

STUDY ABROAD

Berea College

Berea College's Study Abroad Program is rooted in an historic commitment to serving students—black and white, men and women—from Appalachia and beyond.

As Appalachia becomes increasingly economically and culturally interdependent with the rest of the world, this global emphasis becomes even more important.

International students have studied at Berea since the 1890's, but until recently only foreign language majors were likely to spend an entire semester abroad.

Thanks to generous donors, the International

Center opened in 1999 and has expanded study abroad options for January Short Term, summer, and term abroad.

Students who travel and study in other cultures gain a new world view.

One student wrote about her trip to Auschwitz, "There was a realization that only comes when you are touching the walls, breathing the air, and seeing the remains. I will carry this through the rest of my life."

Another student said about her term in Mexico, "Though it was scary to be in the minority, I also found it a very humbling and educational experience."

When students meet native peoples and visit historic, liter-



Kiril Traykov, '06, with Aborigine performers in Sydney, Australia

ary, and natural sites, the richness of all cultures, in grand and humble ways, becomes real.

Megan Vaught, a sophomore psychology major from the Shenandoah Valley of northern Virginia, had the chance to explore her own Appalachian culture during a trip to Ireland with Berea's Bluegrass Band.

While playing traditional Appalachian bluegrass music and touring castles and famous landmarks, Megan and the other band members learned about Ireland's rich history and culture from locals' tales.

"Compared to Ireland, America is a fresh-faced babe," Megan said. "What I realized about the differences in our cultures is that what feels strange to me feels just right to them. No one way of life is superior. Going to Ireland allowed me to realize that our cultures are interwoven. The Irish way of life is a blend of different cultures such as English and Celtic. In America, especially in Appalachia, we absorbed the Irish culture when they migrated here during the potato famine. No one culture remains untouched by any other, regardless of where you go."



Renata Love Jones, a senior psychology major from Dandridge, Tennessee, had been fascinated with Asia since hosting an exchange student from Hong Kong in high school. "My fascination never stopped," she said. "When I saw this trip to study the art and culture of Thailand advertised, I wanted to go so badly."

One of only 20 Berea students accepted to visit Thailand for the month of January, her expectations of a colorful and vibrant Thailand were realized. As she visited monasteries, schools, palaces, museums, and ancient ruins, she enjoyed personal conversations with monks, nuns, students, and merchants.

The trip included taking classes on Thai culture and both taking and teaching language classes. It changed the way she views herself and her interaction with others.

"Religion is so deeply integrated into the culture, with architecture and art of Buddhism or animism everywhere. You can't talk about the culture without talking about their religion—it was all representative of religion, and so beautiful."

"I also saw how much life here affects their economy. Tourism is everything. You had to look deep to find the native Thai culture. There was a McDonald's on every corner—you see how powerful American business is in the rest of the world. Everything we do affects them."



Facts

- More than 40% of Berea's 2004 graduating class had studied abroad.
- 223 students visited 31 countries in 2003-2004.
- Funding is based on appropriateness and purpose, the student's academic background, and faculty references.
- All students must meet GPA requirement of 2.8. Most had 3.5 or better.

Studying abroad helped me realize that all human beings are basically the same, and we can't let our differences separate us. Leave that to the oceans.

Elizabeth Zopff, '06

Funding Needs

Semester Abroad

Average allocation per student (half of total costs): \$5,200

28 students/term: \$150,000

Endowment needed to provide \$150,000/year: \$3 million

Short Term/Summer Abroad

Average allocation per student (one-fourth of total costs): \$900

150-180 students: \$150,000

Endowment needed to provide \$150,000/year: \$3 million

Endowment

Total endowment needed to sustain Study Abroad Program at current levels: \$6 million

Total endowment needed to expand program to desired level: \$8 million