



Friends of the International Center,
at UC San Diego

Newsletter

Volume XLIV, No.6

January 2017



Year of the Rooster

RESERVE!

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11
GREAT HALL,
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING
CHINESE NEW YEAR WITH
A DELICIOUS CATERED
CHINESE DINNER

then

VIEW FABULOUS PHOTOS OF
A HIDDEN ARGENTINA BY
PROF. CHRISTOPHER WILLS

A FUNDRAISER FOR
FRIENDS SCHOLARSHIPS

To MAKE RESERVATIONS:

<http://>

FICasia2017.eventbrite.com

RESERVATION DEADLINE,
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2017

President's Column

Permanence, perseverance and persistence in spite of all obstacles, discouragements, and impossibilities: It is this, that in all things distinguishes the strong soul from the weak. **Thomas Carlyle**

How wonderful it will be to begin 2017 with a sense of stability and I thank our faithful members, our dedicated volunteers, and our committed Board members for your collective efforts that clearly communicated the Friends strong soul.

I am pleased to report that the vast majority of our programs and activities have survived the disruptions and will continue in their new locations until such time as the University implements its prospective building plans that will reunite the International Center as we have known it.

The **Resale Shop** will be located in UC 214 (part of the Chancellor's complex between Library Walk and Matthews Quad). There is an adjacent parking lot for donation drop-offs. The **Friends will also have its office** in this building.

Please be aware that things are still a bit fluid, but it looks as if our daily daytime programs will be offered as follows:

- Tuesday: **English Conversation** (*Gus' Table*) and **Craft Circle** in the Dance Hall in UC Building 409 (located between Rupertus and Russell Lanes);
- Wednesday: **Family Orientation** in McGill Hall in IFSO's Conference Room
- Wednesday: **Wednesday Coffee** in the Dance Hall in Building 409
- Wednesday: **Mommy/Daddy & Me** in McGill Hall in IFSO's Program Room
- Thursday: **English Instruction** in the Study Abroad Conference Room in Building 409
- Thursday: **Cooking Classes** in the Demo Kitchen at 64 Degrees on Revelle Campus
- Friday: **English Conversation** (*Friday Chat*) in the Dance Hall in Building 409

Our **evening and special programs** will take place in the Great Hall at International House (I-House) located at Eleanor Roosevelt College, adjacent to the Pangea Parking Structure. I hope very much that you will

President (from p. 1)

join us for our **Ethnic Dinner/Friends Scholarship Fundraising Dinner** on Saturday, February 11, 2017 to publicly show your commitment to the Friends mission.

In a time more reflective of the Cold War than could be imagined, I implore you to volunteer to serve on the Board, as a program volunteer, as a host, as a donor. Please e-mail or call me!

May you too enjoy the rewards of your perseverance.

Katya

presFIC@mail.ucsd.edu

**November Friends
Volunteer Hours
791 = 4.49 FTEs**



IEW Fashion Show 2016

—by Pearl Tangri Kumeria

With people from across the world representing their nations through beautiful ethnic wears, the International Education Week 2016 Fashion Show was once again held in tandem with the Friday International Café. All the models were gleaming this November 18, 2016, at the Café's new venue, the Great Hall of International House.

Every year, the IEW Fashion Show keeps getting better, and this year was no different. You could see participants from different countries walking down the runway more or less in an order from West to East, more specifically, from Mexico to Colombia, Brazil, France, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, India, China, and ending in Japan.

While you saw the gorgeous girls and handsome guys flaunting

their unique costumes, you could also hear about the clothes' style and traditional design, as well as on what occasion one might wear such outfits. Be it in a mesmerizing Mexican embroidered tunic, a lovely saree from India, or a beautiful dress to be worn to a Frevo dance in Brazil—the models all looked fantastic.

All participants were part of UCSD; some were international students, others family members of international students or scholars. The beautiful models representing the Friends of the International Center were: **Noemi Aguirre Mendoza** and **Mayra Nevarez** both from Mexico; **Maria Ximena Trujillo** from Colombia; **Sophia Coelho** from Brazil; **Emma Forin Aubret** from France;

Akira Kuwahara, **Yuka Matsuda** and baby **Meiko Matsuda**, **Aya Sasaki**, and **Mariko Hattori**, all five representing Japan; and lastly myself, **Pearl Tangri Kumeria** from India.

The show's finale had a delightful new twist. This year, just like their elders, children from the Early Childhood Education Center walked the runway in their festive finery, representing their countries. Smiling and giggling all the way, they were the cutest showstoppers you would get to see.

You could also see a footfall of around a hundred showing their presence, cheering on the models and enjoying the event.

Above are some visuals from the Fashion Show that will help you picture the event even better.



Argentina Revealed

—Photos and text by Christopher Wills

On February 11, join us for our latest ethnic fundraising dinner, and for a trip to a part of the world that few people know about.

Tourists who visit Argentina usually dance a tango or two in Buenos Aires and visit a glacier in Patagonia. But Argentina is a large country, one-third the size of the continental U.S. It has a wide variety of terrains and climates, a dazzling assortment of birds and animals, and a rich and complex history.

My wife **Liz** and I spent a month in Argentina, starting in the subtropical far north, near the borders of Brazil and Uruguay, and traveling as far south as the southernmost estancias of Patagonia. We began by exploring the wetlands of the Esteros del

Ibera, with its flocks of colorful birds, herds of roaming capybaras, and wetlands teeming with caiman crocodiles. We stayed at the fabulous estancia belonging to the late **Douglas Tompkins**, the founder of The North Face and Esprit, which is (we hope) slated to become part of the Great Ibera Park, the largest national park in Argentina.

Heading south, we visited the ancient cathedral towns, artists' colonies, vast cactus forests, and pre-Incan ruins of the central Argentinian Andes. We also explored scenic areas such as Ischigualasto's Valley of the Moon. These remote valleys are filled with the fossils of early mammals and dinosaurs, including one of the largest dinosaurs ever discovered. In the Calchaqui Valley we came upon colonies of parrots that live like Manhattan apartment dwellers in towering, burrow-filled cliffs.

In a break from all of this amazing nature, we sampled the finest Malbec wines from the vineyards that thrive around the Central Argentinian town of Mendoza. The vineyards, in the shadow of the snow-covered Andes, produce some of the world's best wines.

Still further south, we arrived in Patagonia just as the wild lupines were reaching full bloom and the yellow *Alstroemeria* lilies were lighting up the roadsides.

We were welcomed into the working life of the Estancia Nibepo Aike, where gauchos herd horses and sheep across the magnificent, flower-filled landscape and gray foxes prowl the shores of the glacial lakes. We climbed towards the vertiginous mountains of El Chalten through fields of wildflowers. We visited Perito Moreno glacier just as the Notro flowers were reaching full bloom, and made our way above the southern Estancia Cristina to see the full reach of the Upsala glacier.

At the end of the trip, we went north again, to the coastal areas of Bahia Bustamante, Punta Tombo, and the Peninsula Valdes, which together form some of the most dramatic coastal ecosystems on the planet. Flocks of black-necked swans and vast colonies of Magellanic penguins provided a spectacular close to the trip.

And yes, we were also dazzled by the excitement of Buenos Aires, with its tangos, its street life, and its many neighborhoods such as the colorful La Boca and the counterculture refuge of San Telmo.

Professor Christopher Wills will take us through all these adventures and more, after we have enjoyed our Chinese meal (menu not yet finalized as of this writing).

Our thanks go to Ethnic Dinner Chair Liz Fong Wills and Katya Newmark for arranging this event.

For reservations, see front page.



From the Editor: **Kudos to Our International Volunteers!**

Friends of the International Center has been very fortunate to have many international visitors take on leadership roles in our organization. This has always been so, and I think here of **Rea Costly** from England and **Renate Berthold** from Germany, both of whom served as Friends Vice President. There were many others. However, with the encouragement of, and at times actual recruitment by, President **Katya Newmark**, the numbers have increased greatly. There are internationals, such as **Michelle Brown** from Canada and **Mariko Usui** from Japan, currently serving on the Friends Board, but unquestionably the largest numbers are program leaders.

The *Mommy/Daddy & Me* program, for instance, is run by a group of international moms consisting of **Bree Chunharas** from Thailand, **Cathy Lin** from Taiwan, **Huanwei Cui** and **Wenjing Den** from China, **Yuko Takehara** from Japan, with **Mariko Usui** as chair. When Cathy and Huanwei temporarily left on trips to their respective home country, the group was joined in November by **Yuka Matsuda** from Japan. This international team operates well, and resourcefully, with the support of Friends **Alice Blake-Stalker** and **Georgina Sham**.

Until the loss of our International Center kitchen, the *International Cooking Experience* was imaginatively chaired by **Tashu Malik** from India and **Keiko Hirai** from Japan. The *Friends Dinner Socials* benefitted from the talents of **Dagmar Bocakova** from the Czech Republic and **Audrey Leriche** from France, members of a triumvirate leadership team.

Similarly, our *International Kitchen* lunches and *Ethnic Dinners* have always had a significant num-

ber of international volunteer chefs that gave depth to the programs. Guests will remember the delicious October 2014 Ethnic Dinner prepared by **Shohreh Karimaghaei** that introduced us to the sophisticated Persian cuisine of her native Iran. The number of international sous chefs and servers is far too large to list here, but I can't refrain from mentioning former UCSD graduate student **Richard Chim** from Hong Kong, lately joined by his mother, **Gladys Wong**.

The stream of international visitors that participate in significant ways in *Wednesday Coffee* is especially long, but let it be said that many activities are led by them. By way of examples, **Lexi Jiang** from China, **Pearl Tangri** from India, **Susan Louise Sonnesen** from Denmark, **Marie Perroud** from France, and **Mayra Nevarez** from Mexico eagerly shared their enthusiasm for certain crafts by demonstrating the art of crocheting flowers, making banners, and fashioning jewelry and snap purses.

Many of our *Resale Shop's* steady workers are from foreign countries. Among the nineteen volunteers this Fall, seven were internationals. They come from three different continents and are: **Noemi Aguirre** and **Mayra Mortz** from Mexico, **Cida Coelho** and **Daniela Schmitt** from Brazil, **Irene Moon** from Korea, **Pearl Tangri** from India, and **Fatima Zandi** (currently on leave) from Iran.

A teacher of English as a second



Family Orientation team (March 2016): Nancy Homeyer, Macarena Galaz, Yuka Nishibori, Noemi Aguirre, Barbara Fitzsimmons, Diana Saunders, Wen Gu, Joengmin Choi

language, **Diana Saunders** from Great Britain, runs the Friends *Intermediate English* class. Diana also volunteers with *Family Orientation* that currently counts among its other international presenters: **Emma Forin** from France, **Yamuna Mohanram** from India, **Yuka Nishibori** from Japan, and **Nasim Googol** from Iran and Australia. Another loyal presenter, **Macarena Galaz** from Chile, lives temporarily in Los Alamos, NM, but is expected back soon.

While our internationals contribute greatly to the functioning of the Friends of the International Center, they, in turn, thank us for providing them an opportunity to "give back" and to practice their skills. They thank us for helping them adjust to a new country with a different culture, often with a very different language, but no less importantly, they thank us for helping them gain the confidence to go on with work elsewhere. In many cases, Friends provide essential letters of recommendation.

Alas, this is a major problem for the Friends. There is a constant turnover of international participants in leadership roles. Their departures

leave us saddened and often at a loss on how to fill their positions.

Such is the case of **Wen Gu**, a native of China who came to the U.S. by way of Australia. Wen jumped in to help the Friends wherever she could, including accepting the position of the Friends Assistant Treasurer, a role she continued to fulfill even once she assumed a paid position with a local real estate agency. However, Wen has now moved to New Jersey, where her husband was offered a dream job with Merck. Even so, Wen has assured **Nancy Homeyer**, our Family Orientation chair, that she will continue to prepare for reprinting,

January Calendar

Please check time and place for all events.

Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31: **Gus' Table**, 10:00-Noon

Jan. 4, 18: **Family Orientation**, 9:15

Jan. 4, 11, 18, 25: **Wednesday Coffee**, 10:00-Noon

Jan. 4, 11, 18, 25: **Mommy/Daddy & Me**, afternoon

Jan. 5, 12, 19, 26: **Intermediate English**, 10:00-11:30

Jan. 10: **Resale Shop** opens in Building 214

Jan. 10: **Board Meeting**, 10:00

Jan. 10, 17, 24, 31: **FIC Craft Circle**, 1:00-3:30

Jan. 12: **Int'l Cooking Experience**, 9:00-1:00

Jan. 13, 20, 27: **Friday Chat Group**, 10:00-Noon

Jan. 16: **Martin Luther King Day**; campus closed

Jan. 25: **Reservation deadline for Ethnic Dinner**: FICAsia2017.eventbrite.com

as needed, the Friends *Welcome!* booklet, a compendium of useful information for new UC San Diego international arrivals. Wen feels confident that she can do so from afar!

Like others, Wen became an integral part of our Friends community, and as you can see from her farewell note to our President, her stay at UCSD was greatly enhanced by the circle of friends she was able to form through our offerings.

Dear Katya,

Thank you for the amazing job of keeping IC stay for these months. We all really appreciate what you did for Friends, and we know that it's the hardest job. However, you made it! International Center is really the home to us, so we can't really imagine what our lives would be without IC.

I know all of my friends from IC and it's my life in the U.S. So I greatly appreciate all of the efforts and the hard work you did for us. You're sooo wonderful!

I'm so sorry that I can't stay to take on the Treasurer position, but thank you for offering this great opportunity to me. I feel so sad that I can't stay and do it!

As I said, I'll always be there to help no matter what you need in the future. **IC is my home in the U.S. and I'd love to do anything good for it.** I hope you like the bookmark and will think of me when you use it.

I wish you all the best in your life. Please stay in touch and I'll keep you updated with my life. Thank you for everything!

Lots of love,
Wen

Another person who will be greatly missed is **Noemi Aguirre**, a steadfast Resale Shop volunteer, a Family Orientation presenter, and a lively participant in the Tuesday conversation group. Wrote Noemi shortly before her return to her native country:

Dear All:

I want to say thank you for all these months of friendship and great talks! For all your kindness and all the things I have learned from you! I couldn't imagine my days in San Diego without you. This has been a wonderful experience and I will take every person and every moment in my heart forever.

I wish you all have a happy Holiday Season, and please keep in mind that you always will have a friend and a house in Mexico.

I send you hugs, kisses, and best wishes!
With love,
Noemí A.

Wednesday Morning Coffee

—by *Georgina Sham*

Learn new skills or sharpen previously learned ones. Wednesday Coffee's tentative activity schedule for the month of January is as follows:

Jan. 4: Fold origami cranes with **Marie Perroud**.

Jan. 11: Learn how to apply Zentangle patterns to making jewelry.

Jan. 18: Turn t-shirts into shopping bags—a popular project.

Jan. 25: Make button necklaces under the direction of **Susan Louise Damsgaard** from Denmark, who is eager to share her expertise, but is still not sure when she will be leaving us.



A New Cooking Experience

—Photos by Katya Newmark

The loss of the Friends International Center kitchen has led to experimenting with new approaches. The pictures seen here of a new cooking class format tell a lot about how carefully everything was arranged by the instructor, **Vaughn Vargus**, the professionally-trained Sr. Executive Chef for Dining at UC San Diego.

The class was held on November 10, in a beautiful demonstration kitchen, and featured a modern Thanksgiving menu complete with turkey, cornbread stuffing, gravy, candied yams, cranberry chutney, green beans, and dessert—all in keeping with tradition, but presented in updated versions. Thus, the green beans were not doused with Campbell's mushroom soup, but rather sautéed with grape tomatoes and presented with crispy shallots. More amazingly, the star of the show—the turkey—came in two variations: one, handsomely roasted in its entirety; a second, splayed. Should you wish to know how you *spatchcock* (the official appellation) a turkey: you cut out the backbone, press the turkey to flatten, and proceed to cook from there! Instead of the usual apple pie, there was a *Tarte Tartin*, an upside-down apple pastry, served with ice cream.

Wrote Friends President to Chef Vargus in an e-mail to which she attached 17 photos from the event: "I truly cannot adequately express my deep appreciation for the cooking experience you provided our lucky international participants yesterday, not to mention Cindy and me. Our thank-you to you and your staff for insuring that the setting at 64 Degrees was so inviting from the moment we walked in: from the table setting with its printed menu, to the spa water, to the screens with the Friends of the International Center name."

Here follow a few other comments from participants:

What fun we had with **Chef Vargus**, helping with preparations of a traditional American Thanksgiving meal. YUM!

January's class is anticipated to be on the second Thursday, and we hope soon to announce the class schedule through June. Classes will start at 9:00 a.m. and will be held in the demonstration kitchen of Revelle College's dining complex, 64 Degrees. The theme of the January class is not yet revealed (I heard a rumor that it might feature scrumptious vegetables).

Reservations will be registered to the first lucky 14 internationals who come with \$10 in cash as soon as the event is formally announced; \$10 is quite a reduced price due to subsidy by the university. In an effort to insure that everyone has an opportunity to attend our cooking classes, priority will be given to a participant who has not yet attended a class, and we will continue with waiting lists and our efforts to offer additional cooking opportunities, so that we can continue to offer wonderful cooking opportunities for all.—**Cindy Tozer**, Friends International Cooking Experience Chair

The class and meal were outstanding and both **Cindy** and I note that if we were to attend such a program elsewhere, we would have to pay a minimum of \$60/person (likely even more, because we had so many dishes and high quality ingredients). We are grateful to Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs, **Juan González**, for partnering with Friends to cover the cost of this rewarding experience.—**Katya Newmark**

The lunch was so great and delicious that I have never tasted in Hong Kong. The turkey, bread stuffing, apple pie ... all were wonderful and savory. With the generous and charming instructions of the chef, Mr. Vargus, **Richard (Chim)** and I learned so much for cooking and enjoyed so much. Thanks a lot **Katya**, **Cindy**, and **Mr. Vargus!**—**Gladys Wong**

Hello Katya. Thank you for the e-mail. It was my pleasure, truly, to cook for your group. I had great fun getting to know you all and learning from the group. I look forward to the next opportunity.—**Vaughn Vargus**, CCE, CCA, Approved Certification Evaluator, Sr. Executive Chef

Undergraduate Study Abroad Exchanges

—by Kelly O'Sullivan Sommer, Director, Study Abroad

Friends Scholarship Committee Chair, **Ruth Newmark**, asked me a few weeks ago to tell her (and you) a little bit more about the undergraduate level students who “study abroad” here at UC San Diego. Believe it or not, we only have about 130 study abroad students here this Fall Quarter. These are the UCEAP Reciprocity students who are primarily oriented and advised by the International Students and Programs Office (ISPO). *These students are not to be confused with the more than 4,000 international undergraduates who are pursuing their full degrees at UC San Diego.* We are hoping to increase the number of study abroad students in the coming years under Dean **Kirk Simmons’** leadership.

Why don't we have more study abroad students here at UC San Diego? Historically all undergraduate exchange agreements were managed by the system-wide UC Education Abroad Program (UCEAP) which is housed in Santa Barbara. This meant that the only “study abroad” students that UC campuses received were those who were part of the bilateral reciprocal exchange agreements that UCEAP held with its partner universities around the world. About eight years ago, due to restructuring at UCEAP, the Office of the President began to allow individual UC campuses to develop and manage their own bilateral reciprocal exchange agreements.

When Dean Simmons joined the IC team, we started looking into establishing some of these, as we began to receive an increased number of invitations from universities abroad and inquiries about these from our own faculty. Establishing a bilateral reciprocal exchange

agreement on a campus that has never had one is not as easy as it may seem! As we started asking questions about the approval process, as well as the mechanism for admitting and registering these students, we ran into a lot of blank looks, quite a bit of head scratching, some “I don't know” and a few “We can't do that!”

That did not deter us. Dean Simmons was given the charge by campus leadership to establish some Strategic Educational Partnerships (SEPs) with campuses abroad that were identified as having the highest number of research ties with our faculty. One arm of each SEP would address student mobility. We moved forward to connect with the University of Oslo, Norway, that was very interested in establishing a reciprocal exchange for our students.

The biggest hurdle we faced was trying to figure out how to make the exchange equal course equivalencies, so that the courses our students would take at the University of Oslo would be recognized on their UC San Diego transcripts as UC San Diego courses and calculated into their UC San Diego GPAs. This is typically how reciprocal exchange agreements work at universities across the U.S.—students at each campus pay their home tuition and receive



Kelly and Jan Tuomainen at the 2016 Holiday Party

credit for their courses as though they were their home institution courses. This ensures that study abroad students continue to progress toward graduation in a timely manner, which is critical to the success of all study abroad programs.

While we asked around campus for a protocol to guide us, the University of Oslo was moving forward and recruiting students. Realizing that we were going to be up against a time crunch in developing new policy at UC San Diego, we approached our partners at UCEAP to see if they might help us manage this, our first campus-based, tuition reciprocity exchange agreement. They readily agreed and we now have one more agreement that UCEAP is managing for us with the University of Tasmania, Australia.

We hope very soon to establish some policy here locally at UC San Diego to allow us to start managing our campus-based exchanges and admit our first official UC San Diego “study abroad” students through these exchanges. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Happy New Year!

Friends sponsor International Café
with an Estonian menu
Friday, February 3
Noon-1:15, Great Hall, I-House.
Cost: \$5

SCHOLARSHIP LETTERS

Hola Friends of the UCSD Programs Abroad Office,

Have you ever seen the rain?

California rain doesn't count, not even El Niño rain. Costa Rican rain is a weather phenomenon that can't possibly compare with anything else in the world. I've run out of my tent at one in the morning in the drought-stricken Area de Conservación Guanacaste—weeks before the rainy season started—in order to retrieve my backpack from the tree it was leaning on and bring it inside my tent, where it would be safe from the rain that had just started. I very quickly picked up the habit of keeping plastic bags inside my backpack, because it could start raining at any time of day and I disliked having soggy biology notes. Twice, when I was hiking around the Rio Peñas Blancas with other students and a few teachers, our hikes ended with wet hiking pants and muddy boots and drenched daypacks.

I spent three lazy afternoons in the back of Eladio's Refugio near El Rio Peñas Blancas playing cards with students, teachers, and trail guides, while it poured merely feet from us. I picked up the habit of never wearing my rain jacket when hiking back up to the Estación Biológica, even if it was dumping buckets from the sky, because I would get so sweaty that I would think the jacket was leaking.

Have you ever seen a lightning storm?

I have. I've eaten dinner on the back porch, on the second floor, of the Estación Biológica and watched the lightning hit the TV towers at the continental divide of Costa Rica. I've tried and failed to take good pictures of the lightning while my friend played: "Have you ever seen the rain?" by Creedence Clearwaters on his phone. I sat in every creative position imaginable just to get a better view of the constantly moving lightning. Later, I

questioned the logic of walking up and down a metal staircase in a lightning storm.

My bunkmate and I have cuddled on the front porch of the Estación Biológica while singing "Little Bitty Pretty One," watching in awe as the lightning faded into the night, and complaining when we were summoned back inside for a night lecture.

Have you ever seen a table with no field guides on it?

Its really, really weird. Tables should have field guides: those books are an integral part of the dining experience. How else can you identify all the plants and animals you saw that day? Without field guides on the table, people are forced to continue their lives in unhappy ignorance, never satisfying the curiosity that comes with seeing an insect they've never seen before. Field guides should be piled in a moderately messy manner in the middle of a table: books on insects, birds, frogs, mammals, and plants are a must.

Have you ever sweat so much that you think it's raining?

If this is a bodily function that you would like to experience, I would recommend a trip to Isla Violin, located just off the coast of Sierpe in the Southern Pacific side of Costa Rica, north of Corcovado. That island was the definition of hot and humid. Once, I pulled my camera case out of my pocket after a 30-minute hike and it was dripping water. And by water, I mean sweat. Jumping into the ocean to escape the heat was a common activity, as was showering. However, we'd start sweating the second we left the water. My tentmate and I decided on the very first night that sleeping in our sleeping bag wasn't really an option, so we slept on top of them. Every few hours, when the hot stickiness just got unbearable, the idea of abandoning all clothing was

discussed. I quickly accepted the fact that my clothes would always stick to me, and my laundry would never dry.

Have you ever played with a four-day-old calf?

I was kind of scared to, at first. They like sucking on your fingers, and they have teeth. Turns out it just kind of tickles. When the calf sucks on your fingers, you have to put your middle finger and ring finger together, while your pinky finger and pointer finger stay on the sides of the calf's mouth. The calf sucks on your fingers as if they're an udder.

Have you ever seen a fer-de-lance?

I haven't either, unfortunately. Or fortunately, I guess. A fer-de-lance is an incredibly poisonous snake, and it's found around the Rio Peñas Blancas, among other places. It's brown and small and will bite if you anger it. But just because I didn't see it, doesn't mean my friends didn't. They found one curled up in the rocks near El Rio Peñas Blancas, and I got to live vicariously through their pictures. I also got to hear **Eladio Cruz's** account of the time he was bitten by a fer-de-lance. His story was recounted in Spanish, a language that I am still learning, but I'm pretty sure blood came out of eyeballs. Eladio's, not the the snake's.

Have you ever watched the sun set over Monteverde?

It's a sight I don't think I will ever forget. The entire town looks down over a heavily forested mountain with the greatest plant diversity I have ever seen. The light reflects off the dark green leaves, and the light green leaves, and the brown bark, and the leaves that are glistening with water from the rain—and the sight is absolutely breathtaking. I was fortunate enough to witness this on my walk home almost every evening.

Have you ever been biologizing in the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve?

No other forest can compare.

Within the span of five hours, I watched a colony of swarming army ants, accidentally kicked an assassin bug that mimicked a tarantula wasp, and hiked up to the continental divide of Costa Rica. My friends and I studied for our midterms while hiking up

and down the Reserve, pointing out plants, insects, and birds to each other and trying to identify them.

Nunca olvidaré mis experiencias. Costa Rica siempre tendrá un lugar en mi corazón. Estoy seguro que voy a regresar. Gracias para esta oportunidad

irreemplazable. Pura vida!

Mukta Kelkar

Muir College, Environmental
Systems major
EAP, Spring 2016

Dear Donors,

For my study abroad, I went to Berlin. Although this choice may seem rather odd, given that I am an aspiring historian of the Middle East, I had very good reasons for choosing Berlin; namely, I chose to study at the Free University of Berlin, because I have always heard that Berlin was a cosmopolitan city, with tons of culture and history. For these reasons, Berlin seemed for me to be the best choice.

I took four classes, two of which were German. Although the German classes were the reason why I came to Berlin in the first place, I knew that I would have some difficulties. In particular, the version that is taught is not the one that I grew up with. To me, Swiss German sounds more musical and fluid, whereas High German sounds awkward and simply ghastly. Although that class fulfilled its purpose, I can't pretend that I enjoyed hearing a language so near and dear to my heart eviscerated.

The other two classes were "Berlin: History, Memory, and Literature" and "Islam in Europe." The first was mainly a literature class, which dealt with the depictions of Berlin and its people from the Second Reich until the present. Although it delved a little bit into the history of the city during each period, I found it to be too little for my taste. For my taste, the best thing we read in that class was *Der Untertan*, by Heinrich Mann. I enjoy works of fiction with psychologically complex characters that cannot be placed into simple categories.

As for the class on Islam in Europe, I was again hoping for more historical analyses of Islam and Mus-

lim populations in Europe. Although we discussed some important legal aspects of integration and cultural assimilation, far too much of the content in the course was mired in post-modernist theory, which seems little more than over-inflated gibberish that scholars use when they wish to sound profound and knowledgeable. The highlight of that class was a visit to the Şehitlik Mosque, which has been around since the end of the nineteenth century.



Şehitlik Mosque

I had many wonderful experiences in Berlin—far too many to list in a humble report. I shall name but a few. First, Berlin's proximity to other parts of the world enabled me to use it as a steppingstone to more adventures. I was able to go to Dublin for the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising, which I found incredibly moving. It was a time for celebration, but also a time for reflection and remembrance.

I also had the chance to go to Beirut, which meant a lot to me as a scholar interested in the Middle East. I was a bit intimidated at first, but I quickly found the people to be extremely friendly and willing to accommodate a somewhat lost tourist, whose two-years of Arabic quickly evaporated upon arrival. It was a culinary and a cultural adventure un-

like any other that I have ever experienced. I shall never forget the sunny day I spent strolling on the Corniche, a seaside promenade, with the waves of the Mediterranean gently rolling onto the rocky shore, while the air was thick and heavy with an oppressive humidity. It almost seemed as if I had strayed onto another world.

As for Berlin itself, I had the chance to visit many Cold-War-era buildings and monuments. My favorite two would be the Marx-Engels Monument near Alexanderplatz and the entire quarter of Friedrichshain, which was in East Berlin during the Cold War. Walking down the three-and-a-half-kilometer-long Karl Marx Allee was like a blast from the past. Somehow, those old Stalinist buildings just seem a little out of place in a modern city like Berlin.

Lastly, I had the chance to conduct archival research at the *Auswärtiges Amt* (Federal Foreign Office) in Berlin. This was a wonderful experience for me, as it gave me valuable insight into what I can expect as a graduate student.

I tried to convince my parents that they should move to Berlin, but they weren't having any of that. Nevertheless, I will return there soon, with any luck.

Thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the International Center, I was able to do all of this. It would not have been possible without such kind assistance. My warmest thanks,

Christian Hillman

Eleanor Roosevelt College
History major
EAP, Spring 2016

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