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Appreciating “Africa Time”
By Louisa Dunwiddie ‘15

Generally, I stress myself out. I am probably one of the more neurotic people I know. Southern California has mellowed me considerably, but I would still worry about being late to a meeting with a professor because of swim practice. I often hope that my neuroticism can be played off as endearing or maternal. My study abroad experience has challenged this previously immovable part of my character.

In Uganda, I have no choice but to live on what is known proudly here as "Africa Time". Our study abroad program explained in their guide to culture that being two hours late to a 9:00 am meeting is okay, because 11:00 am is in the “morning”. The reliability of the transportation might influence the fluidity of time here. I ride an old Volkswagen taxi to school, and almost every taxi seems on the verge of breaking down. When a taxi lost a bumper two weeks ago, the conductor had to stop and run back to fetch it before we kept going. Even the route to school changed almost every day, depending on traffic. The first week or two, when the various routes were still unfamiliar, I would hope that we would happen across my destination. My taxi ride to school has taken anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours, so I often just hope to arrive sometime around the start of class. Usually my instructors understand. I quickly adopted “Africa Time” as I adapted to living in Uganda.

I am in Uganda on an SIT program, so as I write this, I'm in the period known as ISP, or Independent Study Project. I'm working with a partner to do an economic analysis of Queen Elizabeth National Park, interviewing community members, high and low-level government officials, stakeholders from private corporations, and conservationists. Our time is unstructured during these six weeks, but we still must produce a paper and conduct a presentation at the conclusion of our research. I've had to use my time wisely because “Africa Time” does not apply to my ISP project due date.

“I quickly adopted ‘Africa Time’ as I adapted to living in Uganda.”
—Louisa Dunwiddie ‘15
One Friday, my research partner and I woke up and had breakfast at the hostel where we stayed for the first week. It was raining, so like most Ugandans, our plans were put on hold until it stopped. We simply had another cup of coffee, knowing that everything would clear up in another half hour or so and we could go about our day. We planned to find a ride with a ranger to the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) headquarters about 30 minutes away, pay our research fees there and do a few interviews for our research. We found out that the UWA was hosting a meeting at Mweya, where we live, so everyone was going the opposite direction from what we had planned. Instead of paying for a taxi to take us, or worrying that we’d be set back a day in our research, we decided to stay in the peninsula and get some writing done, knowing that we could pay fees the next week and no one would mind.

People don’t seem to create intense pressures about work, and I have surprisingly adopted the mindset. I know that eventually I will obtain the information I need and I will get to the places I need to go. Arriving later than expected is not a problem I need to create. Punctuality is not embedded into the way of life in Uganda but flexibility remains important. There is a generosity with time here that doesn’t exist in the United States. I find myself valuing a perception of time that I couldn’t imagine before living in Uganda. I know that this way of life can't be recreated when I return. I want to remain as giving with my own time as people have been with me in Uganda. I certainly hope that I will worry about the little things less than I did before studying abroad in Uganda. I know that living on “Africa Time” has been a privilege that I cherish about my study abroad experience.

“There is a generosity with time here that doesn’t exist in the United States. I find myself valuing a perception of time that I couldn’t imagine before living in Uganda.”

—Louisa Dunwiddie ‘15
Jordan: Reliably Unpredictable

By Aseem Chipalkatti ‘15

Before I left to study abroad in Amman, Jordan, I heard variations of the same question – “You’re going to the Middle East? Is it safe there?” It was an understandable concern. Jordan is surrounded by a country that just fell into a civil war (Syria), a country that is still recovering from a recent war (Iraq), and one where tensions have existed for decades (Israel). Yet, Jordan has remained free of the violence that surrounds it, and life continues normally.

Although, I should clarify – when I say normally, I mean in terms of the whole “lack of civil war and sectarian violence” aspect. Otherwise, Amman has decidedly been the craziest experience of my life, especially when compared to Claremont. At CMC, my life is decidedly regulated – I wake up at a consistent time, go to class at a regular time, and eat lunch and dinner in mainly the same places every day.

Here, life is anything but that. Granted, I do wake up at 6:00 am every day, but that’s more because getting to school can take anywhere from twenty minutes to four hours. Amman has no public transportation, meaning that we have to take taxis everywhere, which – while cheap – are not always consistent or reliable. In addition, since I stand out as a foreigner, I have to assure the taxi driver that I am not a 20-year old informant or that I understand their intentionally long route around the city. I still make it to my SIT classes every day. Mercifully, the academic style is a little more familiar. Lunch is another slice of surprises, served on top of a pound of pita and smeared with a ladle’s worth of hummus. Fixed ingredient lists do not exist in Jordan. Some days you will get spicy sauce on your shawarma, other days, you will get mansaf – a mixture of chicken, rice, and pine nuts that is absolutely amazing.

“Some days you will get spicy sauce on your shawarma, other days, you will get mansaf— a mixture of chicken, rice, and pine nuts that is absolutely amazing.”

—Aseem Chipalkatti ‘15
The thing about Jordan is that nothing is ever tied down. Part of my study abroad program’s requirements includes writing a research paper with an advisor from the local university. We’ve scheduled many meetings. Few of them have actually happened. Most conversations here end with the word *moomkin*, which means “maybe” in Arabic. Are you meeting someone at noon for coffee? *Moomkin*. That noon coffee is more likely to turn into a falafel dinner on another day than anything else. Think you’re going to get a taxi to school today? *Moomkin*.

Don’t get me wrong though – I love Jordan, and I have had an amazing time here. If anything, these petty grievances have only added to my experience. In Claremont, it’s easy to get lulled into a predictable routine, where the only variance on a day to day basis is what pizza you get from Dora’s to-go cart outside of Collins (the cheese is always a safe bet). Here, I’ve been forced to go with the unpredictable and ever-changing flow and pace of life. So while I can’t wait to be back in Claremont, I definitely will not be leaving this aspect of Jordanian culture behind. I’d be happy to share more tidbits of Jordanian culture over lunch sometime. *Moomkin*.

“The thing about Jordan is that nothing is ever tied down... Most conversations here end with the word *moomkin*, which means maybe in Arabic.”

—Aseem Chipalkatti ‘15
“Container City”, Christchurch

On the afternoon of February 22, 2011, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake devastated the city of Christchurch, New Zealand. In its wake, 185 people were left dead, an estimated 6,700 injured, and the city was burdened with rebuilding costs nearing $40 billion. Over 1,000 buildings in the downtown area were deemed unstable and slated to be demolished. Several months later, still grinding through the city’s gruelingly protracted reconstruction, developers began work on Re:START, an effort to rejuvenate the city center by converting 64 shipping containers into store locations. Currently, 27 businesses—ranging from local boutiques such as Hummingbird Coffee (pictured at left) to nationwide chains like Westpac Bank—operate out of these ad hoc boxes. While Christchurch is still far from a full revival to its pre-quake status, “Container City” exemplifies the heart and resiliency of its people (and those outside the community who have contributed) have shown during the rebuilding process.

More photos can be found on page 8 and 9. Sonnemaker’s Photo Essay continues on page 10.
From top left, clockwise: Ben Lomond Peak, Queenstown; Lake Tekapo, Canterbury; State Highway 8, Waitaki District, Otago; Queen Charlotte Sound (Totoranui), Marlborough Sounds; Queen Charlotte Track, Queen Charlotte Sound (Totoranui), Marlborough Sounds.

Pictured directly left: Mt. Victoria, Wellington

All photo credit goes to Tyler Sonnemaker (CMC ‘15).
From top left, clockwise: Ben Lomond Peak, Queenstown; Abandoned hotel, Rarotonga, Cook Islands; Vara’s Beach, Rarotonga, Cook Islands; Queen Charlotte Track, Queen Charlotte Sound (Totoranui), Marlborough Sounds

Pictured directly left: Ara Tapu, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

All photo credit goes to Tyler Sonnemaker (CMC ‘15).
Art Deco City By The Sea, Napier

Eighty years prior to the massive tremors that shook Christchurch, on the morning of February 3, 1931, an even larger earthquake of magnitude 7.8 rocked the coastal city of Napier, located in the Hawke’s Bay region. Approximately 525 aftershocks were registered in the two weeks after, though most of the damage had already been dealt in the first quake, which lasted over two minutes. The death toll hit 261, including 157 in Napier, 101 in nearby Hastings, and three in Wairoa. Most of the buildings in the town were brick, meaning nearly every single one was brought to its knees, with fires crumbling most of the remaining ones. Ahuriri Lagoon (as well as several other surrounding coastal areas) was raised about 2.7 meters by the quake, leaving it completely dry as the water receded. Though Napier had been essentially wiped off of the map, its residents didn’t abandon the city, but instead rebuilt it with a new identity. This process occurred during the 1930s and 1940s, when the Art Deco style of architecture was prevalent (it also featured heavily concrete structural design, which was more resistant to seismic activity), thus furnishing Napier with one of the world’s most impressive collections of buildings in this style. The vibrant palette of pastel facades in downtown Napier is a stunning visual contrast to the destruction left by the 1931 disaster, but it also holds cultural significance. In addition to forming an Art Deco Trust comprised of volunteers that help maintain the buildings and educate visitors about Art Deco’s emergence in Napier, the city holds an Art Deco weekend every year. The weekend, which includes over 200 events, such as a parade with hundreds of 1920s and 1930s cars, concerts, and residents dressed in full “Gatsby-era” garb, has brought the title of “Art Deco Capital of the World” to Napier.
(1) Looked out my window and saw the Seine River

When I look out the window of my bathroom in Indiana, all I see are tumbleweeds rolling across empty plains and cows mooing restlessly. Well, ok, I don’t even have a window in my bathroom back home, but that’s only because there’s nothing to see except a few plastic deer that my neighbor Frank uses for target practice. Imagine my surprise when I open my bathroom window here in France and see the Seine all lit up at night backed by Le Conciergerie AKA the most beautiful former prison I’ve ever seen. I would plead guilty if I knew this would be my view. Many students like to send postcards home and say “I wish you were here” with a recognizable picture of the country or city where they are living. Well, I send postcards that say “this is literally the view from my window” and hope my friends don’t murder me in a jealous rage.

(2) Became an international model

Because my French translation teacher is the coolest woman I’ve ever met (I’ll never know how she knows so much about French hipsters) my friends and I got the inside scoop on Le Café des Chats (the Cat Café) that opened its doors just this month. We found out about it before many French people and made it into kitty heaven during opening week and without the usual four day advance reservation. Not only did I eat Oreo cake and macaroons with kittens sleeping in my lap, I also appeared in a photograph that made its way into GLAMOUR magazine. Ok, it was only the online version, but still, hello fame!

“Many students like to send postcards home and say ‘I wish you were here’... I send postcards that say ‘this is literally the view from my window.’”

—Clancy Tripp ‘15
(3) Stumbled upon an artists’ studio
After a particularly hearty breakfast of baguettes and cheese (the two major staples of my diet) one Sunday morning, a friend and I walked down my street and stumbled upon an eight-story artists’ studio and free exhibition. Cue the coolest Sunday afternoon of my life. The spiral staircase in the middle of the building is painted like a curled dragon all the way up, there are weird art objects right and left, and each artist beckons you into his/her little corner. Francois, my new favorite artist, repeatedly encouraged us to “touch ze art! Zis is not ze Louvre! Art is to be loved!” So we touched his art. And then he painted my portrait in splatter paint. Because things that awesome just sort of happen to you in Paris.

(4) Did my homework in the Jardin Luxembourg
Honnold Mudd Library is cool, don’t get me wrong, but it will be hard to go back to doing my homework there after doing my reading for class in the Luxembourg Gardens. Admittedly, they do not have salmon sushi…but they do have three enormous fountains, a small zoo, several fields of blooming flowers, herds of talented musicians, Nutella crepes, dozens of statues, and that good ol’ Parisian atmosphere… so you could say they’re about even.

(5) Was mistaken for a French person by a French person
Of course, I ruined the effect shortly afterwards by yelping “OH MAN DO YOU REALLY THINK I’M FRENCH? HOORAY!” but the effect is still the same. Yes, I can give directions. Yes, I can casually sneak the subjunctive tense into a conversation. Yes, I can place an entire McDonald’s order in French without stumbling. It’s the little things.

Also, my host sister is a monkey.

“…Cue the coolest Sunday afternoon of my life.”
—Clancy Tripp ‘15
Travel gives you the gift of anonymity. The realization that no one knows the details of your past or what brought you to your destination can be exhilarating. You can choose your character based on a whim or a given mood. The possibilities seem endless. There is no expectation that you greet people or exchange pleasantries when you are waiting in a bus station or sitting with your morning tea. You can choose whether to engage or happily exist in a cocoon of silence.

Anonymity is also intimidating. It can cause you to doubt yourself or become paranoid that others might judge you or realize you don't fit in. You might ask yourself, “What am I doing here?” or “How do I get to know the people around me?” Stares of strangers can appear aggressive, a smile may look like a leer, and silent observation can be misinterpreted as judgment. While at times this may be true, more often than not, it is a figment of your imagination.

“(Students) frequently approach me with questions of life and the world, and through that process I become more of a friend than a stranger to them.”

—Julia Starr ‘12

Travel can serve many purposes, but for me it has become an exercise in observing the dividing line disappear that separates a stranger from a friend or a foreign landscape from a backyard. In the past year I have seen that line fade in the faces of my students that I teach as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant. They frequently approach me with questions of life and the world, and through that process I become more of a friend than a stranger to them. I have watched it disappear from the old Malay men who peer at me as I jog past every day, their greetings no longer composed of knit eyebrows, but of grins and thumbs-up. And every conversation and exchange I have in my school or neighborhood forces this line to recede further.
The shift from foreign to familiar is often imperceptible. It creeps up and surprises me while I’m driving home from work and forget to marvel at the monkeys in my rearview, when I realize halfway through a sentence that I’m no longer speaking English, or as I’m planning my social life around people who were total strangers a month earlier. It compels me to reflect on the lines that I initially assumed as fixed and the boundaries of comfort that I now easily walk across.

The anonymity that offers freedom from expectations challenges you to connect with a new culture or new place by participating. The challenge is to change the anonymity of yourself into familiarity, to blur the line between comfort and unfamiliar. Ultimately, it is the traveler’s choice to remain insular or step out of their comfort zone. As for me, I’ll jump in.

“The challenge is to change the anonymity of yourself into familiarity; to blur the line between comfort and unfamiliar.”

—Julia Starr ‘12

Julia is currently pursuing a Fulbright Fellowship in Malaysia and works in a rural school as an English language teacher. She studied abroad in India in 2011 and worked in Tanzania during the summer of 2010. A 2012 CMC graduate, she received her degree in International Relations. Upon completion of the Fulbright fellowship, she plans to resume her employment with the Boston Consulting Group in Minneapolis, MN.
I would like to give a special thanks to the students who contributed to the *Globetrotter* publication. Their enthusiasm for sharing their study abroad experiences are a joy for the CMC community to read. I hope that their insight can be a source of encouragement for students thinking of studying abroad and a reminder of what a wonderful and challenging experience studying abroad can be.

*Kelsey K. Cherland*

*OCS Peer Ambassador*