



Tartans Abroad

Study Abroad Newsletter
Sara Joseph, Editor

Greetings from the Office of International Education!

My name is Sara Joseph and I am in my final semester of a masters program in Student Affairs in Higher Education at Slippery Rock University. This degree allows me to specialize in working with college students, which is my passion. Study abroad has always been an area of focus for me, and I spent a semester abroad in Paris while I was an undergrad at Penn State. This spring, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to intern in the OIE at CMU and learn more about the study abroad process from the advisor's perspective. This is a fantastic experience being that my goal is to become an international educator.

Students who engage in study abroad typically experience a series of highs and lows that follow a pattern. At first, they are euphoric to be in a new place, but then quickly realize that there are unexpected challenges and shortcomings of the host country. However, enthusiasm usually returns soon after. Students are then able to strike a balance between what they were used to at home and their way of life

abroad, as well as ultimately embrace the new experiences.

One aspect of study abroad that many students may not consider is reentry, which completes the cycle and can be just as challenging as orienting oneself to a new host country. While you are abroad, I urge you to take the time to really reflect on what you are experiencing and in which ways you are changing as a person. Ask yourself what you are learning about yourself, other cultures and even your own culture. How are your ideas and mindset changing? Write down concrete examples. Keep a journal or a blog so that you can record your thoughts and feelings, because, trust me, memories get fuzzy faster than you might think and this is a way to ensure that you never forget the most meaningful parts of your trip.

Also, you will likely return to the states bursting to talk about your experiences, but find that others are not very receptive. This is normal and you should not let this discourage you; it is simply difficult for others who have not lived abroad themselves to have a thorough understanding of what it can be like. Reach out to those who you know you can connect with, such as friends made while abroad who you know will want to talk about being overseas as much as you do.

These pieces of advice are not meant to dishearten, but rather to encourage you to spend time reflecting and mentally processing your experience as well as preparing to return home.

I applaud all of you for having the courage and perseverance to expand your learning beyond the city limits of Pittsburgh. Though it may be challenging at times, it is certainly a growing experience that will prepare you to be a global citizen when you graduate. Own your experience – it's once in a lifetime! Use it to determine what is truly important to you in life.

I wish you all a safe, exciting, fulfilling and memorable experience.

Best,
Sara Joseph
OIE Graduate Intern



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Oh The Places We Go—by Caroline Kessler, studying in India

From the minute to the grandiose, I move around a lot in India, wading through the thick, humid heat. I usually walk or bicycle to class, take the bus into the city, and if I'm lucky, get a ride on the back of a friend's motorbike. During my semester in Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, I've been

blogging in the form of lists and letters at <http://carokess.tumblr.com/>. Here's a list of nearly all the places that I go: East Coast Road--Generally referred to as ECR, this is the "highway" that our campus is located on, along with numerous

convenience stands, tea shops, and tiny restaurants. It links Chennai and Pondicherry.

Pondicherry University--Founded in 1985, the campus has 780 acres to its name and is

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While You 're Abroad...

Check Out:

- The Study Abroad Handbook:
www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/sab/before/handbook.html
- Follow-Up SATC:
www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/sab/forms/index.html
- Great travel products:
www.umabroad.umn.edu/products/index.html
- Articles on returning home:
www.glimpseabroad.org/

Make the Most of Your Experience!

There are plenty of ways to bring your experience abroad back when you return to Carnegie Mellon:

- Attend the Welcome Back Reception.
- Help out with Information Sessions and Pre-departure.
- Serve as an e-peer advisor.
- Publish your journals, short stories, or poetry.
- Enter the annual Photo Contest.
- Use your experience as a springboard to complete a senior thesis.
- Apply for a Fulbright, Rhodes or Marshall scholarship.
- Continue your experience with an international internship.

Transfer Credit:

Follow-Up SATCs

If you have made changes to your course registration abroad and have not already made arrangements with your academic advisor(s), please use this [Follow up SATC Form](#) to update your courses.

Please complete all categories, including URLs for specific courses. You will automatically receive an email with the changes you are proposing. Once we receive the completed form we will send it to relevant academic advisors.

Advisors will review courses and send you confirmations of approval where appropriate.

REMEMBER!

To enroll yourself in CMU classes for next semester while you're overseas!!

CMU Study Abroad on Facebook

Click on the Study Abroad Facebook badge on the [Carnegie Mellon University Social Media Directory](#) or on [OIE's Study Abroad](#) page to become a fan! Our fan page consists of student and staff photos from abroad, including all photos and winners from the 2010 photo contest, the study abroad calendar of events, and discussion posting opportunities where students can talk about their overseas experiences and pre-and post-trip questions and thoughts.



View from the top of Notre

Dame

Inward Odyssey—by Mena Assad, studying in France

Choosing Paris for a study abroad program is a delicate decision that comes with both benefits and limitations. The city is gorgeous and lively, the food is exquisite and the history, architecture and art scene are seductive. On the downside, I always heard that French, especially Parisians, are snobby and unwelcoming of outsiders. One of the ingredients to an experience abroad is interaction with locals. Therefore, my hesitation for Paris was understandable. With that reputation in mind I had my heart set on Paris nonetheless and while I have been here for about a month, I have discovered the common understanding of Parisians is highly misconceived.

It pains me to say that Americans come with their traditions here unreceptive of any cultural or situational differences. Their unwillingness to adapt or even learn the culture is what the French hate. The French have a strong heritage and culture that is woven into their personalities from the food to clothes to language. To respect the French is to respect this culture and personality. Stainslaw Lem wrote: “we need mirrors. We don't know what to do with other worlds. A single world, our own, suffices us; but we can't accept it for what it is. We are searching for an ideal image of our own world.” It is unfortunate but true that most Americans I've met here are looking for a replica of America.

This is inward odyssey, to look for one world's and experiences in travels and foreign encounters. This type of comparison is just a mirroring technique that is used often by tourists, but is hindering when one is trying to immerse in a



different culture. For example, while the Parisians are definitely colder in their casual interactions with people, that is merely a cultural difference that has nothing to do with their attitude or lack of respect but a literature of different heritage. I am not saying that one can't benefit from keen observations of cultural difference, yet they can't be the center of his/ her experience. It's not worthwhile or valuable to compare every act to a standard that is subjective to our backgrounds and experiences.

My experience in France has been an appreciation and understanding of the culture. And I have to say it is extremely different here. From the little things like street ads for the small private museum of French Symbolist painter Gustave Moreau to the perception of sexuality and gender roles. It's intimidating in today's society for one to step outside their comfort zone, yet if we don't take this step, if we don't step to endure inconveniences, then we will end up just tourists like everyone else; traveling thousands of miles just to watch TV and

check in to somewhere with all the comforts of home.

Finally, I want to conclude that everyone should visit Paris once. It has seduced me as it has done to many before me and all I can say is my allegiance is to my country, but my heart belongs to Paris.

“ My allegiance is to my country but my heart belongs to Paris. ”

Wanted: Bloggers Abroad

Our study abroad web site now features a new page titled “Student Perspectives.” Within this page is a link to our new feature, [Blogs Abroad](#). It features several Carnegie Mellon students' blogs written while abroad in the following locations: Qatar, Australia, Spain, Tanzania, Japan, Ghana, Tunisia, India, and the United Kingdom. We invite you to contribute! For more information about sharing your blog on our website, please email goabroad@andrew.cmu.edu.

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- HUB & Financial Aid
Phone: 412-268-8186
Email: thehub@andrew.cmu.edu
<http://www.cmu.edu/hub/>
- UC Information Desk
Phone: 412-268-2107

Helpful Links:

Center for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

Disability Travel Resources

<http://www.makoa.org/travel.htm>

GLBT Resources

www.gaytimes.co.uk/HotSpots/GayGuide.html

Let's Go Travel Resource

www.letsgo.com

Pittsburgh Post Gazette

www.post-gazette.com/

Sexual Assault Advisors

www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/SAA

The Tartan

<http://www.thetartan.org/>

Women's Resources

<http://userpages.umbc.edu/korenman/wmst/links.html>

Travel Advisory Notices

www.travel.state.gov

Important Financial Aid Information

Attention, students! Make sure to follow-up on your federal aid, 2011-2012 application. More details are on the front page of the HUB website at <http://www.cmu.edu/hub>. Specific questions can be directed to your college contact, listed on the HUB website, <http://www.cmu.edu/hub/hours.html>.

Frequently Asked Questions**1) What if my courses abroad change?**

Students must often make changes to their coursework abroad due to cancelled classes or time conflicts. Because this happens so frequently, OIE has developed a simple procedure for gaining new course approvals abroad. Students who have made changes to their course registration abroad should use the Follow-up SATC Form found online to update their courses with their academic advisors.

2) What else do I need to do while abroad?

- While away from Pittsburgh, students remain registered at Carnegie Mellon and are encouraged to stay in touch with academic advisors and OIE for course changes and other important information.
- Register with the US (or your home country) [Embassy](#) and sign up for warden messages.
- Check the OIE website and emails from the department regarding special opportunities such as 5th year scholar, honor society nominations, and other important deadlines that may occur while students are away.

3) What if something happens to me while I'm abroad?

The OIE staff is a valuable resource for students and parents throughout the study abroad experience. Should students have any serious problems or emergencies overseas, we are happy to assist in any way we can. Students should first contact their study abroad program as they are on the ground and can be of more immediate assistance.

4) What do students do if they get homesick?

Adjusting to a new culture is both exciting and challenging and there are moments when students feel out of place. Check out the Study Abroad Handbook for a detailed explanation of cultural adjustment and ideas of how to overcome homesickness.

Want to see yourself in a new light?

Read *American Ways*, by Gary Althen when you return!

Oh The Places We Go—by Caroline Kessler, studying in India *Continued from cover page*

gated, with three entrances (also known as gates) along ECR. Its tagline is 'Versa la lumiere' or 'Towards the light.'

Tea stall--Affectionately known as "Chai guy," there is a squat, unsmiling man who makes some of the most flavorful tea along the ECR. A few stands down, there's actually another tea stall that stays open until about 1am. Chai guy closes shop around 11.

Science & Humanities Block--technically, there are two concrete, 1970s-looking buildings where we go for class, but I only have class in Block 1. It's a giant circle, with four entrances that are still confusing, even after nearly two months of class.

Foreign Students Hostel--The place that most of our program calls home; "the inmates" as we're called, hail from America, Canada, Germany, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. The kitchen is crawling with ants, we hang our laundry to dry on the banisters and roof, and we have a cat that kills mosquitoes and geckos.

Transit Hostel--a stone's throw away from the Foreign Students Hostel, this is where five people in our program live. There's no security guard here, and there are apartment-style suites, instead of standard double rooms.

"Pondicherry--
affectionately and
always known as
'Pondy' "

Quick Pick and Retail Store--Directly next to the bus stop outside of our campus gate, this place is the Indian equivalent of a CVS or a 7-11, but

better. You can get one of just about anything: cold mango juice, packet of water, kids' notebooks, any variety of packaged snacks, individual packets of shampoo, minutes on our cell phones and just one cigarette.

Pondicherry--Affectionately and always known as "Pondy," the town is a 30-minute (or more) bus ride along ECR. In addition to the hustle-bustle part of the city that is typical to South India (no sidewalks, with cattle, bicyclists, pedestrians, cars, buses, and motorcyclists attempting to blend into traffic), there's the surprisingly peaceful French Quarter. The wide, oak-lined streets and colonial buildings are reminiscent of another era, specifically one when the French colonized Pondy. The whole city is right on the water, the Bay of Bengal.

Auroville--Halfway between campus and Pondy, this European-hippie-turned-tourist town is an interesting mix of local Indians and Western ex-pats who are attempting to create a utopia based on the ideas of Sri

Aurobindo and the Mother. Founded in 1968 with soil and representatives from 124 countries, hasn't quite achieved its goal of 50,000 inhabitants. The town itself is quite spread

out, but has some neat markets and bakeries on the outer edges, closest to ECR, where I go when I'm sick of Indian food.

St. James Court--adjacent from Gate 2 (for a point of reference, the Foreign Students Hostel is right inside Gate 1), this beach-side resort has a rooftop restaurant that serves beer, cocktails, peanuts, and sometimes food until the late hour of 11pm. Last call is usually around 10pm. Our group makes it here a few times a week, as it's just a short walk away and the Kingfishers (an Indian beer equivalent to a heavy Busch) are only 65 rupees.

Kerala Mess--Literally on the side of ECR, near to Gate 2, this is one of the only decent places to eat off-campus. There's no menu except for a sandwich board with writing in Tamil and some less-than-descriptive pictures--but the *chappati* are 7 rupees, the amazing banana milkshakes are only 20. You sit on plastic stools, watching the traffic and the cattle lumbering by.



Caroline standing in a rice paddy in Kerala,

Study Abroad Perspective—by Meredith Ebel, studying in Jordan

When it is a clear sunny day and the temperature climbs past 80 degrees in New York City, neighborhood children everywhere run outside to the garbage-ridden streets and kick off their shoes to jump in the water rushing out of old rusted fire hydrants that their older siblings illegally opened with wrenches. This was the world that I grew up in, where water rushes past your feet and in between your toes and flows between the cars and down the hills into the gutters to shower the rats.

The first time I told this to my Conversational English class of Jordanian adult students they were mesmerized. There were only three types of water my students had ever seen: truckloads that were wheeled onto the streets outside of their apartments once a week and pumped into small metal containers on top of their roofs, those that came in bottles, and the large body of water with too much salt and full of history—the dead kind, specifically the Dead Sea.

Occasionally I had some students whose families came from tribes in the south of Jordan that ventured down to Aqaba, the Jordanian sea port, once a year to picnic along the side of the road.

Open fire hydrants with an abundant water supply were a foreign concept to my students as much as living with a complete lack of an abundant water supply was to me. There were other things that I could never quite wrap my head around, either: the fact that camels and donkeys lined the highway, that the call to prayer woke me up every morning at 5 a.m., that toilet paper didn't exist unless you carried tissues with you in your pocket or paid the

cleaning woman who sat outside the door (and that went for hand soap most of the time, too), that dust and sand always seeped into my apartment even when I closed the windows, that taxis drivers always insisted I was from Russia, and that I felt the need to tell all strangers that I was married with a husband close by—if only for preserving my own honor and protection.

I was constantly, and sometimes painfully, reminded of the things I left back "home", food especially—anything low-fat, organic, meat-free, wheat-free, dairy-free, trans-fat free, carb-free, and genetically modified—but also personal things as well: my mother's hugs when I had a stressful day, my grandmother's Thanksgiving dinner, and my fiancée's birthday party. Before leaving the United States, I had asked some of my international friends what it was like to be an international student, but nothing they said had prepared me for the constant stares that I received, the horn-beeps, the rocks thrown at me, the smiles and the waves, and the "Welcome to Jordan/Lebanon/Egypt/Turkey" greetings in thick accents.

As a single person—a twenty year old student who spoke mediocre Modern Standard Arabic and absolutely no Turkish or Farsi—I became the ambassador of the United States to every person I met while travelling in the Middle East. Every person I met, especially my students, had a comment or a question in regards to American foreign policy, Christianity, and western pop culture. This required lots of research on my part and lots of listening to rap songs. At the same time that they had questions for me, I had lots of questions

for them. Some of them were political, like information about the Jordanian parliament election held in the beginning of November, but most of them were questions about practical everyday life in Jordan, such as "what do I do if I think I have a parasite?" and "why does no one flush toilet paper down the toilet?"

All in all I was able to use my experiences of studying abroad to better myself as an individual. Interacting with others in the Middle East has enabled me to view everyone as individuals rather than grouping them together as foreign and different. It has even changed my former perspectives of my country and my life by making me appreciate the things that I have and the things that I don't. I'll never look at fire hydrants the same way again.



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