



# TRANSFORMATIONS

## SAINTS • GO • GLOBAL

Spring Break Adventures:  
Around the World in Seven Days

The following pages contain the reflections and inspired artwork and photos of our student travelers and their chaperones, and were designed by Malcolm Reynolds '17 and Gabe Rudasill '17 for their senior project.

# Kenya

REFLECTION BY KATHARINA HARDING '18

## Kenya was a trip of a lifetime.

Our group of eight girls began the journey in the very in Dulles International Airport, a hub of cultural and ethnic convergence, and after spending more than 20 hours traveling, were transported into a vastly more diverse world, the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. Lewa is not just a place for wildlife; it is a community. The primary focus is the animals and conservation, but this goal extends far beyond the 62,000-acre property of Lewa. The relationship between Lewa and the outlying communities not only protects the wildlife inside, but also the people surrounding it. This partnership stops poachers and quells community unrest with the help of the private security provided by Lewa.

During our stay we met with many people who work with and in the communities: Joseph from the Northern Rangers Trust; Phoebe, a nurse; Wanjiku from communications; and even Mike Watson, Lewa's CEO. In addition to meeting a multitude of influential people we visited some of the communities surrounding Lewa. We met local women who benefitted from the Manyangalo Water Project and visited some of their farms.

One day we visited a school in Leparua and planted trees with the kids. Most of us would consider this day the most memorable. I loved playing soccer and volleyball with the kids even though they were much faster and better than us. Visiting the classrooms and helping the younger children learn English was my favorite part of the day. I was surprised with how eager they were to learn and how well the high school students spoke English. Speaking with the older students made me realize how much we have in common. Many of them were studying the same subjects we are in school and they have similar goals for the future as we do. We made lasting relationships with the children and teachers there and hope to visit them again.

I was fortunate to catch a glimpse of what Lewa is all about and fully understand why they work so hard to protect all of these amazing

creatures ranging from little hyraxes to the black rhinos. Our well-knowledged and entertaining guides, Nissa and Moses, would bring us as close to lions and elephants as they possibly could. Looking an elephant right in the eye made the real world seem so far away. Yet, for some this is their real world, with no strict schedules and time tables. These animals fill the open lands and make the beautiful sunsets and sunrises even more breathtaking. My favorite part of our days were the nighttime game drives. After sunset the night sky is so clear you can see the Milky Way and make out so many star patterns. Our late nights were quiet and peaceful as everybody wanted to take the vast sky in, while our mornings were filled with different grunts and howls waking us up to start the day. We made so many memories on our game drives, no matter the weather or terrain. One of my favorite drives was one of our last ones. It had just stopped storming, so Nissa decided to open the roof of the Land Cruiser. As we sped through the dirt trails, mud started raining into the car and all of us were soon caked in mud. We spent the rest of the evening covered in the Kenyan dirt as we watched our final sundown.

Hiking through the valley, meeting the baby rhino Kitui, swimming in the water source, and meeting all the wonderful people made me realize how Lewa has affected so many parts of Kenya. The communities are protected by the Conservancy, but have also expanded because of it. The Conservancy has provided so many people with jobs, health care, and housing. Meeting the women from the water project, lodges, clinic, and headquarters was helped me understand why they work so hard to protect the wildlife as it is a part of their lives. However, these people were not just speaking to us, but treated us like friends. Their kind and welcoming words made leaving Lewa much harder than expected. Meeting these people and seeing the wildlife was an experience I will never forget.

We learned and laughed on our safari through Kenya, and I think I can speak for the entire group when I say that we fell in love with Lewa and hope to spread its message of conservation and community.



## PHOTO INSPIRATIONS

OLIVIA GILLIAM '17

### "Tracks" (facing page)

Looking back out of the safari vehicle, the openness of the land and the sky was nothing short of breathtaking.

### "Three Sleeping Lionesses" (right)

These three lionesses were our first glimpses of lions at Lewa. The way they were lounging gave us an appreciation for their secure, carefree place at the top of the food chain.



## ART INSPIRATION

LILLY CADY '19

### "Rhino"

Acrylic Finger Painting on Canvas, 12" x 16"

Our group saw this particular male rhino on one of the first days of our trip. Rhinos such as this one are critically endangered due to poaching, so the group was very excited to have such a close encounter. Although brief, the moment was truly magical and inspired me to paint. With its rugged beauty and strength, the rhino embodied the very best parts of our trip. The wildness of Kenya was an incredible sight to behold, and all the members of our group were touched by its vast wonders.

As we ventured out of our comfort zones, quite literally, and stepped off the plane in Madrid, Spain, I don't think any one student had an idea of what we were about to experience.

Hosting Spanish exchange students is one thing, but being in a foreign country and trying to speak a language you are not fluent in for almost the whole day is another. I can speak for myself and say that I had several doubts about the trip. With these initial insecurities about my Spanish skills in the back of my mind, I left the airport with a nervous excitement. I could practically taste the jamón serrano and freshly baked bread, which would both become a staple of my diet for the next week.

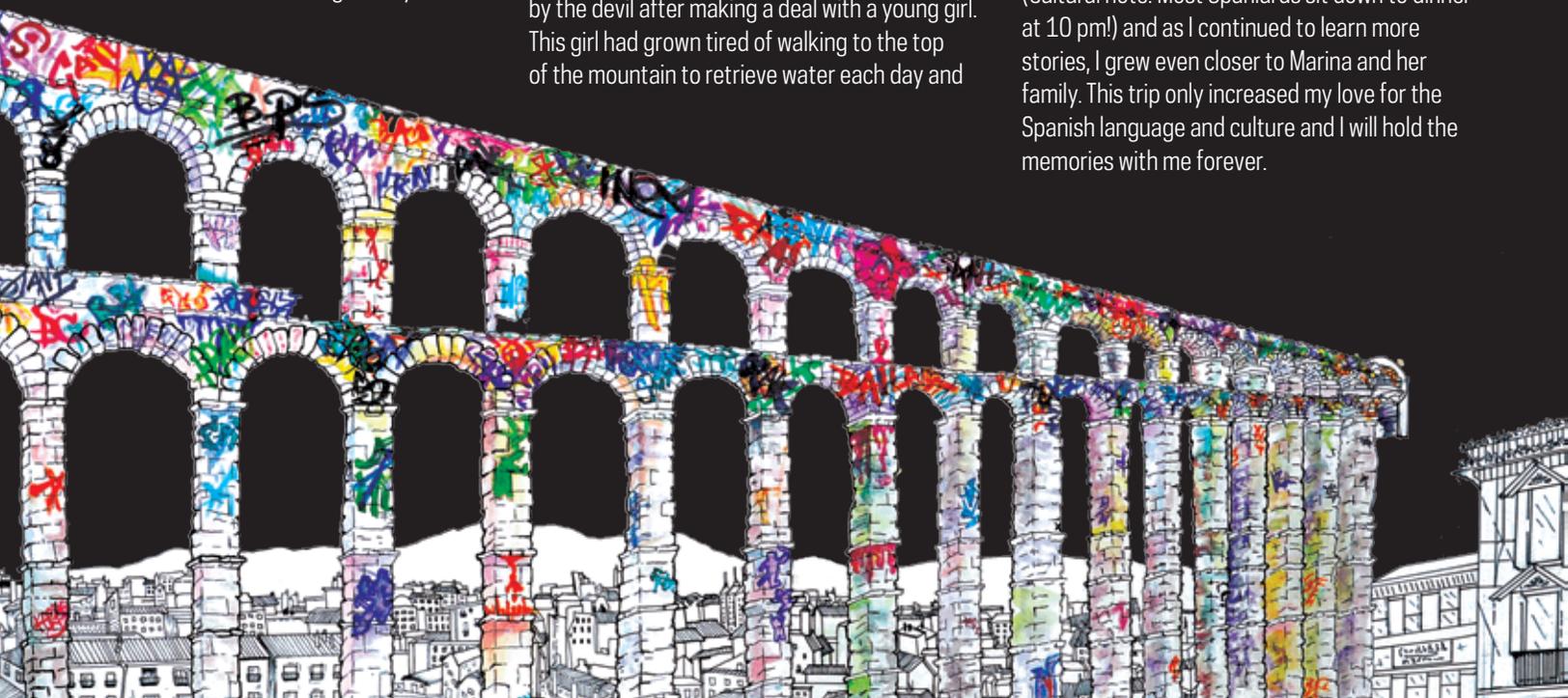
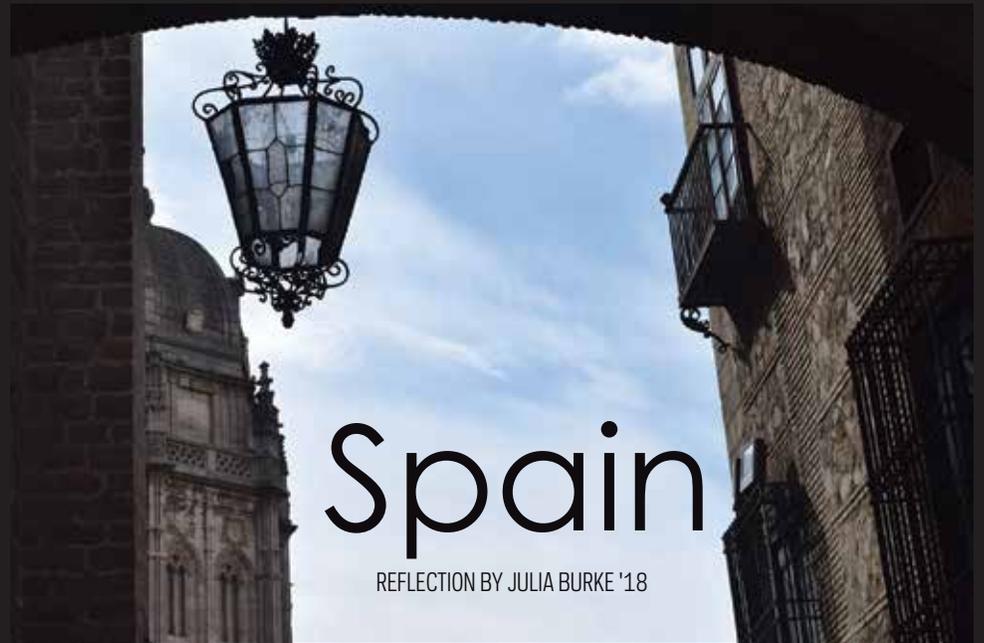
The first couple of days, of course, had some inevitable awkward lulls in the dinner conversation, but I found myself loving the challenge of speaking Spanish and quickly found joy in sharing stories and indulging in the home-cooked meals at the dinner table each night. Not only was I improving my speaking but I began to understand a lot more of their culture, even if I could only pick up a few words from the fast-paced conversations. I soon realized that there was a story behind everything—town squares, aqueducts, cathedrals, palaces—and that instead of reading history

textbook versions of Spain's rich culture, I was lucky enough to hear personal stories from my host family and their friends and teachers. These stories are ones I know I would've missed had I just visited Spain on my own.

One of my favorites came during our trip to Segovia on the most beautiful day of the trip. Of course, the Roman Aqueduct in Segovia is impressive even without knowing the legend behind its making. Its arches stand curiously sturdy, creating an immense entrance to the city. However, it wasn't the pure structure that interested me, but the story behind its creation. In Spain, it is said that the aqueduct was made by the devil after making a deal with a young girl. This girl had grown tired of walking to the top of the mountain to retrieve water each day and

asked the devil to build something to carry the water down the mountain in exchange for her soul. Just before the devil laid the last stone in the aqueduct, the girl regretted her decision and prayed to the Virgin Mary, who in turn saved her soul. The space where the last stone should have been placed rests a statue of the Virgin Mary, in honor of her saving the young girl. It is also said that the divots in the aqueduct are from the fingers of the devil.

After returning from Segovia I had a little more to add to our late night dinner conversations (Cultural note: Most Spaniards sit down to dinner at 10 pm!) and as I continued to learn more stories, I grew even closer to Marina and her family. This trip only increased my love for the Spanish language and culture and I will hold the memories with me forever.



## PHOTO INSPIRATIONS

GABRIELLE SULLIVAN '18

### "Lantern in Toledo" (facing page)

This was taken at a Cathedral in Toledo, where I wanted to capture the repeated motif of light in religion. Lanterns were along every path to the Cathedral to help the people find the hope that religion could provide. My eye was drawn to the almost intimidating and mystical nature of the way the light struck the cathedral and how the lanterns seemed to reassure the people as they strolled by.

### "Unknown Knight" (right)

This stained glass window in the Alcazar of Segovia shows the rich religious and architectural history of Spain. It caught my eye for a variety of reasons. I was astounded at the sheer beauty and intricate detailing among each piece of the stained glass, and how it draws you in.



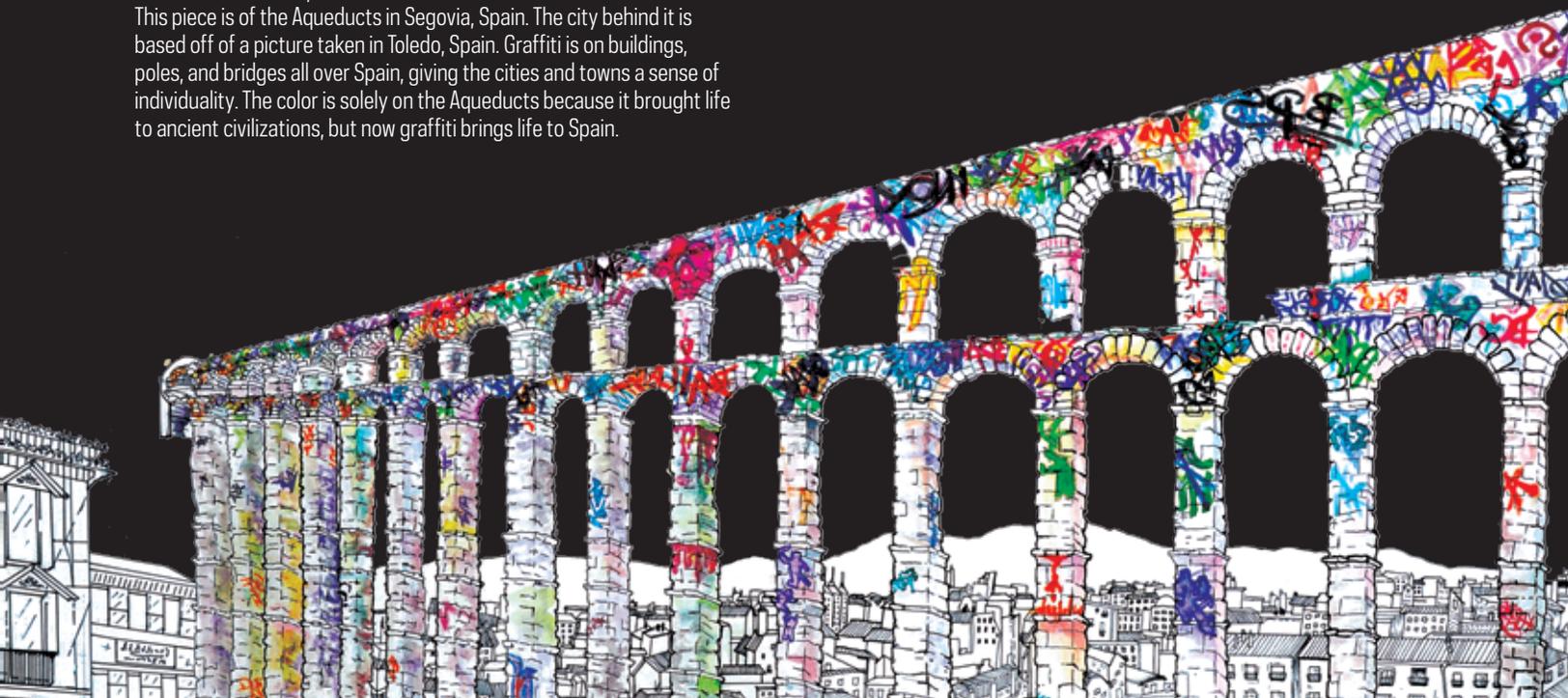
## ART INSPIRATION

CATHERINE OWENS '19

### "Disturbance of The Boring"

Ink and Watercolor, 10"x18"

This piece is of the Aqueducts in Segovia, Spain. The city behind it is based off of a picture taken in Toledo, Spain. Graffiti is on buildings, poles, and bridges all over Spain, giving the cities and towns a sense of individuality. The color is solely on the Aqueducts because it brought life to ancient civilizations, but now graffiti brings life to Spain.



# China

REFLECTION BY RACHEL SULEYMANOV '19



## **Our goal for the day was to visit the Buddhist monastery that sits atop Mount Emei.**

After a long drive to a bus station, we boarded a bus that would take us up closer to the foot of the mountain. The roads up the hills unfolded in twisted and narrow ways, and we all observed the earth surrounding us. To our right lay the lush and bright trees of the forest, and through the left windows we saw waterfalls spilling over high edges and joining small streams below.

After leaving the bus, we sat in groups of four in small ski lift-like pods that slowly climbed up Mount Emei. The whole hill was blanketed by dark leaves that shined with the gloss of the moisture in the air. Looking back from the lift, you could see the gray of the clouds eating the view and covering everything you passed—the more we went up, the more the view disappeared into the hands of thick dew.

When we reached the top of the mountain, after an immense amount of steps, we came to a circular pavilion surrounded by slim, high trees. In the middle of the pavilion stood a walkway fashioned like a pagoda and when you walked through, you could access all the smaller monasteries. The main prayer room was at the end of a long walkway that was decorated with statues of small white elephants down the sides. The wide but small building was painted a light yellow, and the

dew sat breathing right above it. When I entered the room, I was greeted by a magnificent pearly elephant adorned with a golden headdress. Atop the elephant sat a tall, gold Buddha surrounded by the elegant petals of a lotus flower. He wore a thin, but towering crown and the Buddha and his elephant sat behind a small table covered with colorful offerings. Around the center and pressed into the walls of the room were spaces for smaller statues of bodhisattvas. One could go around, bow, and pray to each one. Every time a Buddhist would kneel in front of the the big Buddha and touch their heads to the golden pillow beneath them, the monks struck a gong. A large crowd was building up to pray, but everyone remained calm and peaceful as they carefully planned the words they would speak to their Buddha.

Though I do not identify with any religion in particular, I always enjoy visiting relics in different countries. I've been to Russian Orthodox churches, mosques with wish-granting hooks, and many different temples, but I can confidently say that my trip to this very monastery was the most memorable one. The cloudy serenity that I found at the monastery fostered a sort of peacefulness within me. And, though the specificities of the monastery can only be triggered by pictures, the lasting impression of ethereality will never abandon me—just as the Buddha with his believers.





## ART INSPIRATION

ZAK ZELEDON '19

### “Mount Emei, Chengdu, China”

Medium: Watercolor, 8" x 10"

I have always been interested in art, ever since I was little. I was honored when the school asked me to create something from my spring break trip to China. Being a sophomore, this was my first time traveling with the school and I was beyond excited. In Chinese culture, ink and wash is a common art method which I tried to embody. This watercolor piece brings back great memories. While visiting the city of Chengdu, the group hiked up a mountain and encountered a small pagoda near a Buddhist temple. We continued to explore the surrounding area in the misty weather. We were all tired and wet, but we advanced forward. I wanted to express the feeling of that location, and a sense of the place in my work.

## PHOTO INSPIRATIONS

ALEX KRAMER '18

### “Shanghi Skyline” (facing page top)

This was taken on top of the really tall financial building in Shanghai, where the view is incredible. This particular picture is how I pictured China before I went there. I had this image of China from stories in the Western media, as a country filled with concrete buildings that all look the same smothered in smog that reduces visibility to only a few miles. What I discovered was that this preconceived notion was mostly wrong. China is a beautiful country, but standing on the sky deck I realized that it is a very different world. The vast expanse of identical housing and oppressive smog in Shanghai were truly like nothing I had ever experienced before.

### “Terracotta Army” (facing page bottom)

Learning about history and experiencing it in person are very different experiences. We learned about the terracotta army in freshman history, but actually being there is absolutely breathtaking and give you a completely different perspective on what you have learned. This picture shows only the tip of the iceberg, as there are three other identical active dig sites just as large.

## The Old City of Dresden during the day is an amalgamation of colors.

The high arches of the Baroque Fraunkirche Church are a smattering of gray and black, the tall townhomes that flank the main square are painted with pastels, and their terracotta roofs are a deep red that shines in the sun. The city was once called the Jewel Box of Germany for a reason: with its florid Baroque and Rococo architecture it could be the setting of a fairytale, complete with a vast, dominating palace in the city center. One can almost imagine stepping into the urban landscapes that hang in the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen art gallery, and joining the wig-wearing soldiers and cart-dragging peddlers.

Yet, the whole city of Dresden is, in many ways, a lie. If you step out of the city center, or cross the River Elbe to the city's residential and industrial areas, the scene resembles the Communist Block more than a fairytale. The juxtaposition of these two Dresdens is a reminder of the true history of this city that lies just below its plaster veneer.

In 1945, months before the end of the Second World War in Europe, British aircraft with American support firebombed the city of Dresden, leveling it and killing anywhere up to 100,000 civilians. This senseless and strategically unnecessary bombing was part of an Allied retaliation against German offenses earlier in the war, and was detailed by the American Kurt Vonnegut decades later in his book *Slaughterhouse-Five*, which we read in preparation for the trip. Below the rubble, along with the bulk of the city's population, also lay hundreds of years of carefully maintained art and architecture, that had once graced this historic capital of Saxony. Dresden was the Jewel Box of Germany no longer.

This was what we learned on our Central Europe trip: the cities we visited (Dresden, Prague, and Krakow) might seem like quaint tourist destinations, but were in fact the scenes of some of the greatest accomplishments, and worst atrocities, in European history. It was a first-hand experience in the nuances of human history, and snapshots of both its brightest and darkest hours.

# Eastern Europe

Dresden, Germany ▪ Prague, Czech Republic ▪ Krakow, Poland

REFLECTION BY SAM DUBKE '17

## PHOTO INSPIRATION

KATIE PRATT '17

### "Prague Market" (facing page)

This picture is of a market street in the Old City of Prague, just as the sun was setting on a rainy day. This part of the city has survived through hundreds of years of wars, and all the different styles of architecture illustrate this history. But in spite of so much conflict and so many different regimes, the city and its people have retained an identity that is uniquely Czech, but even more so uniquely Prague. This photo was one of my favorites from the trip, because I think it really captures a part of that identity by showing what Prague is like, not during a parade or celebration, but on a normal day when it's time to close shop and run home through the rain.

## ART INSPIRATION

MALCOLM REYNOLDS '17

### "An Alley in Prague"

Watercolor and Ink, 6"x10.5"

I drew this based on a picture I took from the top of a clock tower in Prague. I remember thinking that the alley looked like a crack in the earth with light shining up through it. This view is one of my most vivid memories of Eastern Europe, and probably my favorite of all the skylines we saw. The way light and noise from the street seeped up into the quiet air of the night made the city feel alive.



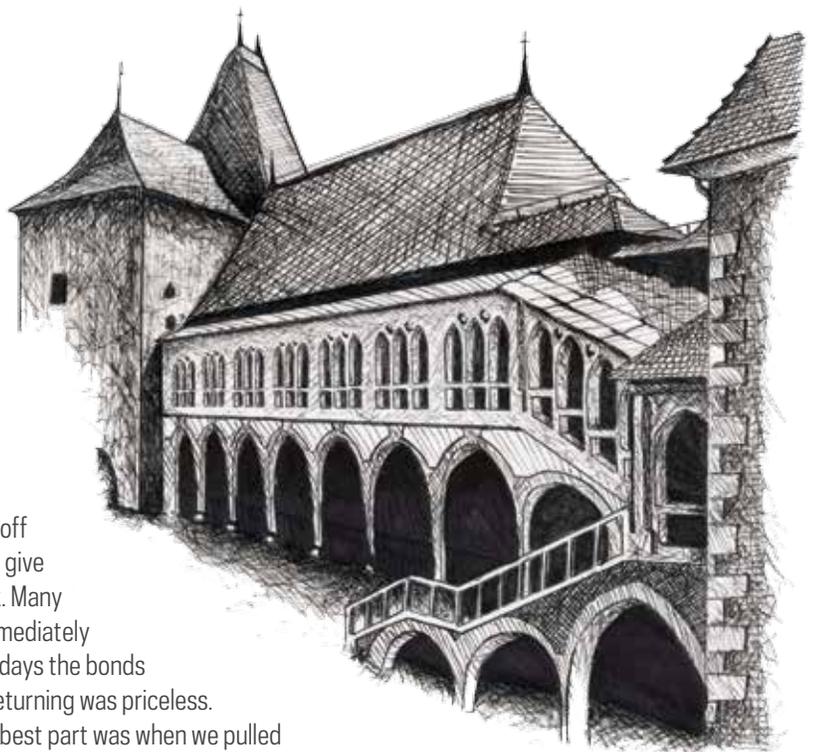
# Romania

REFLECTION BY ALLISON VUONO '19



## A promise is a promise.

A promise is a promise. Following our adventures of seeing castles, churches, and towns of Romania during our overnight trip in Transylvania, we returned to Pro Vita, the orphanage where we stayed for the week. Before we had left, we promised the kids that we would return and be back the next day. They did not want to see us go and wanted to make sure that we would not be gone for long. Being away for one night from them was just as hard for us. We saw kids in Brasov and at Bran Castle, and would sigh saying, "Aw, he reminds me of Claudio," or "She looks just like Adrianna!" As we pulled up to Pro Vita, the bus skidded to a stop in the gravel. Even though we had only been at Pro Vita for three days before our overnight trip, it felt like we were coming home. We came off the bus one by one into the cool crisp night air, and could not wait to give the kids all of the new balls and toys we had bought on the way back. Many of the children had been sitting and waiting for us to return. They immediately jumped up, and ran to give us excited hugs. Just in these past three days the bonds we had formed with them were so strong and seeing their joy in us returning was priceless. We had become a part of their lives and were considered family. The best part was when we pulled out the bouncy balls and soccer balls that we had gotten for them. Their eyes lit up with such excitement and it was a moment that I would never forget. We went inside to eat, and the whole dinner we could hear laughter and balls bouncing off the walls and how happy the kids were with these few balls we had brought.



Artwork by  
GABE RUDASILL '17

One of the biggest things that I took away from this experience was not taking anything for granted. We have so much that we don't think twice about and I realized how important it is to appreciate the little things. These kids are incredibly strong and make the best of their situation. This trip was eye opening and our group without hesitation, we all decided that we will be going to go back to Pro Vita. It was amazing to see how much we impacted these kids lives and how much they impacted ours in just a week. Even after an hour of playing, we formed relationships with them that will never be forgotten. Saying goodbye at the end of the trip was the hardest part, but this goodbye was not forever.

## PHOTO INSPIRATIONS

MIKAELA DISCENZA '19

### "Happiness" (facing page)

This photo is of two of the girls from the orphanage, Andrea and Adriana, playing with some of the stray dogs that wander around the complex. It is my personal favorite because the expressions of joy and happiness on their faces is so pure and genuine. Almost all of the dogs were too scared to approach any of us, but they trusted the Romanian children, who loved to hug and play with them.

### "Love" (right)

This picture is of Mackie Wainstein '19 and Adriana, one of the Romanian children. They are playing Slide, a simple hand game that we taught the children. Despite the language barrier we were always able to communicate with a smile or a game. The moment we met them we knew it would be nearly impossible to leave them.



## Kenya

"In Kenya, the students were provided with experiences that could inspire them to become lifelong conservation leaders. We also went to a local school, where the students taught elementary school children, planted trees and experienced a culture different than their own."

—SHAWN COTTER, UPPER SCHOOL MATHEMATICS TEACHER

## Spain

"The group of sophomores and juniors participating in our Spanish exchange with Colegio Villa de Griñón had hosted Spanish students in the fall. In addition to activities and classes at the school, we visited various sights in Madrid, such as the Bernabeu Soccer Stadium and the Prado Museum, as well as the nearby cities of Toledo and Segovia. But the difference between a traditional trip and an exchange are the relationships made. For many students, what makes the experience unforgettable are the little things, like getting to know their host families, attending classes at a typical high school, and spending time with other teenagers in the community. I have two of my favorite examples of these connections. One Saint on this year's exchange was staying with the same family that a sibling had stayed with during the 2015 exchange. The families had never lost touch and both sides were excited to reconnect. Another student who joined us this year had no intention of going to Spain, but when a parental decision was made to host a Spanish student in the fall, a friendship formed which prompted our student to decide to visit Spain. I truly believe these exchanges are life-changing experiences for most participants."

—CHRISTINE GASPER, UPPER SCHOOL SPANISH TEACHER

## China

"The China trip was really something extraordinary and special. Between events like scaling the Great Wall, exploring the Terracotta Army, tasting exotic teas, observing pandas in their natural habitat, and volunteering with children in need, the students had time to form a deep bond among themselves. They came to know a different culture and people who, while speaking a totally foreign language and possessing such an unfamiliar history, yet share so much with us. Words will never do the experience justice, but I know it was a trip we will all cherish for our entire lives."

—DANIEL LOWINGER, UPPER SCHOOL MANDARIN & FRENCH TEACHER

## Eastern Europe

"Eastern Europe is the center of an overlapping web of historical and cultural trends. During our brief trip we were able to see the treasures of medieval kingdoms, the scars of two World Wars and communist occupation, and a variety of literary and artistic landmarks. The most moving day, of course, was the one we spent at Auschwitz. This experience was all the more heartbreaking for the time we had spent in beautiful cities like Prague and Krakow, where Jews, Poles, Roma, the disabled, gays and lesbians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and so many others had lived their lives before they were claimed by the Holocaust."

—ELIZABETH PECKHAM, UPPER SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHER

"Inspired by Kurt Vonnegut's darkly comic WWII account, "Slaughterhouse-Five," the spring trip to Dresden, Prague, and Krakow was meant to beget both laughter and penetrating, personal rumination. On what subject? The civilized human. We paused before baroque architecture and sculpture depicting forthright gods and dancing nymphs, and in Prague, we ate toasted cinnamon bread on a stick. Our culinary and visual appetites we regularly satisfied, but in order to search our souls we toured Sonnenstein, a Nazi Euthanasia Clinic outside Dresden and Auschwitz I and II (Birkenau) outside Krakow. Consequently, the trip, with its contrasting delights in the shadow of depravity and vice versa, proved to be a powerful vehicle for somber yet peaceful thought. And I would add that any smiles and/or laughter along the way, and there was plenty, may have come from a reinvigorated joy to be alive."

—DR. ANDY SIDLE '78, UPPER SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER

## Romania

"It is hard to put into words the many feelings I have reflecting on the trip to Romania. Pro Vita opened their doors and their hearts to us all. While the work we did will benefit the children at Pro Vita as they head into the next winter season, it seems like a blip compared to the daily commitment of Melanie and Mihail Tanase, who run Pro Vita, and the other adults who care for the children and residents. The group of students who went on the trip this year was perhaps the hardest working, most thoughtful, and caring that I have ever seen. It's like we all became a family, just like the children at Pro Vita. I think about the trip, and the mission of Pro Vita, every day, and I hope, one day, to go back."

—TIM DOYLE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF COLLEGE COUNSELING

"The students and chaperones met for several months prior to departure to discuss the culture, language, and what to expect upon our visit to Pro Vita in Romania. After much anticipation and a very long packing list, we had all bonded and were so excited about the amazing experience that was awaiting us! But in truth, there are not enough meetings and discussion to prepare you for our transformative experience. During our week there, we met some of the nicest people who showered us with love and kindness. The interactions between our amazing students and the children of Pro Vita were infectious and literally images that we will carry with us forever. It truly was the experience of a lifetime—Romania has our hearts."

—NICOLE HARDING, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

