

The Essay / Application:

Howdy! My name is Stephanie Martin and I am currently an International Studies Major with declared minors in Russian and French, however I am soon to be a triple major in International Studies, History and Russian with a minor in French. This summer I am headed to Kyrgyzstan to study, intern, and do research. Not exactly the most typical destination for studying abroad- I cannot wait!



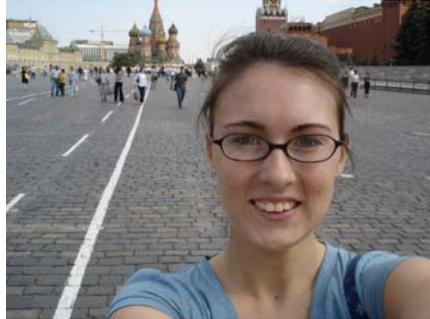
In case you did not know, Kyrgyzstan is wedged between Kazakhstan, China, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. While not the safest area in the world, Kyrgyzstan is absolutely the most perfect place in the world for me. Not only will I be able to study Russian language, I will be able to live with a traditional Kyrgyz family, intern with a news agency, research for my undergraduate research fellows honors thesis and best of all... TRAVEL! While approximately the size of South Dakota, Kyrgyzstan is a beautiful land with hospitable people. Many people travel to this off-the-beaten-path land to climb mountains, trek, bicycle, raft and ski. Outside of the country, you can actually stay with the pastoral people who live in tents without electricity or running water. This is certainly not sipping wine in Seville or buying souvenirs atop the Eiffel Tower, I could not think of a better study abroad for me.



I like to think of myself as well-traveled for my age. In high school, I got the opportunity to study in England, Scotland and France. I've participated in multiple mission trips to Mexico and South America. After my freshman year in college, I studied in abroad in Moscow. I love traveling- it is my passion- and I plan to pursue it as part of my career for the rest of my life.



My study-abroad experience in Russia was on of the most challenging and rewarding of my entire life. Living literally in the ghetto of Moscow, I truly learned what it meant to live as a Russian. In my Soviet standard housing, I shared my bed with the rats and was starved by my host family. After 6 weeks I lost thirty pounds and ended up in a Russian hospitable for malnutrition and near kidney failure after collapsing and throwing up blood in Red Square. I honestly thought I was going to die in Russia. However, I learned how to adapt and adjust and came to love Moscow. On my last night, I was assaulted outside of my apartment and robbed- my parents don't understand why I continually want to go abroad, but nothing can stop me. You have to realize that people don't hate Americans- they hate American politics. Once you accept that people will go to the most extreme measures in order to survive, you can truly learn to appreciate and respect other cultures.



On May 26th, my flight will leave the United States and I will be bound for Bishkek until August 21st. This gives me 12 weeks to experience all I can of Kyrgyz culture as well as the surrounding areas. Currently- this entire trip is coming out of my own pocket. My parents help support me in school, but anything additional is on me. To support myself, I work at the study abroad office on campus at Texas A&M. Despite the fact that the value of the Kyrgyz som is significantly less than the American dollar, twelve weeks abroad is expensive.



I know it sounds cliché, but this grant could make my dreams come true. I've always wanted to see the Great Wall, right an elephant in Bangkok and visit Hiroshima. At the same time, I would die for the opportunity to travel to Ukraine and Belarus in order to collect local research for my thesis, which is titled "Entangling Economics and Imperial Implications: The Foreign Policy of Vladimir Putin." If I can find the funds, I would love to travel to the countries actually affected daily by Russia's meddling foreign policies and gather additional research to support my thesis.



I could attach a resume or ramble on about my 24 hours of honors classes, my 3.9 GPR, my numerous leadership positions and other honors, however that is not my point. Look at the picture below- can you describe the beauty that you see? I know that I can't- it just warms my heart and makes it almost impossible for me contain my excitement and anticipation for May 26th. Look at this picture- please help me get there. Thank you!

