

AgAbroad Newsletter

International Programs in Agriculture

November 2017

Love Flourishes Overseas

Karissa Moar graduated from Purdue University in December of 2004 with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics. She grew up in Carroll County, Indiana and had never traveled out of the United States until she studied abroad.

Karissa studied abroad at the University of New England during the spring of 2003 and at the University of Western Australia during the fall of 2003.

“You learn far more about yourself and the world around you in those months abroad than you could ever learn by studying a textbook,” said Moar. “It is empowering to know that you can travel halfway around the world on your own.”

Karissa first met her husband, Peter, when she was serving as the Indiana State FFA Secretary as he was participating in an EF exchange program in Ripley County. The two coincidentally met because Peter’s host family was a cousin of the Indiana FFA Southern Region Vice President.

When Karissa decided to study abroad at the University of New England, she contacted Peter to have a familiar face when traveling to Australia. Who knew she would be contacting her future husband?

Karissa and Peter became very close while she studied abroad in Australia. He then decided to study abroad at Virginia Tech with a mate during his final semester of college. Karissa accepted an internship in Texas during that time.

After studying abroad for so long, Karissa said, “I was suffering terribly from reverse culture shock – I had grown and changed so much through travelling and felt as though I didn’t really fit in with my old group of friends.”

Over Peter’s spring break studying abroad in Virginia, he came to Texas to visit Karissa and met her family. Peter proposed during this visit. During the following summer, Peter had an internship in Texas.



Peter and Karissa with their three children

Once Karissa graduated, they decided to live in Australia. Karissa immigrated to Australia in January of 2005, and she and Peter were married in April 2005.

Peter and Karissa now live in Karratha in Western Australia with their three children, Gabriella (8), Alexander (7) and Madison (4). The best part about finding love abroad is “being able to bring our children up with a genuine love and appreciation of travel and other cultures,” said Karissa.

The toughest part about living in Australia is being so far away from her family, especially during the holidays. Now that Peter and Karissa have children, they only make it to the states once every two to three years.

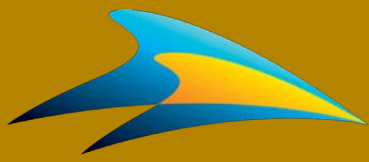
Since immigrating to Australia, Karissa has worked as a market analyst for a fertilizer company and an operations manager at a large bank. She currently has a full-time job at home caring for their three children, and Peter is a lead engineer for an Australian oil and gas company.

Written by: Rachel Flanders

Haiti Winter Break

Twenty students will be heading to Haiti on December 27 to learn about international food security. They will explore issues such as malnutrition, health and economics. The goal of the study abroad is to develop potential educational strategies to improve nutrition through sustainable agriculture and better animal sources of nutrients, as well as improve access to clean water.





SeaWorld®



Copenhagen, where Donica studied abroad, is famous for a bike-friendly culture, which is the best transportation for commuting or exploring the city.



The Antarctica exhibit at SeaWorld Orlando is easily Donica's favorite, with 32 degree F temperatures and five species of adorable penguins.

15 Best Things About Working for SeaWorld

Donica Owsley is a Purdue AgAbroad Alumna who currently works as an Educator at SeaWorld

1. Seeing how SeaWorld pours its heart and soul into animal rescues and protects habitats through the SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund
2. Inspiring guests to conserve our planet and protect wildlife through sharing my appreciation and knowledge of the animals
3. Studying to continually strengthen my understanding of the animals at SeaWorld
4. Escaping the Florida heat by working with penguins in Antarctica: Empire of the Penguin (the exhibit)
5. Walking into the break room to find a Magellanic penguin there for a surprising visit
6. Feeding fish to the sea lions and harbor seals to watch their individual personalities shine
7. Hand-feeding the stingrays—it's SUPER fun, and a bit surprising the first time you do it
8. Suiting up in waders to clean the stingray exhibit with stingrays swimming around me
9. Getting discounts on food and merchandise, and even receiving guest tickets to get friends and family into the park
10. Going to SeaWorld, Aquatica and Busch Gardens any time I'm not working
11. Having opportunities for promotions
12. Watching the orca show, which amazes me through the trainer and orca bond that inspires us to protect our oceans
13. Seeing SeaWorld surpass standards to continually improve their facilities, being accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums
14. Eating the pineapple soft serve dessert, which is THE BEST because they don't hold back on portions, so it is a refreshing treat that is great to share—you must try it
15. Working with coworkers that are like family—they are supportive and want to see me succeed

Peace Corps in Uganda

“The only thing I knew about Uganda before getting off the plane was what I saw in the movie ‘The Last King of Scotland...’”

Andrei Sokolchik graduated from Purdue University in May 2014 majoring in Agricultural Economics. Andrei is from a country in Eastern Europe called Belarus, but moved to the United States in third grade.

Andrei studied abroad in the spring of 2014 at the University College Dublin in Ireland. By studying abroad, Andrei was able to get out of his shell and become a more authentic person. Studying abroad at Purdue led Andrei to volunteer with the Peace Corps in Uganda from June of 2015 to July of 2017. He wanted to get in tune with whom he was and “get off the grid.”

Biggest Adjustments

In Uganda, Andrei was the only foreigner in his village of 7,000 people, aside from occasional missionaries. The isolation and attention was a huge adjustment, with villagers paying attention to his every move. Other than being the village gossip, Andrei said, “for the average American, the biggest change was that Wi-Fi was no longer a guarantee in life.”

He did have electricity, cold running water and plumbing, but the electricity had a tendency of going out often, once for a month straight. Another big change was doing his own laundry. He had a tub, detergent and piped water.

Peace Corps Project

Andrei worked for a coffee cooperative in Uganda to teach financial literacy trainings like bookkeeping, cash flow, budgeting, and goal setting. In Uganda, farmers use Village Savings and Loan Associations rather than banks often times, which consist of 25-30 members. “My coworker and I would work with these VSLA to improve their constitutions, membership structures and loan schemes,” said Andrei.

He worked on other projects outside of the coffee cooperative such as HIV awareness, forming youth clubs and painting murals of the world at schools around the country to help kids learn geography.

Ugandan Culture

Uganda is very traditional. Women do most of the housework and take care of the children, while men earn the money. A cultural adjustment was the importance of greetings. “I could spend an extra 20 minutes of my 30 minute walk to the office just greeting people,” said Andrei.



Andrei preparing barkcloth, as Ugandans wear bark as clothing

Lastly, Uganda runs on “African Time.” Nothing happens in a hurry. African time becomes more prevalent when an area is more rural. “If I set up a meeting at one, I can be sure that the meeting will realistically start at three,” said Andrei.

Ugandan Food

Matooke, or plantains, is a staple that looks like yellower, sweeter mashed potatoes. Matooke was served with rice and a sauce or soup. Posho is made of corn or millet flour. It looks like a white sponge, according to Andrei, and tastes like whatever it’s seasoned or eaten with.

“The best food in Uganda is the fruit. Fruit is fresh and delicious all year round,”

said Andrei. His favorites were mangoes, avocados, pineapples, sugar canes and passion fruits.

Lastly, pork joints are a national treasure in Uganda, according to Andrei. This is a bar where they roast or fry pork; it is cheap and delicious.



Andrei painting a mural in Arua in the West Nile Region of Uganda

Now What?

Currently, Andrei is starting a career in Hollywood at the Social Security Administration where he will investigate claims of people from all walks of life and will use his native language dealing with a large Armenian and Russian population.

When asked about Uganda now, Andrei said, “It’s strange to think about how much of my heart has been given to a place that’s, for the average human, a blot of paint on a globe and nothing more.”

“Never be afraid of an adventure, and you’ll be surprised at what life will bring...”

Written by: Rachel Flanders

Did I Just Eat an Octopus?!

The smell of saffron filled the air as I devoured another steaming spoonful of homemade paella. The clinking of silverware on plates continued around me as my three roommates enjoyed their paella as well. We had all arisen early just to cook this delicious traditional Spanish dish, so that I could get the recipe and take it back with me when I returned home to the United States.

My roommate Silvia boasted that her paella is the best, as all Spanish people do. It was her mother's recipe, but "recipe" is a loose term. I had to furiously take notes, translate words, and eyeball measurements as she had begun pouring all the ingredients in and just shaking spices on top, with no regard for the precision provided by actual cups or spoons. It was a crazy hour, with me constantly asking, "How much was that?" and her giving me strange looks and replying in vague terms such as, "Two shakes." Whatever a "shake" is.

But the meal turned out great as usual. We were talking and enjoying our meal, despite two of us being non-fluent Spanish speakers. Then I took a good look at what I was



Paella dish

eating, only to discover that I was about to spoon a tiny, baby octopus into my mouth with the gooey rice. I dropped my spoon with a small shriek of surprise, exclaiming "¿iQué es eso?!" which in the moment roughly translated to, "What is that??" My roommates all stopped eating and chattering to see what had surprised me so much. I stared into three faces giving me a friendly version of the "you silly American" expression. "It's octopus," my roommate replied oh-so-helpfully, as though octopus is as common as, say, ketchup. After explaining to them that the only octopus I had ever eaten was of the cut-up fried kind, and not the whole-to-the-point-of-still-having-eyeballs kind, I got more sympathetic looks. My roommates were the best.

My roommates continued to finish their meals, while I carefully picked around mine, contemplating the amount of baby octopi I had already unknowingly digested. It was an experience in food and an experience in culture that I will never forget, an experience that most definitely expanded my cultural and culinary horizons by a factor of ten. Well, by at least a factor of eight, anyway.

Written by: Kasha Halbleib

I got to go to a cow show!!



"Big news everyone, I went to a cow show!! You didn't expect me to stay away from cows for too long did you? I had the opportunity this past weekend to attend the All Breeds All Britain Calf Show near Worcester, England. The first week I was here I went to a talk on campus about the Holstein UK Young Breeders program. I talked to them about staying involved in the dairy industry while I was here..."

Interested in reading more? Check out [Kendra's blog](#) as well as our other [student blogs](#)



Kendra studies abroad at Aberystwyth University; this is the view out her bedroom

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