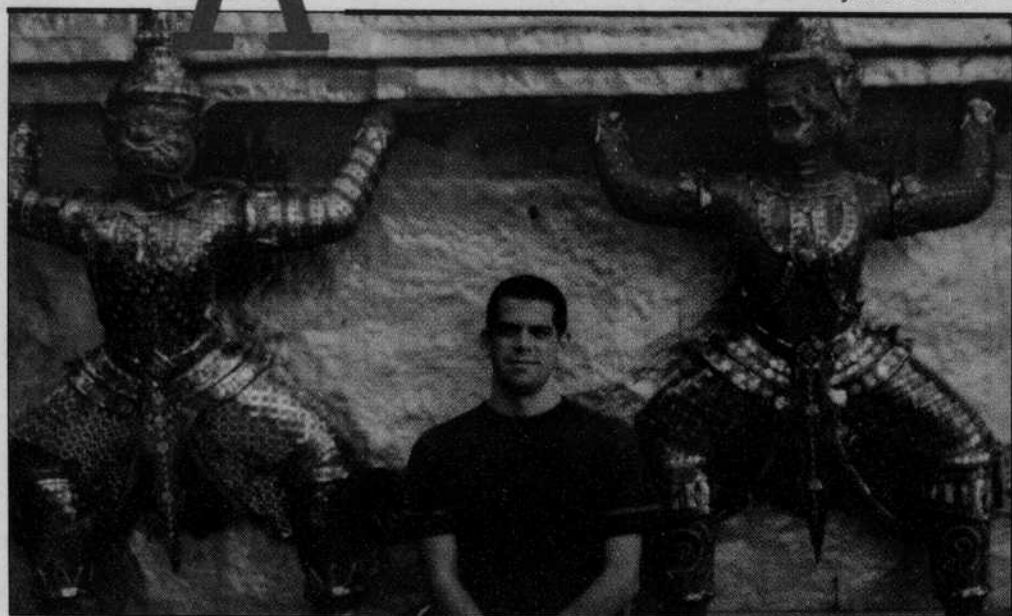


# Arroy mag mag: A Taste of Thailand

by Adam Bourret



Adam at the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

**M**om, the food here is exceptional and can be found everywhere! The restaurants are not the only place that one can get great food; often it is the street vendors that have the best stuff. One morning, I got up at 6:00 am. I've found that it's a great time to be up because I could almost catch Bangkok asleep. It is also the time that the Buddhist monks come out to collect food from the food vendors and locals. It was an amazing site to see—streets littered gold from the monks' robes. People came up to them, bowed and gave them free food to put into their baskets and purses. This particular morning I went up to a food vendor, a friendly old Thai woman, sat next to a bunch of Thais and ordered my breakfast: stir-fried spicy chicken with rice and a fried egg. It was like the huevos rancheros of Thailand. It rocked!

This is from one of the first emails I sent after arriving in Thailand. I remember well the feeling of wonder and excitement. I knew that I would study for the next nine months in a country that offered experiences that would challenge all that I was accustomed to in the States.

What can I say about my nine months in Thailand? For me, the experience is embedded in the pictures I have in my mind. When I first arrived, nothing prepared me for the spectacle that is Bangkok. I remember the taxi ride from the airport to Kho San Road, which is a very popular street for travelers and has many cheap places to stay. On the way, most of my initial attention was focused on how hot and humid it was. I have lived most of my life on the West Coast and, as a result, had never experienced real humidity like that of Thailand. I could practically cut the air with a knife. It took some acclimating, to say the least.

Kho San Road was like no street I had ever seen. It was packed with foot traffic with taxis and tuk tuks (motorcycles with carriages built on top of them that function like taxis) weaving in and out of the pedestrians. On either side of the street, there were street vendors selling anything and everything to eager travelers ready to try their hand at haggling. I learned quite quickly that haggling is practically an art form among Thais.

After five days in Bangkok, I took the night train up to Chiang Mai in northern Thailand, which was to be my home for the following nine months. I studied at Payap University, on the outskirts of the city, and lived in a nice apartment just blocks away from the university, which cost me a meager \$80 a month. At Payap, I learned about Thai culture,

Buddhism, history, politics, music, the hill tribes of Thailand and, most important, how to read, write, speak and understand the language. It was an educational experience full of new information.

Though I am indebted to Payap University, it was off campus where my education really emerged. My interactions with locals and my exploration of the city and other areas of Thailand were crucial to my education.

What was unique to Thailand was how patient and encouraging Thais were with regard to foreigners learning the language. I never felt intimidated when practicing with the locals of Chiang Mai. When I spoke the language, or at least attempted to, a common response from the smiling local was Khun poot pa sa Thai gang mag, which means, "You speak Thai very well!" For most Thais, it wasn't so much what I said as the fact I tried. Before I knew it, statements like "spicy chicken with rice and a fried egg" became gai pad prik gap cow plow siy kai dao and "it rocked" became arroy mag mag.

Along with my acquired language skills came a greater opportunity for learning. I could talk with locals and learn about their culture. In addition, I was also able to reap many benefits not available to foreign travelers, such as getting a taxi ride for a "Thai price." Toward the end of my stay in Thailand, I got quite good at haggling with the locals and obtaining things at better prices. In addition to all those perks, it was a lot of fun speaking with Thais.

This is just a small glimpse into the quality of my study-abroad experience in Thailand. On the whole, my nine-month stay abroad was a life-enriching experience. I also learned more about my own culture by gaining a different perspective while living abroad. In short, I had something else with which to compare my culture and was able to see the differences and similarities.

On my return to the States, many aspects of my own culture seemed as foreign to me as Thailand was when I first arrived there. Perhaps I had a glimpse of what it feels like for someone not from my country who is experiencing it for the first time. My experience abroad continues to inform and educate me even after my return, and I suspect that it always will. I feel so fortunate that I was able to have such a vastly rewarding experience.

*Adam Bourret participated in the OUS program in Thailand during the 2001-02 academic year, and he received the prestigious Freeman Scholarship for Study in Asia and the Gilman Scholarship. Adam graduated in summer 2002 with an anthropology major.*

## Notes from the Field: an Intern in Action

Tanzanian friends share a moment in the kitchen of the clinic where Jeremy interned.  
Photo by Katrina Brown, 2002 intern

by Jeremy Arnold

**M**onday, June 24, 2002  
I am staying in the African American Community Center. It is an extremely nice place situated in a small village inhabited by native Maasai and other ethnic groups. In order to communicate with the people in the village and others in the market I have to learn how to speak Swahili. I have been spending a couple hours each day just learning the basics so I can hold a reasonable conversation with the locals.

I went to the hospital and clinic today to meet the doctors that I will be working with. I am working at the old Arusha Clinic with Dr. Urasa. Here I will get the opportunity to observe surgeries and other clinical procedures. Overall I am enjoying my stay and am eager to get started.

It is truly an amazing atmosphere here. If the sky is clear you can see Mt. Kilimanjaro towering over everything. You would have to see it to appreciate its beauty.

**Saturday, June 29, 2002**

Things here are going great and I am learning things that I never thought I would have the chance to learn. Some of the things that I got to do the first week besides observing included checking patients' vital signs and using different tests to determine a newborn's age if born prematurely. I also got to calculate each newborn's feeding schedule and amount (breast milk) given their weight and age.

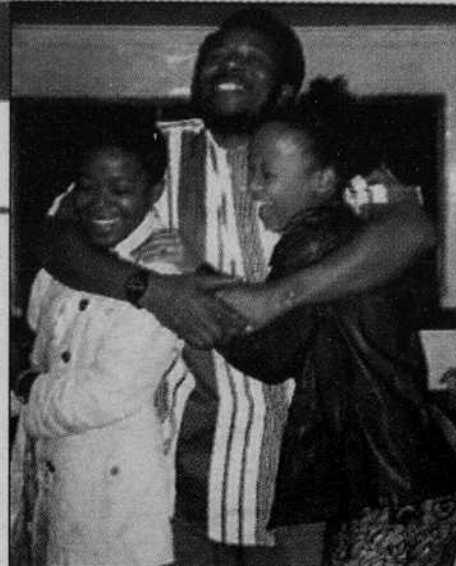
Dr. Lymio taught me to check the child's reflexes and to check for any congenital defects like a curved spine, extra digit (which is very common), and cleft palate (another common defect). I check all the newborns and report to him any abnormalities.

Other than that I just listen and absorb as much as I can, anticipating the time when the doctors get more comfortable with me. I have a really good feeling about the hospital.

**Sunday, July 14, 2002**

This week I am spending time at the other clinic and will hopefully be able to see a couple of surgeries. I have gotten better acquainted with the doctors and, as they assess the patients, I make notes in the charts. After reviewing patients, I get the opportunity to try and diagnose them and tell the doctor the care I would recommend for the patient. It is getting easier and I am becoming more familiar with the treatments and common diseases.

I help with admissions by taking the vitals and



also with discharging the patients. Not much, but it makes me more than happy. I have been reading journal articles that the doctor gives me and they help in me learning about the dilemmas that Third World doctors face. There are definitely many, and I hope to learn from all of the ones that I see.

There is still a strong communication barrier between the patients and myself, even though I can ask what is wrong. It is the reply that they give me that is hard to grasp! Everything here continues to amaze me and my learning never ends.

**Tuesday, August 6, 2002**

Hamjambo [Swahili greeting].

Well, only three weeks left in my internship, and I will be taking a break and heading off to the coast of Zanzibar near the beginning of September. If only I could stay here for a couple of years. I keep telling myself that I will always be able to come back if I can afford it.

This place continues to amaze me with all the opportunities it offers. It is going to be hard to leave. Next week I will again be in the theatre and also in the labor ward. They both have pretty much become my home. I am going to go to the orphanage again this weekend and am going to try and get some more info about what happens to the kids once they reach the age of five, and about how it is funded. There is so much to learn in such little time...

Kwaheri [Swahili for "Farewell"]

*These entries were gleaned from email messages sent by Jeremy Arnold during his internship in Tanzania. Jeremy begins his senior year as a biology/pre-medicine major in fall term 2002. He spent the summer months of 2002 in Arusha, Tanzania, as an IEG Global Intern with the Old Arusha Clinic and Mt. Meru Hospital.*

## Seeing the U.S. from a Whole New Perspective

by Morgan Gates '02

**L**earning for Denmark from the U.S. was both the scariest and most exciting experience of my life. I was heading into the unknown, which was exciting because I was tired of my ordinary life here in the U.S. I didn't want high expectations of my experience because I wanted every experience to be special and rewarding.

That is exactly what every day felt like for me in Copenhagen. I arrived full of energy and left with more knowledge of myself and the world around me. The real learning didn't come from the classroom, but from daily activities and experiences.

I chose Denmark as a study-abroad destination partly because I knew next-to-nothing about the country and its culture before I started doing research. Unlike France and the UK, Denmark was somewhere that no one I knew had ever been.

Many who travel to popular "American" destinations in Europe have stereotypes of what their experiences will be like (the idea that the French are rude, etc.). I didn't want these stereotypes or expectations to get in the way of my own experience abroad.

After returning from Denmark, I realized how much more self-assured and confident I was. I also realized that things I once thought were important no longer seemed that important. Living abroad made me realize how big the world is and how much more significant the world's problems are than mine. Living in Denmark and traveling throughout Europe intensified my desire for traveling and living abroad.

Coming back to the U.S. was very sad for me. I had made so many wonderful friends, and I

came to feel that I fit in more in Denmark than I did in the U.S. The Danes' ways of thinking and the political climate seemed so ideal and comfortable to me that I believed coming back to the U.S. would be like entering a new and different world.

The first few days home certainly did feel this way. Flying into the ever-present smog-bank of the Los Angeles International Airport was only mildly depressing as a first view of home. Hearing only English being spoken was also strange, believe it or not. What was most surprising to me was how uneven the distribution of wealth in the U.S. is. In a relatively socialist country, such as Denmark, poverty is rarely seen; on the street corners near LAX, it is bitterly apparent.

It also seemed strange that most people were fairly disinterested in hearing about the best six months of my entire life. The strangeness of home and the accompanying depression soon diminished, though, as I realized that I am still an American and that many of my moral and cultural values are derived from this identity. I realized that, if I let this sadness affect me, I would constantly be living in the past.

Instead, I decided to develop a new outlook on life in the U.S. I would try to make every day here seem like a new experience. There were things and places in my own country I hadn't seen. Although I know that I will always want to go back to Denmark, but there are many new experiences to be had here as well.

*Morgan Gates received her B.A. in political science in June 2002. She studied in Denmark's International Study (DIS) program, a regular UO program in Copenhagen, in the spring semester of 2001.*

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