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Study away: An experience not to be missed

Furman University

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Because Furman Matters.

Study away: An experience not to be missed

SINCE 1969, when Furman students first set foot abroad as part of a university-sponsored travel-study trip, the sun has yet to set on the university's study away programs.

Whether you're talking traditional overseas travel experiences or internship and research programs within the United States, hundreds of students past and present have benefited from opportunities to spend a few weeks or a semester enjoying Furman away from Furman. And nowadays more of them are taking advantage of the options available: the average number of participants has increased over the last decade from approximately 200 students per year to 300.

During the recently completed May Experience, for example, students enjoyed three-week travel programs to such destinations as Iceland, Australia and Turkey. For the 2010-11 academic year they have a choice of 13 faculty-led programs to such places as Belize, the United Kingdom, China, Africa, Washington, D.C., and Columbia, S.C., plus a host of exchange programs to such destinations as Japan, Italy and Greece, among others.

Furman's approach to study away is in many ways distinctive from that of other institutions because the majority of trips are led by Furman faculty. Says Kailash Khandke, assistant academic dean for study away and international education, "When Furman faculty are the primary travel-study instructors, we guarantee that the program's instruction and coursework meet the university's high standards and ensure that the academic experience merges cohesively with departmental curricula and our broader educational mission."

For many students, the study away experience proves to be transforming. Jenny Adamson Moorhead '99, an attorney in Greenville, still remembers vivid details of her winter 1999 trip to the Baltics and Eastern Europe, led by political science professor Cleve Fraser and history professor (now retired) Bill Lavery.

Moorhead writes, "In the years since that trip, I've often thought how much of an art it must be to take a group of 30 or so over-confident, smart-aleck college students halfway around the world for six weeks and to find that delicate balance between, on the one hand, boring them to death, and on the other hand, letting them run amuck. Not only did the history we'd studied before leaving come alive for us on that trip, but the places themselves came fully alive: living, breathing, functioning, modern and complex in a way that we'd never have understood if we had stuck solely to lectures and classes.



SHELLY MATTHEWS

Students at the ancient Roman theater in Aspendos during the 2010 May Experience trip to Turkey, where they explored early Christian and Byzantine sites.

"I know that our professors were and are experienced travelers, but for many of us it was the trip of a lifetime and one from which we returned having become friends in a way that only a shared extraordinary experience can create. Friendly enough, anyway, to have forgiven Dr. Lavery for that 'short little walk' through the open-air market in Moscow, in February, without our coats. He was so excited to share the spectacle of the transformation of a former Soviet parade ground into a thriving capitalist marketplace, it was hard to resist. Perhaps it was his boundless enthusiasm, as much as the walking, that kept us warm that day."

One of Furman's goals is to encourage (and provide the means for) even more students to benefit from a study away program. Because operational and travel costs are increasing, the Because Furman Matters campaign is seeking to raise \$10 million to endow scholarship support that will help accommodate all interested students.

As Jessica Taylor '07 wrote after spending winter term of her senior year in Africa, "Expanding your worldview through different cultures and environments is an experience that should not be missed."

Visit www.furman.edu/international to discover the variety of travel-study options available to today's students.

Contact susan.brady@furman.edu, (864) 294-3693, to learn more about supporting Furman's study away programs.