

December 21 2019

Dear Class of 1955,

When I first started looking at colleges, what attracted me so much to Cornell College was the dedication and commitment for sending students abroad. As an International Relations and Economics double major, I have always had a passion for exploring new cultures and world travel. Since my time at Cornell I have been fortunate enough to travel to Guatemala and India, but I never thought I would be able to return to Asia nor have the ability to travel to one of the oldest countries in the world, China.

Even though I had many classes at Cornell that would discuss the 5,000 year old nation, I still had absolutely no idea what I was getting into when I stepped off the plane in the Shanghai airport. I had been to some big cities, but nothing could compare to the beauty and innovation that was Shanghai. From the tall looming skyscrapers, to the extremely clean metro stations, visiting Shanghai was definitely an experience a girl from Nebraska will never forget. My class was exposed to Chinese culture, from learning the history to understanding China's economic structure, we got to explore a world completely different from the United States. Not only did my class get to see the richest city in all of Asia, but we were also exposed to the less glamorous lifestyle of rural China. During our second week in China my class traveled to the city of Dali, a poorer rural area of China, here my class got to interact with Chinese students at Dali University and also participate in some Bali cultural tea tasting and tie dying. It was crazy to go from a city like Shanghai, the richest city in all of Asia, to a poor rural city in Yunnan. My class was really exposed to the vast differences in Chinese income, education, and living standards. It really made everyone challenge their perspectives on how they viewed the chronic income gap throughout the world and made us think about the struggles many people go through just within the US.

Traveling abroad really allows you to push yourself to see past the stain glass that you see in books, on TV or hear about in the news. It allows you to see first hand the issues other people face, the culture that other people live in, and parts of the world that you didn't even know existed. I have always had the travel bug, but thanks to your generous gift, I was able to reaffirm my love for the "unknown" and hope to return to Asia at some point in my life. As I begin to look forward to graduation and starting my new position in Omaha, NE, I will always use my

experiences traveling to think outside the box and to always take a chance on a new perspective no matter how different it may be.

Thank you again for your generous gift and support!

Marissa Czapla '20



Shown above: My class had the opportunity to do one of China's most popular hikes, Tiger Leaping Gorge, this photo was taken at the Half Way house where we stopped to take a break before we did the rest of our hike.

