Carolina Passport bridges the Atlantic Ocean, crosses the Strait of Gibraltar, surfs the Caribbean and fills newsstands around UNC’s campus. Each page holds a unique story – and a way to leave Chapel Hill, even if only for a moment. Readers can travel the world in less than an hour. This can all be done from the comfort of your futon or pre-owned sofa.

Bringing the world to you, we hope PASSPORT encourages you to open your mind and take some chances. This will be the final issue for two of our staff members as they, similar to the stories of adventure and broken comfort zones you are about to leave, will take on new and uncharted territory of post-graduation life. The design editor, Courtney, has been on board for two years and is to thank for the gorgeous layout. The copy editor, Emily, is slightly newer to the team but has made just as deep an impact on the magazine with her sharp eye for grammatical errors. The challenges they will face may not compare to the complications of conversing with another in Italian or blending in with the Arabic culture. As the following stories illustrate, the most prized memories come from the most unlikely of experiences. It only takes a little push out the door. We hope you’ll enjoy the pages of this issues as much as we have.

From left to right:

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Cover photo by Hannah Nemer
The Abayudaya Jews of the Putti, Uganda community welcome in the new week with Havdalah services inside the Rabbi’s home.

Background photo by Jessica Smith
Waves break over a rock on the coast of Koh Samui, Thailand.

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Questions? Comments?
Carolina PASSPORT welcomes feedback and suggestions. If you are interested in submitting stories or photos, contact the editors at carolinapassport@gmail.com.
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“Γεια μας!” we exclaimed as our group of 10 raised up shots of ouzo to celebrate the end of another great meal. Translated literally, γεια μας means “to your health” and is the Greek equivalent to “cheers.” My study abroad experience in Athens, Greece, was coming to a close, and I had finally made it to the rooftop taverna everyone on my program raved about.

A Greek taverna dinner does not start before 10:00 p.m. and involves several plates of food, several liters of wine and several hours of talking. While overlooking the first modern Olympic stadium, we feasted on cheese pie, lamb chops, eggplant dip, meatballs and zucchini fritters, and reminisced about the many adventures we had in Greece. By the end, we were practically rolling out the door, full of food and laughter.

Yet, our obvious repletion did not stop the servers from making sure we left more than satisfied. Out they came with chocolate cake, ice cream and, alas, more shots of ouzo. The sense of community and friendliness unique to this country still exists even with being in the midst of the worst economic crisis they’ve seen in years. The gesture of welcoming us into their restaurant and giving us free dessert and drinks summed up the most important lesson I learned last semester—that despite being in the hardest of circumstances, the Greeks, like the Parthenon, are resilient in the face of crisis.

As the local and global symbol for all things aesthetically and culturally Greek, the Parthenon has withstood various crises in its 2,500-year history. It was originally conceived as a temple for the goddess Athena but has also served as an Orthodox Christian church and later as a mosque under the Ottoman Empire. It has been set on fire, bombed and deconstructed, yet it still stands strong. The Parthenon is a metaphor for this nation that is undergoing extreme social, political and economic change. Although the country is currently in a state of distress, I believe it will emerge from this crisis intact and stronger than ever.

The reason the Greeks remain positive about overcoming this crisis is because they stand strong together. The servers in the taverna could have let us go early without any dessert or drinks, therefore opening a table for another group of customers. Instead, their simple gesture reminded me that in Greek culture, community transcends the individual. The toll of the economic and political crisis is especially prevalent in Athens where shops are quickly abandoned and where each new austerity measure is received with increasing tension. However, this obvious struggle does not stop the Greeks from filling the bars and restaurants in Gazi, from taking the time to meet and talk with friends for coffee, and for opening their homes and hearts to others.

During my time in Greece, I was fortunate to experience all of the country’s beauty. I clapped along as the sun set in Santorini, climbed Mt. Olympus, swam in the Mediterranean Sea, and saw the famous rock formations of Meteora. Yet, without a doubt, the beauty of the people’s courage, perseverance, and sense of community surpassed even the most spectacular sunset.

After finishing our shots of ouzo, we walked back to our respective apartments, and I caught a final glimpse of the Parthenon, reminding me that like the Greeks, we all have the strength to overcome even the most difficult challenges.

Chelsea Boorman is a junior from Chicago, Ill., majoring in global studies and anthropology. She traveled to Greece.
PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE WORLD 📸

1 // Jessica Smith; Pak Khlong Talat, Bangkok, Thailand. 2 // Mary Stevens; Carrick-a-Rede Bridge, Ireland. 3 // Ryan Christopher Aves; Sevilla, Spain. 4 // Jessica Smith; Wat Saket, Bangkok, Thailand. 5 // Meredith Edgerton; Azores, Portugal. 6 // Jessica Smith; Ha Long Bay, Vietnam.
WHAT I WISH I’d Known

Students share helpful hints and advice they wish they had known before studying abroad.

1. Personal integrity (honesty, full faith, hard work, and refusing to give anything less than 120% for anything) is important. It makes a big difference.
2. Keep tabs on anxiety and don’t let it ruin any more than is absolutely necessary. This is relevant whether maneuvering bureaucracy or village politics.
3. Letting people share their stories is often more useful and satisfying than any amount of official data collected.
4. Tops with a cut-out in the back keep you much, much cooler than those without. Especially relevant in 100 degree heat and 10-hour workdays outside.
5. Personal and professional reflection is the key to measured success.
6. Language is important. People appreciate your effort in learning their colloquialisms, even with less than flawless execution.
7. Traveling and exploring as much as practical and possible is rewarding, especially in a land where nearly everything is novel. Also, always keep a book at hand – it makes 6-hour train journeys pass by much quicker than they would otherwise.
8. Interpersonal relationships need to be as carefully curated as a google search profile – whether at home, in the office, or on the street.
9. Always bring more essential clothing (especially those items that can’t be purchased in the country you’re traveling in) than you think is necessary.
10. Sometimes all it takes is a shower (or a bucket of warm water) to make the most exhausting day immediately better.
11. Always carry toilet paper and hand sanitizer everywhere you go.
12. Always apply sunscreen, regardless of how cloudy the skies look.
13. Photograph everything. What seems trivial can turn out to be invaluable at the end of the day.

“Еf you’re traveling on a budget, try Couch-Surfing. It’s an organization in which you stay for free on someone’s couch. But be safe about it by checking reviews and traveling with a friend. I did it in London and it turned out to be an amazing experience! Another tip — I wish I had researched places more. When I took weekend trips to travel, I was too caught up in packing and figuring out directions to the hostel to find out cool restaurants, good museums, and places to stay away from. It sounds nice to go somewhere on a whim and figure the place out on your own but trust me, it’s better to go with a list of ideas. That way, you can balance spontaneity and planning, especially if you’re only there a couple days.”

— EMILY MILKS, content editor

Read it!

Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail
Cheryl Strayed

While this book isn’t necessarily about traveling, it’s a great read to get you prepped for adventure!

Reader Advice by senior SHAMPA PANDA

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PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

1 // Ryan Christopher Aves; Puente Nuevo in Ronda, Spain. 
2 // Jessica Smith; Ayutthaya, Thailand. 
3 // Mary Stevens; Nice, France. 
4 // Jessica Smith; Hanoi, Vietnam.
Top: A sunset over the Yarra River, which runs through the heart of Melbourne City.

Left: Six people. Six countries represented. One minivan. What could go wrong in a road trip through Tasmania?

Above: The first waterfall I saw while hiking with friends in the Grampians, a mountain range in Southern Australia.
“Don’t you wish you could stop time?”
Our legs hung over the 12-story building, Tisara’s eyes soaking up the city lights below.
“But you can’t. You just take in moments like these and know they’re the ones you live for. No one’s pressing pause.”
I smiled at my Sri Lankan companion, knowing exactly how he felt, except never calling his position my own. What must it feel like to live in a place for three years watching friends come and go only to graduate and return to a country that’s supposed to be home? I decided to take a lighter approach.
“Yeah, but can you imagine how many problems that would cause if everyone could stop time when they wanted? Absolute chaos.”
We both smiled at the absurdity of it all. A friend’s laptop poured music into the night, washing us all with British-flavored nostalgia. We were silent for a few beats before I heard him say, “You should write a story.”
His words still ring in my ears. What do we have in life if not our stories? And what greater pleasure can we have than sharing them with other people?

Last semester, I studied abroad in Melbourne, Australia, and it changed my life. I could recount to you adventure after adventure from just the five short months I lived in the metropolitan city. I could tell you of the Great Ocean Road, where rocks rose like gods from the water. I could describe the thrill of stopping in the middle of a trek to watch as one of the ten most venomous snakes in the world nonchalantly slithered its way across my path. I could also mention how shaky I was riding my first wave on a board that was bigger than me, or even how I choked on saltwater as I quickly found out how to properly use a snorkel to explore the largest barrier reef in the world. (It was great, you know.)

But none of it would compare to my greatest Australian adventure: the friends I made while traveling.

If there was one lesson I learned while being abroad, besides recognizing how blessed I was to be halfway around the world, it was that no matter how beautiful or breathtaking the scenery was, none of it had the true basis for a memory without people there to enjoy it with.

I met a girl from Denmark who taught me how to get in touch with my sense of adventure through bouldering (a.k.a. rock climbing without harnesses). She also became my best friend. I met a Sri Lankan who taught me how to pronounce his name and who lived for defining moments. There was a girl from Holland who taught me how to cook, a guy from Perth who explained the rules of cricket and made jokes punnier than my own, a girl from Sydney who shared her home and what it’s like to be part of an Australian family, a guy from Ireland who shared his love of music, and a French guy from Thailand who became a really close friend to lean on.

I could go on. Names, faces, people who made a difference in my life. I never would’ve known they existed had I not studied abroad, and it’s those same people I’m in contact with now. Thriving off of virtual conversations on whatever social networks we all happen to be procrastinating on. I know we will meet again as my love of travel has only grown since leaving Australia.

As I look back on that shining city, seeing the scope of creative people, I fill with longing. For the street buskers on every corner, the man who made art with a mop and water, the jazz spilling out from Laneway cafes and the graffiti no one would mistake as anything but art.

If you’re looking for a place full of life, music and art all appreciated by an eclectic mix of people from around the world, I would suggest Melbourne, the friendliest city on earth. Not to mention the same city that has now been voted twice as “the best city to live in the world.”

As for me, I will still smile every time I repeat Hikadua Galipatigue Tisara Prasan Samarasuryia, and I will count the days until I find myself once again in a land that lives in tomorrow.

Jordan Moses is a junior from Hickory, N.C., majoring in journalism and mass communication with a specialization in editing and graphic design. She traveled to Australia.
I was sitting at a small but deceivingly airy lunch counter called Soul Kitchen – just a few steps down from Sacré-Cœur on the backside of the Butte Montmartre – whose vegetable-packed, three-choice midday menu is probably the best deal in the city, when I realized for the first time that Paris is almost exactly the same size as my hometown of Cary, North Carolina. Both municipalities cover approximately 40 square miles, but living in each feels so different that I had never before thought to make the comparison. The most obvious – and most important – distinction between the two is population density. Cary is home to about 140,000 people, spread widely over an increasingly deforested trapezoid between Jordan Lake to the west, US-64 to the south, and I-40 to the north and east. In Paris, 2.2 million squeeze into a rough circle bounded by the Boulevard Périphérique and bisected by the Seine. Any other differences – such as Cary’s conspicuous absence of busy, neighborhood restaurants like Soul Kitchen – are subordinate to the fundamental one of density.

Living now among the pines, dogwoods, and many single-family homes of suburban North Carolina, I could hardly imagine housing another two million people within Cary’s borders. But Paris never felt crowded. However bustling public squares were, I never found myself fighting for space on a sidewalk or a seat on a bench. In fact, Paris has a diverse and inviting surplus of free seating: the moveable chairs in the Jardin de Luxembourg or the Tuileries, the flat marble steps of the Madeleine, or the ledge that rings the fountain outside Saint-Sulpice, whose cool mist is simply divine on hot summer days in a city in which air conditioning units are rarer than original Monets. And in contrast to towering cityscapes like New York’s, Paris never hems you in. The city is an organic web of cozy, mediaeval neighborhoods, never more than six stories tall, made navigable by a series of narrow streets and slopes that curve around the funnels of the Champs-Élysées and the Champs de Mars.

Unchained chairs make public space flexible. The Tuileries gardens lend solitude to sunbathers and conviviality to group gatherings.

DENSITY BUILT TO THE HUMAN SCALE: Lessons in Sustainable Urbanism from Paris

by AUSTIN COOPER

I was sitting at a small but deceivingly airy lunch counter called Soul Kitchen – just a few steps down from Sacré-Cœur on the backside of the Butte Montmartre – whose vegetable-packed, three-choice midday menu is probably the best deal in the city, when I realized for the first time that Paris is almost exactly the same size as my hometown of Cary, North Carolina. Both municipalities cover approximately 40 square miles, but living in each feels so different that I had never before thought to make the comparison. The most obvious – and most important – distinction between the two is population density. Cary is home to about 140,000 people, spread widely over an increasingly deforested trapezoid between Jordan Lake to the west, US-64 to the south, and I-40 to the north and east. In Paris, 2.2 million squeeze into a rough circle bounded by the Boulevard Périphérique and bisected by the Seine. Any other differences – such as Cary’s conspicuous absence of busy, neighborhood restaurants like Soul Kitchen – are subordinate to the fundamental one of density.

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of wide, tree-lined boulevards that let in plenty of fresh air and sunshine.

Unlike in Cary, where I might as well be chained to my car, I could walk pretty much anywhere I needed to go in Paris. My 250-square-foot studio apartment was less than a five-minute walk from multiple restaurants (including Soul Kitchen), bars, clothing stores, fruit and vegetable shops, organic groceries, butchers’ shops, wine shops, (two of Paris’ very best) bakeries, a flower shop, a Chinese take-out place, and a particularly stinky cheese shop. Three more minutes in either direction would bring me to a supermarket, where I could purchase essentials like light bulbs, shampoo, and cheap Danish lager. And that’s just retail. My walkable neighborhood also encompassed two lively plazas, where on the weekends I could listen to older French gentlemen play the barrel organ for awestruck children who always seemed to tip pretty well.

When I wanted to get out of my neighborhood, I had a few options. I could either walk – it was less than an hour from my apartment in the north of the city to the quays of the Seine – or take the Métro from the neighborhood station, or maybe ride a bike, even though I didn’t own one. In 2007, Paris’ city government instituted a bike-sharing system called Vélib. The term (pronounced vay-LEEB) is the fusion of two abbreviations: one for vélo, meaning bicycle, and one for liberté, which is a cognate of the English “liberty.” Roughly translated, it means “bike freedom” – and that’s exactly what it gives you. Using a chip-and-pin bankcard, you can buy a day ticket for less than two euros from any of the hundreds of Vélib racks scattered around the city. There are no additional fees if you ride the bike for less than half an hour before you return it. In practice, those two euros buy you an unlimited number of 30-minute checkouts within a 24-hour period; on balmy September afternoons, it’s the perfect choice for hop-on, hop-off touring.

The first time I hopped on a Vélib, however, it was well into the wee hours of the night. My two baby-faced French comrades – Pierre and Louis – and I mounted our two-wheeled steeds at the corner of the Rue Saint-Placide and the Rue de Rennes, not far from the monolithic Tour Montparnasse. Five minutes later, we were racing across the Pont du Carrousel, the Seine flowing beneath us, the south wing of the Louvre palace rising above us, the glass pyramid quickly coming into focus. It was like one of those 3-D movies, except without the ugly, tinted glasses. On a bike, the city flies past you at 30 frames per second; with the wind in your face, it’s a super-cinematic experience. I quickly learned it’s also a pretty rapid mode of transit. Clever bikers weave through stalled traffic, navigating Paris’ narrow streets much faster than the cars.

In its walkable neighborhoods, bikeable streets, and convenient and connective Métro network, Paris embodies the New Urbanist mantra of “design to the human scale.” There are tensions, however, that express themselves as this small and insular city encounters its suburban neighbors. Anyone who travels by rail between Charles de Gaulle airport and central Paris will, passing through the impoverished communities of the Seine-St-Denis département, notice that there are huge discrepancies in income and quality of life between Paris’ historic center (the 20 arrondissements) and its towering postwar suburbs (the banlieue). Only one sixth of the roughly 12 million residents of the Paris region live within the city limits. This distinction is economic as well as racial; as citizens of France’s former colonies follow economic opportunity to the former colonial metropolis, they find themselves priced out of Paris proper.

Today, steps are being taken to reimagine Paris’ banlieue. In 2007, the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy introduced a new transportation plan for the Paris region called Le Grand Paris. It will augment the existing public transit network, extending rapid rail links from Paris to the suburbs as well as between the different suburban cities. There has even been talk of replacing the Peripherique highway with a circular high-speed rail line. And, as of 2013, Vélib has begun expanding its network beyond the city limits. In short, France is planning to redesign its suburbs to the human scale.

While Greater Paris addresses the planning mistakes of its past, I suggest that we consider our own. We, of the land of dead downtowns, have a lot to learn from Europe’s thriving urban centers. If we want to live in the kind of places we dream of visiting, we need to embrace residential density and invest in public transportation. There is no reason that a bike-sharing system couldn’t work in major East Coast cities like New York, Boston, and Washington, DC, or in the reviving post-industrial towns of Detroit, Pittsburgh, and nearby Durham. This is especially true if we pursue dense growth instead of deforesting sprawl. Cities like Paris are especially valuable in that they offer us a different view of development. It is time, for the sake of our economy, climate, and waistlines, that we reimagine the American landscape from this perspective.

Austin Cooper is a junior from Cary, N.C., majoring in comparative literature and French. He traveled to Paris and is a Carolina Scholar.
“We will get to the school by boda,” Moses says, gesturing to a red motorcycle. He cradles one helmet under his arm.

Moses is the principal of a rural primary school near Iganga, Uganda. My co-intern, Danielle, asked me to accompany her to review his school, a prospective internship site. I’m tagging along but not thrilled about the commute. We traveled to Iganga in matatus, claustrophobic mini-bus taxis common in Uganda. Provided that you’re willing to get cozy with a rice smuggler or a woman holding a live chicken in one hand and a baby in the other, matatus will get where you need to go. Danielle and I look at each other with unease. Matatus are uncomfortable and exhausting, but bodas are dangerous.

“How long will it take to get there?” I ask.

“About an hour and a half. We will go slow,” he says.

I go to the bathroom and return to find Moses with his helmet on, about to get on the boda. There are no helmets for Danielle and me—this is The Uganda Deal. Climbing onto the boda, I wrap my hands around Moses, who has the paunch of a man entering middle age. Danielle struggles to get on behind me. Moses flicks the ignition and we rumble out of Iganga. Moving over paved main roads to dirt roads, we pass banana-colored buildings whose Sadolin brand paint chips to reveal dingy concrete.

Danielle sits behind me, trying to stay stable. Lacing my fingers tighter around Moses’ stomach, I hold my breath and feel my lungs stretch against my chest for a moment. Decorum-wise, this is all problematic. Most Ugandan women ride bicycles and bodas sidesaddle, but I am not a Ugandan woman. I feel safer this way. In a place where ambulances don’t come, I’ll take the brief cultural insensitivity.

“You are scared!” Moses shouts. I’ve noticed that expressions usually phrased as questions in America are often expressed as declarative statements or observations in Uganda.

“I’m okay! Just don’t do this much back home!”

“I can tell.”

He turns and smiles at me, but I wish he would look at the road. A few minutes later, Moses switches off his engine and we coast down a hill. My great-grandfather did this to save gas, my mom says. Moses guides his boda around holes and we find stability in the grooves of old boda tracks. As he maneuvers around mud mounds, I feel my understanding of Ugandan roads shift. Back at my host family’s house, I ran on rural dirt roads. The uneven roads put pressure on my stride, so I sought out the most level path. Level ground was stressful, too. Boda drivers and bicyclers, with huge bundles of coal or jackfruit rigged to the back of their bikes, kept on my tail until I relented. We needed the same dirt, but boda drivers needed it more.

Another driver approaches. Moses and the driver silently negotiate the right away. I don’t fall. I hold tight and then slowly let go. I feel the lushness of the Ugandan countryside: the maize fields, rice paddies, mountains, brick houses, grass-thatched huts, and children screeching “Mzungu! Mzungu!”

Women hefting yellow jerrycans of water onto their heads pause to watch us drive by. They smile; we wave. We pass incomplete brick buildings. Vines crawl up their roofless walls and at just four feet tall, these structures resemble oversized garden plots that everyone gave up on. Rogue saplings spring from meadowy would-be floors in defiance. I exhale. I too reclaim my presence in this space.

Coco Wilder is a sophomore from Charlotte, N.C., majoring in history and English. She traveled to Uganda with the Campus Y Fund and the St. Anthony Hall Educational Foundation grant.
Standing at the top of the rail, a boy rigs a jerry can to his bicycle.
There was a moment on my flight into London when the plane curved hard to the right and hung in the air. Then it rotated, slow, and in the windows the city grid appeared and slid past beneath us, panning over the Tower Bridge, the Eye, Parliament. The Thames wound a silky green ribbon through the roads and spires below, brown rooftops peppering the gaps. It was a whole minute of held breath. Enthralled with the view, I was still, absorbing the city that would soon be mine, already feeling things changing. The plane turned up to face the hazy sky, horizon indistinguishable, the city quiet beneath us, and then we landed.

It feels like a thousand times I’ve paused now, unsure how to answer the simple, “How was it?” The tacit, “Great, I loved it,” usually suffices, but there are oceans beneath that answer. There is no full response I can give — no summary or cute quip — that conveys the entirety of the experience of spending four months abroad.

I loved London. I really, really loved it. It almost came as a surprise. People talk about Paris like stepping off the metro platform is a transformative experience. What I knew about London was far less. But I fell in love with the city instantly, with its low-lying streets and cloudy days. There’s a sense of wilderness in the unrefined parks and millions of brown homes, dusted with an old charm. It lacks the flashiness of American sharp lines and model homes but instead possesses a sense of age to it. And with that age comes a sense of comfort. I felt like myself there, like all my various parts were at ease.

London is a city of richness and history, and it’s one of layers. It’s easiest to remember the city by the tube map, the multicolored cross-stitch of sorts that I memorized on what felt like a thousand sweaty,
crowded, fluorescently-lit rides. I see the city by the map – disparate zones and colors and rhythms somehow linked together, fitting together, even when the differences are wild.

Consider the contrasts: the grit and glitter of Camden Market, against the artisan cheeses and cakes of Borough Market, against the wild beauty of the sprawling heaths to the north. There are the clubs — from bluesy and intimate to pulsing, bright and hot — and the jewel-toned National Gallery, the pastels of Portobello Road, and the regal façade of Buckingham Palace. It goes on: weathered roofs in Fulham, opulent storefronts in Kensington, tourists in Trafalgar Square, and sleek lines at the Tate Modern, which faces the ethereal dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral. All these pieces should be fragments but instead they’re sewn together, fluid, forming one London.

At first, I was constantly looking around me, weighing how things felt, slipping into a new mode of attentiveness. I had a heightened awareness of even the smallest differences. Soon, though, the city became home. American accents made me do a double-take. My hour-long commute became normal. British tabloids, fuchsia lipstick, “mind the gap,” red buses: all of it became my everyday.

Still, though, certain moments struck me. I especially savored the cold days in December, my last ones in London. I’d take the long way to class so I could walk across the Waterloo Bridge in the bitter, thin air, absolutely alone and so very alive. From the middle I could see it all, the whole city, and there was always a shift inside me, some heavy weight in my lungs as the wind sliced hard across the bridge. It was a feeling of total autonomy, of disjointedness and belonging all in one, of understanding and, most of all, gratitude.

And that feeling of gratitude, as I finished my classes and travels in a blur, said my goodbyes and took three flights home, is what remains. Gratitude for being able to go, gratitude for having gone, and gratitude for coming home.

Claire McNeill is a junior from Greenville, S.C., majoring in journalism and mass communication and political science. She traveled to England.
Global Views

Travel 3 countries in four pages: Get a look into Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam through JESSICA SMITH's lens.
Sunlight streaks through a cave opening in Ha Long Bay, Vietnam.
Opposite page top: Streamers radiate outward from a paper lantern at a Buddhist temple in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Opposite page left: A Thai flag waves above the city of Bangkok.

Opposite page right: The sun illuminates a Buddhist statue in the Thai city of Ayutthaya.

Top: A young boy bikes alongside a rice paddy in Phong Nha, Vietnam.

Left: Children play alongside the street in the mountainous village of Vang Vieng, Laos.

Above: Paper lanterns light the night sky in Chiang Mai, Thailand.
Hi, I’m McKay Roozen! I graduated from UNC in 2012, and I’m the former managing editor for Carolina PASSPORT. I’m currently teaching in rural Yunnan province with Teach for China in an effort to eradicate educational inequality. You can follow more of my journey on my website, insatiableliving.com.

Enjoy!

McKay
Here goes something!

July 12, 2012

And so begins a new chapter of my life. After graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in May 2012, I am embarking on a two year fellowship to teach English in rural China. Since my decision and acceptance of the fellowship with Teach for China, I have told my situation to countless people. Whether it’s giving a one line explanation to the pharmacy cashier why I’m buying a jumbo size pack of Tums (plus the other components of the small pharmacy in my suitcase) or talking about the decision with a close friend, the reaction is often the same: “Wow, that’s crazy/wild/brave/stupid/unbelievable! Good luck with that.” Sometimes, I even get asked “Why?”

Why travel halfway across the world to live in some unknown town with people you don’t know squatting over a hole for two years of your life? Surely you can get a better job than that with a college degree. Well, to these people I always say, “Why not?” Because honestly, it doesn’t seem like there could be a more perfect place or opportunity for a young person like myself. Allow me to explain:

I started taking Chinese in college, and over the past four years, I have come to love, respect and understand a little bit of the Chinese language and Chinese culture. I visited the country for the first time when I was twelve. Once I got to college I decided to start something new and picked Chinese as a minor. The battle with the language eventually led me to Beijing, where I participated in a study abroad program that focused on Chinese and even had a pledge to speak only Chinese the whole two months. I spent the next summer and following fall semester in China. This time, doing research and studying abroad in Shanghai. Once again, I strengthened my language skills, but most importantly began to realize just how important it is to understand China, Chinese culture and Chinese people. I moved beyond my fascination with the language and began to focus on other aspects of the country.

While there are many universal aspects of human nature, the differences between one culture and another are often easy to point out, but difficult to understand. I learned very quickly that understanding these differences can only be accomplished with patience and an open mind. And now I am going back to China once again. This time, of course, it’s for the longest period of time yet. I will be teaching English for two years in a rural area of Yunnan province in southwestern China. The goal will be to help equalize the education gap between urban and rural areas and make education, at least through high school, more accessible for students in impoverished areas. I will be working for a non-profit called Teach for China (TFC), which is under the same umbrella as Teach for America and is similar in many ways. You can find out more information on their website (tfchina.org).

From what I understand so far, the biggest challenge we will face as Fellows will be to convince students to value education and believe that they can achieve it if they work hard enough. Many students in rural areas are often faced with a choice to work and support their family, or go to school. Many choose the former. It is now my job to convince them to choose the latter. Even more so, my goal is to instruct them and teach them in a way that they are capable of doing good enough on their exams to get into high school and college so that these opportunities promised by education can actually become true. It will be no easy task, but who better to try?

China Snob

August 24, 2012

After finishing my training with TFC and finally reaching my placement school in Lawu, I sit on the side of my mountain, eating my Wal-Mart-bought oatmeal from a city five hours away. I realize I have become a China snob. I think back on my other experiences in China and realize that they were inexplicably easy. There were restaurants, there were malls, there were people, other foreigners.

Here, there is none of that. There’s barely even bottled water, nonetheless luxuries like green-tea-flavored Oreo’s. I was kidding myself before. This is the real deal; this is what I was looking for all those times before. Or maybe it’s just what I need now. Maybe I didn’t need it all those times before, maybe I was just working towards it, it was just building up. But now I’m here and my life is all of a sudden filled with breathtaking views and cloud formations that make me feel like I’m living in a fairy tale.

Maybe because I am. At least right now, there’s this feeling of surrealness surrounding this place. It’s like I’m living in a dream alongside donkeys, rice patties, toothless grandmothers and possibly rabid dogs. I pinch myself.

Will that ever change? Will I ever get used to my surroundings? I surely hope not. If I ever do, I need to pinch myself again and remind myself to not take these experiences for granted. Because in some ways, that’s what I’ve been doing in the past. I have these amazing adventures, only to realize later that they’re over and just memories that have had tremendous impact. Perhaps I realize too late to enjoy the situation, the hardship, the annoying and beautifully irritating moments. It’s easy to say that now, however, when I realize that everything before has been an absolute piece of cake compared to this.

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Just call me Teacher Lu

September 8, 2012

Starting this past Wednesday, I became a real, live teacher. The students arrived on Monday, and the school grounds were scattered with children, parents, motorcycles and a few donkeys bringing in some of the produce for the week. As most students do not live in the village of Lawu, they live at the school Monday through Friday and go home on the weekends.

Students are constantly running around. Hundreds of them. 400+ to be exact. Their day starts at 6:30 am when they wake up, do some exercises and then do some chores like sweeping the courtyard, cleaning the classroom, cleaning the bathrooms, taking out the trash, etc. They have morning study hall at 7:00 and then breakfast after that. Three times a week, the state provides free breakfast of hard-boiled eggs and milk. On the other days, the school provides noodles.

Their first class starts at 8:10 and, like all the classes, lasts for 40 minutes. On Mondays, they all congregate outside and raise the flag after the first class. They have class until 11:30 am, after which they line up for lunch. All students who live on campus are given a bowl which they must bring with them when they line up for meals. They cannot eat if they don’t bring their bowls. Students are given rice then can choose from three or four dishes. Because there are so many students and because there is no cafeteria, students have to find a place to squat on the grounds to eat. They usually huddle in groups and eat or sit outside their classroom. The teachers eat in a small room next to the kitchen, and we have the same dishes as the students.

In the afternoon, students have another study hall then three more classes with small breaks in between. Then dinner, then study hall, then bed at 8:30. The next day, it starts all over again.

The days are long, meaning that the breaks in-between classes are the way for them to blow off steam. And blow off steam they do. They run and scream and play tag and play Ping-Pong with their notebooks and basketball and throw things and did I mention scream? Somehow, for the most part, they all come back together when the bell rings and class starts.

For the most part I’m adjusting quite quickly. However, there are some things that are taking a little harder to get used to, like having students follow me around in-between classes and crowd around me before class starts, nearly suffocating me at times. The other teachers seem to be pretty good for the most part. There are only a few other female teachers, the rest are male, and everyone for the most part is over 50 or 60 years old. It’s very clear at times that we are “those young kids” who are naïve and trying too hard. Most teachers here have been teaching for many years, and they don’t seem to have much to prepare. This is, of course, a stark difference from my co-Fellows and I who run around the school grounds trying to get everything done.

Tomorrow will be spent half resting, half preparing for the week, and then Monday is Teacher’s Day, which fittingly means no class because I (and the rest of the teachers) will be drinking with Communist Party officials and other teachers. Happy holiday to us.

On Toys

December 14, 2012

Resources are scarce here, obviously. But I’m always amazed at the resourcefulness of my students. I first remember that they made little envelopes for their flashcards out of notebook paper and a lot of tape. One girl even made it into a little purse. Adorable. Then I started realizing that milk carton boxes could be made into slides, rulers were used as fake swords, elastic became amazing jump rope, paper, tape and chopsticks evolved into kites, paper and tape, aka soccer balls.

Most recently, other students were turned into hurdles. I first observed this phenomenon, otherwise known as leapfrog, this morning, heading out to lunch. I saw one of my students hurtle himself over a barely bent-over student. By the end of the day, the game had evolved and the upper grades were having competition that definitely drew a crowd. They started with one person and worked themselves up to six, all huddled together, with the other student miraculously flying over them. Or, if they were unfortunate, skidding to a halt and slamming into everyone. I’m wondering if this will somehow be incorporated into next week’s mini-Olympics...

A New Leaf

January 28, 2013

After a successful fall semester, I’m ready to start again after Chinese New Year with even more energy and dedication to my students. While the last semester was difficult, I feel I have finally adjusted and know a bit more what to expect and how to invest in the lives of my students. When I reflect on the past eight or so months, I realize how far I’ve come and what I’ve learned. Perhaps what has stuck with me the most is the realization that life will pass. Sometimes days are great and sometimes they are indescribably difficult. But at some point, the good will morph into the bad and vice versa. The only thing I can really do is to hold on tight and enjoy each moment as much as I can. On to the next semester!

McKay Roozen graduated from UNC in 2012 with majors in global studies and political science. Follow her journey on her website: insatiableliving.com.
by LAYLA QURAN

One minute I saw Jordanian flags and pictures of the king and the next, Israeli flags and soldiers and checkpoints. Crossing between Jordan and the West Bank does something to a person psychologically that I can’t adequately describe through writing. It messes with the psyche.

But nevertheless, I was in Palestine. I was home again, and the summer had begun when street markets started selling the apricots, when the lullaby at night became the sound of children riding their bikes and kicking the soccer balls through the streets, and, most of all, when the festivals and concerts filled the air with the music and dance of a people under occupation. People who needed even more to express themselves through art.

I was in Palestine for the summer through UNC to research the role and impact of the arts in the lives and perceptions of Palestinians. My research focused on answering the questions, “How has arts exposure/experience affected Palestinians living in the West Bank? What role does it play in their lives?”

One of the things I noticed through my research is that Ramallah, a largely populated city, is by far the cultural center of the West Bank. With Palestinians prohibited from entering Jerusalem, many art organizations have had to relocate to Ramallah. However, for the other cities and villages of the West Bank, there is little to no arts exposure. When I visited Jericho, one of the city officials at the town hall said to me, “Arts? In Jericho we don’t have arts, we herd sheep.” The arts are concentrated to one area, and because of this, so too is the impact of art. Many Palestinians do not see art as a form of political resistance, but rather as solely a hobby or luxury for the elite.

It is true that for some artists, political agendas are on the backburner when it comes to their art. But it is not a form of elitism as much as it is an escape from a harsh reality. Many say they are just pursuing what they love rather than trying to make a politically relevant point. A young musician at the Al-Kamandjati organization in Ramallah told me she feels alive when she is playing her instrument, and that’s her reason for creating music.

But the politics here are hard to ignore. Even I experienced them firsthand. I wasn’t able, geographically, to move around as I pleased to interview artists, and it was solely because of my Palestinian passport. Although I was born in Jerusalem, I cannot enter the city without special permission because of my passport (I am a U.S. citizen as well, but because I also have a Palestinian passport, it overrides my American one in the eyes of the Israeli government). I was finally “awarded permission” to enter Jerusalem my tenth and last week in Palestine, but only after a long process of applying to the Israeli government for entrance. I was rejected twice. I was granted permission only after visiting an Israeli settlement to file for a special card, contacting one of the government ministries, and waiting over 3 hours at a factory farm/prison-style checkpoint before seeing the city.

With this kind of political discord, it’s obvious that for many artists, art and politics are entwined. One of the most memorable experiences I had this summer was my visit to Ofer prison in Beitunia with the artist Ibrahim. Ibrahim takes artillery the Israeli army fires and uses it to create beautiful works of art. As I was speaking to Ibrahim and helping him collect the tear gas canisters, one of the canisters shot by nearby Israeli jeeps landed right beside me. This experience is only a snapshot of what Palestinians living under military occupation must face in their lives.

I also got the opportunity to interview renowned Palestinian artist Sliman Mansour at the International Academy of Art in Al-Bireh, Palestine. I asked him why he is a political artist, with many of his paintings relating to the life of Palestinians under occupation. He paused for a second before telling me, “I did not choose to be a political artist. I paint what I see around me, and it is just what I have always done.”

Layla Quran is a sophomore from Greensville, N.C, majoring in global studies. She traveled to Palestine with the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship, the C.V. Starr Scholarship, and the Carolina Experience Enrichment Scholarship.
Dear London,

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry I ever left you. Please take me back.

You don’t understand, my parents made me come back to the States. They told me I was better off with Chapel Hill, that it was the more practical choice. Don’t get me wrong, Chapel Hill is wonderful. But it isn’t you.

What my parents don’t know and what there is no way of denying is that that summer changed me. I was excited to go abroad and get a much-needed fresh start, but what I didn’t expect to do was fall in love irrevocably.

The buildings that lined my street on my way to and from class were stout and grey, but not without their charm. They were not ornate but they were better: they were practical and real. This wasn’t a photo book but a place where real people lived, breathed, went to work, and led everyday lives. And maybe I could pretend for three weeks that I had that life too.

The tube map looks more like some twisted Rainbow Road level from Mario Kart, but it never led us astray.

Your parks and squares were spontaneous and refreshing oases of nature amidst solid concrete. I touched the walls of cathedrals that were a thousand years old; I still can’t wrap my mind around that.

The pubs opened my eyes to a whole new world where you can sit, talk, and enjoy a pint with your friends at the end of a long day. I cherish every half-remembered conversation about pre-med versus pre-law, the existence of souls, and poetry that was ever shared across a table at a Wetherspoon’s.

But I really fell in love with you the first time I walked alone from the pub down the street to our flat. For as long as I can remember, I longed to be an adult, able to go wherever I wanted to
WHY I WON’T NOW, OR EVER, GO PUNTING

If you go to Oxford and are looking for fun stuff to do, don’t listen to anyone who tells you “punting.” Just don’t. In fact, run as far away in the opposite direction as you can. That person is not to be trusted.

Punting is a sadistic British invention from the nation that brought you Spotted Dick and put boy bands back on the radio. At its essence, punting is using a 10-foot metal pole to steer a canoe-sized boat. That’s it. And let me tell you, it’s about as fun and easy as giving a root canal to a bear.

After a two second orientation which can be summarized as “Here is a pole, put in the water and go,” they send you off into the river to splash around. Except said pole is completely useless in navigating a river, especially fighting to go back upstream and not get charged for an extra hour. So basically, within the first five minutes you’re face first in a bunch of gnarly tree roots and branches, ricocheting from bank to bank.

I think the Brits tell unsuspecting tourists to do it so they can get a laugh out of us. The locals sunbathing along the bank watching as we crashed from muddy patch to tree roots then back in the mud sure were getting a good chuckle out of us.

This isn’t the kind of miserable experience where you’re grumpy now but you know you’ll laugh later or the type you know will be character building for you in the future (if I can go up and down a river with just a PVC pipe, I can do anything!). No, this is the type of ordeal that you come out of hating humanity just a tad bit more and cursing the guy who ever thought this was a good idea. But hey, at least it can’t get worse than punting.

and do whatever I wanted. But there, alone on Farringdon Road in my navy blue trench coat, I realized that someone could pass by me and think I was a local, coming home from work or on the way to the pub for drinks. I straightened my back and lifted my head.

From that moment on, wandering the city was like a drug. The feeling of security and comfort in such a large city was infectious. I knew we shouldn’t have walked all the way home from Piccadilly Circus at 2 am that one time but, to be fair, your bus system is a mess. On our way home, barely a soul crossed our paths on the dark streets, and if I stopped on the sidewalk for even just a second, it felt like the world was standing still.

So see, this is clearly all your fault, London. You were too beautiful to resist, too potent a power. As I write this, I keep trying to pinpoint what I love about you—the scones, the trains, the history, the adorable old British men—but it’s not enough.

Our time was cut short when I had to leave for Oxford, but the distance made this heart grow fonder. When we passed back through town on our way to Belfast and Amsterdam, you fit right back on like a glove, and it was like I never left. And that was when I knew that six weeks in this country would never be enough.

Now I just curl up in my room, cry into my tea, stuff my face with Digestives (great cookies, terrible name), and watch every British TV show I can find, just to try to recapture the magic. I’m even starting to find British humor funny. I’ve also been practicing my accent. I could at least pass for Scottish. The grey winter days that used to make me miserable now can’t come soon enough.

I know you’re not perfect. Your pubs close at midnight—what’s up with that? You don’t have biscuits (the southern kind, not cookies). But I’ll take the cold, rainy weather in the summer. I’ll even eat your food. Bangers and mash, fish and chips every day. As long as we can top it off with toffee pudding.

So wait for me. I promise I’ll be back one day. Until then, I will carry myself around campus and wherever else in life as if I was walking down Farringdon Road again.

Cheers.

Megan Harley is a junior from Charlotte, N.C., majoring in English and global studies. She traveled to London, England.
As a third-generation Korean American, I had a very monocultured experience growing up. Certainly, family traditions are a big part of this experience. I call my father “apa,” which means “dad” in Korean, and he has taught my siblings and me judo, a Japanese martial art meaning “gentle way” that is very popular in Korea, just as his father taught him. Still, the only culture that I had ever really known growing up was American culture. Despite my roots, I tended to associate Korea as simply an Asian country. Thus, it was with some skepticism that I embarked upon a “generational judo journey,” with my father and grandfather accompanying me as team coaches, two summers ago to compete in the 8th International Busan Judo Team Tournament with the USJF high school national team. I had no clear idea of what to expect, although both my father and grand­father assured me that it would be eye-opening, so I resolved to simply keep an open mind.

The first thing I noticed was that the Japanese and Koreans were absolutely incredible at judo, by far the best that I had ever seen. Even though I was honored as the MVP of the U.S. team, most of the other international players outclassed me in terms of experience and technique. Eventually, as I spent more time with members of other teams, I learned the reason behind the other fighters’ remarkable skills: essentially, it’s because that’s all they do. One of the teams I was introduced to represented a secondary school where instead of classes, they learned sports. I didn’t understand what that meant until they explained that their daily schedule includes intense judo training for hours every day but very little math, science or history. My father informed me that the intense competition for jobs in Korea meant that career specialization happens very early: often, children decide what secondary school to attend—and therefore what field of careers to pursue—before they leave middle school.

This practice of committing one’s life to a particular goal so early leads to an intense dedication toward that pursuit—something that is far less common in Western culture. The true meaning of this was revealed to me during a series of events, beginning with my second match of the tournament. We were fighting a team from Japan and by coincidence I was matched up with the son of the sensei, or coach, of the Japanese team. (Remember that my father and grandfather were the coaches of the U.S. team.) The result was an emotionally-charged match, especially for the Japanese player. After about 30 seconds of play, I threw him for an “ippon,” or full point, and won. He almost immediately broke down into tears.

After the match, we each went our separate ways, and I thought no more of it. This was not the case for the Japanese player, as I discovered during a friendly training session the following day. Over the course of
the two-hour session, he approached me no less than five times asking if I would play him again so that he might learn from me. I wasn’t able to agree as several others had been asking, so it wasn’t until after the practice ended that I approached him and asked if he wanted to play. His face immediately brightened and we walked to the center of the mat. Noticing what was about to happen, his teammates immediately set up a match timer while a small crowd quickly gathered; clearly, this was to be a sort of rematch of the previous day. However, after a few seconds of play, it was clear that I was the better player and again, I threw him. Since this wasn’t an official competition, he simply got up, and we continued this pattern for most of the remaining time.

Towards the end of the match, I noticed him becoming more and more agitated and it dawned on me that this friendly exhibition match meant far more to him than to me. As the timer counted down, his intensity only sharpened and he began to pant raggedly as tears welled up in his eyes again. With less than a minute left, without really thinking of what I was doing, instead of fighting his motion to block his attacks, I allowed myself to be moved by his pull and let him complete a beautiful throw that would have ended any match in real competition.

I will never forget the sheer elation on his face as we both got up. His throw clearly was more than just a throw for him. I believe it was a small validation for the long painful hours he had spent training and although it wasn’t for a medal or any international prestige, he was able to satisfy his own much deeper and ultimately more important internal drive. We bowed to show our respect for each other and then walked away. As I walked up to my father, he asked, “What happened? Why did you let him do that?”

“Because he wanted it more than I did. He deserved it,” I replied. The young man I had just played and his father approached us. His father wordlessly extended a business card to my father (a clear sign of respect in Japan) and then shook my hand.

“Arigato-gozaimashita” he said. Thank you very much.

The language barrier was too great for us to be able to say much more to each other, but the encounter was deeply moving.

Upon reflection, what made that particular encounter so important during a trip full of unique and memorable experiences—which included delicious, exotic meals and sand wrestling—was that this was the rawest display I have ever seen of someone’s passion. Seeing how devoted that Japanese player was to his craft has helped me dive into my own undertakings with more enthusiasm.

I am very glad I embarked upon this journey, and I feel richer for it. In some ways, the trip allowed me to appreciate things in American culture that I had always taken for granted. The freedom to follow one’s own passion in life is no small thing, and it was eye-opening to see how early and completely some people devote their lives toward a particular pursuit. Such early specialization can take away the freedom to follow one’s own path, but it allows for greater mastery of the chosen profession. Ultimately, the most rewarding part of the trip came not from learning the differences between these two cultures, but in starting to understand how those differences have shaped my own heritage.

Kai Shin is a sophomore from Charlottesville, Va., majoring in materials science. He traveled to Busan, South Korea.
Six kilometers seems like so much longer when balancing two overflowing pots of water on your head. This was all I could think as I trudged through the rolling Ganjam hills back to my field site for the summer, the small subsistence farming village of Gothagaon in the East Indian state of Odisha. Six kilometers is the average distance that a woman in the developing world travels to fetch water for household use, and this summer I was one of the nearly one billion women who did this on a daily basis. It was in Gothagaon, as far from my home in California and as close to my birthplace of Berhampur in Odisha as I could possibly be, that I began to uncover the myriad intricacies of development, gender equality, and water access.

I traveled to India the summer before my senior year of college as part of the World Bank funded Odisha Community Tank Management Project (OCTMP) to assess water resource conservation and community governance in the state of Odisha. Armed with an abundance of academic experience in the functioning of social-ecological systems in developing countries, I was resolute that even against the backdrop of India’s notoriously corrupt bureaucracy and crumbling infrastructure, I was going to produce concrete change for those who needed it most. This was going to be my capstone summer, the one that would allow me to delve into all of my passions – environmental policy, water quality, and gender empowerment – at once. With only the naïveté of youth to guide me, I was wholly unprepared for what I found.

I was born and raised in India, but all of my trips back after the monumental move to the United States had been filled with being shuttled between the houses of doting relatives and piquant curries during school vacations. This summer was different. It was my first encounter with the real Odisha - the one with crippling poverty, rigid caste lines, and endless hope. I spent the majority of my time in Gothagaon collecting stories of environmental disparities through household surveys and oral interviews while perched on a straw mat in the village square. Here, men met to talk about the harvest and their households in the evening as the sun set behind the stunning Ganjam mountains. As they candidly discussed government subsidies for
genetically modified seeds and the rising price of pesticides, I was overwhelmed by just how much traditional knowledge they possessed. For all of my environmental policy coursework, participation in local food symposiums, and insistence on the purchase of all items organic, I had never realized how valuable indigenous, context-specific knowledge was in effectively functioning agriculture.

However, the resounding theme in the village was one of scarcity. There was no water in the canals or the water tank, making it difficult to cultivate the vegetables and grains that were necessary for survival. This summer there were fewer of the opulent weddings and grand feasts than is customary during the rainy season. The paltry rains and collapsing irrigation network had resulted in a crop yield that fell dangerously short of expectations. Regardless of these unfortunate circumstances, villagers were unerringly gracious to their firengi (foreign) visitor. I learned to bathe at public tube wells next to women who expertly wove their worn-out cotton sarees so that no inch of skin was visible to passersby, hurriedly donning the obligatory aanchal to cover their head when village elders walked by. The girls of the village showed me how to roast parathas on biomass cookstoves, making the ten-kilometer walk to gather firewood from the forests at the base of the hills when we ran out of fuel.

At times, the summer was so physically and emotionally trying that I wanted to quit. As a woman working and traveling alone in rural Odisha, the burden of all my perceived feminine shortcomings had never seemed so immense. I was constantly reminded that the independence I had grown accustomed to by living in America was restricted by the mores of this society. Prominent politicians assured me on national television that it was the shrinking length of women’s skirts that provoked harassment, sentiments echoed by men in government offices and villages alike. This culturally-condoned misogyny should not have been possible in this lush homeland of mine, which has had a female prime minister and where there are major festivals dedicated to female deities. It was unacceptable to me that the world’s largest democracy was so dominated by men while the voices of women were heard only lightly and were based on arbitrary judgments of gender and worth. However, I was determined that I would not be cowed by these societal restrictions. I worked with women’s empowerment groups to assess the efficacy of livelihood programs and member-based microfinance groups for female-headed households and scheduled caste families, presenting my findings to OCTMP officials to assist in capacity building for these marginalized stakeholders. At the end of the summer, I had learned just as much about conservation and resource management from the daughters and wives of the village as their leaders.

Throughout the summer I attempted to frame every scene through the 55-300 mm lens of my camera, even ones I couldn’t quite capture. Eventually I understood when to put my camera down and pick up my notebook, and later still how to simply nod and listen. The villagers of Gothagaon taught me the merits of dedication and the importance of community, and for that I will always be grateful.

Shampa Panda is a senior from San Jose, Ca., majoring in environmental health science. She traveled to India with the Burch Fellowship and the Mahatma Gandhi Fellowship.
GIVING HOPE IN SHANGHAI

by WENDY LU

I trace little circles on Cindy Yi’s* wrist, too small and delicate for a nine-year-old, as she fumbles with a folded piece of origami paper. She sits on the hospital bed with her back curved over, her fingers shaking slightly as they press down to make a crease. Her arms, like her legs and torso, have purple bruises emerging from underneath her hospital gown – evidence of hematoma, a common sign of organ rejection. It is the summer of 2012, and I am an intern paying Cindy my daily visit to her hospital ward at Shanghai Children’s Medical Center.

“There’s your boat,” Cindy says, holding up a flowery cruiser against my blue volunteer uniform with a triumphant smile on her face. “All done.” Bored with this activity, she reaches over for some manga books to pass the time. Later, she’ll color in some pictures if she’s not feeling too tired.

In 2009, Cindy was diagnosed with acute myeloblastic leukemia. One year later, she received a bone marrow transplant and then immediately completed chemotherapy. But with emaciation and skin bruising from hematoma, her body is unable to accept the bone marrow into her system. Cindy remains one of many patients at Shanghai Children’s Medical Center who lives day-to-day in the department of hematology and oncology.

As a hospital intern coming from the United States, I wasn’t sure what to expect. Growing up in a Chinese-American household, I spent countless childhood summers in Shanghai. But I never stepped out of my comfort zone to really understand how China’s health care system worked or what daily life is like for long-term hospital patients until I spent that summer at Shanghai Children’s. Gradually, I became immersed within the hospital culture and fell in love with the people, whose inner strength continues to amaze me.

With only 66 hospital beds, lined side by side in each ward, the oncology unit reaches capacity quickly. On any given day, I find several tiny bald heads wandering over to the Ronald McDonald’s Fun House down the hall. We read comic books or play the keyboard together, and they laugh at my funny accent. Colorful stuffed animals line the walls and action figures litter the floor, waiting to be picked up. Other children, including Cindy, simply stay in their hospital ward, watching Pokemon on the television with blue face masks covering all but their eyes. Because she’s been undergoing treatments since her diagnosis at age 6, Cindy never went to school, but learned to read and write at home. She’s usually in her hospital bed, isolated from the other children to prevent infections. When a nurse comes in to check Cindy’s vital signs or refill her nutrient bag, I have to look away.

For every inpatient, there is at least one parent who stays with the child in the hospital every day. The days are long and there’s not much to do for the families except wait for test results or updates from the doctors, never knowing if it’ll be good or bad news. Sometimes, perhaps over a table of origami dolls or at neighboring hospital beds, parents talk to each other. Sitting quietly with my notebook, I listen as they exchange ideas about how to solve issues of nutrition and nurse care. Even if their children have different hematological conditions, the parents share the same pain, the same tired look.

“Others can’t understand us or imagine the pain we’re going through,” Cindy’s mom, Helen Yi, says. “Only parents in the same situation can understand this experience.” I catch her massaging both temples in the department lobby as she struggles to have a moment alone. But whenever her daughter is awake in the ward, perhaps poring over a graphic novel, Helen smiles.

Families practically living in this unit say stress and anxiety will always be there. Talking with each other helps. They’re reminded that some days will be better than others. They spread an inkling of hope, whatever that might be.

The end of my internship in July brought me tears and remorse from the parents who came to recognize my face and knew me as “the American girl.” But leaving wasn’t the only heartbreak. Watching the children and their families live through their own personal hell every day taught me that it doesn’t matter what country you come from, what language you speak or even how old you are. There are some feelings, some relationships that make the human experience universal. There are things like unconditional love that should never be taken for granted.

Wendy Lu is a junior from Greenville, N.C., majoring in psychology and journalism. She traveled to Shanghai, China.

*Names of patients and parents are changed for privacy.
SUMMER SOLSTICE

by ANNA YOUQI TANG

Shashliks were sizzling on the open fire. I carefully turned over the skewered, spice-coated chunks of red meat. The smoke slowly crept towards my face and became tangled in my hair. Midsummer nights in Latvia are a special reason for celebration. 25 kilometers outside the capital of Riga at a dacha, or summerhouse, in the countryside, I celebrated the summer solstice. I specifically remember the evening of June 23 as I sat down to a picnic table stacked with plates of caraway cheese, piragi or bacon rolls, pickled mushrooms, and of course, piles of shashliks. Mugs of kvass, a fermented wheat beverage, were filled to the brim. My host family, whom I called Baba and Dedo, sat across from me. The neighbors sat around us. Together, we raised our mugs to the night of Ligo.

The night of Ligo is followed by the day of Janis. Together, they commemorate the shortest night and longest day of the year.

Ligo and Janis are the most beautiful holidays I’ve ever celebrated. I still remember the bonfire that Dedo (Grandpa) made and the wild berries that Baba (Grandma) picked. Holidays in Latvia are all about keeping traditions alive, and on that night, no one slept since it was considered bad luck to sleep on the night of Ligo. Instead, everyone celebrated the summer. The bonfire was so bright that I had forgotten it was night at one point. The dachas were all decorated with oak branches, ferns, and flowers — an old tradition meant to ward off evil. I wore a wreath made from wildflowers that Baba made for me. I danced with the children around the bonfire. I listened as Dedo told the stories of the ancient Latvians. I helped Baba clear the table after everyone finished eating, only to bring out more food. I spoke to the guests in Russian because my Latvian was mediocre. The bonfire still glowed into the night.

At the dacha, time seemed to stop. There were no clocks on the walls. No television or computers. No electricity. No Wi-Fi. Just nature and just each other. The rising of the sun on the morning of Janis was beautiful. I ran up a hill behind the dacha with all the children and watched as the sun steadily rose and remained for the longest time that year. The dew soaked my light blue dress, and the flowers in my hair hung on for dear life as I danced with the children singing the songs of old Latvia.

On summer nights, I still hear the children’s laughter, see the neighbors patting each other on the backs over mugs of kvass, smell shashliks in the air, taste the caraway cheese. I can still feel the earth beneath my bare feet dancing in the dew. According to legend, the physical and spiritual worlds are closest to each other during Ligo. The night of Ligo, I felt my spirit come alive.

Anna Youqi Tang is a first year from Chapel Hill, N.C., majoring in chemistry and mathematics. She traveled to Latvia.

Far Left: Celebrating the summer solstice calls for special preparations that often take all day. Left: A splendid way to end any evening in Riga is to sit and listen to many of the city’s local bands.
Think you can’t afford an international 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 at UNC. Must have 2 semesters at UNC after the Burch experience.
**Stipend:** Up to $6,000
**Deadline:** February 28
**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. Must be a U.S. citizen.
**Stipend:** $5,000
**Deadline:** February 18
**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 eligible for Pell Grant with min 2.8 GPA; grad students who are NOT U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Preference for students going to China and India.
**Stipend:** Up to $1,500
**Deadline:** March 6
**More Info:** cgi.unc.edu/awards/cv-starr

**Program: Frances L. Phillips Travel Scholarship**
**Description:** For students with individual, self-designed/directed international travel experiences of 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:** $3,000 - $5,000
**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 returning undergrad or grad students.
**Stipend:** up to $3,000
**Deadline:** TBD (check website)
**More Info:** mgf.uncsangam.org

**Program: Study Abroad Office Scholarship Opportunities**
**Description:** For students to participate in study abroad programs approved by the College of Arts & Sciences.
**Requirements:** Full-time undergrad students accepted in a study abroad program. Specific requirements vary.
**Stipend:** Varies
**Deadline:** Early February for summer/fall programs; mid September for spring programs.
**More Info:** studyabroad.unc.edu

**Program: Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships (SURF)**
**Description:** For students to carry out research, mentored scholarship or creative performance projects during the summer.
**Requirements:** Full-time undergrad students in good academic standing. Projects must last at least 9 weeks (min. 20 hrs/wk).
**Stipend:** Minimum $3,000
**Deadline:** February 28
**More Info:** www.unc.edu/depts/our/students/fellowship_supp/surf.html

**Program: Robert E. Bryan Social Innovation Fellowships**
**Description:** For students who are interested in making a significant contribution locally, nationally or internationally through the creation of a community-based project.
**Requirements:** Any returning, full-time undergraduates and teams are eligible to apply.
**Stipend:** Up to $1,500
**Deadline:** mid October, TBD (check website)
**More Info:** ccpss.unc.edu/awards-recognition/bryan-social-innovation-fellowships

**Program: Sonja Haynes Stone Center Undergraduate International Studies Fellowship**
**Description:** For students pursuing academic research or study in an international setting.
**Requirements:** Full-time second-term freshmen, sophomores and juniors who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Preference for students with financial need from underrepresented groups and for programs in areas of the African Diaspora.
**Stipend:** Up to $2,500
**Deadline:** TBD (check website)
**More Info:** http://sonjahaynesstonectr.unc.edu/programs/forms/usif

**Program: Honors Thesis Research Grants**
**Description:** For students carrying out research for senior honors thesis projects.
**Requirements:** Undergraduates performing research for senior honors thesis. Students apply directly to their departmental Honors advisor.
**Stipend:** Minimum $500
**Deadline:** Varies by department
**More Info:** honors.carolina.unc.edu/current-students/honors-thesis-and-graduate-research/honors-thesis-research-grants

**Program: Phillips Ambassadors Program**
**Description:** For students participating in summer or semester study abroad programs in Asia that are approved by the College of Arts & Sciences.
**Requirements:** Students accepted to a UNC study abroad program in Asia with min 3.0 GPA. 25% of scholarships awarded to qualified business majors/minors. Students going to China and India receive additional consideration.
**Stipend:** Up to $7,500
**Deadline:** Early February for summer/fall programs; mid September for spring programs.
**More Info:** studyabroad.unc.edu/phillips

**Program: CGI International Internship Awards**
**Description:** For students who wish to implement a summer internationally focused internship.
**Requirements:** Full-time undergraduate students returning to UNC. Graduate students pursuing a master’s degree.
**Stipend:** $500 - $3,000
**Deadline:** March 6
**More Info:** cgi.unc.edu/awards/internship

**Program: Carolina Undergraduate Health Fellowships**
**Description:** For undergraduates to create a self-designed health-related project anywhere in the world.
**Requirements:** Full-time returning undergrad students. Projects must have a health-related focus. Preference for students with financial need.
**Stipend:** $1,000 - $3,000
**Deadline:** March 6
**More Info:** cgi.unc.edu/awards/cuhf

**Program: Office of Global Health Funding Opportunities**
**Description:** For undergraduates to pursue international/global health internships.
**Requirements:** Varies
**Stipend:** Varies
**Deadline:** Varies
**More Info:** www.sph.unc.edu/globalhealth/students/student_funding.html

See global.unc.edu for more information.
PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

1 // Meredith Edgerton; Azores, Portugal. 2 // Chelsea Boorman; Santorini, Greece. 3 // Mary Stevens; London, England.
4 // Laura Brush; Amsterdam, the Netherlands. 5 // Ryan Christopher Aves; Sevilla, Spain. 6 // McKay Roozen, Yunnan Province, China.
The Study Abroad Office at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill provides opportunities for students to travel all across the world. The map shows the diverse travel experiences of students. This does not include international programs offered by other units.

For Year Long 2011, Fall 2011, Spring 2011, Summer 2011, SH Year 2011
UNC students travel all across the globe. The numbers on the map reflect participation in the Year Long 2011, Fall 2011, Spring 2011, Summer 2011, and Southern Hemisphere Year 2011 Study Abroad programs.

For Year Long 2012, Fall 2012, Spring 2013, Summer 2012, and SH Year 2013 Study Abroad programs.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

Over 100 students

30-100 students

10-29 students

Fewer than 10 students

SOURCE: Mark Nielsen, Information Systems Director, Study Abroad Office
A building directly in the center of Melbourne's cylindrical mall: Melbourne Central. Photo by Jordan Moses.