



Education Abroad Stories

by UC Riverside Anthropology Majors

Japan



Gabriella Carrion
アメリカ カリフォルニア大学リ

PERFECT FIT PROGRAM

by Gabriella Carrion

OAP

Josai International University

Fall quarter

gabriella.carrion@gmail.com

I have never been one to have big dreams, but a dream I did have was to visit Japan. Through UC Riverside and their connection to Josai International University in Togane, Chiba, Japan, I was able to achieve that dream in September of 2016. I first became interested in education abroad when I was in middle school. I became interested in Japan after reading a children's book called *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr in elementary school. I found out later in middle school that colleges and universities offered education abroad programs where you could travel the world and study in different countries. I even chose to attend UC Riverside because I saw that they had a lot of opportunities for education abroad.

I originally was very interested in the UCEAP programs, but while doing research of education abroad programs in general, I found that the UCEAP programs did not fit my needs. While the UCEAP program seemed to be a good fit for other students, including my friends who studied abroad in South Korea, the programs for Japan did not check a lot off of my list, and outside private programs were too expensive. However, my professor from my Japanese classes, Sato-sensei, introduced me to the program Josai International University was offering, and it seemed like a perfect match for me! Josai International University often sends their own students to UCR, and they also offered UCR students the opportunity to take classes at their campus.

The program was a great choice for me because I was looking for a program outside of Tokyo so I could immerse myself into Japanese culture, and allow me to take classes that studied Japanese culture all at an affordable price. The program was affordable for my situation as the tuition was waived and I only had to pay for living and travel expenses, and I could still use my financial aid towards it. The campus in Chiba also seemed to be close enough to Tokyo where I could still travel there and enjoy a lot of tourist spots, but far away enough that I would be able to practice my Japanese and see what life was like outside of Tokyo. So, off I went on my journey to Japan, leaving the country and traveling by myself for the first time ever!

I was able to land safely in Japan and find the JIU representatives at the airport. The first week at JIU was full of nothing but surprises. Firstly I found that JIU had placed me at their Tokyo campus instead of their Chiba-Togane campus like I had expected. I then found that the people I would be living with and taking classes with were actually students from European countries. We were also asked for representatives from each of our countries to speak in Japanese to other JIU students and faculty at the main Chiba-Togane campus. I was chosen to represent the United States at the opening ceremony because I was one of the only 2 U.S. students in the program, and the other UCR student was arriving late. It was a bit overwhelming, and not what I expected at all, but it turned out to be a great experience!

Japan

The other international students and I still had opportunities to visit the main campus in Togane, Chiba, and we also had opportunities to interact with the Japanese students at both campuses. It also turned out that my roommate was from Spain and we became very good friends and we often explored Tokyo together with the other international students. We had a lot of fun exploring around the neighborhood where our apartment was, or even traveling into the city for tourist spots. Our classes were fun, interactive, and interesting. Our Traditions and Culture class would often take us on small field trips to teach us about Japanese traditions and culture. Our Research Project class let us choose our own topics and research anything that interested us in Japan. Even the Japanese Literature class was engaging, and it was interesting to read passages that Japanese students often studied in school.

Traveling during weekends and holidays was always fun, and it was also interesting to experience not only Japanese holidays but also their version of holidays we shared. I was living in Japan from September 2016 to January 2017, so I got to see Japanese holidays such as the Emperor's Birthday on December 23 and the Coming of Age day for young adults, but also shared holidays such as Halloween, Christmas, and New Year's. For the Emperor's Birthday, the Imperial Palace in Tokyo is opened to the public (they only open the Imperial Palace to the public .

2 days out of the year), and they handed out flags of Japan to wave as you walked through the Palace and waited for the emperor to come out to the window to greet everyone. The Coming of Age Day in Japan is a holiday in January where young adults that have turned 20 or will be turning 20 are celebrated for officially becoming adults. The young adults all dress very nice (the girls often in pretty kimonos), and visit a shrine before heading over to a city hall for a ceremony. Holidays such as Halloween and Christmas were not that different from our own commercialized holidays here in the United States, but during Halloween it is uncommon to hand out candy to people, and for Christmas they would eat KFC to celebrate! New Year's of 2017 was interesting because it is a tradition to visit shrines within the first few days of the new year in Japan. My friends and I found that the lines for all of the shrines were also very long, but it was worth the wait to experience a Japanese tradition.

...it cost me about the same (a little less!) than if I had never left and stayed at UCR for all 4 years

The biggest challenge I faced while studying abroad was homesickness. I had never been away from my family for longer than 3 weeks, but I was also missing my friends. Trying to be comfortable with all new people in a new country took time, and while we were all friendly, it did not feel the same as having people I was used to being around for years. I struggled a bit with the first month. However, eventually I was able to cope with the homesickness and finally enjoy myself. It also was very beneficial for me because it made me more independent. I made new friends with people in different countries, and I am now hoping to visit my roommate from the program in Spain where she lives, and see our other friends in Europe as well.



[above] Outside the Imperial Palace. The Emperor and his family came out to greet

Japan

While traveling alone, paperwork for applying and processing to be an international student, getting homesick, and experiencing a lot of unexpected events was scary and stressful for me, I do not regret the path I chose. I have a lot of precious memories, more knowledge, and new friends from all over the world now and I highly recommend studying abroad to anyone and everyone. Stepping out of your comfort zone can be fun sometimes! Education abroad broadens your knowledge of the world and as an anthropology majors it is a good experience and opportunity to be able to live and study or familiarize yourself with new cultures, while still earning credits for school. Some programs might even offer a course where you can do an independent research study, or you can take classes to practice your language skills! The possibilities are endless if you research your programs, especially if you feel that it may be financially difficult to do. There is aid out there for students, or smaller programs that might only require you to pay for travel and living expenses. For myself in the end, despite going on a education abroad trip, it costed about the same (and a little less!) than if I had never left and stayed at UCR for all 4 years. I was able to still graduate in 4 years, and graduated a couple of months after returning from Japan. Do your research and have safe travels!



[above] Field trip for class to the Temple of the 47 Ronin, Sengaku-ji.

Thailand



RESEARCHING ABROAD

By Richard Guzman

UCEAP

Thammasat University

Fall quarter

falang2560.tumblr.com

How did completing research abroad impact your education in anthropology?

As part of my agreement with the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Program, I created a project that targeted students to study abroad using the disposable camera prints and placing a QR code sticker on them (a link to my blog).

My independent research project (the Thai royal barges) initiated from an Art Historical approach, however my concurrent Anthropology class required a group investigation using social science methods. After I introduced the idea of the Royal Barges to the members of my group, we designed an online survey to ask Thai nationals about their perceptions of these national icons. What started out as a historical and image-based analysis developed into a social experiment that enhances the my own and the reader's understanding of what the barges actually mean and represent as international icons of the Thai monarchy and nation. This research abroad was very rewarding professionally, academically and personally; to me it demonstrates the holistic and interdisciplinary nature of Anthropology's social science tools.

Thanks to the help of several departments at UC Riverside, the images are displayed throughout campus. I hope that more students and potential students consider the reality of study abroad, especially when there's an opportunity to strengthen your academic or career goals

What financial aid did you receive?

I received very generous aid from several sources including the Benjamin A. Gilman scholarship, UCR Anthropology Department's Steven Mandeville-Gamble scholarship, federal aid, cousins, aunts, and friends. In my scholarship applications and personal statement submissions I did my best to explain my passion and determination to take courses in both my majors abroad. Along with denial letters, receiving aid from donors I had never met before gave me a true sense of potential and helped me take action, investigate options, and pursue the most out of my education abroad experience.

How did you first get interested in education abroad?

I grew up crossing the US—Mexico border quite frequently and the cultural contrast made me curious about the rest of the world. Since I was in elementary school I had a fascination with geography and often thought about travelling. Education abroad was my top desire at university aside from doing well in the disciplines I chose.

What was the biggest challenge you faced while abroad?

Balancing a very new social life. Adapting to a new wardrobe of characters and personalities you may not be used to. The best thing to do is be as flexible and open to people as possible while also listening to your intuition.

Thailand

What was the greatest benefit of your time abroad?

Meeting some truly beautiful people that have become a special part of my life. I was able to live a dream and have so many valuable sociocultural, linguistic and art historical/archaeological experiences that I could not have had at home. Personally, professionally and academically, my time and experiences abroad as an undergraduate have given me some sense of credibility in my research interests.

What is your favorite memory of your time abroad?

I travelled on my own to Chennai and from Mandalay to Yangon. During each trip there are handfuls of moments where I stepped back mentally and evaluated my situation: being independent, in a new environment very far away from anything I'm used to. These moments are priceless and help me remember I can accomplish anything I truly want.

What would you recommend about education abroad or your program to other anthropology students?

Especially in a globally-focused discipline like Anthropology, travel and experience abroad is a professional, educational and empirical augmentation. I witnessed several social science-majoring (and other) people blossom both individually and socially while abroad. Pursue your subdiscipline abroad! There are many, many options.



[above] Images with QR code produced as part of the author's independent research project on Royal Barges, and as project to encourage students to study abroad. QR code links to author's blog.

India



VOLUNTEERING ABROAD

By Dalayna Gardner

UCEAP

The Alliance for Global Education

Summer 2015

dalayna.gardner@gmail.com

fromamericatoindia.wordpress.com

What education abroad program did you participate in, and when?

I studied abroad in India in summer of 2015. The program was called The Alliance for Global Education. This was an 8 week Internship & Research program.

What financial aid did you receive?

I was fully covered. I did a lot of research on scholarships, and I applied to many. I received these scholarships and school aid.

2015 Off the Beaten Track Scholarship
2015 UCEAP Promise Award Scholarship
2015 Shawn Carter Foundation Scholarship
2015 The Alliance for Global Education Scholarship
2015 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship

How did you first get interested in education abroad?

I have always listened to people older than me. When I got to UCR a lot of seniors said that they regret not studying abroad, so I made it my goal. Then my sophomore year, I got diagnosed with epilepsy, and I gave up on studying abroad. However, I was inspired by the head of the disabilities department at UCR (Glen) to still continue my desire to go abroad. He said that "the only limitation I have are the ones I put on myself." Here I am 5 years later LIVING abroad.

I realized that there is so much more in the world than what I have been around my entire life.

What was the biggest challenge you faced while abroad? I got food poisoning, and I was in the hospital for 4 days. Also, I had a hard time adjusting to the taste of the food. I highly recommend that any person looking to study abroad eat the food prior to arriving.

My biggest challenge was actually when I came back to the US. I'll admit it was hard for me to adjust back to this lifestyle. There were a lot of things that I missed about India that are not here. I must say, I was not home sick when I was in India. There was nothing in me that made me desire to come back home. However, when I first got back to America, I was down in the dumps and pretty sad that I left.

You see, in India, I did research with children. I felt as though when I woke up every day, my purpose was to help the children and I knew that my research was impactful. But, when I arrived in America I felt useless. I didn't like sleeping-in because I had nothing to do that day. I didn't like the feeling of not being needed. I really missed the smiles on those kids' faces and their appreciation for education.

I missed the sound of the streets. People awake at 4 am playing the drums. Fireworks exploding at 11pm. I missed seeing people outside conversing. I missed the outside shops and the streets filled with busy city life. I missed the sounds of the horns. I missed hearing children laughing in the streets playing with something as simple as a can and a string. Back in the US, all I saw was empty streets and sidewalks. I heard nothing but crickets at night. No one communicated with one another. I missed the concept of a COMMUNITY in India.

India

What was the greatest benefit of your time abroad?

I got to experience a new culture and travel a new world. I realized that there is so much more in the world than what I have been around my entire life. There is so much more to see and explore. Life is too short to stay in one place.

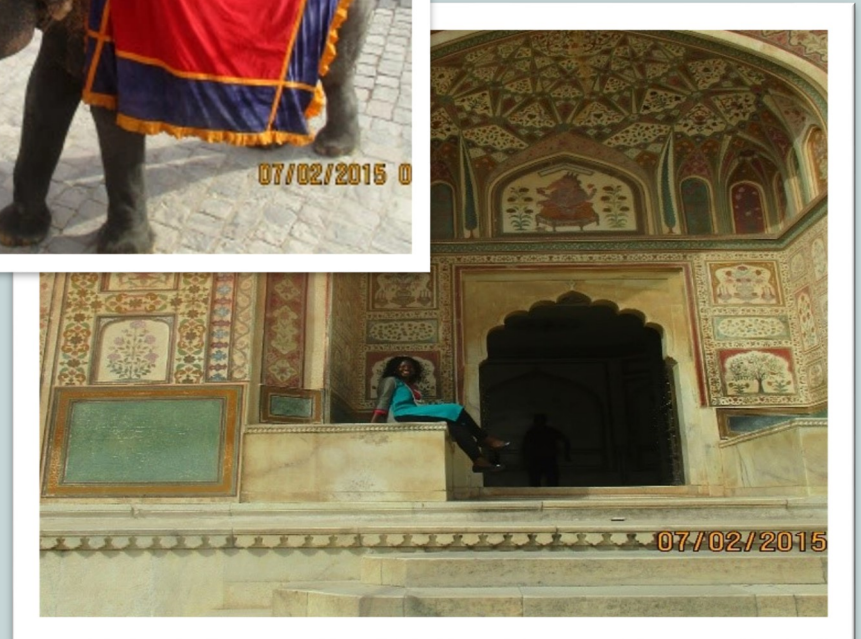
What is your favorite memory of your time abroad?

My favorite memory would be my 21st birthday. I flew to another city in India (Jaipur), took a taxi to a princess castle, rode an elephant up to the princess castle. Amazing.

What would you recommend about education abroad or your program to other anthropology students?

You need this experience under your belt if you want to continue in the anthropology field. This will set you apart from other candidates for jobs and graduate programs. As an anthro major, you might tell people that you enjoy studying culture, but spending time immersed in another culture is the best way to prove your passions. If you are more interested in the archeology side, find a study abroad program

When I applied for grad school, the people interviewing me had more questions about my study abroad experience than they did about my education at UCR.



UK-Scotland



LEARNING ORAL HISTORY

by Mary Megan MacGregor

UCEAP

University of Edinburgh

Fall 2015

mary.megan.macgregor@gmail.com

Perhaps the best decision I made during my undergraduate career was to study abroad. I spent four months in Scotland at the University of Edinburgh in 2015 but the journey began years before. I knew once I was accepted to college that I wanted to make the most out of my time and studying abroad was near the top of my list. It took me three years to study abroad because life got in the way and I was busy focusing on doing what I could at UCR. I applied during my 3rd year as I was finishing up most of my required courses and was set to leave during Fall Quarter of my 4th year. Looking back, this set up was the ideal situation because I had less stress about what classes I still needed to take at UCR and didn't worry that I would come back a quarter behind.

I enrolled in Introduction to Gaelic Language and Culture, Archaeology: Scotland Before History, and Scotland and Orality. Each class I felt addressed the subdivisions in Anthropology in a way that allowed me to learn about my host country while also examining how different the discipline was taught there. I was able to truly see how interactive and very applicable their courses could be in the real world. Archaeology majors were encouraged to work in the field at one of numerous archaeological sites in Scotland during the summers.



UK-Scotland

Gaelic, perceived by many to be a dying language, was fascinating to learn and it was compelling to see the work my Gaelic professor was doing to help promote the use of Gaelic in Scotland. The Scotland and Orality course examined the pivotal role that children's songs and oral history has in the preservation of Scottish history.

I had a project during my time there where I examined recordings taken by anthropologists of elders in the Highlands telling stories and singing to bagpipe music, and explored the oral history shared on those tapes that may have otherwise been lost. I felt like the years I spent in classrooms at UCR learning about methods of ethnographies and archaeological sites was culminating at that point. I was seeing the effect these practices that I learned about had on shaping the current culture, in terms of promoting Gaelic language, and preserving culture that may have otherwise been forgotten, through recording the Highland meetings. I was finally living the role of anthropologist that I had been cultivating since my first year. It has been three years since my study abroad adventure but I remember it as if I were still there. Study abroad always seems like an exciting experience but the lasting effect it has is something I never could have anticipated. To study abroad is to learn more about yourself than you imagined, to become a part of a society entirely different from the one you are used to and to thrive in it, and to have an experience so profound it shapes your perspective from the moment it begins.



To study abroad is to learn more about yourself than you imagined, to become a part of a society entirely different from the one you are used to and to thrive in it, and to have an experience so profound it shapes your perspective from the moment it begins.

Brazil

SUMMER ABROAD

by Kimberly Lai

FLEAP

Summer 2018

klai006@ucr.edu

I was always told that studying abroad is an experience that you'll only get in college and I wanted to pick a program that would count as credit but also be in a country that wouldn't be my first choice to do touristy activities in. I also knew that I wanted to do a shorter program for studying abroad because I had never been out of North America and I didn't know how I would feel being away. This past summer, I studied abroad as a part of UCR's FLEAP program in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil under Professor Vargas of the Anthropology department. Brazil and Scotland were the two programs that I was debating between since both were five weeks long but the main reason I choose the Brazil program was because it counted for two upper division courses that I needed vs. Scotland counting for two breadth courses that I had already fulfilled.

Studying abroad was overall a great experience but it did not come without some bumps along the road. To start, I was experiencing a major culture shock. Even though I had used DuoLingo to try to learn Portuguese, I arrived to Rio only able to say "bom dia," chicken, and potato. Not knowing the language, adjusting to the time difference, and being unfamiliar with everything and trying to absorb a whole new culture was overwhelming.

In addition, I knew studying abroad through UCR meant that I'd be representing our university but I was unprepared to be a representative of Asian-Americans. Going to a country with an Asian population of about 1%, I knew that I would be the minority. Yet, I never thought that being in Brazil, I'd be asked questions about being Asian-American -- what that meant to me, what it's like to be Asian in America, etc. Had the questions been more about America and less about Asian-America, I would have been a bit more prepared. Having to dissect and analyze my entire life in seconds and making a conscious effort to explicitly preface that what I'm saying is based on my personal experience and doesn't reflect Asian-Americans as a whole was, honestly, terrifying.

I was terrified to say the wrong thing simply because I'm not an expert on the Asian-American experience. I have rarely had to differentiate between my identity as Asian-American being separate entity from my American identity, so being asked these questions caught me off-guard.

All challenges aside, Brazil has given me amazing opportunities I never thought I'd have. A part of the program that really drew me in was the activist portion. How often do people get the opportunity to meet activists and see how much of an impact their work has done, first-hand? I was privileged to meet four outstanding activists and traveled to the places they were bringing about change to. To be able to see how and why certain conditions have pushed them towards activist work is indescribable.

Of course, being in another country we had to dabble in some tourist activities and these were some of my favorite memories. I believe my study abroad group consisted of some of the best, like-minded peers. We all got along well and we did a bunch of our touristy activities as a big group. These outings strengthened the bond of our study abroad group and created memories that will last a lifetime.

In conclusion, I believe that all anthropology students should study abroad if they have the chance to do so. Even if the program you choose is not an anthropology program, studying in another country and using the knowledge gained from the classroom and applying it to the real world is an invaluable experience. I believe studying abroad solidified my skills to be objective and empathetic to a different culture and experiences a different society faces. While I touched on my experiences, the program I was a part of focused on the Black Diaspora in Brazil but the topics discussed made me think about the Asian Diaspora. Moreover, discussing the Black Diaspora shows how different groups of people around the world share a similar story.