

TRAVELOG

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THIS IS WHY THIS PROJECT MATTERS.

In our increasingly globalized world, it is crucial for students to experience other cultures and societies in order to gain a new sense of intercultural connectivity and competence, and the ways in which we must see ourselves as citizens of the globe and not only of our hometowns. Having an international experience enables students to gain a new global perspective, question their idea of national identity, become more confident/independent, and have life changing experiences that I believe cannot be gained within the borders of the United States. To say the least, watching Planet Earth is simply not enough to receive a global education. It's the relationships that we make with others from vastly different cultures that induce a type of learning that can only be gained from experience, not a television, the Internet, or a lecture hall.

According to Nadine Dobby, author of *Encountering An American Self, Study Abroad and National Identity*, "Overseas study is the most effective and dramatic experience you can have to broaden your international and intercultural awareness. Encountering another world, immersing oneself in the daily practices of other people, sometimes living and speaking in another language, and learning how others view the world are all touted as the benefits of studying abroad."

From February to July 2010 I immersed myself into an exciting but temporary lifestyle in Prague, the capital and largest city of the Czech Republic. I chose Prague because it was different — a change of pace — and I saw it as a challenge. On my academic records, my purpose was to study at the Academy of Art, Architecture and Design, Prague under Rostislav Vanek, head of the Graphic Design and Visual Communication department. What I quickly came to understand was that this study abroad experience would go far beyond the realm

AND THIS IS THE SENTIMENTAL PART.

So how was your trip? Prague, right?

Well it was great I mean—I don't really know where to start I guess.

...

Can you speak any Czech?

Um, yeah. Well, no. Not really. I can order beer and tell someone that I don't speak Czech. You know—the important things.

Cool. I want to see your pictures sometime.

Yeah, sure. There's a lot.

Hi everyone you're listening to Travelog. This is a new podcast series hosted by myself, Kelsie Kaufman, and I'm here to talk about traveling. After spending six months abroad, mostly in the Czech Republic, I wanted to create this series to generate conversation about why it is so important to live and learn in unfamiliar cultures. You'll hear stories from my colleagues, friends, strangers, professors, and occasionally myself about some of our most intriguing experiences abroad that created long-lasting changes within us. The idea of Travelog is to tell some of the more unique stories from our time overseas...the things you won't necessarily see in a Lonely Planet, on a map, or hear from any kind of tour guide or travel agent. We're here to tell you stories you've never heard about the places we've seen, the cultures we've experienced, the people we've encountered, the food we've been surprised by,

of gaining design experience from a highly respected European design studio. I would clearly be absorbing a full spectrum of new information and perspectives from several constituents of Czech culture and a community of international students in the same situation as myself; in an unfamiliar place where we have yet to learn the language and cultural norms. The people, history, language barriers, culture shocks, politics, daily struggles, interactions, and experiences would contribute my abroad education equally to my new academic routine. After six months of living in an international dorm, acclimating to Czech culture and traveling to several cities in Europe, I was rewarded with the lasting effects of these experiences, almost all of which I've found to be consistent with several study abroad research statistics.

Studying abroad as college undergraduates generates undeniable long term benefits. According to a study by Mary M. Dwyer, Ph.D. and Courtney K. Peters on the long-term effects studying abroad has on one's personal, professional, and academic life, an international experience "positively and unequivocally influences the career path, world-view, and self-confidence of students." Mary M. Dwyer Ph.D. is the president of IES (The Institute for International Education of Students), a national academic consortium with over 155 member colleges. Courtney K. Peters, is the Communications and Media Relations Coordinator at IES.

Dwyer and Peters' data comes from a survey of 3,400 IES program alumni from 1950 to 1999. Their findings state that "Ninety-seven percent of respondents said that studying abroad served as a catalyst for increased maturity, 96 percent reported increased self confidence, and 95 percent stated that it has had a lasting impact on their world view." Additionally, when asked about intercultural development, "Ninety-eight percent of respondents said that study abroad helped them to better understand their own cultural values and biases, and 82 percent replied that study abroad contributed to their developing a more sophisticated way of looking at the world. Finally, Dwyer and Peters state that, "It is significant to note that these intercultural benefits are not fleeting but continue to impact participants' lives long after their time abroad. Almost all of the respondents (94%) reported that the experience continues to influence interactions with people from different cultures, and 23 percent still maintain contact with host-country friends. Ninety percent said that the experience influenced them to seek out a greater diversity of friends, and 64 percent said that it also influenced them to explore other cultures." (Dwyer and Peters).

What is missing from these statistics are the stories behind them. After my experience in the Czech Republic, I firmly believe that these statements, data, and findings apply to my own experience. However, my continual internal battle is not to simply to recite such powerful data to my audience as a selling point for seeking out intercultural immersions, but to recount the actual

the interesting ways we've gotten from place to place, and how it feels to come home after such life changing adventures. Travelog is a collective narrative and tour guide to the world, and why each and every one of us should get out there and experience it to its fullest.

KEY:

The following contains selections from the journal I kept during my time in the Czech Republic, designated by *[this typographical style]*. Interjecting between journal entries are selections from the script of Travelog, which looks like this. Miscellaneous narrative is presented in the style of this sentence, here.

PART ONE

New Beginnings

"This morning I got what I assumed to be a jelly-filled croissant. Wrong. When I bit into it, I was horrified to realize that what I anticipated to be a fruit filling was actually a sausage, of sorts. It's really quite startling to bit into something thinking that you're getting jam only to find a cold wad of meat from what has to be a combination of several different mammals."

The culture itself in Prague wasn't the biggest thing to adjust to. Despite being a part of Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic is definitely an object of "western culture". What surprised me most were the little differences that mostly presented themselves unexpectedly, like the tendency of Czechs to be rather unfriendly, or finding that your pastry is filled with meat and not jelly. At the time, these things were frustrating, but as soon as I began to write these stories down and send them to my friends and family to update them on my time here, I would quickly find myself snickering at all these bits and pieces of my new life in the Czech Republic.

These little things—that's what sparked Travelog.

"Everyone here smokes, and smokes everywhere. Smoking indoors is as acceptable as scratching an itch. It's still strange to walk into school and see people smoking in the hallways and classrooms. All the kids we live with are constantly sucking down tobacco in the spiral staircase. You'll never see that in the States. I guess that's what makes this all so fascinating."

"The first night we went out to a club I noticed that everyone our age had painted their country's flag on their face. I will definitely not be doing that. Just doesn't work that way for Americans."

During my first few weeks, or even months in Prague, I cannot even begin to explain just how embarrassed I was to be American. I spent most of my time attempt-

stories from students which they feel includes them in the category of, “having a more sophisticated world view” or “having a better understanding of their own cultural values and biases” after their trip. This data and countless other statistics simply show numbers, not the experiences from respondents which actually produced such positive responses about their trips.

I don't believe that students of my generation are necessarily unaware of the benefits gained from an abroad experience. I cannot deny that nearly every individual I've spoken with regarding studying abroad fervently advocates for such experiences whether or not they have participated in one. Despite this, since my return to the United States I feel an almost overwhelming omnipresent passion to tell my story about living in Prague in order to express not simply the undeniable benefits of such an experience, but the ways in which the complex concepts and perspectives of a different society combine with the simple cultural differences to create very complicated interlacing emotions and dialogue about the entire process of studying abroad, and then returning to one's own culture. It is not as simple as saying after studying abroad I have gained self confidence or worldly perspectives, though true. The combination of simple and complex life altering cultural experiences that actually produce an overall change in oneself is something that is not easily explained upon returning. The following entry from my travel journal is just one example of the vast array of the ways in which subtle and obvious cultural barriers interweave to generate a shift in perspective. Written in mid-April, I later titled this journal entry, Short Lived.

“A transient lifestyle with temporary habits, and cursory tendencies.

Placing yourself in a new location for just long enough to have to change ‘your current mailing address’ but not long enough to become fully immersed in the culture conjures such a strange double life. I'm not in the Czech Republic long enough to be able to disassociate myself from my normal Michigan life, however at the same time I am here long enough to develop a sense of home, for now at least. This transient double life happens to be in a place where English is not the first language, public transportation is abundant, beer is cheaper than water, and customer service is not part of the vocabulary. My day-to-day battles and successes with such cultural differences procure equally overlapping emotions. While part of me is highly intrigued about being dropped in a place where I can tune out the entire world because I can't understand it anyway, the other half just wishes so badly I could ask any person in sight where this tram is headed, because chances are I don't have the slightest clue.

Transient, temporary, momentary, provisional. In Michigan, there is always constant. Everyday is just a variation on a theme. Pattern. Series. Predictable. While

ing to prove to the other international students in the dorm that I'm not like a stereotypical American, and actually most of us aren't. I'd tell people I was Canadian to avoid feeling ashamed. I found myself working tirelessly to divert the American stereotype, only to realize months later that most of the students in the dorm didn't really have solidified preconceived notions of what all Americans are like. On the contrary, its Americans themselves that hold the Texas ranger-loud talking-rude behaving-money hungry-steak eating stereotype of ourselves. While I did feel like I was being made fun of often (which, I was), it was almost never malicious. In fact, joking about each others stereotypes and even making fun of our own was a quick way to make friends, and show that cultural assumptions set aside, we were all just trying to get to know each other as people, not solely as representatives of our home countries. It took some adjusting, but I finally gave up trying to be an example of a “good American” once I realized that nobody was holding me responsible for being the national representative of 300 million vastly different types of people who are all under the American umbrella.

“The French boys were embarrassingly overdressed for the occasion but they just say, ‘Oohh is because we ah French you zilly Amaaaarikun guerls’. I wish I could use being an American as an excuse for things that easily, but just doesn't work that way. Honestly, I'm losing sight of what it even means to be American.”

A letter to David:

“Last night my roommate Rose and I stumbled on Old Town Square in the center of Prague. I can honestly say I've never seen a more beautiful city. It was absolutely stunning, especially since it was snowing just a little bit. All the buildings are so old but well kept, it's amazing. Prague really makes me realize just how new the States are. The cobblestone streets are really tiny and wind around all over the place. They're sprinkled with little shops, cafes, hotels, and whatnot. There's also a big intricate astronomical clock right in the town square that everyone just stands and stares at. I'm so lucky to be living here (and by the way I live right down the street from a castle). Its definitely everything I hoped Prague would be. Wish you could see this so badly. Words can't do this city justice.”

It didn't take very long for my roommate Rose and I to realize that the Czech Republic is not exactly known for its cuisine. Our grocery store in Prague was called BILLA, which was roughly one-sixteenth the size of a standard American mega-mart. During our first month abroad, just about everything Rose and I did was an iffy process of guess and check,

in the Czech Republic, I uncontrollably and constantly compare my temporary lifestyle here to my regulated home life. I take a tram on average twice a day, and like a metro here and there. In the grocery store, asking if they have peanut butter is a lost cause, and finding broccoli is a gamble. My relationships in Michigan are mostly static. Knowing that this six-month lifestyle is so temporary, the relationships I've made here formed quick and strong with an underlying knowledge that most of them will likely dissipate in the same rapid fashion once we return to our home countries. While this is a seemingly disheartening thought, at the same time the fact that these relationships are so temporary motivates me to make the most out of all these social connections and form a profound collection of lush sentimental memories within this short period of time.

We were told that Czech is one of two languages that cannot be self-taught. This fact is further proven to me each and every time I find myself in a cafe, attempting to pronounce words in the menu that are sixteen syllables long, thickly decorated with accents but without a trace of any vowels. A series of obscene gestures to request a roll of toilet paper at the dorm reception desk makes for an amusing story the first time, but by the 10th time and second month of asking I've found myself running out of improv ideas to get my point across. As these constant language barriers affect my every day routine I've found myself at a point in my time here that these consistent communication blocks have mostly lost the entertaining aspect and are steadily becoming a heavier weight on my shoulders. I can't help but to feel an underlying gut fear in the bottom of my stomach that leaves me wondering, what happens if something actually goes horribly wrong while I'm here? What happens if I find myself in a situation where I'm completely trapped and can't speak a word of Czech or make ridiculous hand motions to save my life? Nerozumim, nerozumim, nerozumim.

Despite a never ending series of communication errors and a language barrier bigger than the Great Wall, I'm beginning to feel a sense of belonging to this beautiful city. I've been here long enough now to feel a sense of home, and connection. My inner pulse is synchronizing with the pulse of the city, and each and every day I can feel my ties to Prague tightening. Come July, I can already feel how heart wrenching it will be to let go of my grip on Prague.

I am a local but a foreigner."

Instances of frustration and success with language barriers and other cultural differences such as the previous journal entry are what began to spark ideas for a vehicle in which to portray my message. One of the most challenging things to explain are the ways in which these struggles and complications are, in truth, positive experiences that in turn build one as a person. These are the stories that accumulate to create the long-term benefits that reoccur in countless sets of statistics. Therefore, in

especially our daily trips BILLA. You'd think going the grocery store wouldn't be much of an issue, but day after day we were shocked by just how questionable the content of food really was when packaged in a different language and without any clear visual clues. So, we usually stuck to the certainties just to be safe. This left us mostly with things like fruit, vegetables, peanuts, cheese, and alcohol. Sometime in our first couple days living in Prague, Rose and I were gearing up for a day of exploration, and I thought I'd branch out and get a pastry for breakfast instead of a mistake-proof banana. What else would one put inside a flaky pastry than jam or jelly? Well, this was Eastern Europe and I quickly discovered that pastry filling is definitely not limited to strawberry jam with a delicate vanilla-icing glaze. With one foot out the door of BILLA I took a big bite into my pastry to find not jelly, but a cold wad of unidentifiable meat. Mystery. Czech. Meat. Needless to say, after that severe breakfast tragedy, I avoided the baskets of pastries for months.

I find that when I talk about the places I've traveled, food inevitably makes its way into the conversation sooner or later. Whether it's hearty Hungarian goulash, barrels full of sauerkraut at the Vienna street market, homemade pasta in Venice, French fries drenched with mayo in Amsterdam, or the occasional mystery meat mishap, my experiences with food remain some of the most memorable from my time abroad.

As you may have guessed, this episode of Travelog is dedicated entirely to food, and stories about some of the peculiar cuisine we've encountered around the globe.

PART TWO

Settling In

"Our bar across the street is called Andalusky Pes. Something about a dog. Its owned by a crazy Czech lady named Martina, who, frankly, is much nicer to us than the rest of the Czechs... Since day one she has spoken with us as if we've been friends for years, not as though we're just more obnoxious tourists."

By month two and three, I still didn't miss home, but I did miss little things; fresh milk, hip hop, driving my car... While the adventure was still fresh, I really began to think a lot more about I felt about being American, what it even meant to be American anymore, if I was proud or not... I still can't say I have it fully figured out. Amidst having an amazing time with all of my new friends from the dorm and jetting off to different cities every other weekend, the language barrier was beginning to weigh me down. I felt like even my own English

order to better explain the intricate emotions and life changing experience of studying abroad that generates such positive impacts, I decided to create a collaborative non traditional travel narrative, guide, and dialogue about not only my trip, but the experiences of a collection of students.

I chose to begin interviewing my colleagues who had also spent extended amounts of time in varying corners of the globe. In doing this, my initial idea was to combine their stories with my own narrative to design a cohesive printed document, which would provide various perspectives and responses on the subjects of studying abroad as young adults, intercultural competence and connectivity, cultural immersion, and the residual effects created by the struggles and benefits of having an international experience. During the process of recording in-depth discussions with my interviewees, I came to realize that each person had a vastly different experience than my own, and these differences are what make the stories compelling, rather than reiterating the same ideas, simply from different voices. I swiftly diverted my interviewing process towards the direction of a story telling session, which made for increasingly more meaningful, passionate, and captivating responses.

What I concluded through actually recording interviews rather than simply transcribing the responses was that the act of storytelling in itself audibly provided the passion, emotion and excitement about our experiences. While the idea of a book initially seemed to be a suitable vehicle to relay my message, the emotional investment of the storytellers could potentially be misinterpreted or lost without the proper voice inflections and pace of the actual audible process of story telling. I therefore came to a final conclusion that the interviews and story-telling itself would become my final product by editing and compiling my collection into a series of podcasts.

As a designer, it is my responsibility to use my creative intuition and skill to change the way society perceives and responds to the information that surrounds us. My biggest challenge in creating a podcast series was to use my role as host as a method of connecting each set of stories to develop a discernible over-arching concept behind each episode in order to properly project my message. With the themes of each episode in place, my role was to cohesively link each group of stories through insightful narration. Much of the inspiration for this process was derived from Ira Glass, host of *This American Life*. As explained by their web site, “*This American Life* is a weekly public radio show broadcast on more than 500 stations to about 1.7 million listeners. It is produced by Chicago Public Media, distributed by Public Radio International, and has won all of the major broadcasting awards. It is also often the most popular podcast in the country, with more than a half million people downloading each week.” Each episode

grammar was dissipating slowly after weeks and weeks of speaking so slowly and simply with everyone but Rose and Kate, our Irish flat-mate. At the same time, most of the little logistical frustrations of moving to a foreign country had been taken care of. I found the post office, learned where the trams went and was moving along steadily in my classes. A place so foreign was beginning to feel like home.

“A month in and I’ve thoroughly wrecked many pairs of shoes stumbling over the cobblestones. I still get lost all the time on the winding little streets. Sometimes after studio I like to just wander around Old Town Square, watch tourists, and explore the tiny twisting stone roads.”

“It’s been so much fun to meet and spend time with people from all over the world. I can honestly say I’m so glad to not be hanging out with a bunch of Americans while I’m here, like most of the other Americans are doing. After all, I didn’t go abroad to feel like I’m at home. It’s such a relief to be with people from all over the place. We have so much to talk about and I have so much to learn from all of them. While the language barrier gets really frustrating sometimes and can severely limit conversation, we’re all getting better at the whole communication thing.”

“Maxime probably has the worst English of all the French, yet he’s always the most fun for me to talk to.”

So I was sitting with my parents in the basement of a Czech restaurant called U Rudolfina. It was mid June, at the very end of my trip. My parents had come to visit me in Prague and they were so excited to see where I had been living for the last five months. I wanted to take them to some places that are more off the grid and less touristy, to give them a better taste of Czech culture, so I knew this place would be a perfect example. Its very local, quite hidden, and the waiters are definitely not concerned if ‘you need anything else with that’ or if ‘everything is tasting ok’. So I’m sitting in the basement with my parents, and the waiter comes to our table and asks us what we’d like to drink — in Czech, of course. I order a beer for my dad and myself and ask if he has any English menus for my parents. He looks back at me, then to my parents, puts down his pen and says, “No we don’t have English menus...”

Mildly perturbed I turn to him and exclaim, “I know you have English menus I go to school across the street, I’ve been here many times...”

The waiter says, “Not tonight we don’t.”

My parents are shocked, I’m not in any way surprised. So he then takes it upon himself to just order what he thinks my parents might like. Mom got soup, dad got some variety entrée of meat and dumplings.

All I could really say was, “...Welcome to the Czech Republic.”

of This American Life revolves around a theme, and contains an assortment of stories around that theme. The stories are mostly true, from everyday people, and eloquently weaved together by host Ira Glass. Travelog follows closely to this format, where I play the role of narrator between the storytellers.

Additionally, much of the inspiration for production style was similarly derived from Radiolab, a podcast hosted by Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich in a style related to that of This American Life. Radiolab functions on the philosophy that, "Your ears are a portal to another world. Where sound illuminates ideas, and the boundaries blur between science, philosophy, and human experience."

Word Of Mouth, formerly known as MothUp Ann Arbor, has also served as a model for the aesthetic in which stories are told and recorded for Travelog. The Word Of Mouth story slam event is an Ann Arbor student organization inspired by the Moth. The Moth is a group that meets once a month to tell stories around a theme. Hailing originally from Georgia, the Moth moved to New York City and has appeared on This American Life, and more recently, on its own podcast and radio show. The Moth is steadily gaining popularity and has started traveling shows around the country. Additionally, different groups of people have taken to having MothUP events of their own. In response, a student organization called Word of Mouth was formed, which is fashioned after the official Moth organization. We hold weekly meetings and throw monthly story slams. These stories are told to a group of people, completely unscripted and without notes. The emphasis of the group is to participate in the craft of storytelling and to share experiences with the community and world at large.

What I find most admirable about the Word Of Mouth story slam is the unscripted aspect of the event. Therefore, Travelog parallels with Word Of Mouth and differs from storytelling models such as This American Life in the sense that I've directed the Travelog stories to be narrated in an unrehearsed manner. There are no actors involved (as is often the case in This American Life), no notes, and no rehearsals. However, this is not to say that the editing and producing does not include the elimination of extraneous content. The stories within episodes of Travelog are carefully and meticulously crafted from unadulterated true stories in order to develop a cohesive narrative and conclusion on each theme.

The process of recording for Travelog began with an initial round of informal interviews, followed by a second round of more directed storytelling sessions. After recording several interviews, I chose to divide the episodes of Travelog into the most frequent reoccurring topics I heard about studying abroad and traveling. The methodology behind the first round of interviews surrounded the idea of keeping the discussion casual and,

This episode of Travelog is about communication barriers. One thing I was particularly nervous about when preparing for my semester in the Czech Republic was the language barrier I knew I'd be facing. After a few months I eventually got used to it considering it was involved in just about everything I did, but it never really got any easier to deal with. Occasionally it worked to my advantage, but not very often. Not surprisingly, one of the very first things we learned in Czech language class was "nerozumim", meaning simply, I don't understand. We were taught a few other seemingly important things in Czech, such as, where is the tram? I'll have two beers please...and I am not a doctor, but in truth a lot of times I didn't even try to speak Czech because my pronunciation was clearly quite a joke.

Other than that, incorrect grammar was pretty much guaranteed. Our Czech teacher explained in one of our first sessions, depending on the situation, every phrase in Czech can be spoken in approximately 7 different ways. In truth it was the nice way for her to say, go ahead and try, but there's really not much hope. Either way, I'd try out my few Czech phrases here and there, hoping that my attempts would at least give me some brownie points with post office employees or restaurant staff. Sometimes I'd get a sympathetic laugh, but most Czechs reacted with an unimpressed glance, and a response in English.

Now don't get me wrong, I had fallen deeply in love with Prague, we just couldn't have a conversation. When traveling the world, communication has great potential to take our experiences from one extreme to another.

This episode, stories about language barriers.

The good, the bad, the unspoken.

"Last night I was cornered by some Russian boys and forced into a slightly broken conversation about underground Russian hip hop. The people you meet here are so intense sometimes. I must say, it keeps things interesting."

"I just want to be able to go to the library and not struggle and make a million hand motions to try to communicate with the people behind the desk. I want to be able to ask someone in a grocery store if they have peanut butter. It's such a strange feeling to be on trams and the metro when everyone around you is speaking Czech. I'm constantly in my own little bubble, isolated. Sometimes I think it's great being able to tune out everything around you because it just doesn't matter and I'll never understand what's be-

as stated previously, unrehearsed to illicit genuine and honest responses regarding the various international experiences. From these discussions, I chose to divide Travelog into five episodes with five distinct themes; Language Barriers, Cultural Immersion, International Food, Transportation, and Coming Home/Reverse Culture Shock. At this stage, I called back my subjects for a second round of recordings, eliminating myself from the discussions to develop the informal interview style into a storytelling format. The storytellers were asked to retell the stories (still unscripted and without notes) which stood out to me in their first interviews, without any interruption from myself. Additionally, I continuously recruited more colleagues to contribute their experiences to my growing bank of stories based on the themes. Upon completion, Travelog as a whole contains narratives from Argentina, Ecuador, China, Namibia, India, Thailand, Cambodia, Israel, Turkey, England, Spain, and the Czech Republic.

Due to the episodic nature of Travelog, and the necessity to display it in a visual form, the gallery presentation reflects a gentle sense of branding through means of consistent typography, graphic style, and color choice. The main concepts underlining the Travelog series — intercultural connectivity and cultural immersion — ultimately influenced the logo design, which to is a pair of overlapping speech bubbles to represent the relationship between travelers and the new cultures we've experienced.



For all five episodes of Travelog, I've similarly designed corresponding CD covers which visually respond to the themes. On each cover, the overlapping speech bubbles are centrally placed below the title. However, the representation of intercultural connectivity and cultural immersion is taken a step further by placing photographs from my experience within the speech bubbles; one containing an image from home, and the other containing an image from my study abroad experience in Prague. The photographs are intended to represent the relationship of my home life as it overlaps with my international experiences to create interlacing life perspectives.

ing said, but then when it comes down to being in studio and school its driving me crazy. Even my professor (who doesn't speak a word of English) has mostly given up on trying to explain project prompts to me and has just said do what you want from now on. Its just so hard to not understand."

PART THREE

The End of an Era

Today is February 3rd, 2011. One year ago I left for my six-month stint across the atlantic, and I think today is probably an appropriate time to record this particular episode.

This last one is about coming home, how it felt, and the difficulties we faced (or didn't, in some cases). After interviewing each of my friends and colleagues about their time abroad, I realized that diving back into our own culture after being away for a while was equally as important as the international experiences themselves, and a lot of times it's the hardest part to even talk about. Since our return, its undeniable that we've been changed in so many ways from the places we've lived in, and the people we've met, laughed with, cried with and learned from abroad, but finding the right words to describe precisely what it is that has transformed within us is something I'm still struggling to put my finger on. From the words of Bill Bryson, "It is disconcerting to find yourself so simultaneously in your element and out of it."

It's definitely very unsettling to come home to what is supposed to feel normal but then it just doesn't anymore. I knew I had changed so much while everything and everyone in Michigan seemed just about the same, and I felt so disconnected. In Prague I never really got very homesick, and I never looked forward to the day I'd have to fly back to Michigan. Coming home was one of the most intense emotional experiences I've ever gone through.

I remember sitting in the Detroit airport, waiting for bag to come around the baggage claim conveyor belt. I was definitely in this surreal hazy state, I couldn't believe I was actually in Detroit Michigan, and when I looked up I was kind of staring blankly at all the customs information on the wall, and it actually took me a minute or two to realize that I could read everything in front of me. It was in English. When an announcement came on the loud-speaker I could understand what was being said, and it just annoyed me. All the conversations around me were

TRAVELOG episode five coming home



For example, the Coming Home cover is representative of the biggest difference I experienced between my living situation in Prague and in Ann Arbor. Living in Prague meant adjusting to a big city lifestyle, as opposed to Ann Arbor where I reside in my own room within a home in a primarily student neighborhood. The photographs on the Culture cover reflect the vast difference between international culture (represented by the Buda castle in Budapest, Hungary) and the college-life culture I experience at the University of Michigan. Ironically, the two buildings reflect a similar architectural shape.

TRAVELOG episode two culture



This graphic style continues into the exhibition design of Travelog. On the back wall of the three wall display (figure 1) is a painted map with attached photographs of the storytellers in Travelog (figure 2), so as to give face to the voices being heard. During the exhibition, episodes of Travelog were played through speakers

understandable and I felt like my brain was overloading.

When I got back to my house, I took my car out on a drive for a good two hours through the farms of Mason. The first time in six months I had driven a car. Sounds simple but it was very, very strange. I honestly never thought reverse culture shock would be something that would effect me. I thought everything would just fall back into place in Michigan; back into routine. That was definitely not the case. It took a long time to feel comfortable at home again, and I think I'm still adjusting.

The whole time I was in Prague I never stopped thinking of Michigan as home, but now that I'm back I'm really not sure if I still feel that way. Prague really started to feel like home, and now I continually question where I really belong.

The Czech national anthem just happens to be called Kde Domov Muj. In English, Kde Domov Muj means, "Where is my home"...

So pardon the lump in my throat as I make my best effort to read one of my final entries from my Prague journal.

"I'm sitting on a train going from Prague to Poland. This is the last time I'll see my city. My mom and dad, seated across from me—excited to begin their Poland adventure—can see the tears welling up in my eyes over and over but this is the first time in my life neither of them have comforting words for me. This is it. It's really over. The end of an era, the best 5 months of my life I'm positive. I've never felt a sadness as deep as this—watching my city grow smaller and smaller from the dirty windows of this train. I sit here with thick slimy tears running down my cheeks as I write this. If I thought it was hard when the first of our dorm friends left, today somehow topped it. The lump in my throat is nearly choking me. I feel like I'm losing my home. I'm the last one of my friends to leave Prague. We threw a goodbye party for everyone else in the dorm as they left one by one, but I'm on my own for this one. My parents can't possibly understand the hole being ripped out of my heart with every jolt of this rusty train as it pulls further and further away from what are now to be only memories."

directed into the space. Additionally, a listening station for private selective listening was provided (*figure 3*). The podcast series in its custom packaging was available to gallery visitors (*figure 4*) — who may now listen on their own time, uninterrupted by the background noise of a gallery opening. Overall, the secluded Travelog gallery exhibit served as a project overview or guide, a promotional display, and a listening space.

All in all, the entire Travelog narrative, production, exhibit display and promotion ultimately serves as a collective culture guide and motivational tool intended to encourage listeners to seek out international experiences themselves.

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Mike Kolton
Igor Belopolsky
Barrie Schwartz
Carly Friedman
Katherine Drake
Rose Jaffe
Mat Schwartz
Benjamin C. English
Lauren Sopher
Ben Antonio
John Marshall
Erica Buher

Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

