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On the road: Making the case for travel programs

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ON THE ROAD: MAKING THE CASE FOR TRAVEL PROGRAMS

The winter of 2008 found Furman alumni and friends taking two highly successful and extremely different university-sponsored trips. The Alumni Association hopes these excursions will mark the beginning of a revitalized alumni travel program.

In January a group traveled to the Cliffs at Patagonia in Chile, an ecological resort being developed by Jim Anthony of the Cliffs Properties in Greenville. Jim is a good friend of Furman, and the 18 people in our entourage were the first sizable group to visit the resort, which opened in December.

We were led by Frank Powell, longtime professor of health and exercise science, and his wife, Jane. Our travelers included Carl Kohrt '65 and Bill Howes '59, the last two chairs, respectively, of the Furman board of trustees, and their wives Lynne and Mary; a father/daughter alumni pair; suitemates from the '70s; a set of current parents, one of whom is an alum; and two alumnae from the '60s. My wife (Diane Wedgworth '78) and I had the privilege of accompanying the group. We were a diverse lot, but with our shared Furman experiences we bonded immediately.

The Cliffs at Patagonia is beautiful beyond description. The trip to get there is arduous, taking almost 24 hours, but once you arrive the scenery is so breathtaking that any fatigue melts away. We stayed in cabins on cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean, and each cabin had its own wood-fired hot tub with a magnificent view.

The food and activities were well planned and offered something for everyone. Among the trip's highlights was a bumpy boat ride to view penguins, sea lions, cormorants, whales and abalone fishermen. We enjoyed hiking, bird watching, horseback riding,



The Cliffs at Patagonia offers stunning scenery and exceptional accommodations.

poetry readings, and incredible food and entertainment by local performers. We also paid a visit to a girls' home, where we donated computer equipment we had brought from the States.

As much fun as the sights and sounds of Chile were, the people on the trip and our hosts at the resort were what made the week so memorable. I renewed friendships, made new friends, and learned how talented and funny some of our alumni really are.

The staff at the Cliffs at Patagonia became our extended family, and we all wanted to bring them back to the *Estados Unidos* and show them some Furman hospitality. On one of our last nights there, we gathered the staff, told them the story of "Brown Eyes," and serenaded them. On departure day, more than a few tears were shed as we said goodbye to our hosts.

Only a few days after I returned to Furman from South America, Jane Dungan, my colleague in the Alumni Office, took 13 alumni and friends on a four-day trip to Charleston, S.C.

With the help of Bill Lavery, professor emeritus of history, and Steve O'Neill '82, a current member of the department, the group enjoyed an inside look at the culture, commerce and history of the Charleston area and examined the city's ongoing efforts at preservation, restoration and renovation. They stayed at the historic Francis Marion Hotel, visited museums, art galleries and plantations, and enjoyed a lowcountry dinner at Lavery's new home in Mount Pleasant.

The Charleston School of Law allowed the Furman group to use one of its classrooms for a lecture by O'Neill, a local product, on his hometown's myths and legends. The group took

private tours of Charleston Harbor and the Gibbes Museum and visited the Charleston Tea Plantation, the only active tea plantation in North America. They also enjoyed a reception at the Smith-Killian Gallery and a lowcountry cuisine cooking class at the famous Charleston Cooks.

The trip was unique in that it brought together alumni from several different decades. The planned activities were of interest to everyone, and before the week was over they wanted to know where we would be going on our next trip.

We hope you'll be interested in future travel programs, because the success of these two ventures has encouraged us to develop more opportunities for Furman folks to see the world together.

Stay tuned for details. We look forward to having you join us on our next trip.

— TOM TRIPLETT '76
Director, Alumni Association