I wipe enough syrup from my fingers to snap this shot. A master at his craft, the jalaibi vaala stares into my lens as the next batch of fresh jalaibi waits to delight another addict.

Taiyyaba Qureshi is a first-year law student from Raleigh, N.C. She graduated from UNC in May 2007 and majored in Political Science and Religious Studies. Her family is from Pakistan. She wrote this piece while visiting them in the summer of 2007.
“I can’t resist! I grab one, hot and crisp, and bite into it, not noticing the sugar syrup rapidly drenching my chin and fingers...”
In public, all people become actors. No matter how animated or reserved a person acts, everyone puts on a show. For the most part, we behave with typical manners, but eventually in public we’ll all come across an entertainer. The entertainer draws attention, sometimes a crowd. When I studied abroad in Italy, public entertainers were everywhere. There were mimes, clowns, musicians and street artists of vivid varieties, masters of improvisation. They captivated the curiosity of crowds, who gathered as an audience does, encircling the performer, pointing, and snapping photographs. Applause, cheers, laughs, gasps and even screams were common reactions from people who stumbled across an entertainer. These unique performers, unnatural at times, were colorful and alluring; they were amazing and neck-wrenching.

I have unforgettable memories and snapshots of dozens of musicians, multiple mimes and even a finger puppeteer. Each was working the crowd, with a box, a tin can or a hat to collect donations. You knew a good performer before you got to him by the size of his crowd. Then you were reassured by the weight of his collection.

There was an air of freedom in the streets of Florence, the city where I, too, began my performances.

There was an air of freedom in the streets of Florence, the city where I, too, began my performances. I came to Italy under a faculty-led Studio Art program for a one-month immersion. I was excited; despite researching the host country, I had no idea what to expect. I had the privilege of organizing an independent study and decided to experiment with a type of painting I had never attempted. The style is called plein-air, or “outdoor art,” a classic practice dating further back than the Renaissance. Renaissance means “re-birth” and began in Florence as a movement to re-adopt classical ideals and to further cultivate all aspects of intellectual pursuits. To achieve picturesque-quality art, outdoor artists certainly used the plein-air practice. Although classic plein-air is most notably associated with painters, it also can be illustrated, which I was obliged to do under my course requirements.

“"There was an air of freedom in the streets of Florence, the city where I, too, began my performances.""
My first performance was staged outside of the famous San Lorenzo church, whose façade was designed by Michelangelo Buonarotti, the painter of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City. I had purchased a beautiful, large Italian leather-bound sketchbook to encourage my efforts. It took nearly a week of wandering past this monument before I settled down, alone at the base of a fountain, opened the book and began judging the proportions of the scene before me. The experience was so eventful that I wanted to remember it forever. Behind my illustration I began a journal, with an excerpt recorded below:

Cloudy morning in Florence quickly turned hot. Tourists by the masses visited my subject, the church of San Lorenzo. Many loomed above as I sat crouched, backpack beneath me. Some took photos; others complimented my work. One boy, young and brave, commented, “Que velo…” Others claimed it purchase-worthy. A Pakistani man spoke briefly with me; I asked a favor of him. His compliance won me two photos of myself at work. It took four hours with less than one dozen colors. I left with so much more than the cost.

At this point I didn’t realize that I was performing no differently from the mimes, musicians and clowns. The first day, I had an audience. I had applause, albeit figuratively, and I gained praise and confidence. I ended the day feeling elated and motivated to continue plein-air art. San Lorenzo was right outside my apartment’s doorstep. I wondered where else I could wander. The next day, I ate dinner with the rest of the program participants enrolled in the Lorenzo de’Medici Institute on the bank of the Arno River. There was a breathtaking view of the Ponte Vecchio from our site. At the conclusion of the dinner, I mustered up the courage to ask a waiter if I could return and paint from the embankment. He pointed me toward the owner of the establishment, who was generous and set a date for my return at sunset the next day. I hadn’t even bought an easel, canvas or palette yet, but you bet I hurried. The night I painted, I was treated with respect, adoration and privacy, along with a complimentary glass of sparkling wine.

I was hooked. Over the course of my program, I painted five major paintings and eight illustrations, each completed on-site, thus enhancing my skills in observation. I walked miles in the heat to my destinations, traveling over stones and up hills. I enjoyed countless adventures and the pleasure of soaking in the scenery and culture. I met friends along my journeys and created art like never before. I have so many stories to tell of my interactions while working. For instance, in the Piazzale degli Uffizi -- a centuries-old art museum that houses some of the world’s greatest artworks -- a mother and her two sons approached me. I worked intently as they innocently hovered. Then, they suddenly posed and a flash went off. They all giggled as they left; I smiled wishing one day I could find that photo of myself at work.

Although I saw people gather around historical monuments, I felt that most people found the creation of art in public to be more intriguing than inanimate public art. My visual art was like the mime: voiceless, active, mimicking the familiar -- in this case, my immediate surroundings. The plein-air experience abroad changed my life. When I returned to Chapel Hill, I continued this endeavor, with much the same public response. My first painting was a view of a Franklin Street intersection. My artistic style grew during my excursion abroad -- so did my confidence, my outlook of our international community, and my awareness of the similarities among people across an ocean.
When I returned home from my semester abroad in Havana, Cuba, my friends asked me to tell them all my crazy stories. Undoubtedly caught up in the popular Cuban stereotypes of Havana, Cuba, my friends asked me to tell them all my crazy wild 21st birthday party during which I consumed two bottles of Havana Club rum. Although my time in Cuba wasn't marked by outrageous feats of consumption, I did have a series of truly Cuban outrageous feats of consumption, I did have a series of truly Cuban experiences, which I will tell in part to dispel false stereotypes and outrageous feats of consumption.

I spent most of my first week in Cuba exploring the areas around my residence and the University of Havana. As I walked down 23 toward Coppelia (a world-famous ice cream parlor), I was flagged down, in true Cuban fashion (a mix somewhere between a whistle and hiss), by a stocky little barber named Jorge. After hearing his unabridged life history, he told me to come by for a haircut and a shave. Although I didn't really want to cut my hair, I thought it would be an interesting cultural experience, so I reluctantly agreed to stop by his shop the following day at 2 p.m.

When I arrived at his shop, Jorge was nowhere to be found. Instead, an Afro-Cuban man named Bebo was standing alone in the shop using the electric shaver to trim his chest and belly hair. “Jorge ya viene, sientáte,” Bebo told me. Sure enough, Jorge arrived soon after, pushed Bebo aside, took the trimmer from his hand, and without hesitation began to use the shaver on my head. The haircut left me looking a lot like Michael Corleone, but I stayed a while after and helped Jorge practice his English.

He showed me a picture of his wife, who surprisingly looked very similar to Jorge himself. “She’s very beautiful,” I said. “No…,” replied Jorge, “…she is fat, but her face is okay.” I really wasn’t prepared for this brutal honesty, especially not in my first week and especially not regarding his wife! Only my closest friends back home would have told me what they really thought. Most people I know would just try to be polite and tell a little white lie like I, admittedly, had. Not Jorge. Not Cubans. It doesn’t matter if they’ve known you for 20 years or 20 minutes, they will tell you what they think, whether you are prepared to hear it or not.

One of the best ways to explore a city is by running through it. I had always been a runner, so when I arrived in Cuba, I would set out on directionless jogs in whichever direction looked the most interesting. Most of my runs ran along the Malecón, from which I could take in the sea, the Capitol building, the lighthouse, an old Spanish fort, Hotel Nacional, the American Interest Section and the Anti-Imperialist Park. The Malecón is always full of people, most of them Cubans and most of them curious.

A group of Cuban men sitting along the seawall tempted me by waving an ice-cold Bucanero beer at me as I ran toward them. I stopped, grabbed the beer and sat with them on the wall. One thing led to another, and the next thing I knew, Manuel, one of the men, invited me to his house for dinner. I brought a bottle of rum and my friend Patrick to the dilapidated colonial-era apartment in the heart of Central Havana. After pouring a large glass of ice-cold water from their 1930s General Electric refrigerator, Manuel’s wife prepared a traditional Cuban meal of chicken, beans and rice, and toasted plantains. Manuel’s father, a skinny old man with a friendly smile, prepared Cuban coffee and ripped beans and rice, and toasted plantains. Manuel’s father, a skinny old man with a friendly smile, prepared Cuban coffee and ripped beans and rice, and toasted plantains.

I showed up at the starting line of the race, joined by more than 4,000 University of Havana students. Many of them wore jeans, and almost everyone was dancing to the salsa music blaring through speakers. Had these people never heard of energy conservation?! I started to feel pretty confident about my chances of placing. I showed up in full running attire, did some serious stretching and began mentally preparing for the 26.2 miles ahead of me.

I’ll give it a try.”

“It doesn’t matter if they’ve known you for 20 years or 20 minutes, they will tell you what they think, whether you are prepared to hear it or not.”

“I’ll give it a try.”

“¡Viva Fidel!” and “¡Viva Raúl!” chants, the starting gun shot off. I was nearly trampled to death
as students sprinted down an avenue that had been cleared for the race. Either this is the most physically fit country in the entire world, or maratón ≠ marathon. I picked up my pace and moved toward the front, where, to my surprise, I saw the finish line. I crossed the finish line in about 10 minutes, finishing 18th (and 1st in the faculty of history and philosophy) in a downhill two-kilometer sprint. In Cuba, “maratón” just means race, and the best runners wear denim.

The stories and friendships I created in my four months in Havana will never be forgotten. These memories did not come from the beautiful beaches, the food, the music, or any of that. The memories came from the people I met there. Their generosity, open-mindedness, enthusiasm and sense of humor were what contributed to what I now look back on as the most memorable travel experience of my life. I hope that one day this issue will find itself in Jorge’s barbershop and that he’ll read my article with complete fluency and exclaim, “I can’t believe this guy thought my wife was attractive!”

Angelo Coclanis is a junior History and Spanish major from Chapel Hill, N.C. He attended the UNC in Havana study abroad program in Spring 2007.

“I had always been a runner, so when I arrived in Cuba, I would set out on directionless jogs in whichever direction looked the most interesting.”

Above: A child of the Revolution. During the procession on May 1, a young boy on his father’s shoulders waves the Cuban flag. In the background is the Jose Marti memorial in the Plaza de la Revolucion.

Opposite: Man waiting for the Hershey train at Matanzas Station. The Hershey train is an electric train that transported workers to the now-abandoned Hershey Chocolate Factory prior to the 1959 Revolution. It runs from Havana to Matanzas.

CUBA
Population: 11,394,043
Capital: Havana
Language: Spanish
Really, I was pushed upon Arnold the day of my arrival into Africa. After being picked up from the airport, I was dropped onto his doorstep. Swerving, half from the travel, half from culture shock, I was surrounded by black skin and white teeth. I stumbled into a room that smelled like dead bugs and collapsed into a caved-in bed, curling up into the warm imprint of a long-gone occupant. I was tiny, sleeping in the footprint of a dinosaur.

I slept doggedly without a mosquito net and felt the welcoming bites of scrambling insects walking across my dripping white skin. Blanketless, I listened to the wild fights of roaming dogs, laden thick with the cries of the beta males, howling across the dusty Ugandan streets. I was silent as they cut into each other, grinding themselves from youth into a hairy and collarless adulthood. The African night was filled with sounds so beautiful, so stripped of every detail that the whole thing was laid bare, simple and raw at my feet. Crushing exhaustion overtook the end of my journey. I slept.

Arnold came crashing in, as I later found he was prone to doing, wildly swinging a red racquet, plastic and charged. Its electric strings were fatal, snapping and cracking satisfyingly across a spinning room thick with mosquitoes and flies. In that moment, I had no idea that he was my host; I thought of him only as another toothy African greeting. He strolled in with a self-confident slump, explaining the fixtures, the bathroom, and how to sweep up pools after a shower. I lay in the bed, head still spinning from a backwards clock as he leapt beyond all formalities. He dug his heels into the ground and welcomed me to his home. Through the barred window, light poured in, bringing the heat and vibrations of a Ugandan morning.

Arnold’s house was a half-complete, half-abandoned construction project. We lived in the basement, which was made up of four rooms, the other two being let out to students from the nearby university. Across from the structure, buried coyly into the same crouched alley, walled in by a million mismatched stones, was a structure that housed even more students. The only access point was a thinning alleyway that was caked in mud. Arnold was an odd cut, a landlord of 22, grinning between drinks and girls. “You eat food?” We rolled ourselves up in warm chapattis, sandwiched between eggs and cabbage. I rolled out of bed, and Arnold showed me Africa.

The day passed and the trip began at night in the back of a rusting old white truck that bounced lightly up a stone-littered road. We were steered by the bobbing smile of Ebra Kukunda, a friend of Arnold’s. Black hands and white knuckles gripped a thin, hard wheel, and skidding spares sent dirt into the air. The truck skidded ruefully around turns, its rusty bed overflowing with the black and white pulses of young life, crashing and bouncing wildly into the soft hum of a sweet African night. The air was misty; it hovered between humidity and drizzle. Arnold was still as I slid around the back of the old pickup, filthy with rusting edges and screw tips to snag an elbow on. Around us cluttered old water bottles filled with Bond 7 whiskey, label-less and dirty. The rim to my lips, I sank into my wet clothes, drinking it down.

And across from me he sat, an old pair of jean shorts and a white tank top falling over shining black skin with shining white scars. He sat huddled with his hands around his knees, watching me take in the passing streets that were on fire with African rhythm and life. I wonder sometimes what he saw, what my face must have looked like. I felt so full of everything around me. I was hovering in the back of Ebra’s pickup, walking the tightrope between poverty lows and whiskey highs. Ebra careened, and above that dusty road, the dripping air whipped madly through the truck bed, dragging soft and unrelenting fingers across our faces. The hood bounced manically over every bump and every pothole until there was nothing left in the air besides the gripping fear and thrill...
of the rocky pavement dragging on below us.

We drove on like that, only stopping for more whiskey and biscuits. “We need pork.” I kicked my legs in the air, echoing loudly “Yes! Pork!” The car raced down that famished road, past the women and men and children, all with chickens and bananas, all with wide staring eyes.

With a muffler kick, the truck groaned violently, leaving the blinking candle light of the villages behind us only to explode at last beneath the hot, soft light of a bouncing Kampala. The scene was hot with electricity. We passed boda-boda scooter taxis, each of them carrying village migrants and mattresses. Everyone knew the score; everyone wanted a taste. We screamed over the crackled pavement of another unfinished construction project and landed in the Kyengera, where the flickering candles of street vendors illuminated the dark street, packed so tight with people that the whole scene moved and breathed. Arnold’s hands were on my shoulders as he steered me through the grumbling crowd. We moved through the people like water, with constant contact, until we spilled furiously into the pork joint. The ceiling was dripping with candles that were wrapped in thin red paper and hung over an old pool table covered in torn brown felt. The place smelled like salt and meat. Music pounded furiously through the open air.

Kampala almost caught fire that night. Its people pulled, stretched, and flattened it out, drinking down every last drop until there was nothing left but its bare bones. Even then, they sucked out the marrow. The next morning, they slid silently back into the villages, leaving behind only Kampala’s thin, hard shell to be occupied by the politicians and businessmen for another six days.

*   *   *   

Hours earlier, before the night’s end, the group of us stood on one of Kampala’s many silent hills with the blinding charges of the city fizzing around us. I could barely see the thick columns of smoke billowing up from small piles of trash, propelling the sweet smell of rotten fruit and wheezing charcoal into the buzzing night. Through the translucence of a gray and smoky haze was the elevated district of Kampala’s aristocracy, across a wide valley, rising high upon a barely visible hill to two pointed radio towers. My eyes roamed down the hill across opposing tilted landscapes arranged in small, walled-in squares. I saw rippling tin roofs and bright yellow water jugs with green caps. Bellowing iron doors were rusted shut, surrounded by thick, silent walls. The dead branch of a once-flourishing tree cut across the distant landscape like a long and knobbed finger pointing at nothing. Arnold smiled at me, his white teeth swimming in the ocean of his black face beneath his round eyes. The distant rhythms of discotheques rolled over the rooftops, climbing the hill to lay exhausted at our feet.

The boys around us tried to count down to when it would happen. “Three, two… No! Twenty, nineteen… tsch! Sixty, fifty-nine…” Then it happened. We watched as a rolling blackout swallowed the massive cityscape spread out before us. Everyone was speaking except Arnold and me. Silence overtook me as we watched darkness so whole and so deep that it seemed inescapable. I reeled and the boys chanted on.

With time, tiny flickering candles began lighting up. The tiny headlamps of boda-bodas began to buzz silently into the black, penetrating the darkness for fleeting seconds before they were swallowed up by their dark destinations. But they would light again, and soon the blackened streets would be traced manically by tiny driving lights. The alleys would twinkle with tiny candles as the street vendors sold chapattis and pork for coins.

The people of Uganda began to light the dark streets, and the soft sound of rhythmic music began its ascent for the second time that night to once again dance with us on top of that dusty hill.
At the Palacio de Bellas Artes, in the historic downtown of Mexico City, hangs one of the more notorious works of Mexico’s great muralist, Diego Rivera. Originally commissioned for New York’s Rockefeller Center in 1933 -- communist hysteria in the U.S. squelched that project -- “Man at the Crossroads” shows a society caught between history and the promise of a new, modern world. On one side, a dim vision of the recent past, soldiers in gas masks march in tight formation. Opposite, workers and peasants, embracing a new fraternal spirit, demonstrate peacefully. Primordial plants spring from the mural’s lower edge while, overhead, huge metal gears hint at new technologies. In the very center of it all sits a weary pilot at a set of controls, steering a course into Mexico’s future. His face registers equal parts optimism and concern.

Mexico City today, more than 70 years removed from the vision in this painting, remains a metropolis poised tenuously between the past and the future. With nearly nine million residents, it ranks as one of the world’s greatest cities in size. Yet Mexico City is hardly a place of shimmering towers and dramatic skylines. Leave behind the neat grid of streets in the historic center and the few skyscrapers congregated in the financial district, and you’ll quickly find yourself lost in a maze of narrow lanes and squat two-story buildings. These buildings, repeating endlessly in every direction, are indeed the Mexico City dwelling par excellence. Fashioned of unfinished concrete and painted haphazardly in blues, yellows and oranges -- tints that quickly gray in the sour city air -- these structures seem, above all, provisional. Originally temporary accommodations thrown together in anticipation of better times ahead, they have become permanent and defining features on the Mexico City landscape.

Slicing through this dense matrix of streets and neighborhoods (and linking all that Mexico has been and aspires to be) is the Paseo de la Reforma. Modeled after Paris’ Champs-Élysées, Reforma -- as the locals call it -- is Mexico City’s showcase avenue. At its heart, outside of the city’s priciest hotels, it is a broad and cobblestone boulevard flanked by shade trees, with a swath of manicured green running right down its middle. A walk along this part of Reforma brings one face-to-face, in quick succession, with the heroes of Mexico’s past: conquerors, colonizers and revolutionaries memorialized in larger-than-life statues. Crane your neck skyward and you can even make out the features of Mexico’s most famous landmark more than 1000 feet above: a seven-ton angel, cast of solid bronze and covered in gold.

Back on ground level, however, and moving farther from the center, the scene grows less and less celestial. A stray dog, hobbling on three legs, noses at passing tourists before dashing off into rush hour traffic. Farther still, blasts of foul air issue from sewers below ground. Nearby, on the steps of a colonial church black with age and soot, a dirty child lies with arms extended cross-like from his sleeping body. One hand is locked around a bottle of the cheap glue used by street children for a quick, deadening high.

These mixed signs of aspiration and grim, grinding desperation are everywhere in Mexico City. Nowhere, however, do the country’s future and past collide more starkly than at Reforma’s spectacular terminus, Mexico City’s main square. The Zócalo, as it is known here, is a vast and improbable void at the core of one of the
world’s most crowded places. Stone-gray and barren except for a single towering flagpole, the Zócalo attracts a mixed crowd of locals and tourists, vendors and beggars, protesters and performers staging everything from Aztec dances to Michael Jackson’s moonwalk. Along its edges, the square is ringed with the requisite monuments to government and religion: the Spanish colonial cathedral and national palace, the courts of justice and city hall. Lurking just below the surface, however, and sometimes poking right through, is an altogether different past.

Sixteenth-century Spanish conquerors built the square directly over the ruins of the Aztec Plaza Mayor, the civic and religious heart of the ancient empire reduced to rubble by the invading army. Today, monuments of both cultures rest cheek by jowl in an uneasy intimacy. Just out back of the ornate cathedral, whose alter is gilded with plundered Aztec gold, lie the excavated remains of the Templo Mayor, the Aztec high church. Cameras in hand, tourists wander right from the incense and stained glass of the cathedral to the raw and ruined temple, in a few steps traversing civilizations and the violence that marked their collision. Nor are the scars of conquest confined to buildings and artifacts. Here in the Zócalo, the beggars on the sidewalks, the vendors hustling a few pesos from passing tourists -- nearly all the poor and struggling -- share the dark, strong features of Mexico’s indigenous peoples. Here, as elsewhere in Mexico, the past seems less a historical curiosity than a weight born clean through the present.

Leaving the Zócalo behind and zipping toward the center in one of the city’s aging VW taxis, a curious fact about the capital becomes plainly evident: Mexico City is sinking. Originally built on a marshy lake bed, the city, as evidenced by the off-kilter monuments and tipsy basilicas on the streets outside, is now very slowly slipping back into the earth.

And yet, despite the gloomy prognosis, the city continues to climb upward and push outward, with new residents flocking from the countryside every year. Facing massive challenges -- a perpetual gray haze that clouds the skyline, nightmarish traffic, poverty, inequality and a violent history built right into the city itself -- Mexico continues to steer toward the future.

Signs of optimism, in fact, are everywhere. Frames of new high rises point skyward. Bank windows promise credit cards and home loans that were unheard of in the decade following the 1994 economic crisis. Out on the street, there are swarms of brand-new cars. Back on the leafy part of Paseo de la Reforma, an old VW taxi, green and white and rusting with age, slows to a stop at a red light. Alongside pulls a shiny new VW Beetle, the driver chatting away on a cell phone. The new car is painted a brilliant fire-engine red -- aggressive and defiant, a red straight out of an Aztec painting.

Remy Scalza is a second-year master’s student and Roy H. Park Fellow in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. He visited Mexico City during spring break 2007 as a teaching assistant with Dr. Richard Cole’s Mexican Mass Media class. The trip was partially funded by the Roy H. Park Fellowship.
It was Good Friday in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, a rural Polish town about 60 kilometers west of Kraków. Every year, nearly 100,000 Catholic pilgrims flock to the little community of 4,500 to see its famous passion play—its elaborate re-enactment of Christ’s last hours. I had come as a spectator, hoping to catch a glimpse of both the ritual and the faithful masses. It was a miracle that I even found Kalwaria that day. Earlier, some linguistic adventures with the PKP, Poland’s always-entertaining rail system, had culminated in my having to jump off a slow-moving train. By the time I jumped off the correct train in Kalwaria, it was well into the afternoon and many of the pilgrims had come and gone. Apart from the elderly woman sitting behind the counter of the station’s one-room building, the place was deserted. With no pilgrims to follow, I knew I would have to ask for directions to the sanctuary—a complex of 40 individual chapels where the play is staged. In my butchered Polish, I asked the old lady if she spoke English. She shook her head, Nie. After a few minutes of repeating duży kościół (big church) and drawing, I gathered that the sanctuary was about a half-hour’s walk away. My rendering of a box with a cross on top had finally gotten the point across. I asked her in what direction I should walk and she pointed toward the door.

So I headed off down a gravel road with a bottle of water and Lonely Planet: Poland, guided by the index finger of someone’s babcia (grandmother). I was admiring graffiti and listening to some far-off dogs, when suddenly I realized that I was alone, unsure of exactly where I was or where I was going, and with virtually no means of communicating with anyone around me. I felt a surge of panic on that empty road, but realizing that there was little left to do but walk, I kept moving. Eventually, I spotted the sanctuary perched on a hill overlooking the town.

On the steep road up, I encountered a white-haired man speaking English to a stray dog. Feeling a little desperate for some human interaction, I said hello. He stood up and I could see his collar—he was a retired priest from Ontario who had come to Kalwaria’s Franciscan seminary for Lent. He was extremely nice (even by Canadian standards) and offered to buy me a bowl of barszcz. We talked for a long time about theology, Polish Catholicism, and my failed attempt to observe the famous Good Friday traditions in Kalwaria. As a consolation, perhaps, he introduced me to a Polish Franciscan monk and showed me the interior grounds of the seminary—an area normally closed to visitors. He left me with a rosary inscribed with the image of the late Pope, Poland’s national and spiritual hero. I keep it on my desk, not so much as a religious symbol, but as a reminder of that Friday in Kalwaria. It’s grown to become...
one of my enduring symbols from my time in Poland.

As an American studying in Poland, I was asked over and over again about my ancestry. Do you have Polish roots? Many Americans do, but as my last name suggests, my roots lie in Poland’s beloved western neighbor. Heritage aside, Poland interests me, perhaps for the very reason that places it in the periphery of many American minds: Poland has been beaten, many times. The Swedes, Tartars, Napoleon, Hitler, and Stalin have all occupied it. From 1795 until 1918, and again in 1939, Poland ceased to exist on the map. From 1945 until 1989, it fell under oppressive Soviet hegemony. Despite this tumultuous history, the Polish culture and people have endured. Of course, there are contradictions in modern Poland: Soviet-style apartment buildings stand blocks away from beautiful medieval streets; overt displays of anti-Semitism and homophobia erupt among the hooligans of local soccer clubs—an especially disturbing phenomenon, given Poland’s 20th century experience with ethnic cleansing. But in a place like Kalwaria, for instance, one sees not so much the evidence of human suffering, but rather the vitality of a surviving culture.

I lived and studied in Kraków, Poland’s historic capital and cultural epicenter. I don’t know if there is any other place where this Polish vitality is so apparent. Living within walking distance of Wawel Castle, the coronation and burial site of Poland’s great kings and patriots, I tangled with crowds of Polish children on field trips to what is their nation’s equivalent to Westminster Abbey. I spent many nights on or near Rynek Glowny, Kraków’s picturesque medieval square, the largest of its kind in Europe. Flower stands are open there year-round, because any respectable Polish man still buys a flower for his date. I photographed a sea of candles lit for Pope John Paul II and placed before his former Kraków residence on the second anniversary of his death. I felt the sympathetic smiles of native Poles as I tried to pronounce words like “hey” (cześć) and the number 33 (trzydzieści trzy).

I now look back on that trip to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska as an essentially Polish experience. For all its harrowing moments, it was just another curious way in which Poland made itself so strangely and warmly accessible to me. I hope to return to Poland this summer, perhaps to Wroclaw or Gdansk, with the goal of studying the nation’s small German-speaking minority—an another vestige of Poland’s complex history. I’ve also vowed to return for the European soccer championships in 2012. Provided I can find a way, I can’t foresee a reason not to return to Poland, if even for only a short time. It is, after all, a quickly changing place with a magnetic brand of charm. Perhaps I’ll make it back to Kalwaria someday. I’ll try again to catch a glimpse of the passion plays. Or maybe I’ll just walk the town.

Brett Sturm is a junior History major from Charlotte, N.C. He spent Spring 2007 at the Centre for European Studies at Jagiellonian University in Krakow with a Boyatt Award in History.
She knew she had just come from Amsterdam, but trying now to recall the details was like trying to pull pieces from a very distant dream. Hazy bits floated in and out, and she remembered the Van Gogh pieces and the strange music and the loneliness she had felt when she looked at them. She remembered the coffee shops and the pancakes and the bicycles. There was the very strange language and the canals and the fact that there was almost no religion anymore, and she wondered about a world with no religion.

Then she remembered Paris and the first time she saw la Tour Eiffel and the Louvre and Notre Dame, and there was the lingering taste of goat cheese and honey. There was Sacre Coeur and the artists and the surprise that Mona Lisa was small and the daffodils and Picasso and le métro.

“My gawd this airport is just awful, it is by far the worst airport I have ever been in, people are actually having to sit on the floor and there are CLEARLY not enough seats. I mean really what is wrong with the people over here,” the American woman next to her was saying into her cell phone.

She stared at the woman with the distracting voice, and she wished very much that she was not there. The girl went back into remembering.

And there had been London and Piccadilly Theatre and riding the tube and the pubs and the rain. There was Big Ben and Monet and the feeling of “Well, there it is.”

There was the London Eye and the very long line. There was the feeling of eating American food for the first time in what felt like years but were in fact months, and she had looked forward to it so much but afterward wasn’t as satisfied as she would have thought. There was the freshness after the rain and the blue, blue sky and the puffy clouds that made every picture and every memory more beautiful.

There was Pisa and the tower and Lucca and the bicycles and the feeling that in this moment she was purely happy and very free.

“Then she remembered Paris and the first time she saw la Tour Eiffel and the Louvre and Notre Dame, and there was the lingering taste of goat cheese and honey.”

There was Siena and the bell tower and the gelato. There was Rome and the Sistine Chapel and the gypsies with praying hands and the secret taking of pictures in the no-pictures-allowed rooms and the Forum. There was Venice with the accordion players and the pigeons and the gondolas that she did not ride but wished she had.

“Are you writing a novel?” the cell phone lady asked her.

“No, just writing down what I want to remember before I forget.”

“Oh, I was wondering what you were doing over there, writing and writing and writing. Isn’t this the worst airport? Where are you from?”

“North Carolina.”

“It’s nice to have an American here to talk to who knows how things are supposed to be done. This whole place, this whole country just seems backwards sometimes, you know, and can you believe some people don’t speak English? My gawd.”

“We’re in Italy,” she said, but the woman was already dialing a new number on her cell phone.
Then there was Santorini and the Aegean and the still blue water as far as she could see. There was the French toast with the pads of butter and the freshest orange juice she had ever tasted in the mornings and the donkeys that moseyed inches from her as she darkened in the sun. There was the almost-blinding white and blue and the car they rented and drove around the winding cliffs of the island while the sea swelled beneath them. There was the sunset and the absolute silence of it all when no one was speaking and the feeling of not wanting to forget this moment ever.

There was Barcelona and the street performers and the tapas and the sangria that made her feel dizzy and slightly sick. There was the cathedral that looked like wet sand drizzle and the park with the purple flowers and palm trees. There was the song the violinist had played while she looked at the brilliance of the purple and, although she couldn’t remember it now, she remembered how it had made her cry.

“Well I’m going to be home later than we thought, the plane’s late, they’re having some sort of ‘trouble,’ who knows how long I’m going to be here,” the cell phone lady was saying. “This airport is awful, you would absolutely not believe it.”

She didn’t mind that the plane was late; it was only a little late. She went back into remembering.

There was Cinque Terre and the Via dell’Amore and the rocky beaches and the clear and quiet Mediterranean with the coldest water she had ever felt. But she swam in it and it took her breath and it never really quite came back and she floated.

There was Lago di Como and the gardens and the stillness and the feeling that if she shouted, the echo would go on forever and the oranges and the lemons and the pesto.

There was the feeling that she had done so much and the feeling that she had done so little. There were the times when she felt herself being watched in the streets and at the train stations, and she concentrated on making herself appear as un-American as possible, and then there was the wondering how they always still knew and why she knew it was not a good knowing.

“Hello? Yes, I’m in the Milan airport and can I just tell you how hideous this is? I am just CRAMMED in, this is the worst airport I have ever seen they need to add a whole new part it is just too small and they need more seats and more comfortable ones too, I think I’m losing feeling in my legs I’ve been here for so long,” the cell phone lady was saying.

And of course there was Florence. Florence and due cappuccini and grazie and Michelangelo and vino rosso and Dante and molto molto bene. There was the train station and the blueberry steak and the bridge and the Arno and the feeling that she was home. There was Fiesole and the sunsets and the Duomo. There was the leather and the piazzas and palazzos and the feeling of being part of something larger.

“GAWD,” the cell phone lady was saying. “You would just not believe it. I cannot wait to get home.”

I don’t know if I want to go home, the girl thought.

Laura Johnson is a senior Journalism major from Charlotte, N.C. She attended the Spring 2007 Lorenzo de’ Medici program in Florence, Italy.
If I learned anything during my time abroad, it was that Swedes are obsessed with soccer. Each morning my hall-mate Karel would hand me a steaming cup of black coffee, and our conversation would invariably drift down one of three paths. Choice one: listen to him gush about how FC Barcelona was the most attractive sports team in the history of modern athletics. Option two: what a dream it would be to discuss Marxist theory with French national defender Lilian Thuram. Finally, door three: an emotional tirade about how Stockholm’s own AIK was going to destroy Malmö FF this year in the Swedish league.

Karel is by no means alone in his attachment; the sport seems to attract the most committed and, therefore, potentially violent cast of characters. Various studies point to soccer hooligans being from the poorest, most frustrated tiers of society, and they undoubtedly bring this emotion into the stadium. Through soccer worship, hooligans find an open forum to vent frustrations and angst through the legitimate lens of team devotion. It was only a matter of time before politics and ideology entered the stadium, and, frighteningly often, certain sections of European stadiums were transformed into overt and sometimes violent displays of nationalism, xenophobia and racism. The blending of right-wing ideology with elaborate choreography and showmanship makes the sight of thousands of hooligans jumping, singing, and turning in unison as impressive as it is chilling.

Riding the train from the quaint college town of Lund, Sweden, to the larger metropolis of Malmö, waiting to attend my first Allsvenskan (“all Swedish”) league match, I expected the stands of Malmö Stadion to be tainted with the same vicious beliefs that had colored the other stadiums of Europe. Regardless of Sweden’s global reputation for social harmony, Malmö is an entirely different animal. In fact, all of southern Sweden presents a potentially volatile challenge to historic Swedish homogeneity. Always liberal and magnanimous toward immigrants and refugees, the last 20 years have seen a staggering influx of Middle Eastern and former-Yugoslav immigrants, the majority of whom have taken home in Malmö. Of the city’s population of 260,000, more than one-third are foreigners, and more than 60,000 are Muslim. Such a drastic demographic shift would disrupt any society, especially one as “ethnically pure” as Sweden.

In Lund, a city with a significantly smaller population, I experienced the Middle Eastern influx through the most mundane of ways: the food. During the four months I studied in Lund, I probably consumed my own body weight in falafel, not just because all other food options were obscenely expensive, but mainly because it was delicious. As superficial as this seems, the falafel and kebab stands that dot every street are by far the most common way Swedes interact with their new neighbors. A culture so distinct from Swedish is literally around every corner.

But the conflict is not just culinary; religious tension is unavoidable in Malmö. Instead of a Christian population outraged at the expansion of Islam, the Swedes’ religious...
beliefs lean more toward widespread indifference. The idea of any religion, especially one with such powerful images as towering minarets, covered women, and ominous calls to prayer, shocks many Swedes. It is not so much what Islam stands for that unsettles so many, but the threat that it unjustly is perceived to represent.

With all this in mind, I made my way to the stadium. Here I thought I would find a face for the ethnic tension gripping the city. I expected banners, chants and slogans. I didn’t think I would really see anything shockingly xenophobic because the Swedish sense of civility would never allow anything so uncouth, but I did imagine a sea of Swedish flags. I was quite disappointed. I sat fairly close to the hooligan section and saw nothing but an elaborate percussion section, awkward facial hair, and a wash of Carolina blue (the team’s color). There was nothing designed to ignite Swedish national consciousness. The traditional blue and yellow of Sweden was discarded, and in its place were symbols arousing anything but a national sense of exclusivity: the red and yellow of Skåne.

The region of southern Sweden known as Skåne has become the flagship of the European Union’s attempts to eliminate nationalist rivalries throughout Europe in favor of more cooperative, transnational regions. The Skåne identity has always existed but has recently flourished throughout southern Sweden, due to the completion of the Öresund Bridge connecting Malmö and Copenhagen. The pervasive red and yellow of Skåne (a clever combination of the two countries’ flags) that covered the stadium that day would have made even the toughest Euro-skeptic blush.

I should have realized before I came to the match that I was not going to see in Malmö what tarnished the other stadiums of Europe. As much trouble and unrest as Malmö is facing, Malmö FF — the most successful team in the history of the Swedish league — is a reflection of the city’s diversity. Undoubtedly their greatest player, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, is a first-generation Bosnian-Swede. The team is a mosaic of ethnicities, with players’ backgrounds hailing from Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo and Iran. Malmö FF epitomizes the city it represents; both find not only success, but also their identity, through ethnic diversity.

It’s redundant to say that things in Malmö are going to change. The vast majority of Swedes are still coming to terms with the dissolution of their ethnically homogenous state. Immigrants are challenging ethnic Swedes for fewer and fewer jobs, taxes are increasing, and right-wing parties are emerging. Growing pains are inevitable. The Swedish government is going to great lengths, sometimes awkwardly so, to present Sweden as an ethnically unaware state, but I am not sure how aware Swedes are of the massive demographic and cultural changes ahead. It was telling, however, that Swedish hooligans did not revert to vicious, destabilizing nationalism. The hooligans, those most acutely affected by the arrival of immigrants and who are most susceptible to right-wing influences, resisted. Instead of the Swedish flag, they held up the red and yellow of Skåne. Hooligans rejected virulent nationalism in favor of a more pluralistic regional identity. They cheered the Bosnian midfielder Anes Mravac. Falafel was eaten by all.

Daniel Wadis is a junior History major from Charlotte, N.C. He studied abroad at Lund University in Sweden in Spring 2007.
Above: I was trying to get to the Brooklyn Heights promenade when I came to this pier. It was going to rain, and I was tired. I bought a cone of peach ice cream, sat on the bench and called my friend in Boston. I spent almost an hour talking to him and describing everything I saw around me. Then I sent him this picture.

By Natasha Rostovsteva

NYC VIA RUSSIA

Population: 141,377,752
Capital: Moscow
Language: Russian

RUSSIA

By Natasha Rostovsteva

Above: I was trying to get to the Brooklyn Heights promenade when I came to this pier. It was going to rain, and I was tired. I bought a cone of peach ice cream, sat on the bench and called my friend in Boston. I spent almost an hour talking to him and describing everything I saw around me. Then I sent him this picture.
I am a very lazy person. Actually, my laziness brought me to UNC. I was so tired of working 12 hours per day that I decided to apply for a Muskie Fellowship that sponsors graduate education for people living in CIS countries. And here I am, studying 12 hours per day in North Carolina! Does that make a difference? Of course. The main difference is that now I am just two hours by airplane from New York City instead of 10.

My relationship with New York City started in 2001, although this start was not that romantic. I visited the UN Model Conference 2001 hosted by Fordham University, which is located in the Bronx. I had terrible jet lag, and we were not recommended to leave the campus by ourselves because, you know, the Bronx is not the best place for a promenade. The only thing I remember about Manhattan is how I fell asleep at the racial discrimination discussion panel at the UN headquarters. Oh, I will never forget that jet lag, but I couldn’t forget New York City either! I was very passionate to go back, and I finally succeeded.

My New York is not about the skyscrapers. It is more about going out with my Serbian friends to the Italian restaurant located in a Greek district. It is about old ladies from the Upper East-side wearing Chanel suits and having their Sunday coffee in an Austrian cafe. It is about Greenwich Village, which reminds me of Paris, Moscow and Barcelona. It is more like traveling around the world and staying in one city at the same time.

Natasha Rostovsteva is a first-year master’s student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. She is from Moscow, Russia.

Clockwise:
1. Most New York buildings are tall and made of stone. At the beginning you hate them, but then you start to love them.
2. This is my favorite picture. I was walking around East Village and saw that man talking on the phone. Everything looked so peaceful and silent, especially those yellow leaves.
3. Part of me is always there. Ernest Hemmingway said that Paris is a moveable feast. I can say that about my New York.
4. Greenwich Village is all about going out and being in the most exciting part of the New York City. It makes you feel like you’re in Paris, Barcelona or Moscow at the same time.
5. No comments to this picture. Just turn on your favorite sad song and look at it until you are ready to move on.
6. I always go to Brooklyn Heights when I am in New York, partly because Joseph Brodsky lived there before he died, partly because I always see beautiful old cars there.
The FedEx Global Education Center
From a Student’s Perspective

By Jamila Thompson

INTRODUCING THE FedEx GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER

On the corner of Pittsboro & McCauley Streets is UNC’s newest addition to campus: The FedEx Global Education Center. The Global Ed Center’s renowned architect, Andrea Leers, created the building with a vision to “bring the outside... inside.” As you explore the building, or when you are just walking to class, especially when walking through the atrium on the first floor of the building, don’t forget to pause and take in the sights.

THE GLOBAL CUP CAFÉ

You should definitely check out the Global Cup Café, where you’ll find shade-grown organic coffees, freshly-baked pastries, delicious frozen drinks and smoothies, as well as lunch items and snacks that you might need during a quick break between classes.

A “GREEN” BUILDING

Meet me on the fourth floor - that’s where you can see the sustainability going down! You might be surprised to learn that even with all the beautiful architecture, the Global Ed Center has recognized and upheld its responsibility to the environment and has set a new standard on campus with its sustainable design and features.

Right outside the fourth floor of the Center is the green roof, where the rainwater is recycled, filtered, and used throughout the building. Ever wonder why there is yellow water in the “green” bathroom stalls? It’s because the bathrooms use this recycled rainwater that is constantly being filtered and reused.
One can only imagine how much water is being saved. Every drop counts! This green roof includes a garden terrace and a pretty good view. The garden terrace has a few tables and chairs, so under a Carolina blue sky, the roof is the best secret study spot in the Global Ed Center. I mean... who’s going to bother you on the roof?

DEDICATION TO A GLOBAL EDUCATION

Ever thought about studying abroad? Want to major in International Studies? Maybe you just want to study the cultures found in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Global Education Center is a host to academic instruction, international programs, organizations, services, and research centers dedicated to promoting international knowledge.

The Global Ed Center is a space that provides students with the opportunity to explore differences among cultures, peoples and societies and how they are being challenged, integrated and transformed through globalization.

If you are looking for a cozy study space, the Center has four levels with study spots on each floor. Take your pick of four floors with comfy couches to read a book, to study for your Asian history exam, or to take that much needed mid-afternoon nap.

Learning about different cultures doesn’t have to appear in the form of a book or in a class lecture. Have some fun and attend a cultural event that sparks your interest! Ever tried your hand at Taiko-Japanese drumming? What about belly dancing? The Global Ed Center hosted Triangle Taiko, who gave an interactive and exciting performance last semester, as well as the Arab Student Organization, which taught belly dancing.

Maybe you are passionate about global issues and academia outside the classroom. The Global Ed Center has events for you, too! Concerned about global poverty? Last year, UNC hosted Jeffrey Sachs, director of the United Nations Millennium Village Project. This January, the Global Ed Center hosted economist Paul Collier, who talked with students, staff and visitors about the struggles facing countries in the bottom billion.

So, don’t come into the Global Education Center just for class. Check out all of the exciting events during the semester—from world-class speakers and photography exhibitions to film screenings and cultural music performances. Did I mention that most of the events at the Global Education Center are free and open to the public? And what college student turns down free food?

THE JIST

UNC is dedicated to providing students with the highest standards of learning and to instilling the values of public service and diversity. The Global Education Center reflects UNC’s progress toward becoming a premiere global institution. Don’t just take my word for it—drop by the FedEx Global Education Center and “GO GLOBAL!”

Jamila Thompson is a junior Information Science major from Charlotte, N.C.
There is a growing appreciation for the ability of locally-based organizations to effectively implement sustainable development. Although larger-scale development efforts, such as the Millennium Development Project and USAID and World Bank programs, receive much funding and attention, smaller grassroots organizations are often better attuned to the needs of their communities.

How can UNC students become involved in these kinds of initiatives from so far away? After traveling to Uganda more than three years ago, senior Jonathan Pourzal began developing an answer to this question.

Jonathan started an organization called Advocates for Grassroots Development in Uganda (AGRADU), which works to support indigenous grassroots organizing in Uganda. The initiative supports internships for UNC students and funds three different community-based organizations (CBOs) each summer. Jonathan said that working with AGRADU “is a way of partnering with the groups, supporting their work, and using student efforts to do so.”

Jonathan’s interest in Uganda stemmed from his involvement with the United Movement to End Child Soldiering (UMECS) in Washington, D.C., which provides assistance to child soldiers involved in a 20-year civil war in Northern Uganda. His mentor at UMECS encouraged him to visit the country during the summer after his freshman year. Jonathan said that the trip was an invaluable impetus for the formation of AGRADU.

After acquiring grant funding during the following school year, Jonathan and AGRADU co-founder Jennifer Monroe backpacked through Uganda in the summer of 2006 to set up the internship program by “researching, networking, and
seeing what’s possible.” They visited various CBOs to determine which were the most effectively organized and receptive to outside help. Ultimately, they selected three organizations that advocate, among other issues, sustainable development, HIV/AIDS treatment and education, and microfinance initiatives: Centre for Environment Technology and Rural Development, Kyetume Community Based Health Care Programme, and Friends of Christ Revival Ministries.

After establishing partnerships with the three organizations, they prepared the first group of students for their internships and raised funds for each CBO. Through bar nights and a fair trade crafts fair, AGRADU successfully raised $450 for each organization to invest in the community. Jonathan’s minor in social entrepreneurship was influential in developing his philosophy toward development assistance. “We try to prevent that our funding create any kind of dependent relationship between us and the organization, which is why we don’t call it ‘charity,’” said Jonathan. “It needs to be an investment. For example, the money could be invested into a microfinance scheme or a co-op, anything that would yield returns that could be reinvested.”

Also crucial to AGRADU’s mission is the principle of working directly with already-established CBOs. Despite their initial goal of introducing new programs, Jonathan and Jen concluded that it would be better to tap into Uganda’s already-rich civil society. They chose to work with CBOs that were more connected to their communities than the larger non-governmental organizations.

In summer 2007, an inaugural group of five interns spent seven weeks working with the three selected CBOs. The interns have continued to work with AGRADU upon their return, and AGRADU will send six new interns to Uganda this summer.

Austin Hill is a senior psychology major who worked with Friends of Christ Revival Ministries (FOC-REV), located in the Busia District of Eastern Uganda. FOC-REV works toward awareness, mitigation, care and support of HIV/AIDS-affected communities.

Austin’s internship at FOC-REV marked not only her first trip out of the country but also her first airplane trip. Unlike the other four interns who offset the majority of travel costs with grants, the entirety of Austin’s funding came from donations from her small hometown of Lewiston, N.C. Coming from a small town helped her raise funds because, as Austin explains, “the people who didn’t know me personally know my uncle or my grand-
mother. And everyone was so proud that I was going to Uganda.”

“One of the best parts of working with FOC-REV was the organization’s hands-on approach to public health,” said Austin. “For instance, I got to shadow HIV-positive public health workers, who met with other HIV-positive community members to teach them to care for themselves.”

Living in Uganda gave Austin a new perspective on being American. “Here at UNC, we’re exposed to all kinds of cultures, but until you go somewhere where you are the minority, I don’t think you can really appreciate what is here in front of you,” she said. “Even though we complain, we’re really so fortunate.”

Danika Barry, a senior from Colorado, worked with Kyetume CBHC last summer. Her decision to travel to Uganda originated from an interest in public health. “Uganda is an example of highly successful civil society organizing, especially in controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic. After previously being in Vietnam, which has a very controlling government and not a lot of civil society organizing, I wanted to see what effective grassroots organizing looks like,” Danika explained.

Danika said that her experience at Kyetume left her with the impression that Ugandan CBOs are most effective in addressing the public health needs of their communities. “I really feel that nobody else could be doing the sort of work that they’re doing. They truly know their population and can therefore provide the most appropriate and comprehensive forms of care,” she said.

At Kyetume, the diversity of Danika’s responsibilities reflected the wide scope of the organization’s programs. Shortly after arriving, she was placed in charge of evaluating Kyetume’s microfinance program, a task for which Danika felt “unqualified.” However, after doing some frantic research and extensive interviewing with microfinance group members, she discovered that the microfinance program was actually losing money because of several banking oversights. After compiling a report with the help of a Ugandan student and translator, Danika made several recommendations that allowed Kyetume to correct the problems and begin growing the microfinance pool.

Although some of Danika’s responsibilities, such as grant-writing, were mainly office-based, she also was able to work hands-on with several programs. Through field visits, she saw the positive effects of microfinance projects. A woman named Teo left a strong impression; a microfinance loan helped her support her 12 children through a firewood collection enterprise.

Overall, the experience was extremely educational and influential for Danika. “AGRADU is unique in that interns get the chance to become a part of the organization, which puts precedence on the CBO’s goals,” she said. “Furthermore, we’re able to invest the money we raise without dictating exactly how it’s used. It’s so important that organizations have this flexibility with their funding. And the reason why is that we’ve been able to establish a relationship of trust with each organization. That’s so much more important than a written contract.”

For more information about AGRADU, contact Jonathan Pourzal at Pourzal@email.unc.edu or visit www.agradu.org.

Marissa Hall is a senior International Studies major from Winston-Salem, N.C. She studied abroad in Singapore in 2005 and in Ecuador in 2006.
Think you can’t afford a study abroad experience? Think again.

Here are just some of the scholarships available at Carolina. Visit global.unc.edu for more information.

PROGRAM: Burch Fellows Program
DESCRIPTION: For students with self-designed off-campus experiences pursuing a passionate interest.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time undergrads who have completed at least 1 but not more than 6 semesters. Must have 2 semesters at Carolina following the Fellowship experience.
STIPEND: up to $5,000
DEADLINE: February 15
MORE INFO: www.burchfellows.unc.edu

PROGRAM: Class of 1938 Summer Study Abroad Fellowships
DESCRIPTION: For students who need support to pursue independent career or personal projects outside the U.S.
REQUIREMENTS: Sophomores, juniors or seniors planning on 5th year of coursework with financial need. Must be a U.S. citizen.
STIPEND: $3,500
DEADLINE: February 25
MORE INFO: oiss.unc.edu/services_programs/1938/

PROGRAM: C.V. Starr International Scholarship
DESCRIPTION: For students who have strong financial need to undertake an independent internationally-oriented experience during the summer.
REQUIREMENTS: Undergrad students must be eligible for Pell Grant and have min. 2.8 GPA; grad students must NOT be U.S. citizens or permanent residents and have demonstrated financial need.
STIPEND: up to $5,000
DEADLINE: March 20
MORE INFO: gi.unc.edu/funding/cv-starr-ugrad.html

PROGRAM: Frances L. Phillips Travel Scholarship
DESCRIPTION: For students with individual, self-designed/directed international travel experiences for 2 to 6 months.
REQUIREMENTS: Juniors/Seniors in the College of Arts & Sciences with financial need. Must be a U.S. citizen and have attended high school in N.C.
STIPEND: up to $7,000
DEADLINE: October 15
MORE INFO: www.unc.edu/depts/travel/

PROGRAM: Mahatma Gandhi Fellowship
DESCRIPTION: For students to pursue independent summer projects that benefit South Asians.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time undergrad or grad students.
STIPEND: up to $3,000
DEADLINE: February 1
MORE INFO: www.unc.edu/cps/fellowships/epsfellowships/

PROGRAM: Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships
DESCRIPTION: For students to carry out research, mentored scholarship or creative performance projects during the summer.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time undergrad student in good academic standing. Projects must last at least 9 weeks (min. 20 hrs/wk).
STIPEND: $3,000
DEADLINE: March 1
MORE INFO: www.unc.edu/depts/our/summer_research.html

PROGRAM: Travel Fellowship Fund
DESCRIPTION: For students pursuing personal enrichment through travel experiences outside the U.S. for 2 to 6 months.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time upperclassmen in good standing with at least 51 semester hours (min 27 at UNC-CH). Must be a U.S. citizen. Travel itinerary must include at least 4 days in London. Cannot be used for participation in formal study abroad programs.
STIPEND: up to $4,000
DEADLINE: March 30
MORE INFO: studentaffairs.unc.edu/what_we_do/travel.html

PROGRAM: UNC Entrepreneurial Public Service Fellowships
DESCRIPTION: For students carrying out research for senior honors theses.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time second-term undergrads accepted in a study abroad program. Specific requirements vary.
STIPEND: Varies
DEADLINE: Early Feb. for summer/fall programs; late Sept. for spring programs.
MORE INFO: studyabroad.unc.edu

PROGRAM: Undergraduate International Studies Fellowship
DESCRIPTION: For students from underrepresented groups pursuing international travel or study.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time second-term freshmen, sophomores and juniors from underrepresented groups.
STIPEND: $2,500
DEADLINE: March 30
MORE INFO: Call the Stone Center at 919-962-9001.

PROGRAM: Phillips Ambassadors Program
DESCRIPTION: For students participating in study abroad programs in Asia approved by the College of Arts & Sciences.
REQUIREMENTS: Scholarships are awarded on the basis of academic merit, with consideration for financial need.
STIPEND: up to $7,500
DEADLINE: Early Feb. for summer/fall programs; late Sept. for spring.
MORE INFO: studyabroad.unc.edu/phillips

PROGRAM: CGI International Internship Awards
DESCRIPTION: For students who wish to implement a summer internationally-focused internship.
REQUIREMENTS: Sophomore, junior or senior students returning to UNC. Graduate students pursuing a master’s degree.
STIPEND: up to $4,000
DEADLINE: March 20
MORE INFO: gi.unc.edu/funding/internship-award-ugrad.html

PROGRAM: Carolina Undergraduate Health Fellowships
DESCRIPTION: For undergraduates to create self-designed health-related project abroad.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time returning undergrad students. Projects must have a health-related focus.
STIPEND: up to $4,000
DEADLINE: March 20
MORE INFO: gi.unc.edu/funding/health-fellowship.html
TRAVELING HEELS

Spring, Summer and Fall 2007

The Study Abroad Office at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill provides opportunities for students to travel all across the world. The map shows the diverse travel experiences by students in the program. This does not include international programs offered by other departments.

Map colors correspond to the bar chart below.

BY THE NUMBERS

UNC students travel all across the globe. The numbers below reflect participation in the 2007 Study Abroad programs.
In Cuzco, Peru, two young girls sit in the hot sun for hours trying to sell Andean dolls to tourists passing by. The dolls cost 50 cents each.

Photo by Anika Anand