

GOING GLOBAL

Wide-Ranging Study-Abroad Programs Offer Photography Students an International Reach

[By Jill Waterman]

In an increasingly connected world, study abroad offers students much more than simply a chance to make new friends and get experience in a different learning environment—it fosters cross-cultural understanding and broadens perspectives in a way that builds maturity and encourages future leadership.

Typing *photography* into a keyword search on the Web site <www.GoAbroad.com> calls up 368 study-abroad programs offered through 163 institutions. With so many options to choose from, how does a student make the right choice? Selecting a program directly arranged by your school is one easy option. Searching for study-abroad opportunities through schools within a consortium or sharing affiliation agreements

widens the possibilities a bit. More adventurous students looking for a stand-alone program without a direct connection to their school in the States might be well advised to consult with the school's international studies office and/or work with a study-abroad advisory service.

To whet your appetite for wanderlust, we investigate distinctive options for studying photography abroad in these three profiles of well-established programs that offer intensive learning with a high degree of comfort and support. Allez-y!

A TASTE OF TUSCANY: University of Georgia student Victor Pivetta makes the most of the panoramic view along Via Santa Margherita (God's Little Stairmaster) adjacent to the Cortona campus.



photo © Robin Dana

University of Georgia Studies Abroad in Cortona Immersive Fine Art Studies in Italy

In 1970, the University of Georgia (UGA) Lamar Dodd School of Art began a long-standing relationship with the Tuscan hill town of Cortona, Italy. Beginning as a summer-only course, UGA's Cortona program now encompasses semester-long art programs during spring, fall and summer plus special Maymester courses in science, viticulture and drama.

"The Cortona program shaped me in so many different ways," says Reynolds. "It gave me the opportunity not to have any other concerns except art."

"The town pretty much opens its doors to us," explains the program's administrative specialist, Mary Van Nus. "They're excited when the next group of students come."

The bond that UGA has forged with the community has allowed the school to carve out a four-and-a-half-acre campus, with photography facilities that include a full chemical darkroom, a 16-computer Mac lab and a large-format printer, in addition to resources for 16 other subjects.

UGA faculty member Ben Reynolds has been involved with the program since his first visit as a photography student in 1984, an extremely formative experience for him.

"The Cortona program shaped me in so many different ways," says Reynolds. "It gave me the opportunity not to have any other concerns except art. I had no bills to pay. I was able to put as much into art as I was willing to. There were no excuses."

The program currently accommodates 50 students in fall and spring semesters and 100 during the summer. Students and faculty members generally travel to Italy via Rome and spend the first several days absorbing art and culture there and in Florence before making their way to Cortona by bus.

"When we arrive in Cortona, everyone in the community greets us in the main square, then helps us unload and get settled in," explains photo faculty member Robin Dana. "Students have a trek up the hill called God's Little Stairmaster, so the local people help."

According to Dana, the initial week of group travel sets the tone for the type of instruction pursued during subsequent weeks. "That's when the faculty get to know the students and vice versa," she explains. "We have opportunities to sit down and discuss what students are looking for and then a course evolves around that."

Cortona program guidelines require a grade point average of at least 3.0 and recommend that students be at least rising juniors. According to Van Nus, all classes generally fill to capacity, and acceptance is fairly competitive. Application requirements include a portfolio of 15 to 20 im-

other schools are first accepted by the Cortona program, then they apply to the University of Georgia for one semester as a transient student," Van Nus explains. "After they attend, credits are issued and transferred back to their school."

A limited number of \$1,500 work-study stipends offer select students financial assistance. "They are assigned to a professor or a program area and work about ten hours weekly in addition to class time," says Van Nus. "There's at least one stipend per professor, so between nine and 15 are available depending on the number of instructors we have."

At the end of the program, students exhibit their work both in Italy and at annual Cortona alumni events held by UGA.

During her first Cortona program, Dana decided students should work on some-



BLOGGING HOME FROM ABROAD: Cortona students Clare McCormick (foreground) and Laura Fleury (background) work on their photo blogs in the digital photography lab.

ages, an official transcript and two letters of recommendation. "The letters are read carefully to make sure accepted students will be pretty self-motivated," Van Nus says.

While the program attracts students from schools throughout the United States, including more than a dozen that have consortia or affiliation agreements with UGA, credits come from the University of Georgia. "Students from

thing collective. "I told them, 'You're going to be responsible for documenting the program for the rest of the students. This is something we're going to do as a class.' The slide show we put together was featured at the following year's reunion," she adds. "It was a nice way to incorporate daily life into the classroom and make something that wasn't just about grading. It was about celebrating and summing up the experience."

SCHOOL STATS

Web site(s): <www.art.uga.edu/cortona>.

Details of program: Semester-long program in spring and fall and two-month summer program offering photography instruction in addition to 16 other subject areas.

Student population: approximately 50 students in spring and fall, 100 during the summer.

Estimated program cost: \$6,126 in summer 2010 and \$7,050 in spring 2011 (includes housing, transportation, most meals and health insurance).

Tuition for study abroad: Varies depending on the number of credits and UGA admission year; \$3,535/maximum for spring/fall, a little less for summer.

Regular UGA undergraduate tuition: Estimated total for students entering in 2009 and later, approximately \$7,070 annually.

Credits: Students generally take 9 to 10 credit hours in summer and 12 to 13 credit hours in spring or fall.

Financial aid: Limited work/study stipends of approximately \$1,500 are available for select students.



SPEAKING OF IMAGES: A gallery visit as part of a Spéos class in Visual Identity, under the guidance of instructor Bernard Derenne (at left).

Spéos Paris Photographic Institute Professional English Language Training in Paris

Nestled adjacent to the historic Bastille, Spéos Paris Photography Institute recently celebrated two significant anniversaries: the 25th year since its founding in 1985 and the 20th year of a collaboration with the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) to host a study-abroad program during its six-week winter session.

Offering programs in both commercial/studio photography and photojournalism, levels of training at Spéos range from a 14-month master of professional photography degree program to weeklong summer workshops, which can be taken individually or in multiple week sessions. Courses are taught primarily in English.

“We have a reputation as more of a continuing education center, so we attract a very big mix of students, with ages ranging from early 20s to 50,” says Spéos founder Pierre-Yves Mahé. “Some of our students already work in the field, but they want to improve the quality of their photos.”

The school also has deep roots with photo programs at many top American schools, due to collaborations Mahé established with institutions as diverse as Rochester Institute of Technology, the Chicago Art Institute and Hamilton College, to name a few.

While Spéos’s student population started out as 90 percent American and 10 percent French, the current demographic is more of an international melting pot. “This year, we have 29 nationalities, which is average among a group of 80 to 100 students, so the international mix is very visible,” Mahé explains.

RISD professor Anna Strickland has taught winter sessions in Paris for the past ten years. “There are a lot of programs abroad, but in many of them, students are on their own in the community and don’t have a home base,” she says.

She explains that Spéos offers RISD students’ facilities they can count on plus perks like guided tours of galleries and museums, a special program highlight. “Two afternoons a week, students go out and about with Nicole Capoulade, a Parisian photographer and Spéos teacher. They really get to know the city. I feel this course is half about learning photographic skills and half learning about Paris,” she adds. “Nicole always chooses interesting exhibitions, and there are a lot to choose from. Paris is so culturally rich.”

While RISD’s study-abroad program is a very concentrated learning experience—offering students double credits and a weekly

total of 40 contact hours of instruction—the course is not specifically geared to photographers. “There are no prerequisites,” says Strickland. “While it’s suggested students have some photographic experience, we can and do teach absolute beginners.”

According to Mahé, many RISD students who were not photography majors on arrival at Spéos shifted their focus after the program and are active photographers today. Strickland notes that two different winter-session students enrolled in the Spéos master’s program after receiving their RISD degrees.

Ambitious and intensive, Spéos’s European master of professional photography has three phases. Two semesters run from September to May. In the program’s second phase—from May through the end of July—students pursue Experts Modules, a series of four-week consultations with industry professionals. In the program’s final phase, students plan and complete a master’s project, which is submitted twice for review by a jury. After successful completion of the 14-month course of study, students are awarded a French national diploma, while those finishing only the first two semesters receive a private diploma from Spéos.

The school’s facilities include two shooting studios, several small classrooms for groups of 12, a gallery space, two rooms with calibrated monitors and fine printing equipment, plus a wet darkroom with 17 enlargers. Spéos also offers professional equipment on loan. “Any size camera, 4x5, professional flash—we provide absolutely everything brand-new,” says Mahé. “We change our equipment every three years.”

Another valuable property owned by the school is the former residence of Nicéphore Niépce—author of the world’s first-known photograph—located in the Burgundy countryside, 350 kilometers from Paris.

While the many different programs and the wide student mix mean a lot to juggle, Spéos runs a tight ship, with the total population capped at 100 students. “It’s the correct size, we don’t want to be bigger,” says Mahé. “It’s still a family and a company that can make decisions quickly.”

He also notes “Photography is a job where you need to be able to make decisions in order to succeed. All our students were able to make a very big decision to leave their country and come study in Paris. They’ve already proved that they want to make big decisions when they come here, so it really creates a quality group.”

photo © Pierre-Yves Mahé

Edge of the Outback At LaTrobe University Stand Alone, Study-Abroad Course in Australia

Midwestern college student Jennifer Schmaderer had always wanted to go to Australia and figured including school in her plans was the best way to do it. “I got online and looked around for the program that was most appealing and fit my summer schedule,” she says.

What she discovered was the Edge of the Outback (EOTO), Melbourne-based LaTrobe University’s three-week travel program offering photography instruction and cultural immersion to international students.

“EOTO is a stand-alone course in which students gain academic credits while undertaking an intensive learning experience in Australia,” explains LaTrobe professor Neil Fetting. Currently offered in two sessions that run in mid-June and mid-July—wintertime in Australia—EOTO averages ten to 20 students per session. While LaTrobe promotes the program through its Web site and in YouTube videos, Schmaderer learned about it through the international study advisory service GlobalLinks Learning Abroad, which works to connect students seeking study-abroad experiences with programs that will suit their needs.

GlobalLinks’s marketing director, Deborah Morrison, explains how such services work. “We set up the right kinds of partnerships with international programs that we think will work well for students, where they’ll be well supported once they arrive on campus. We’ve worked with a number of these schools for 20 years, so we’re very selective.”

“We don’t tend to recommend one school over another based solely on academics, because students are looking for more than just that in their study-abroad selection,” Morrison says about their approach. “Although I might say ‘Here are a couple of schools that stand out in my mind,’ more often it’s a case of saying ‘Here’s a huge selection how can I help you narrow that down?’ We counsel students into the best program for them based on academics and other needs.”

She notes that while students at larger schools can use the resources of a centralized study-abroad office, such departments aren’t always available at small schools specializing only in art. “It’s going to be a bit more challenging for those students,” she says. “That’s a benefit to utilizing a service like ours because we can provide those students with support and liaison with their faculty members, admissions and financial aid offices to make sure that all the pieces get into place.”

photo © Lisa Ailoud

Schmaderer, a mass communications and graphic design major at Briarcliffe University in Sioux City, Iowa, sought GlobalLinks’s help to arrange her trip and transfer the credits she received for the program, since there is no study-abroad office at her school.

Once in Australia, Schmaderer met up with other program attendees in Melbourne, before making the six-hour drive to the town of Mildura, where the EOTO program is based. Students are not required to have a photography background, and although they are invited to bring their own cameras, the university also provides photographic equipment.

“The first week was spent making sure we knew how to use everything,” Schmaderer says, “as well as a bit of photo history and the history of Australia. It was a pretty even balance of culture and photography.”

Students from LaTrobe and Aboriginal teenagers served as peer tutors. “We went to an Aboriginal school, where they cooked

dinner, and local residents could actually buy our photography,” says Schmaderer, who sold one print. “The show stayed up for about two weeks after we left, and prints that didn’t sell were mailed back to us.”

Schmaderer admits that her first taste of international travel has given her a case of wanderlust. “I’d definitely love to go other places when the chance comes up again,” she says.

For others sharing this travel bug, there are many Web sites and services to consult beyond the confines of a school’s studyabroad office. “I definitely think students should take responsibility for finding the right program,” advises Morrison. “Whether it’s visiting their school’s study-abroad office, talking to an advisor or looking at <www.studyabroad.com> and asking questions of companies like ours, that’s absolutely part of the process. It’s important for a student to know they’re finding the program that fits them best.”



IMMERSION IN THE OUTBACK: LaTrobe University’s three-week Edge of the Outback course offers photography instruction and intensive immersion in Australian culture during summer vacation for American students.

a big meal and we did a presentation for them,” Schmaderer adds.

EOTO also includes overnight camping trips in the area’s national parks, which for Schmaderer was a big plus. “Our guides took us out at night to show us all the constellations and talk about the things their culture believes in. Learning about all their customs and beliefs made me see things a lot differently when I returned to the States,” she notes.

At the end of the course, students exhibit their photos in a local Mildura restaurant. “There was a big gallery opening with a

SCHOOL STATS

Web site(s): <www.speos.fr>.

Details of program: Multiple levels of photographic training, from one-week summer workshops to 14-month European master’s of professional photography degree program offered in two semesters, plus six week winter session offered for RISD students.

Student population: Total enrollment at the school capped at 100 students.

Estimated program costs: Estimated outside costs for RISD winter session is \$5,000 to \$7,000 (costs for housing, transportation, meals and health insurance are the student’s responsibility).

Spéos tuition: Costs range from approximately \$32,750 for the 14-month European masters degree to \$5,050 for the full summer workshop program. Tuition for individual summer workshops is \$682 each.

Credits: RISD winter-session program offers six college credits. Credits for other courses are subject to arrangement with a student’s matriculated school in the United States.

Estimated total annual tuition at RISD: \$38,000 for the whole year (two semesters and six-week winter session).

SCHOOL STATS

Web site(s): < www.latrobe.edu.au>, <www.globallinksabroad.org>

Details of program: Stand-alone course offering photography instruction and an intensive cultural immersion in the Australian outback.

Student population: Approximately ten to 20 students per session.

Estimated program costs: \$3,860 (includes lodging, transportation in Australia, some meals and health insurance).

Other costs: International airfare (\$1,000 to \$1,800) plus some meals.

Credits: Three to four U.S. credits (dependent upon home university credit transfer policies).