

GLOBAL



KENYA | CUBA | ITALY | SPAIN | ROMANIA

STUDIES



THAILAND | FRANCE | HAITI | BAHAMAS

One hundred and twenty Saints and their chaperones traveled far and wide this spring. During spring break they traveling to Haiti, the Bahamas to Kenya, Cuba, Italy, Spain, Romania, Thailand, and France. Just after the close of the school year in June, two groups headed for the Caribbean. One went to Montrouis, Haiti to run a weeklong summer camp at our partner school, St. Paul's Episcopal, while the other went to San Salvador Island, Bahamas for a hands-on week of scientific study.

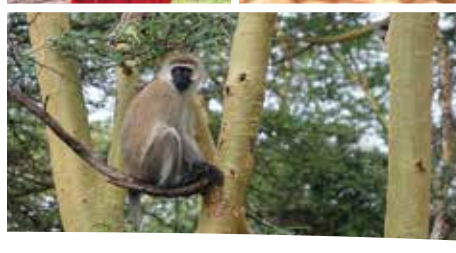
The following pages include some of their reflections and the amazing photos of our student travelers and their group leaders.

KENYA

CHASE COHEN '19

I stood up in the back of the Jeep and felt the cool, Kenyan air envelope my body. Surrounding me were endless plains and hills of light brown and green grass, striped with the occasional dirt trail on which we drove. Beams of light from the setting sun painted the sky gorgeous shades of yellow, orange, and pink, and speckled the earth with golden highlights, illuminating the gilded coats of giraffes eating from the tall acacia trees, and spotlighting a family of elephants drinking and bathing from a quiet pond.

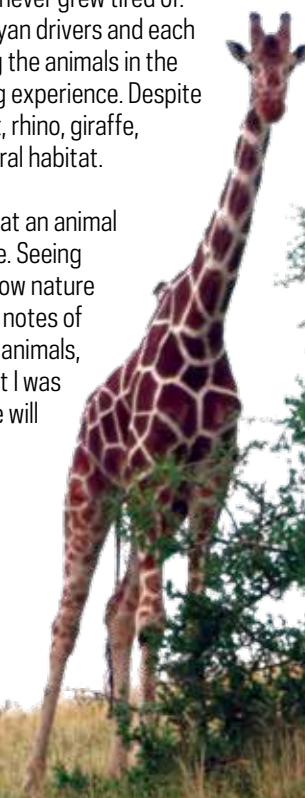
As I felt the soft breeze run through my hair and touch my face, I remember a feeling that words struggle to explain. The landscape took my breath away, and I realized the incomparable beauty of nature untouched by humanity. I observed the perfect balance of the scene unfolding before me; every organism, from the plants to the insects to the rhinos, lived in harmony with one another, and this unity between different species created a perfect elegance that was only possible through the lack of human intervention. Suddenly, the scope of man's environmental destruction struck me. I awoke to the sharp contrast between the urban environment in which I grew up and the flowing grasslands of Lewa, and a sense of urgency developed within me regarding the future of our planet should human development continue without bound. Ever since this moment in which nature's raw magnificence catalyzed my passion for conservation, I've felt a pressing responsibility to protect this majestic Earth and the animals that inhabit it. This trip is one that I will never forget.



LILY SMITH '18

During our time spent at Lewa, we went on game drives twice a day: one at sunrise, one at sunset. We all loved these game drives, which were the backbone of our day, a constant which we all adored and never grew tired of. Between standing to poke your head through the roof of a moving car, chatting with our Kenyan drivers and each other, sharing sweatshirts, blankets, snacks (and everything between), and of course, seeing the animals in the Kenyan landscape animals, every one of these drives was a novel, unique, lovely, eye-opening experience. Despite having gone on maybe half a dozen game drives already and having seen countless elephant, rhino, giraffe, zebra, gazelle, and more, it took several days for it to hit me: these animals were in their natural habitat.

I'd seen many of these animals before, in zoos, of course. It's easy to notice and recognize that an animal in a zoo isn't meant to be there, but fully grasping the opposite did not come as quickly to me. Seeing the animals in the endless plains in massive packs, mingling with other animals — this was how nature intended them to be, and it struck a chord in me. Something was awakening, something with notes of sadness and awe — awe of the landscape surrounding us, of the sheer size of the groups of animals, of the injustice of containing them, keeping them in captivity, of the cosmic rightness of what I was seeing. I'm not calling for the eradication of zoos and aquariums, but I know that nothing else will ever compare to seeing these animals really, truly wild.



CUBA

WILLIAM CLARK '19

I am infinitely grateful to have gone on this trip to Cuba. As the trip was coming to a close, I realized that my perspective had vastly changed. I thought the trip would be easy and relaxed, but being completely out of my element forced me to experience Cuba in a way that was infinitely important and memorable to me. The trip, despite challenges like homesickness and language barriers, was a very positive experience. I formed stronger bonds with people I already knew from school, as well as with complete strangers. I will always remember our humorous and compassionate tour guide, Dayan. I will remember the open doors to houses. I will remember stumbling over words trying to speak Spanish with my host family in Viñales and sharing many laughs with them. Mostly I will remember the vibrant spirit of Cuba, whose people are loud, outgoing, and always friendly.

KITTY TYREE '19

On the fourth day we went to Viñales, where we would do our service. We were divided up between different host families with whom we would stay for the next few days. I, along with three other girls, stayed at the lovely home of Herminia and César. They were extremely nice and we were disappointed not to see very much of them since we were working on a farm all day. Their three-year-old niece was very friendly, and gave us a gift of small wooden birds. When it was time to go back to Havana, I really wanted to thank Herminia and César for opening up their home to us. So, to the best of my ability, I wrote them a note in Spanish telling them how thankful we were for their incredible hospitality. I decided to leave the note on the bed, along with the key. We were still loading our things into the van when I saw Herminia walk into the room and pick up the letter. I guess my Spanish was understandable, for when she had finished reading, she ran outside with a big smile on her face and waved goodbye to us. Knowing that we were able to connect with each other despite the limited amount of time we had together made me feel so grateful that these amazing, gracious, and open people were willing to let us into their lives.



ZACH GAYDOS '19

On the second night we gathered in the family room of the hostel where we met with a Cuban economist who studies at the University of Cuba. I think I really expected a presentation on the benefits of socialism/communism but I was surprised by how honest he was about the upsides and downsides of the Cuban society. We asked questions about Cuban industry and housing, and were surprised that a fair amount of the questions came from the Cubans in our group. It was interesting to see that there weren't really any homeless people. The economist had said that anyone could get a job working for the Cuban government. Apparently, the jobs come with free food and basic necessities as well. If you work for yourself, you can make more money, but if you work for the government, you have a steady source of income.



ITALY



AFUA NYANTAKYI '18

My favorite part of the Italy trip was definitely the day we took a walk across a large bridge in Naples. The bridge wasn't a named site. In fact, it was a stop we made in between attractions. We managed to catch the middle of the sunset, in the best weather we had seen after days of persistent rain. In clear, cool weather, the walk across the bridge was such a carefree moment for the group. We strolled along, talking, laughing and repeating the word "Italia!" because we were simply so happy to be there. The place had taken on an orange and pink color scheme, with the light making everything around it even more beautiful than before. We split the time nicely between taking in the sunset and the atmosphere around us and taking fun pictures to preserve the memory.

Feeling that genuine happiness from something as simple as a view immediately taught me something important about how we perceive happiness. As most seniors stressed about incoming college decisions, I assumed that happiness came from things similar to getting into the college of your choice. While happiness can come from that, this moment in the trip reminded me that happiness can also come from things like nice outdoor views, great food, and interactions with new people, all of which I got in Italy. In that moment, I believed that incoming college decisions or anything else I felt apprehensive about were not conditions that exclusively determined my happiness.

Before that moment, it had rarely crossed my mind that there truly was more to life than what I experienced and thought about day to day. However, being located in an entirely different country reminded me that there's an entire life ahead of me filled with opportunities to experience pure happiness, just like this trip.



SPAIN



HELEN SWEENEY '19

Thousands of people every year from around the globe take one of the many paths that end in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. It is believed that St. James's remains lie in the city under the infamous and gorgeous cathedral. St. James was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus and is considered the first apostle to be martyred. In English, El Camino de Santiago even means "The Way of St. James." The El Camino de Santiago began as a religious journey to honor St. James and yet today the route is traveled for spiritual, health, or any number of other reasons...

Walking a portion of the El Camino allowed me to get down to the roots of what it means to be alive. I didn't have a revelation or become a different person, but the El Camino did reinforce many parts of my identity. It reinforced my love for nature and being outdoors. It reinforced my love for Queen and The Beatles as we sang some tunes along the trail. Most importantly perhaps, it reinforced my love for human connection. I am so grateful for the lengthy conversations I had with my peers and chaperones, but I also spoke to store owners, waiters, and other people on the El Camino...in Spanish! I can honestly say that the El Camino de Santiago is not only the coolest thing I have done in my life, but it also has inspired me to set aside more of my time to enjoy nature, human connection, and solitude. The El Camino de Santiago solidified my identity and reminded me to cherish it.

MAXIM BJARNASON '19

The Opposite Logic of Solitude

The Spanish woods, each of its facets: trees, rocks, bushes, fallen leaves, all caked with the wet residue of a recent rainstorm, serve as the quintessence of solitude should you choose to wander them alone. It is just you and the muddy path which has been degraded overtime by the feet of fellow travelers.

I started this journey amongst a procession of fellow students and teachers. We walked as one homogeneous group, but as time moved forward, so did I, further and further from my companions. At first, I was aware of this disjointment. I strolled, subconsciously cognizant of the fact that the group was behind me. Consciously, I focused on my hunger, thirst, or the pain in my feet.

Come an hour, however, these complaints and qualms had dissipated, and my thoughts dwindled down into a realm where I got lost in my own head. My body followed the trail, but my mind had no direction. To describe the thoughts that come during this extent of solitude — isolating oneself from comrades and walking amongst nature in its most organic state — would be senseless; thought is non-linear and delves into a level of introspection that I had never experienced before. Perhaps I thought this was unique to me at the time.

However, at the end of the day the group reconvened to find that we all shared this experience. We reflected and shared stories about the farfetched places our thoughts traveled and marveled over the breadths of our imaginations. What struck me in this moment of sharing was that we had become closest by being by ourselves. I solemnly believe that the greatest thing about walking the Camino de Santiago with my fellow students and our teachers was the solitude we experienced and shared with others who really cared.



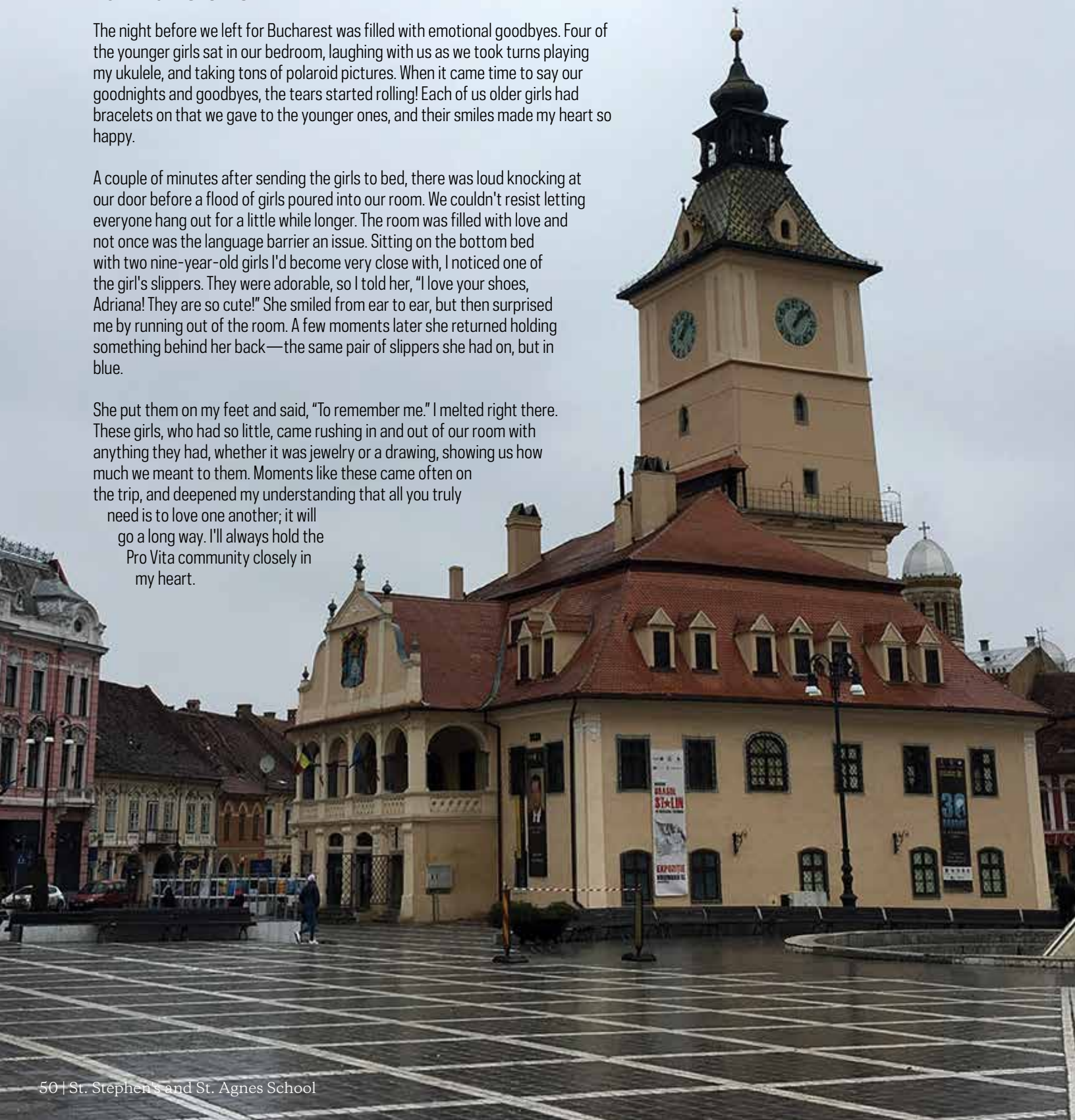
ROMANIA

NOELIA VARGAS '20

The night before we left for Bucharest was filled with emotional goodbyes. Four of the younger girls sat in our bedroom, laughing with us as we took turns playing my ukulele, and taking tons of polaroid pictures. When it came time to say our goodnights and goodbyes, the tears started rolling! Each of us older girls had bracelets on that we gave to the younger ones, and their smiles made my heart so happy.

A couple of minutes after sending the girls to bed, there was loud knocking at our door before a flood of girls poured into our room. We couldn't resist letting everyone hang out for a little while longer. The room was filled with love and not once was the language barrier an issue. Sitting on the bottom bed with two nine-year-old girls I'd become very close with, I noticed one of the girl's slippers. They were adorable, so I told her, "I love your shoes, Adriana! They are so cute!" She smiled from ear to ear, but then surprised me by running out of the room. A few moments later she returned holding something behind her back—the same pair of slippers she had on, but in blue.

She put them on my feet and said, "To remember me." I melted right there. These girls, who had so little, came rushing in and out of our room with anything they had, whether it was jewelry or a drawing, showing us how much we meant to them. Moments like these came often on the trip, and deepened my understanding that all you truly need is to love one another; it will go a long way. I'll always hold the Pro Vita community closely in my heart.





RYAN VUONO '20

My trip to Pro Vita Orphanage in Romania was an absolutely incredible experience, full of memories I'll never forget. Going into the trip, I really wasn't sure quite what to expect. The second we got off the bus, all the kids came running up to us, saying hello and giving us huge hugs. Within minutes, a huge game of soccer broke out. It amazed me how quickly we all connected with one other, despite the fact that we were older and came from a different place. These kids were so generous with their love and compassion, I instantly felt welcomed into their family.

One moment on the second day we were there encapsulated this feeling for me. We returned from stacking firewood at Pro Vita's other site as the kids came back from school. It was quickly decided that the game of the day would be team tag, boys vs. girls. As the girls finished counting down from 20 and ran towards us, one of the boys, Tao, asked if he could have a piggy back ride. When he hopped up on my back, he told me that he wanted to show me his secret hiding spot. As we ran from the girls, I let him steer me behind the main building using my ears. We managed to lose them, and Tao confided that he had never shown anyone his secret spot, until now. While this may seem like something small, I could tell that it obviously meant a great deal to him; he was so excited to share it with me. I'm so happy that I was able to go on that trip so that I could help give back to these special people who welcomed me so quickly and lovingly.



THAILAND



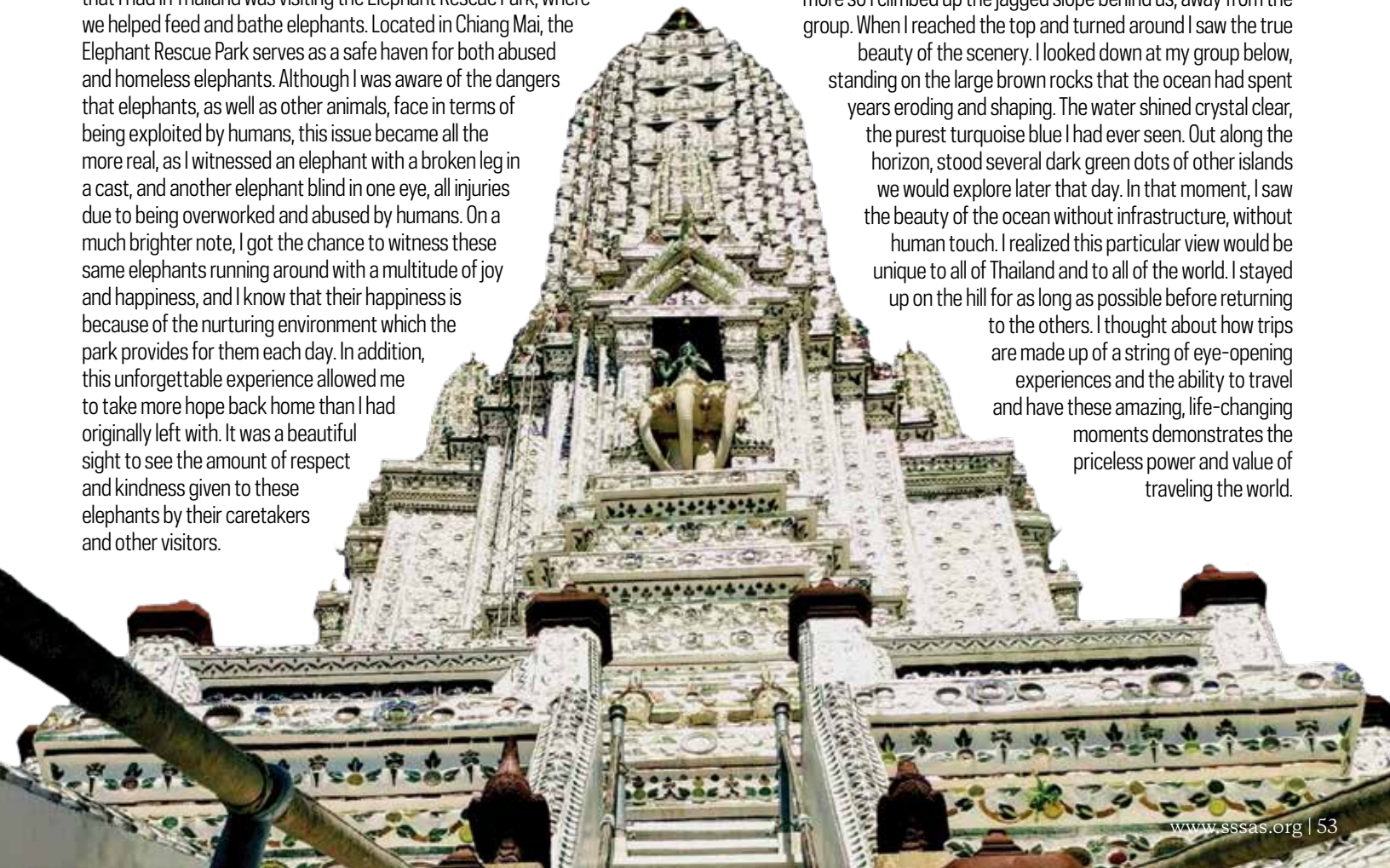


CRISTAL BADU '18

Without a doubt, I would say one of the most memorable experiences that I had in Thailand was visiting the Elephant Rescue Park, where we helped feed and bathe elephants. Located in Chiang Mai, the Elephant Rescue Park serves as a safe haven for both abused and homeless elephants. Although I was aware of the dangers that elephants, as well as other animals, face in terms of being exploited by humans, this issue became all the more real, as I witnessed an elephant with a broken leg in a cast, and another elephant blind in one eye, all injuries due to being overworked and abused by humans. On a much brighter note, I got the chance to witness these same elephants running around with a multitude of joy and happiness, and I know that their happiness is because of the nurturing environment which the park provides for them each day. In addition, this unforgettable experience allowed me to take more hope back home than I had originally left with. It was a beautiful sight to see the amount of respect and kindness given to these elephants by their caretakers and other visitors.

GRAHAM TRACY '18

On our third day in Thailand, we traveled to Ko Samet, an island in the Gulf of Thailand. After eating breakfast, and before taking a boat tour to other small surrounding islands, some of our group decided to venture out to a large set of rocks along the edge of the beach. We marched through the woods eager to reach the rocks. Many of us took pictures of the scenery as well as of each other. There were crabs and other organisms resting in small pools in the rock's crevices, their colors blending together in perfect harmony, almost going unnoticed. I was interested in exploring more so I climbed up the jagged slope behind us, away from the group. When I reached the top and turned around I saw the true beauty of the scenery. I looked down at my group below, standing on the large brown rocks that the ocean had spent years eroding and shaping. The water shined crystal clear, the purest turquoise blue I had ever seen. Out along the horizon, stood several dark green dots of other islands we would explore later that day. In that moment, I saw the beauty of the ocean without infrastructure, without human touch. I realized this particular view would be unique to all of Thailand and to all of the world. I stayed up on the hill for as long as possible before returning to the others. I thought about how trips are made up of a string of eye-opening experiences and the ability to travel and have these amazing, life-changing moments demonstrates the priceless power and value of traveling the world.



FRANCE



CHRISTIAN CORPENING '18

While growing up in a military family, I've been reminded of the sacrifices our men and women in uniform make every day at home and abroad. However, in being the son of one of those men, it's easy to focus squarely on the sacrifices that my family and I have had to make: having to move twice in a year, not getting to see my father for months or years at a time. I think that appreciation for what it is our soldiers do can be lost in this, that I had previously lost sight of what the big picture is, so to speak. Our visit to sites that are important in American military history, Pointe du Hoc, Omaha Beach, the American cemetery, put things into perspective for me. From those visits, I gained a new appreciation for what it is my father does and has done for over 20 years. It made me more proud than I already am to be the son of a soldier.

LILLY CADY '19

Certainly none of us had expected a snow squall in late March, least of all in Paris. Nonetheless, we persevered through the slush, clutching tightly to our too thin jackets on our whirlwind tour of the city. Trudging up a slippery cobblestone hill, we ached with the fatigue of travel, our fingers numb from the cold. I willed my body to warm itself as I stared at my feet. Blindly shuffling along, I didn't notice that the group had stopped until I bumped into them. Shaken from my daydreams of crackling fires and steaming cups of chocolat chaud, I glanced up.

A stunning postcard view of the Sacré Coeur greeted us. Flanked by a stately set of stairs, the church perched atop a hill, its bell-shaped domes disappearing in the clouds above. The whole scene — Parisian square, vintage carousel, magnificent building, and wintry weather — made it seem as if we were inside a snowglobe. As the fluffy white flakes continued to float down, our spirits lifted and we eagerly raced up the steps to the basilica. The surrounding neighborhood was just as picturesque as the church itself. Warmly lit windows of a crêperie beckoned to the group, and soon we were huddled at tables, digging into a well-deserved treat. I cradled a frothy cup of chocolat chaud and began to notice the feeling in my fingers return. Daydream achieved and now cozy warm, I looked out a hazy window towards the church. Snow continued to fall on the dazzlingly sweet city of lights, whose wonders continually warmed our hearts as well as our hands on our amazing trip abroad.



HAITI



JASMINE VARGAS '19

Today, my life was changed. As we walked into camp, the kids ran to us as we got off the bus with "love you's" and "hi." It was humbling to see each of them share their food, water, love, and endless kindness. I never thought I could go to a place and not be homesick, but Haiti has changed my outlook on life .

JAMAL BARNES '20

It was crushing to say goodbye to those people we came close to over the last four days. The loss of these relationships, knowing that I may never these kids again, made me reevaluate the relationships back at home.

GABBY GUADALUPE '19

Profe Gilbert asked the group, "What do you want your last day to look like?" Simple answer. I wanted everyone to be happy and for me to radiate all the positive energy I could whether it was reading a book, playing down by the banks, or coloring with the different paints. It was the day to truly express my hopes.



BAHAMAS

Upper School Science Teachers Ted Yoder and Tim Dodds took 17 Upper School students to San Salvador Island in the Bahamas for a week of incredible scientific discovery!

SOME OF THE EXCITING THINGS THEY DID:

- Snorkeled, explored, and studied some Caribbean ecosystems, including the investigation of fish, coral, algae, plants, turtle grass, invertebrates, and plankton;
- Conducted field collections, classified, and sketched a wide variety of species;
- Learned about the night sky
- Explored caves
- Studied collection specimens and used keys to identify the species in labs at the Gerace Research Centre.

SOME OF THE AMAZING THINGS THEY SAW:

Lots of fish, shells, nurse sharks, rays, barracudas, coral, a fossilized reef from about 150,000 years ago, an octopus, and crabs.

