After working with Passport for a year and a half, it has been impossible to ignore my itch to study abroad. Every issue I pore over pictures of the Italian countryside and stories of diving in the cool waters of the Galapagos Islands. The tantalizing images and enticing articles had me bouncing out of my seat. I wanted to be among the ranks of the well traveled. When I couldn’t take it any longer and finally got the chance, I embarked on my own study abroad. I spent this past summer in Amman, Jordan through one of UNC’s study abroad programs. I can’t emphasize enough the impact this decision has had on my life. How I view the Islamic religion and the structure of Arabic society was completely altered after immersing myself in the culture. My Arabic language skills improved and I established long-lasting friendships overseas. I wouldn’t have gained these experiences without going the extra mile and studying abroad. I hope these next pages inspire you to open your mind and take some chances, just as they did for me. — Georgia Walker

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Cover photo by Jessica Tobin
A pair dances the tango in Plaza Dorrego, Buenos Aires, one afternoon. Buenos Aires is home to the tango.

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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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also in this issue
Sometimes I still have trouble pinpointing exactly where I am on a map. I purchased a round-trip flight to Chicago for Labor Day, and had to remind myself several times that I don’t need my passport. It’s just a domestic flight.

Studying abroad in Europe, for all its overpriced pay-as-you-go phone stunts, security lines that round corners, and Ryanair flights with non-existent arm rests and tray tables, can still be summed up in one word—adventure.

My classmates and I constantly repeated one joke when stepping off the runway at ungodly hours of the night on those miserable red-eyes—“I’ve never looked better in (insert city name here)” Every city was a fresh sight to see, the first time to step foot on Czech, Polish, or Irish soil, another corner to turn and stumble upon an ancient ruin, hidden castle or famous author’s grave.

Yes, international travel can be daunting. After all, you need your passport, identification, ticket, and must always, always heed pickpockets and scam artists. En route to a concert, my compañera (roommate in Spanish) turned to listen intently to a conversation on the metro, and by the time she turned back around, her purse had nothing in it except a few coins and some lint at the bottom.

But although the world is not always the friendliest of places, the excitement is greater than the risk. As you bumble your way half-asleep, speaking Spanish to meet your host-mom, an epiphany arises—you are abroad. You are finally here. And you will not be returning home for at least five months. This was the first time in my life when my parents did not know exactly where I was, down to the square mile. In Chapel Hill, where I venture no further than Carrboro to grocery shop or Raleigh to meet up with friends, the foreign idea (no pun intended) of jet setting away for the weekend was a novelty.

I cried when I saw David—the perfection was more than I could handle. The Cliffs of Moher literally took my breath away, and I don’t think I’ll ever be able to shake that feeling of evil and monstrosity that permeates from Auschwitz. Travel makes the exotic seem reachable and the world seem simultaneously daunting in size and comfortably navigable.

My roommate’s Moroccan boy friend who waited at a restaurant similar to Chili’s humbled me with his simple kindness and willingness to listen to my bumbled Spanish. Our tour guide in Budapest could speak six languages. We communicated with a seventy-five-year-old Italian bed and breakfast owner, Maria Lucia, solely using sign language and hugs. There is a beautiful world out there, itching to be seen and photographed and appreciated. People are people everywhere—kindness and goodwill translate to every dialect. So get your paperwork done, book that ticket, and get exploring! And make sure you always have your purse in sight….¡Hasta luego!

Madeline Merrill is a senior from Dallas, Texas, majoring in English. She traveled across Europe.
DEAD LEGS
The Challenge of Not Moving

BY WILSON SAYRE

I hear the bell ringer’s footsteps before I make out the familiar high-pitched peal of his bell. I check my watch and am once again surprised by how much more pointy punctuality is at three in the morning.

My plan — to get up two minutes early and silently scurry to the only women’s bathroom, on the other side of the complex — is pushed aside. The bell has signaled the start of the day here, and the bathroom will just have to wait. Considering, I went to bed a little over three hours ago, there is no pressing emergency. I force myself to do a few stretches that make me feel like I am ripping my leg muscles in two, and I hobble out of the storage room, the only place I am allowed to sleep as a female guest. I cast one last glance at the hat I won’t be able to wear again until I leave the gates of this place. I walk out into the pitch-black winter night, and my shaved scalp joins in with the various riots my body is putting on.

I had come to Tofukuji, a Rinzai Zen Monastery in Kyoto, Japan, five days prior for the intensive meditation period called Sesshin and wanted to leave ever since. The sheer physicality of what I and 12 other people, monks, were required to do every day was daunting. It consisted of 13 hours of Zazen, or seated meditation, with little to no sleep — depending how well sleep and pain got along with each other. After so many hours of sitting, you get the sensation that death has grasped your lower body, a stillness not merely of the blood that used to circulate there, but coming from some deeper place. Even more than the physical effects, though, was the combined psychological and emotional toll associated with sitting with oneself for so many hours. Yet mental control was not something I ever particularly prided myself on. The attempts to force myself to think of nothing — the paradox well noted — were often drowned out by the struggle to suppress the constant inner cry for help. So I went about replacing these thoughts with justifications for why I was there, rationalizing and idealizing what I was doing at the moment.

What was I doing there?

I thought much later about how ironic it was to travel halfway around the world to sit in a tiny monastic complex for days on end as opposed to hitting the sights and expanding my cartographic horizon. And yet travel, more than most things, makes it starkly clear how little we ever actually are in a place. We hardly ever spend more than a few moments immersed in the present. We are too worried about predicting the future, remembering the past or teleporting ourselves to academic other-wheres. It is so easy to get transported to Middle-earth or Narnia while ignoring the beach I am resting on, the mountain I am climbing, or the monastery I am sitting in. So what does our mind do when asked, sometimes not so politely, to do nothing, to go nowhere and to just be? Do you possibly go more places, push more boundaries and see more than you would with mere physical travel? Should travel be measured in miles traversed and heights reached, or by other metrics? Maybe travel starts here, now, with the unlimited ways in which this moment can be revelatory and new. Maybe those dead legs took me more places than I thought.

Wilson Sayre is a senior from Raleigh, N.C., majoring in philosophy. She traveled to Kyoto, Japan, with the Carolina Scholarship, Phillips Scholarship, and the US Bridging Scholarship.

Above: Tofukuji in Kyoto, Japan.

Photos from Around the World

1 // Scott Davis; Wallenstein Gardens in Prague, Czech Republic. 2 // Ashley Wilkes; Maasai Boma near Tangerie National Park, Tanzania. 3 // James Ding; the Lake District, England. 4 // James Ding; Agra, India.
On the weekends, my American friends on the program and I would go sightseeing, experiencing the most beautiful parts of St. Petersburg. We went to so many gorgeous cathedrals I doubt any church in America could impress me anymore. We saw palaces filled with gilt and splendor, ballet and opera shows, cute little cafés filled with trendy young Russians, hip and happening bars, and so much more. I saw so much this summer and felt even more.

I felt a deep and abiding love for Russia and her people. It is impossible to completely immerse oneself in a culture and not develop some depth of feeling for it. And indeed, I grew to love the Russians. I loved them for their aloofness toward strangers, their intense loyalty toward their friends, and for their carefree attitudes. I loved them for their strange meals, their delicious pastries, and their patriotism. I loved my Russian friends, and leaving them in addition to the city of St. Petersburg itself was almost more than I could bear.

I felt a sense of marvel and wonderment. Almost every aspect of Russia filled me with a sense of awe—how could a place so familiar yet so alien exist in our world? How is it possible to create cathedrals of such beauty, mosaics of such perfection? How is it possible for me to feel so at home in such a foreign place?

Because I felt at home there. Strangely, inexplicably, I made a home in a country that is divided by numerous canals and rivers, all of which freeze in winter. Luckily, I was in St. Petersburg in the summer and did not have to endure the infamous Russian winter. And yet, summer in St. Petersburg is very much like a summer in the States. The weather is uncharacteristically sunny in the morning to stormy in the afternoon.

I lived in the north end of the city and sipped champagne with my Russian host family. Every morning, I commuted to Herzen University for classes, an over-an-hour ordeal that involved a bus, a metro, some absurdly long escalators, and a considerable amount of walking.

And I loved every minute of it. I would sit on the bus and watch the city of Peter the Great pass by while listening to Russians speak all around me. I would sit on the metro and practice my “Russian public transit face” in order to blend in, a combination of sternness and downright anger. I would stand on the escalators and watch people going the opposite direction. Inevitably, many of them would either be making out with their significant other, reading, or staring back.

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Never in my life have I appreciated a single apple as much as I did that day. I stood on a boulder, among thousands of other boulders that moved in a jagged line up and up and up toward the top of the beast that was Mount Carrantuohill, the tallest mountain in Ireland. I had been walking for about two hours through what I might have called a swamp if it hadn’t been so green. Green everywhere, all around you and above your head and underneath your feet, teasing your eyes so that you thought it was safe to step there. But it wasn’t safe to step anywhere, and my black yoga pants were drenched with mud from the knees down, my new white tennis shoes now unrecognizable. It had rained that morning, as it did most mornings in Ireland, but we didn’t care. Swamp or not, we were on a mission, and this was just the beginning.

We had set off that morning from our hostel, armed with a single book bag containing our supplies for the day: a loaf of bread, the remnants of a jar of Nutella, a gallon of water, an apple I had bought from the hostel snack bar, and all of our cameras. The seven of us had crammed into the taxi, laughing, high on the eagerness of what lay ahead and slightly hung over from the night before, each time we had looked at the driver where we were headed. He gave us a look of alarm and asked us if we were sure.

“Yes, we’re sure.”

“Are you wearing hiking boots?”

“Well... no.” In fact, one of us was wearing a pair of old Chuck Taylors. Had we thought this through at all?

The driver gave an unnerving chuckle and pulled the taxi out of the drive. No turning back now.

When we arrived, we piled out of the taxi and spotted a path that looked pretty promising. We followed it over a small bridge and past a particularly unfriendly goat tied to a stake. When the path opened up, it was as if we had stepped into a sea of green, with green sedge hills and gigantic green mountains forming an outer boundary that seemed to keep it all from overflowing. This was our backdrop as we made our way towards Carrantuohill, the mightiest of the surrounding mountains.

After about two hours of sliding, falling, stumbling, and stopping for group photo ops in the grassy mud, we had made our way to the base of the mountain. On the way there, we had noticed signs pointing to something called “Devil’s Ladder.” Purely from the sound of its name, we decided that whatever Devil’s Ladder was, we were going to make every effort to avoid it.

We now stood looking up at a wall of boulders, sliced through the middle by a small stream, that snaked their way up about three-quarters of the mountain before giving way to a grassy hillside that led to Carrantuohill’s summit. We were already exhausted, sweating, winded from the trek just to get here—the bottom of the mountain. As I looked up at Carrantuohill’s mountainside, already too aware of our lack of resources, I began to accept that we probably wouldn’t make it all the way up. And that might be okay. At least we tried.

We decided we should probably refuse before starting the climb. I remembered, with a rush of joy, that I had an apple in the bag waiting to be munched. And munched I did. One friend remarked she had heard somewhere that an apple can give you more energy than a cup of coffee. Rest assured, this theory is 100 percent true.

By some miracle, that small red apple gave me just enough energy to make it, step by grueling step, up the side of the mountain. The climb was nothing short of treacherous: sometimes I had to pull myself up by the arms, other times I had to step straight through the stream that ran over my feet and made each step a gamble. Other, more professional hikers breezed past us with their hiking boots and their hiking sticks, giving us sympathetic and amused looks. When we made it to the point where the boulders subsided into a calmer, more welcoming hillside of grass, we took a moment to look around, and accept congratulations from a family who was resting in front of us.

“Congrats, that’s quite the climb,” the father said to us. “You made it up Devil’s Ladder!”

For a few seconds we all gaped at each other in silence, then burst out laughing. We had climbed the Devil’s Ladder. By accident.

Feeling invincible after having made it up that climb, we started walking up the last portion of the mountain. Adrenaline, it seemed, had done its part in distracting us from the pain in our thighs, calves, and forearms, and this seemingly docile portion of the climb proved to be the worst. Our legs were wobbly, our bodies exhausted and overheated. After multiple breaks, we were finally in sight of the wooden cross that marked the summit, so overwhelmingly giant now compared to how small it seemed from where we had started at the bottom.

The view from the top was incredible. The Lakes of Killarney, the mountain range, the town, and endless miles beyond were all in full view, covered at times by a layer of clouds that glided beneath us. We had made it. We had conquered the monster that was Carrantuohill. We were looking down on the country of Ireland from its rooftop.

We would celebrate that night by ordering entirely too many pizzas, drinking entirely too much cider, and getting entirely too little sleep. But to be honest, I’m still celebrating. I climbed the tallest mountain in Ireland, with a little help from my amazing friends and one red apple.

Karly Brooks is a junior from High Point, N.C., majoring in journalism. She traveled to Ireland.
This is where Hua Dan comes in. Since its founding in 2004, Hua Dan's scope and influence has skyrocketed, reaching out to over 20,000 migrant workers, their children, and earthquake-affected rural communities. The primary mission of this incredible nongovernmental organization is to use interactive theater as a means of individual and community growth.

While eating dinner the night before camp ended, a huge rainbow began to shimmer out on the horizon. As soon as the kids saw it, they dropped their chopsticks and, screaming with delight, ran outside to catch a glimpse.

It was a beautiful moment to ring the closing of a beautiful experience. As we gazed up at the rainbow, growing brighter and more radiant with each passing moment, one of the little girls walked up to me and tugged on my sleeve. In Chinese she asked, "Are you going back home when the camp is over?" I looked down at her and told her yes. She gave me a sad smile and whined, "Whyyyyy?"

It was a heartbreaking moment but at the same time, a heartwarming reminder of all the close relationships that I had established with the kids at the camp. It reaffirmed my passion for working with, teaching, and interacting with the children and my coworkers. It reminded me of how far I had come in my ability to communicate and break down the language barrier, thanks to the CET's Beijing language program, and in my persistence and desire to develop a greater amount of patience with myself while constantly improving. As I looked up at that rainbow, a huge wave of awe and gratitude washed over me. Awe at the incredible journey that I had embarked on and gratitude for the truly life-changing six months that the UNC Weir Fellowship had given me.

Ashley Rivenbark is a junior from Charlotte, N.C., studying Romance languages and Asian studies. She traveled to China.

CHINA
Population: 1.3 billion
Capital: Beijing
Language: Chinese, Mandarin, and others
SNAPSHOTS FROM SBAA ROUADI:

*a reporter’s notebook*

BY ASHTON SONGER

“Welcome to the Farm”

I had prepared myself for the worst, which was fine with me anyway—strange foods, Mother Nature as a toilet, and no electricity. I was reluctantly anticipating an inability to participate in activities that males were involved in, like soccer. Weight loss was even on my list of expectations, as I was sure vomiting was probable. Though I thought I was being safe by preparing for “the worst,” as Badr says, I should always “expect the unexpected” because my preconceived notions were blasted away.

Green fields and olive trees line the nearly mile-long driveway leading to “dar Bouchikhi,” my home for a week in Sbaa Rouadi, a rural Moroccan village near Fes in the region Moulay Yacoub. A country song by Luke Bryan dominates my thoughts “Welcome to the Farm.”

The first hours at our new home are filled with laughter and confusion. A drawing of a family tree is necessary for us to understand the composition of our large new family.

Daybreak

The sounds of life on the farm stir—the women work to prepare breakfast and the men set out to tend the livestock. One brother, Faissal, leaves for work in Fes. Outside, I witness fresh milk being poured through a cloth filter into a bucket. Mama approaches with a soda bottle topped with a nipple and six-year-old Marwan appears with a tiny black-and-white lamb. Well aware of the routine, it drops to its knees, suckling furiously at the warm milk. Nejia gestures that its mother is dead. While we feed the chickens, the milkman arrives to pick up three large containers to sell in Fes.
Racing

“Yella, yella!” I said to the young girl running beside me. The finish line was in sight and I had been talking to her for the last 400 meters. In my broken Arabic and exaggerated hand movements, I tried to demonstrate how to eliminate her side stitches through breathing. I grabbed her arm and sprinted ahead, raising it as we took one last leap to the end.

Fortunately, she was not one of the girls who dropped to the ground, mid-race from dehydration and heat exhaustion; however, it was evident that, though the boys spend hours playing soccer under the sun, the girls have little knowledge or experience with sports and health. And it’s not an opportunity oft afforded them.

More than 100 women of all ages assembled early Sunday for a race promoting women’s rights and international human development. Despite good intentions, it was a helter-skelter event. We were ushered in and out of a small compound for nearly an hour, lining up, then scattering again. Groups of girls were dressed in an array of sweats, hijabs, soccer uniforms and even slippers. They surrounded me, repeating phrases to foreign ears, laughing and gesturing wildly, desperate for me to understand. They howled at my inability to communicate, but welcomed me in the cheering and clapping anyway.

Thread

Friendship bracelets. Who knew something so simple could serve as such a strong bridge across communication barriers? What’s more, it was the engagement derived from teaching, from showing someone else how. No matter where we went, the Moroccan women and children were fascinated by our recent prescription for road trip boredom. They didn’t just want a colorful woven bracelet, they wanted to know how to make one—and that curiosity is exactly what brought us all together. It didn’t matter that most of us have limited Arabic skills, or that they have limited English, it was the time spent together that transcended all words. Time and thread.

Kurra

Barsa or Madrid? It’s the question every young Moroccan boy asks amidst a game of soccer. But today it was Moroccan-American female soccer face-off on the field. In the back of my competitive mind, I feared a blow-out match—this is Morocco, soccer is what they do. For some of us, our shoes had never grazed a soccer ball outside of gym class. After singing our respective national anthems, both teams took the dusty field. Other Moroccans surrounded the field, cheering for both sides, while we played a hard-fought game. Nothing matched the competitive spirit, teamwork and camaraderie of the Moroccan girls. After a tied contest, the American team lost 3-2 in penalty kicks. For the Moroccans, it was a time of joyous celebration.

Listen

We entered a classroom packed with Moroccan women, some with babies, still nursing. As we delve into discussion, there is dissension fueled by passion for change. Busy from sunscreen to sundown, these women are the ears that make the village work. And they are angry. They do not fulfill the submissive stereotype in this patriarchal society. They are tired of being exploited by politicians. They are concerned with healthcare, housing and their children’s access to education. They are neither jaded, nor disassociated. They are angry and they are using their voices. Soon, more women, children and a few men line up at the windows, peering in to see what is happening in that tiny room, pondering the question we all have—“What is going on?”

Later, in an even smaller room, other women villagers display their livelihoods, and their hearts. Working for weeks on kafan belts and embroidery pieces, they earn roughly $12 per piece. They ask us how they can do better, but our American opinion does not avail the distrust of their own husbands, sons and brothers. One young man who had been listening from the doorway asked, “Does that mean we’re all thieves?”

And one of the last things Bouchta, my host brother, said to me, “You are the first Americans that I know. I see the politicians on TV, and I do not like them. But you have changed my view.” Man, I can’t wait to get back.

Ashton Songer is a senior from Norwood, N.C., majoring in photojournalism. She traveled to Morocco with the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship, Canady International Scholarship and SIT In-State Student Award.
The Tranquilo Life

BY ABIGAIL BREWER

Tranquilo. Translated literally, it’s the Spanish word for calm, but on the Galápagos Islands, it’s a word used to describe the feeling of being awe-struck. I had my first encounter with tranquilo after arriving in Puerto Chino, a beach on San Cristóbal Island. Ever since our plane touched down in the Galápagos, the locals had been insisting that my group visit the “most beautiful beach on the island.” Evidently, our taxi driver thought it was a beautiful place too.

“¡Muy tranquilo!” he asked excitedly as six of us hopped into the truck. “Muy tranquilo!”

Once we got to the beach, I sunk my feet into the soft, white sand and looked out over the turquoise water. As I watched schools of fish allowing it to fly gracefully through the rippling water, I realized that it wasn’t going to suddenly begin to panic.

As elated as I was to make it back safely on the dinghy, a part of me was wishing the experience wasn’t over. If I hadn’t plunged into the unknown, I never would have experienced the adrenaline rush from being so close to some of the most interesting and unique fauna in the world. As we were leaving the mouth of León Dormido, we were lucky enough to see four juvenile hammerheads enjoying the tranquil waters. As elated as I was to make it back safely on the dinghy, a part of me wished the experience wasn’t over. If I hadn’t plunged into the unknown, I never would have experienced the adrenaline rush from being so close to some of the most interesting and unique fauna in the world.

After a two-hour boat ride back to the harbor of San Cristóbal, I was exhausted. That night, I sat down to a dinner of rice and fish in my host family’s restaurant. My brother asked how my day was with the sharks. My stomach was doing back flips, my curious nature left me with no choice but to look down to get a glimpse of the shark. About eight feet under me, the six-foot Galápagos shark stood motionless in the rippling water. As soon as I realized that it wasn’t going to suddenly jump up eight feet and tear me apart, I was able to relax and appreciate its beauty.

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Abigail Brewer is a junior from Wilmington, N.C., majoring in multimedia. She traveled to San Cristóbal, Galápagos Islands and León Dormido in Ecuador.

Our tour guide, thankfully, noticed that our professor’s jokes weren’t convincing the remaining students to leave the safety of the boat. He looked at us and said, “This is the best snorkeling you will find in the Galápagos.” But these words of encouragement weren’t successful in coaxing me into the water either. As a last-ditch effort, he said, “Tranquilo.” I don’t know what it was, but something about this word allowed me to leave my inhibitions behind and risk being the lunch of a shark.

Our tour guide instructed us to follow him through the channel and to stay away from the landmasses that surrounded us. Upon entering the channel, we spotted a beautiful eagle ray with white spots. Its pectoral fins moved like the wings of a bird, allowing it to fly gracefully through the water. As I watched schools of fish and solitary sea turtles swim under the vast landscape of lava rocks that surrounded the beach until darkness began to fall. At one point, a Galápagos shark stood motionless in the water, my stomach was doing back flips, my curious nature left me with no choice but to look down to get a glimpse of the shark. About eight feet under me, the six-foot Galápagos shark stood motionless in the rippling water. As soon as I realized that it wasn’t going to suddenly jump up eight feet and tear me apart, I was able to relax and appreciate its beauty.

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I was so engrossed in the sea life that I forgot about the potentially dangerous creatures lurking in the waters beneath me. That is, until I heard our guide call out excitedly, “Look, it’s a Galápagos shark!” With those words, I began to panic.

Before coming on the trip, I had read an article about how these endemic sharks are known to get pretty up close and personal with humans. I didn’t have any choice but to keep swimming forward until I got out of the channel. Since our group was snorkeling in pack formation, we were constantly kicking each other with our awkward fins. Now that I knew there was a shark in the water, my stomach dropped whenever a classmate accidentally kicked me.

Despite the fact that my stomach was doing back flips, my curious nature left me with no choice but to look down to get a glimpse of the shark. About eight feet under me, the six-foot Galápagos shark stood motionless in the rippling water. As soon as I realized that it wasn’t going to suddenly jump up eight feet and tear me apart, I was able to relax and appreciate its beauty.

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studying abroad is as much a personal journey as it is a physical one. in prague, i stepped out of my comfort zone and into a completely new world. in leaving behind everything i knew—and everything i knew about myself—i learned that i knew nothing. not even the nature of my own soul.

i didn’t realize this until my last morning there. my friends and i had finished a night of dancing, and we stood on a bridge, in the 5 a.m. breeze, watching our final european sunrise. my roommate passed me the flat ends of the last beer of the trip. bitter and warm. kind of like the air.

around us, different pockets of people marched back to their homes and their hotels. a bunch of men ran past us, yelling in german at a couple girls. some tourists walked slowly by, heads slumped, just trying to find their way home to bed. that moment exemplified study abroad. studying abroad is a balancing act. it’s a mixture of the strange and the new with the familiar and the habitual. it’s experiencing familiar ideas in new settings. it’s finding a routine in a city you’ve never seen before. it’s jogging—and then castles. it’s class—and then goulash. it’s ordering three beers—and then not being able to pronounce the word for “three.”

but over six weeks, the foreign and the familiar blended together so that i could no longer distinguish them. for six weeks, the foreign became the familiar. i lived in europe and hardly thought about north carolina. i simply lived—in the moment. in prague.

scott davis is a senior from hendersonville, n.c., majoring in english. he traveled to the czech republic.
22: closed my eyes for a moment. How could I sleep? I had a 12:15 am departure time. But I only got to sleep by 12:30 am. I am staring in panic at the empty train station. Nothing is easy. My short-lived personal crisis served to illustrate something about what it really means to be in China. I originally visited the Middle Kingdom to carry out an independent project on migrants displaced by the construction of Three Gorges Dam, one of the world’s largest hydroengineering projects. The dam uprooted an estimated 1.3 million people from the region alongside the Yangzi River that runs through the heart of the country. I studied and lived with about 100 people who had migrated from Wushan, a town perched on the side of a mountain overlooking the mighty Yangzi in Chongqing Municipality, to a nondescript factory village outside of Foshan, a mid-level metropolis in the southeastern province of Cantonese-speaking Guangdong. As I lived and spoke with these villagers, it became clear how devastating this displacement experience was. The move to Guangdong may have provided them with some economic opportunities, but it also scattered families to opposite corners of the country and placed migrants in the middle of regions where languages and cultures were far from recognizable. Unlike me in my train station, this village was experiencing tremendous language and cultural barriers without even leaving their home country. Until my own experience with utter helplessness, I could not begin to imagine how the migrants must have felt when they arrived in this little village that was so different from their hometown. They arrived alone, they could not speak the local language, and they were not welcome. The locals did not care to bother with the new additions to their community. They believed these migrants to be rude, lazy, and unintelligent. After the relocation, the lives of these transplants were now hard to come by; close friends and family were left behind or were themselves moved to a distant part of China. In short, when my friends from Wushan arrived in Guangdong, they felt about the same way I did stuck in that train station, but unlike me there was no possibility for a quick change of plans, no friend waiting with open arms for them to run into—this terrifying situation was the reality of their new lives. If anything in China was going to be impossible, I thought, it would be the chance of a happy ending for these people trying to start anew. But despite all of the hardship, eleven years after the relocation, the village is doing better. Most parents have factory jobs and can pay to send their children to school. Life is different and still very challenging, but the Wushan migrants are getting by with distinctly Chinese determination.

BY STEFANIE SCHWEMLEIN

“In that moment I felt I had failed. How could I be so ignorant about my own country?”

12:30 am. I am staring in panic at my watch. I pull out my train ticket. 12:15 am departure time. But I only closed my eyes for a moment! How is this possible? I spin around in my seat—the sea of grungy metallic seats is almost completely void of people. A young man is sitting near my gate. I ask him what I already know: has the train already left? Of course it has. I dump my pathetic and exhausted body into the seat next to this Chinese man and begin to bawl. I pull out a map of China, staring at it while my eyes splatter tears all over my potential destinations. I attempt to process the names of Chinese cities and my potential destinations. I am a 20-year-old foreign female with no travel companions and few contacts in this country. It is the dead of night and I am obviously distressed. This is a bad situation by any metric. My eyes, still frantically scanning my eyes, still frantically scanning my full country map of China, suddenly settle on a city where I know a fellow Tar Heel used to live and where I hope she still does. With little time to consider my chances, I race out to buy a ticket for the last train of the night. It would be a seven-hour ride, but at least it would give me a place to sleep and something of a destination. I realize that I have never felt so alone and helpless.

At this time of night, only a few trains depart from this wayside station, and most stops are nowhere near my final destination. I am a student of Chinese language. I can read and write in Chinese, but I am not fluent. I did not realize then how appropriate my choice was. Later, whenever I pull out a map of China, staring at it alone, sleep-deprived, hungry, and trying to communicate in my still uncomfortable second language of Mandarin Chinese. I am an outsider and one whom few in China have the patience to help.

In China, everything is possible, but never in the way you expect it to be. Whether you are a backpacker hungry for adventure or as a villager in the town your ancestors have inhabited for centuries, everyone in China is eventually a daily victim to its curveballs. One moment the country leaves you electrified with its endless possibilities, and beauty. Jiuzhaigou, Sichuan Province, China.

Stefanie Schwemlein is a junior from Kernersville, N.C., majoring in environmental health sciences. She traveled to China with the Robertson Scholars Program.
I’ve never liked Facebook. It’s just a waste of time. No, worse than that: an exercise in egotism. How many photos and status updates must you post to legitimize yourself as a fun, outgoing person who is more fun and outgoing than the rest of your Facebook friends? I mean, that’s why people love Facebook: it allows us to showcase the highlights of our lives.

At least, that’s what I thought before I studied in Thailand this summer. Only a week into my travels, I came to truly appreciate Facebook. It all began with a tuk tuk ride into Little India, just outside Bangkok.

For the uninitiated in tuk tuk travel, a tuk tuk is basically a tin can on three wheels. And the tuk tuk drivers — or at least 100 percent of the ones that I came across — rival NASCAR drivers in speed and sharp turns. The drive to Little India was no exception.

I’d spent the afternoon with my friends Kristin and Maili, shopping in Chinatown, browsing through rows of tea and medicinal shops. After a while, Kristin mentioned that she’d like to tour a few temples. After all, there’s only so many tea and medicinal shops you can pass through before you tire of strong herbal smells. In a country with a population that is about 94 percent Buddhist, visiting a few temples in the area sounded like a good idea. So Kristin flipped through her guidebook, and we narrowed our options. We chose Wat Chakkrawat for its nearby location and quaint description. This “simple temple” would not rival the Wat Pho (displaying a long gold statue of a reclining Buddha, stretching from one end of the temple to the other) or the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (where the Buddha is actually made of jadeite), both of which we’d seen the previous weekend, but we thought it would give us an idea of what a typical Thai temple looked like.

And so, we took a whirlwind tuk tuk ride through Chinatown, passing shoe shops and meat vendors at breakneck speeds and bumping down potholed roads before we came to a slamming stop outside the temple gates.

The author (Emily Palmer) with Nueng inside the monastery courtyard, shortly after meeting for the first time.

I remember very little of the Wat Chakkrawat, except for a long pathway leading from the entrance gates, past the monastery enclosure and up to the temple proper. We never actually made it inside the temple itself.

Instead, as we walked past the monastery, Maili came to a stop. A monk dressed in saffron robes was standing by the gate, holding a book in one hand. She made a motion to request a picture with him, and to our surprise, he agreed. I snapped the picture and headed for the temple, but Maili was already deep in conversation with the monk.

He had just started learning English (a month previously) and was already proficient — a fact which made me, for the span of five or six seconds, actually consider joining a Buddhist monastery. Maybe then I’d finally become fluent in Spanish, a language I’ve been practicing since elementary school.

At this point, Kristin and I had entered into the conversation with Maili and the monk. He said that he’d never had the chance to practice his English with native speakers, so he invited us inside the monastery courtyard, where we sat at a checkerboard table and talked for an hour.

The monk, who introduced himself as Santint, “but my friends call me Nueng because I am an only child” (nueng means “one” in Thai), said that he had entered the monastery at age 10 and hadn’t seen his parents, who live in a faraway province, since that time. Nueng spoke lovingly about his parents, and his eyes dimmed as he mentioned them.

But Nueng spoke even more passionately about Buddhism. He asked if we were religious, a question that garnered different answers from each of us, who range from Christian to atheist. Some of these beliefs were alien to Nueng, but he respectfully listened to all of our views and then divined headfirst into the five basic tenants of Buddhism. These tenants include refraining from: hurting others, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication. Overall, not bad things to avoid! Nueng said that when his English improved — and he estimated that he’d have attained fluency by 2016— he would like to travel to the United States (specifically Chicago) to teach others about Buddhism. He issued us a special invitation.

Through our conversation about faith and childhood, I came to know Nueng in a more individual way, beyond his saffron robes. Eventually, another monk walked by, signaling that it was time for meditation. Nueng excused himself, but he took out his notebook before he left.

“Do you have Facebook?” he asked. We were shocked. A monk with Facebook? What about all of that time they’re supposed to spend thinking big thoughts and studying big ideas?

“Yes,” we said tentatively. “Do you?”

And with that, Nueng scrawled his Facebook name on a scratch piece of paper and handed it to us.

That evening, we became Facebook friends with a Buddhist monk. We uploaded our photographs and tagged him in them. And all of Nueng’s monk friends (who also apparently balance their time between big ideas and Facebook) commented on the photos in Thai. I no longer view Facebook as a waste of time, or even a form of self-indulgence. After all, if a Buddhist monk enjoys Facebook as much as meditation, who am I to find fault with it? But more importantly, I now appreciate Facebook. It has kept me connected to Nueng (and by extension all of his monk friends). With the click of a mouse, I am back at the monastery — via Facebook chat, of course.

Emily Palmer is a junior from Durham, N.C., majoring in electronic communication and global studies. She went to Thailand with Carolina Southeast Asia Summer (SEAS) Program.
BY ROSE PEIFER

My biggest fear for my study abroad experience seemed to come true as soon as I touched down at the Amman airport. I felt so out of place, so foreign, so….American. My light hair, blue eyes, and style of dress immediately singled me out. I felt the stares of the other people in the airport follow me. My discomfort only increased as it became apparent that barely anyone spoke English. At customs, my attempt to answer the guard’s questions was futile: I couldn’t understand him, and he couldn’t understand me. Apparently deciding I wasn’t a threat, he tiredly waved me through. I was terrified that this first impression would turn out to be representative of my entire experience in Amman. What if I never felt like I belonged? What if I always felt like an outsider?

My study abroad program included being placed at a service assignment for the summer. My assignment was at the Women Organization to Combat Illiteracy (WOCI). Located in the outskirts of Amman, this organization encourages families to allow their daughters to continue their education. It also operates vocational classes to teach women marketable skills. I taught English for the six weeks I was in Jordan to a class of women ages 14 to 26. All the women I met there were incredibly driven. Their motivations to learn English were as varied as their backgrounds. Ala’a, a mother of two, wanted to learn English to help her get a better job to better provide for her children. Lujain, a 16-year-old from the United Arab Emirates, already spoke English but wanted to get better so she could someday study biology abroad. Wala needed to learn English in order to get into pharmacy school. They came from different socio-economic backgrounds and religions but what they all shared was a passionate desire to learn.

I got to know Lujain best because we were paired together for conversation practice. Even though she was already fluent in English, she came to our class to practice her skills because her dream was to become a doctor. Minutes into our first conversation, we discovered a shared love for Harry Potter. Actually, we had read many of the same series of books and would spend our conversation time debating our favorite characters and swapping theories about what was going to happen in upcoming books.

My initial fear of perpetually being an outsider was unfounded. Lujain and all of the women were incredibly open and welcoming. Not only did we teach them, but they all taught us. I learned where the best Falafel restaurant in Amman was. I learned where to go to find second-hand clothes markets. I learned about Ramadan and about Islam. And, along the way, I even managed to learn some Arabic. I found a place in Jordan where I felt comfortable and didn’t feel like a stranger. Sure, I will remember riding camels through Wadi Rum at sunset. I will remember snorkeling in the Red Sea and wandering around Roman ruins at the Jerash music festival. I will remember walking down the winding streets of Amman looking for the perfect galabeya. But even more than that, I will remember the amazing women I met and worked with, who challenged and inspired me in unexpected ways, and who welcomed me not as a stranger, but as a friend. I learned not to be scared of fitting in because if you take a chance and put yourself out there, that belonging will come naturally, even if it’s not in the way you expected it to.

Rose Peifer is a sophomore from Chapel Hill, N.C., majoring in women’s studies and global studies. She traveled to Amman, Jordan.

Above: Georgia Walker, who also traveled to Jordan, lounging in the Dead Sea at sunset. Photo courtesy of Georgia Walker.

Bedouins lead us into the desert of Wadi Rum on camelback. Photo courtesy of Georgia Walker.

Finding my place in Amman
Before going to the Galápagos Islands in Ecuador, I had a mental image of my study abroad experience. I knew the scenery would be amazing, the world-renowned wildlife would be spectacular, the snorkeling would be unlike anything I had ever done, and the classes would be a once-in-a-lifetime learning experience. But I never expected to become a part of a family in just six short weeks.

Preparing to leave, I was slightly nervous about living with a homestay family that only spoke Spanish. All I had was a name on a small white card and the promise that they would come pick me up from the university the day I arrived. Our group of twenty UNC students waited in the lobby, and as the other students were called and taken to their respective homes one by one, I felt like I was in line to be picked for a school soccer game, but no one wanted me on their team. Finally, a small girl who turned out to be my host mother’s granddaughter came running through the door. Then my host mom came in and led me outside. I loaded my things into the taxi and off we went. As soon as I got into the car, it was Spanish a mile a minute. They showed me all around their house, told me where everything was, and kept asking if I was tired and needed to sleep. I was beyond tired, but I wanted to spend time with them, so I said I felt fine and stayed for dinner. Most of my answers to their barrage of questions came out as a simple sí or no, severely limiting our conversation. I wondered if I would ever be able to keep up.

After the first night and the initial shock of travel, we began to talk more and more and my confidence in speaking Spanish continued to grow. My host father made breakfast for me almost every morning, and we would sit and talk before I went to the university. He told me about what was going on in Ecuador, where the different foods we were eating came from, and what was going on in the local community that I was now a part of. He asked me a lot of questions about my life and we discussed the differences between America and Ecuador. I looked forward to coming to breakfast every day because I always learned something new, or at least learned to laugh at myself about some language mistake or my attempt to explain “YOLO” in Spanish to someone who had no idea what I meant. I wasn’t just a stranger; I was a member of the family. I visited their family farm and played with the kids after school. Even when I met people in town, I was referred to as “my sister” or “my daughter,” not “the random student living in my house.” We celebrated two family birthdays while I was staying there, which I discovered was a large undertaking. For one of the family member’s fourth birthday, we covered the house with all sorts of Spider-Man-themed decorations. We hot glued black string to the ceiling in the shape of a spider web and made a mountain of food, ranging from the largest pan of rice I have ever seen to a red and blue birthday cake. When it came time to take the family picture, I was told to join them, even if I did stand out as the tall American girl in the middle of my Ecuadorian bunch. While there was a language barrier that created some communication difficulties, it forced me to immerse myself more by making every conversation I could understand both an achievement and a connection.

I've kept in contact with my host family and I love to hear what is going on back in the Galápagos. I still wear an anklet that reminds me of the little four-year-old that hugged me goodbye after six weeks of watching him grow, and also of the family I left behind to rejoin my family in North Carolina. My homestay experience was one I never expected to have in such a short amount of time, but it is one that I wouldn’t trade for the world.

Amanda Gaffey is a sophomore from Charlotte, N.C. She traveled to the Galápagos Islands, Ecuador.
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 undergraduates who have completed at least 1 but not more than 4 semesters at UNC before the Burch experience.
STIPEND: Up to $4,000
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 or travel-related 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 Program
DESCRIPTION: For students who have strong financial need to undertake an independent internationally oriented experience during the summer.
REQUIREMENTS: Undergraduate students eligible for Pell Grant with min. 2.8 GPA; grad students who are NOT U.S. citizens or permanent residents and have demonstrated financial need.
STIPEND: $3,000 - $5,000
DEADLINE: February 28
MORE INFO: csi.unc.edu/scholarship

PROGRAM: C.V. Starr International Scholarship Program
DESCRIPTION: For students who have strong financial need to undertake an independent internationally oriented experience during the summer.
REQUIREMENTS: Undergraduate students eligible for Pell Grant with min. 2.8 GPA; grad students who are NOT U.S. citizens or permanent residents and have demonstrated financial need.
STIPEND: $3,000 - $5,000
DEADLINE: February 28
MORE INFO: csi.unc.edu/scholarship

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.unc.edu/current-students/honors-thesis-and-undergraduate-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: CGS International Internship Awards
DESCRIPTION: For students who wish to implement a summer internationally focused internship.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time undergraduate students returning to UNC. Graduates students pursuing a master’s degree.
STIPEND: $500 - $3,000
DEADLINE: March 6
MORE INFO: cgs.unc.edu/awards/internship

PROGRAM: Carolina Undergraduate Health Opportunities
DESCRIPTION: For undergraduates to pursue health-related internships in Italy, China and India receive additional consideration.
STIPEND: Minimum $500
DEADLINE: mid October, TBD (check website)
MORE INFO: www.unc.edu/apps/students/ internships/fieldwork/index.html

PROGRAM: Carolina Undergraduate Health Fellowships
DESCRIPTION: For undergraduates to create a self-designed health-related project anywhere in the world.
REQUIREMENTS: Full-time returning undergraduate students. Projects must have a health-related focus and must prove their financial need.
STIPEND: $1,000 - $3,000
DEADLINE: March 6
MORE INFO: cgs.unc.edu/awards/cuhf

PROGRAM: Office of Global Health Funding Opportunities
DESCRIPTION: For undergraduates to pursue international/global health internships.
REQUIREMENTS: Varies
DEADLINE: Varies
MORE INFO: www.sph.unc.edu/globalhealth/ students/student_funding.html

See global.unc.edu for more information.

BY MORGAN MCCLOY
Via del Proconolo will always hold a special place in my heart when I think of the time I spent in Florence, Italy. With a variety of shops and restaurants nearby and an apartment window that framed the famous Duomo, our location was hard to beat. I was in awe every day as I stepped out my door and looked up at the magnificent Duomo and all that took place around it. The walk to and from class was never boring, to say the least. However, what always managed to make my day a little better (not that it could ever be too bad living in the beautiful city of Florence) was the friendly greeting from the owner of the Snack Bar Vittoria next door. Not long after moving in, my housemates and I began to notice an enthusiastic “Ciao, ragazze!” (“Hello, girls!”) from an elderly man as we walked by the cafe every day. I think it was his sheer joy and inviting spirit that made us all want to become regular customers at the cafe and get to know him better. We soon discovered his name was Giovanni, and he knew very little English. Despite our inability to have long conversations with him, we found ourselves going into the cafe most days for coffee, pastries and short chats with the charming Giovanni. I had heard the Italians were warm and welcoming people, and Giovanni was certainly proof of the statement. When I think back on my experience, going to his cafe is always something that stands out in my mind. No, the pastries weren't the best, but in a way it became our cafe. I knew I could walk out my door at any point and step into this little cafe and feel welcomed. If I make it back to Florence someday soon, I know my first stop will be Snack Bar Vittoria, where I will aways await the “Ciao, ragazze!” that made my time on Via del Proconolo that much better.

Morgan McClay is a junior from Charlotte, N.C., majoring in photojournalism. She traveled to Italy.

ITALY
Population: 60.6 million
Capital: Rome
Language: Italian

Above: This is the friendly Giovanni, owner of Snack Bar Vittoria, located on Via del Proconolo in Florence, Italy.
Left: This was one of my favorite pastries in the cafe and always very tempting to see in the windows as I walked by.
The Tanzanian Way

BY ASHLEY WILKES

My aunt’s advice: Keep a healthy sense of humor. It will make random power outages the perfect opportunity for a dance party. It will make your feet sinking into the muck of Lake Manyara feel like a free spa treatment. It will make lion grumbles unnervingly close to your Serengeti tent an unforgettable soundtrack to the night.

These are pieces of Tanzania that I will never forget. I spent a month near Karatu last summer with the School for Field Studies, conducting research on human-wildlife conflict. My learning was anything but conventional. Short class time was punctuated with frequent safaris through national parks, and early morning birding excursions. We met Maasai tribes and talked with village locals as they showed us their homes and fields. What I found was joy—raw, passionate, grounded spirits. It is not a Dark Continent. The sun is delightful and warms the day. The stars make a disco ball that illuminates the night. A warm smile and ‘karibu’ greeting is extended at every encounter, no matter the setting or hour of the day.

The Maasai who we visited must walk six kilometers down those dusty roads just to retrieve freshwater. The schools are minimalistic. Their livelihoods are laborious. Electricity is unreliable to the point of being obsolete. Still, it is not a Dark Continent. It is a rich land. My Western standards paint the picture of a backwards people. But every experience I had in Tanzania colors my memory with vibrant strokes of joy and warmth. Of sincere welcoming. Of a determined pursuit of life in the present, free from worry. ‘Hakuna Matata’ was a regular exclamation, and one that had no tie to a Disney movie.

Hakuna Matata: No worries! It is the Tanzanian way of life, one that trades frustration and negativity for compassion, gentleness and joy. I carry this sentiment with me today and always. Tanzania, till we meet again.

Ashley Wilkes is a senior from Greensboro, N.C., majoring in public relations. She traveled to Tanzania.

Above: It was the dry season, yet thunderstorms soaked us every day in the Serengeti.

TANZANIA

Population: 46.2 million
Capital: Dodoma
Language: Swahili, English

PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

1 // Erin Hull; Mindinga village, Malawi. 2 // James Ding; London, England. 3 // Adam Glasser; Singapore, Singapore.
4 // Ryan Awes; Tangier Beach, Morocco. 5 // Sunny Huang; Bagan, Myanmar.

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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, Summer 2011, Fall 2011, Spring 2012 and SH Year 2012

1,260 Students • 56 Countries

UNC students travel all across the globe. The numbers on the map reflect participation in the Year Long 2011, Summer 2011, Fall 2011, Spring 2012 and SH Year 2012 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
1 // Ashley Wilkes; Serengeti, Tanzania. 2 // Bret Fickes; Chengdu, China. 3 // Brad Heshmaty; Dubai, United Arab Emirates. 4 // Ashley Wilkes; Tangerie National Park, Tanzania. 5 // Ellen Currin; Tuni, Bolivia.