

Traveling to gain experience through education

Follow Vasna Wilson's trek through Europe, Asia and Africa as she seeks experience via land and sea study-tours

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FEATURES EDITOR

Part two of the series on experience through education will focus on how fine arts major Vasna Wilson sought out the opportunity to study and travel abroad, how she raised money for tuition and other expenses, and the personal and professional experience she gained.

Gazing upwards at the massive pyramids in Luxor. Basking in the glow of a breathtaking sunset at sea. Exchanging gifts with village people in the remote regions of Brazil.

Sound wonderful? Sound interesting? Sound educational?

These are just a few of the stops featured on a European Culture Tour and Semester at Sea which UNLV photography student Vasna Wilson undertook for Fall 1994 and Spring 1995.

While many students only dream of traveling the world, Wilson decided to make her dream a reality. She found what she was seeking after looking through a book listing more than 100 study tours, *Time Out: Travel and Work*



Vasna Wilson, fourth from right, sets sail with other students aboard the SS Universe for an exciting four month semester at sea.

Study in the U.S. and Abroad, by Robert Gilprin and Caroline Fitzgibbons.

"The whole reason I chose the program from Eastern Michigan University was to understand Western Civilization. As a westerner, living in the western country, Europe was like another world."

Wilson and 30 other students from across the U.S., three professors and a tour manager, set off for orientation in London, England. From there, with only one backpack and a small daypack to hold

her possessions for the next four months, Wilson embarked on her learning adventure.

Each student had to sign up for 12 to 15 credit hours. Wilson spread her 12 credits between Political Science 212, International Relations; History 333, Europe since 1919; Art 379, Art and Architecture of Europe; and Literature 230, Reading from European Literature. Wilson was impressed with the way each class incorporated into the tour.

"We read about the country we were going to visit and then went to the actual site, and that site was our classroom. The classes complimented each other, giving us a deep sense of the people and culture being studied. I literally witnessed the rise and fall of Western civilization."

Wilson remembers the experience of studying literature while in Venice, Italy. "We read Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*. It was incredible to discuss it and gain understanding of where Mann was coming from right at the very spot where he wrote the work."

"We went to the hotel where he stayed, we took the boat down the grand canal where he found the little boy, we even did the same walk. Everything in the story was so symbolic." As many have been in both past and present, Wilson was enamored with the historically famous local.

Plays, ballets and musical concerts were also part of the educational agenda. After a full day of educational sight-seeing, the group would often attend evening performances.

While in Berlin, the word was out that Elton John was in town, playing at the Parliament Center, the former site of the Berlin Wall. After enjoying a symphony concert, Wilson and some fellow students headed over to the center, rocking 'til the bitter 1

a.m. end.

No scholastic endeavor would be complete without some R&R. The tour manager selected a small village near Vladimir, Russia as a spot to chill out.

"We got a chance to hang out and enjoy the countryside," Wilson said. "We stayed in a monastery where nothing had changed since the 13th century. We didn't even have to much trouble with the language; before entering the country, we studied a dictionary to learn the basics—hello, thank-you, please."

As far as choosing one or two favorite spots, Wilson said, "There was no favorite country or thing. Every place had

says it is."

Religion was something Wilson got a better understanding of. "I learned a lot about religion—Christianity, Judaism, Muslim—I never understood Muslim, Islam and the Koran. But I do now, and I have great respect for it."

Some of the group's other destinations included the Netherlands, Finland, Greece, Turkey, Egypt and Israel. They stayed in youth hostels and traveled by Eurail, bus and boat, visiting more than 100 museums and historical sites.

After coming home and regrouping for three weeks, Wilson traded her backpack for a suitcase and packed up for the

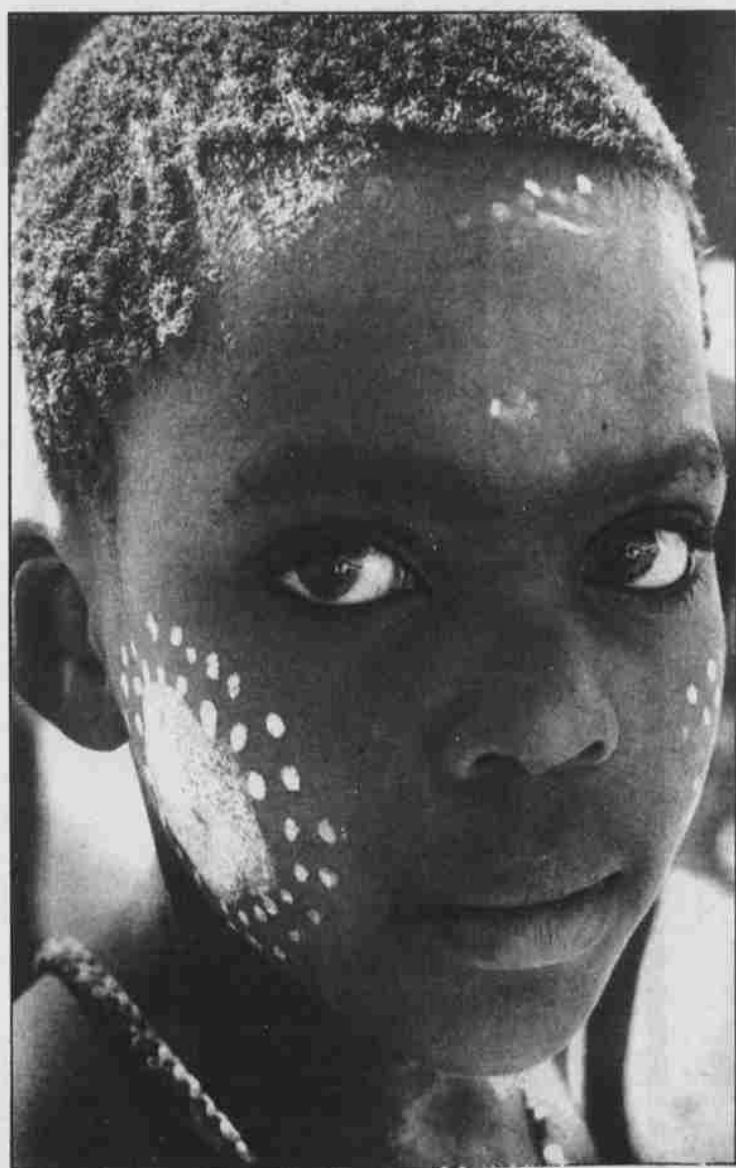


PHOTO BY VASNA WILSON

A South African street dancer, shown in traditional face paint, dances with a troupe for money.

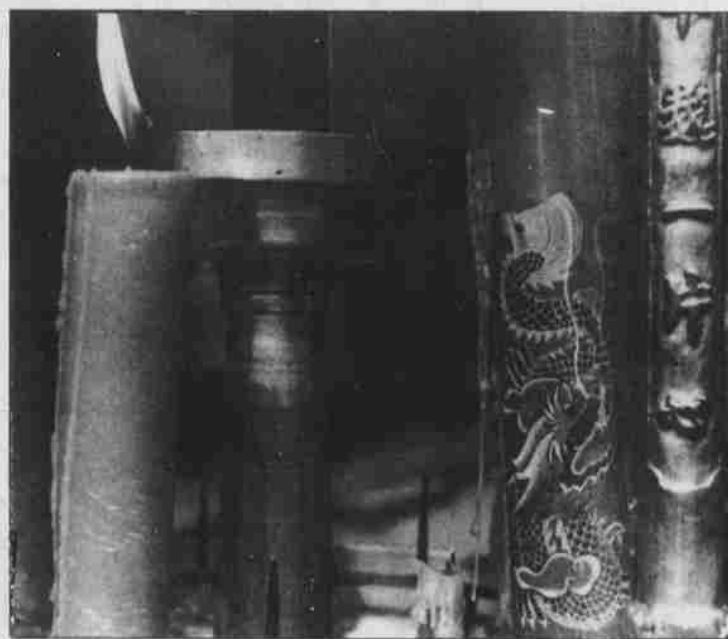


PHOTO BY VASNA WILSON

Candles used in ancestor worship stand on an altar in the 250-year-old Lao Shaung Buddhist Temple in Taiwan.

its impact. Like in Western Europe, I was in awe of the beauty, the people and the culture. They don't forget their past; everyday they see it.

"When I went to Russia, I thought it was an evil empire; Ronald Reagan brainwashed me," she giggled, taking a sip of her café latté. "Russia wasn't evil. Nothing is as the media

second part of her voyage—a four-month study program aboard the ocean liner S.S. Universe, sponsored by The Institute for Shipboard Education and the University of Pittsburgh.

After flying to the Bahamas, the 535-member student body

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