

Honors Program

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SU Students Study Abroad in Egypt

Two Shippensburg University Honors Program students were part of a select group who studied in Egypt this past summer as part of an annual program of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. Each year, two Honors Program students from each of PASSHE's fourteen universities are selected to participate in an Honors summer study abroad experience.

This summer, Angela Darosh, of Pottsville, Pa., and Holly Plank, of Camp Hill, Pa., joined 26 other Honors Program students and three professors in traveling to Egypt from May 13-27. As part of their coursework, the students spent one week at Clarion University learning about contemporary Egyptian culture as well as technical skills so that they could create digital maps in Egypt. Two weeks of study and fieldwork in Egypt followed.

"The PASSHE Summer Honors Program enabled me to immerse myself in a completely new culture," Darosh, a 21-year-old psychology senior said. "It enhanced my cultural competence, a skill that will benefit me for the rest of my life."

"The PASSHE Summer Honors Program sparked my interest in studying abroad and I'm studying abroad again in Costa Rica in the spring," said Plank, a 19-year-old sophomore earth and space science education major. "It also helped me apply my major in a unique setting."

The students' experience began in Cairo with a Nile River cruise and a day exploring the pyramids of ancient Egypt. Because the trip focused on contemporary Egyptian culture, students spent more time visiting Islamic monuments and mosques in the Cairo area before heading southeast to the Sinai Peninsula. On the peninsula they visited the city of Sharm El-Sheikh and Saint Catherine's Monastery, one of the oldest monasteries in the world. They also had the opportunity to climb Mount Sinai. In Alexandria, a city that borders the Mediterranean Sea, the students visited the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, an important library and cultural center.

Some of the unique experiences Darosh and Plank had in Egypt included witnessing calls to prayer held through cities daily and riding camels for the first time. However, they both said interacting with people of Egypt was probably one of the most memorable parts of the program.

"Whether it was bartering at a nearby bazaar or exchanging a few simple words on the street, everyone was extremely friendly," Darosh says. "It opens your eyes to how embracing others can be even if you're not from their country."

“People in the United States often assign stereotypes to Egyptians based on their ancient history as well as their Islamic culture,” Plank says. “However, I appreciated really getting to experience what the Egyptian people thought of me as an American as well as learning about their culture first hand.”

The Honors Program at Shippensburg University provides an outstanding undergraduate experience that emphasizes scholarship, leadership, and service. The program is made up of 150 students who are chosen based on academic achievement, intellectual curiosity, and evidence of leadership and civic engagement. Students benefit from small classes, outstanding instruction, exciting research, study abroad, and internship opportunities, and special social and cultural activities. For more information, visit <http://www.ship.edu/honors>.