

# DIPAtoday

THE DIVISION OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS ABROAD INTRODUCES THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS TO FOREIGN CULTURES AND GIVES THEM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

BY **tammy** DIDOMENICO *photos courtesy of DIPA*

Danie Moss '99 is barely out of college, but is convinced she has already experienced the most influential time of her young life. As a junior, Moss spent six months in Madrid with a program coordinated by Syracuse University's Division of International Programs Abroad (DIPA). "It was the best thing I could have done for myself," says Moss, a class marshal who majored in child development and international relations. "By the end of the semester, I didn't want to come back."

Every year, more than 1,300 students study abroad through DIPA. The University has offered international tour and study opportunities since 1919, but the true founda-

tion began with a Mexican art study program in 1949 and the creation of DIPA's Florence program in 1959. University College developed the University's study-abroad programs from 1948 to 1969, when the Division of International Programs Abroad was officially established. By the mid-seventies, there were DIPA centers in London, Madrid, and Strasbourg. Recent years have seen the addition of programs in Hong Kong and Harare, Zimbabwe. Each location offers a variety of study options, including semester, yearlong, and summer programs. "With most of the programs, it is really easy to do a semester," says Sue Shane '76, G'81, assistant to the executive director. "Faculty mem-

K  
o  
n  
g  
K  
o  
n  
g



bers work with students to try to arrange their schedules so it can happen.”

All curricula and faculty are approved by the departments on campus. The majority of DIPA instructors, however, are residents of the host countries. “With local adjuncts, it is a total partnership,” says Nirelle Galson, executive director of DIPA. Staff members and SU faculty believe in the importance of having a presence at the centers. “These are not outposts,” she says. “These centers are part of SU.”

Galson says DIPA staff and faculty take pride in the relationships established with the host countries. Since the beginning, the University has offered programs that benefit both the students and their hosts. The very first SU abroad program, established in 1919 in Chungking, West China, gave students an opportunity to teach English to the Chinese people.

Art, art history, language, literature, public communications, international relations, and architecture programs naturally lend themselves to study abroad. Three of SU’s six centers now offer special opportunities for School of Management students. “With these programs, we really take advantage of the locale and what that site has to offer,” says Daisy Fried, associate director for DIPA summer programs.

The School of Architecture, for example, builds the Florence program into its curriculum. “About 80 percent of our students go to Florence in their fourth year for at least one semester, in some cases for two semesters,” says Professor Randall Korman. “It is an extension of the core curriculum.”

Florence is also a natural choice for visual artists like Shadra Strickland ’99, an illustration major who studied there for a semester last year. “I thought it would be important to see masterpieces up close and personal,” she says. “I was exposed to all the art I could handle.”

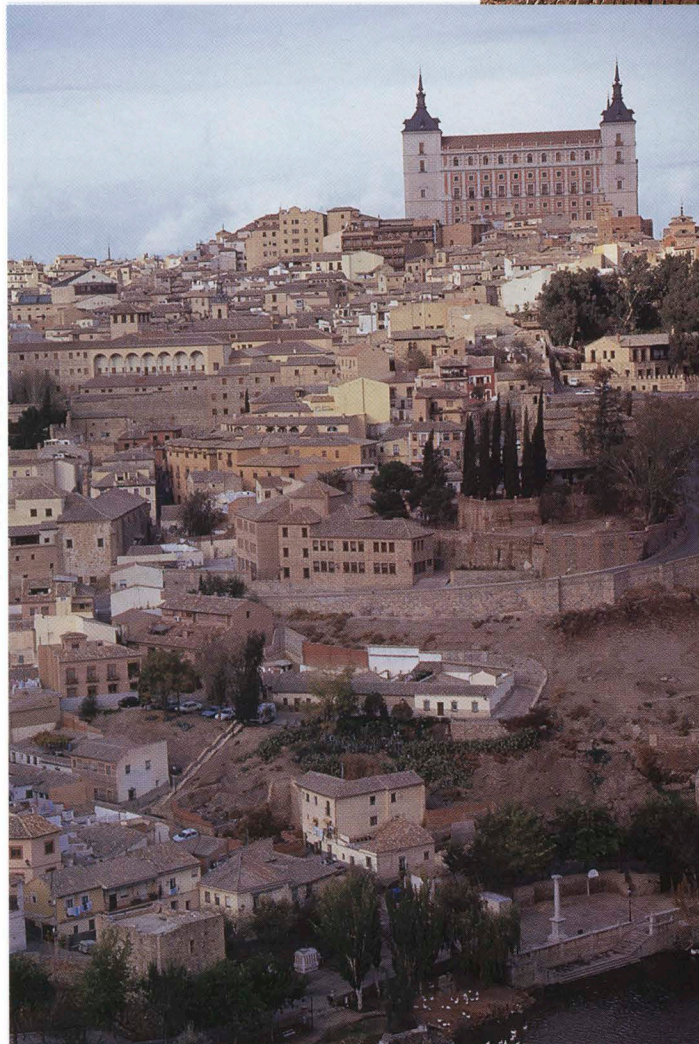
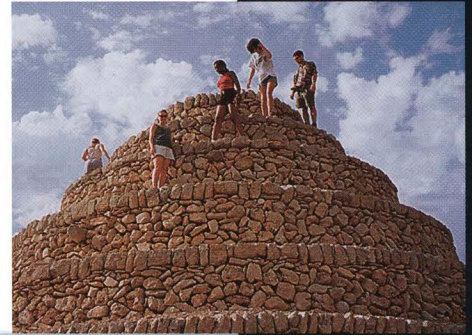
For international relations graduate Rhett Gurian ’99, “Europe seemed so far away.” Gurian learned about DIPA through a class research project, discovered it would enhance his academic progress, and ended up spending his junior year in Strasbourg and London. “Strasbourg is an ideal place to study international relations because it is located in the geographic center of Europe and is home to the Council of Europe,” he says. “Learning history, politics, and economics from a European perspective allowed me to look at everything I had learned in the states from a different point of view.”

Over the years, SU faculty have worked closely with DIPA to provide students the best possible academic experience abroad. But that wasn’t always the mission. Tours offered to veterans attending SU on the GI Bill following World War II emphasized sightseeing, not academics. “There was a resurgence in things

international after the war,” Shane says. “The programs were about 90 percent tour and 10 percent academics. In the beginning, credit was optional. By the 1950s, academic credit was the primary draw.”

Jim Buschman, DIPA’s associate director for recruitment, admissions, and student services, says the programs are designed to enhance students’ academic experiences. “The students are expected to perform academically,” he says. “They see and do a lot on their own, too.”

Many students find that even the most mundane experiences bring unexpected rewards. Gurian, for instance, fondly recalls meeting a Berlin woman who shared a personal account of the once-divided city. “She had lived in the west side of the city her entire life, but had many relatives in the east,” he says. “She recounted stories about smuggling western products to her cousins in the east during communist rule. Her parents would hide things in her clothing.” For Gurian, it was a memorable conversation. “His-



S P A I N  
S P A I N  
S P A I N



tory was happening right in front of me," he says. "I had always heard about the Berlin Wall, but to learn about its real implications was extraordinary."

Summer programs are popular options for students whose schedules don't allow for a semester away from campus. "This year, we have 27 different summer programs," Fried says. "In many cases, DIPA summer program courses are designed to offer a unique opportunity."

Few study-abroad programs offer options as unique as the six-week Zimbabwe summer seminar initiated three years ago by African American studies professor Micere Mugo. The seminar, Faces of Independence in Southern Africa, takes students to ancient caves, the Mandela house, war-ravaged cities, and places of natural beauty. "People think of Africa as a troubled place, but I use the seminar as an opportunity to show students another side of Africa, one from which there is much to learn," Mugo says. "It is important to humanize knowledge in this way. These are lessons all students can apply to their own cultures."

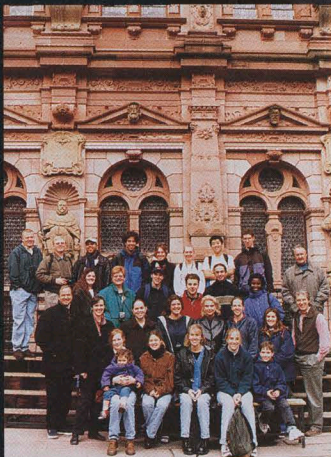
president for undergraduate studies and one of DIPA's biggest boosters, is determined to increase that percentage. "I try to convince students of the benefits associated with spending time immersed in another culture," he says. "I want more students to experience the unique opportunities the Division of International Programs Abroad offers."

Programs are continually evaluated to make sure the academic value is maximized. Programs have come and gone as academic needs changed, including ones in Colombia; Poitiers, France; and Amsterdam.

DIPA's attention to student needs has not gone unnoticed outside the University community. The opportunity to study abroad is a draw for prospective SU students. "I was familiar with the study-abroad options when I came to Syracuse," says Sarah Palefsky '00, an advertising major who studied in London last year. "It was one of my criteria for choosing a college."

As early as 1953, students from other colleges joined SU students on study-abroad programs. Today, students from

more than 300 colleges and universities participate. Catherine Beekman, a junior at Indiana University who studied in London with DIPA last year, chose the program because she was familiar with the quality of SU's public affairs curriculum. "I had to make sure the credits would transfer to fulfill specific requirements for my major," she says. "The SU program offers a great opportunity to live in another country while maintaining high academic standards."



Galson, who has been involved with the University's study-abroad programs for 23 years, encourages students in disciplines not typically associated with DIPA to use the program. Currently, about 5.8 percent of SU's total undergraduate population studies abroad annually. Among this year's graduating class, more than 20 percent studied overseas. According to *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Syracuse ranked 8th in a study last year that evaluated the top 20 research institutions with undergraduates studying abroad. Ronald Cavanagh, vice

### Ensuring Health and Safety

When American students study abroad, there are risks to consider. For DIPA, health and safety issues are top priorities. "When students think they can pretty much do what they want, that can be dangerous," Fried says, "because behavior that is acceptable here may not be acceptable in Europe or Africa. Americans, in general, are open and friendly. In some countries that can be regarded as an invitation for unwanted attention."

Cavanagh says the University does all it can to prepare students for the difficulties they may face in assimilating to their temporary homes. DIPA also works closely with other offices on campus to address safety issues.



Differences in gender and social mores prompt the majority of complaints from DIPA participants. Women's studies courses, now offered in London, Harare, and Madrid, can be helpful. "It is important for students to have some knowledge of gender issues in the society in which they are living—if only to avoid serious misunderstandings and danger to themselves," says political science and women's studies professor Marie Provine, who has taught at three DIPA centers.

The political climate is carefully monitored wherever SU students are studying. "World events naturally have a tremendous influence on our programs," Fried says. "The Chungking program was ended in 1949 as the threat of communism grew. After Tiananmen Square, we canceled a summer program in China. The Gulf War also affected our enrollment."

Five years ago, after faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences, the College for Human Development, and the School of Management expressed interest in a University program in Asia, the Hong Kong program was established. But it wasn't without trepidation. At the time, Hong Kong was still a British colony. That changed in 1997, when China reclaimed the territory it had surrendered to the British in 1842. The University naturally had concerns about how the handover to China would affect the program. "We still felt it was the best place for us to go in Asia," Fried recalls.

While DIPA has an exemplary safety record, Galson's tenure as director has been anything but stress-free. Yet even the most public and tragic of situations—the 1988 terrorist bombing of Pan Am 103 that claimed the lives of 35 DIPA students—did little to damage the program's reputation. "Americans are very resilient," Galson says. "They don't let something like that deter them."

In fact, the next year, the program had its highest enrollment ever. "We sent the message," Cavanagh says, "that we were going forward."

### Adapting to Foreign Languages and Customs

One of DIPA's unique characteristics is that there is no language requirement for students. All DIPA centers offer programs for students who have little or no fluency in the native language. Students who want to study in that language can attend a local university with their advisors' approval.

Moss, for instance, had some knowledge of Spanish when she left for Madrid. "Being familiar with the language helped a lot," she says. "In Europe, people who speak the native language are treated differently than those who don't."

Many students must learn to adapt quickly to an unfa-

miliar way of life, with little or no language training. While the immersion experience effectively forces them to learn enough of the language to get by, many times even those with some fluency are not fully prepared to converse with native speakers. "The hardest thing for me initially in France was the language



LONDON  
W O M E N  
O P I N I O N

barrier," Gurian says. "However, as my language skills improved, I felt a sense of accomplishment."

Language barriers or not, most students find ways to make themselves at home. "As far as blending in with Londoners," Palefsky says, "by the end of the semester, most of us had gotten shorter haircuts and longer coats."

"In France, much more emphasis is placed on interpersonal relationships, which I really liked," Gurian adds. "Life moves at a slower pace, which took some getting used to."

DIPA provides literature and programs to ease the cultural transitions. Staff members accompany every group



Z  
I  
T  
I  
B  
A  
B  
W  
E  
  
Z  
I  
T  
I  
B  
A  
B  
W  
E  
  
E

of students during their international flights. Buschman recalls accompanying one group of students to Harare. "We hadn't even left the airport when a student announced, 'I'm going to stay here the rest of my life.' She came back at the end of the semester, of course, but the impact can be dramatic. Many students find they want to return to the place where they studied abroad as soon as they can. It becomes such a vivid experience for them."

College of Arts and Sciences professor Gary Radke '73 was one of those students. Radke was a fine arts major when he traveled to Florence with DIPA in 1972. "I went to Florence in my junior year, and it was a pretty big deal for me. I had never even been on a plane before," he says.

Once there, Radke was anything but homesick. "It was the longest and richest three-and-a-half months of my life," he says. "And when I talk to undergraduates now who go abroad, it's still the same. Time is transformed. To this day, I have the impression that I lived in Italy for a long time."

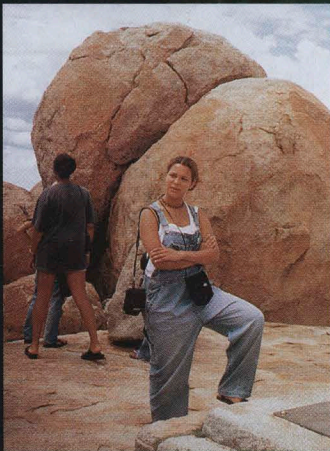
Strickland established a bond with the son of her Italian host family through a shared love of art. "My most precious memory of Italy is the first time my host brother came to the studio to paint with me," she says. "It was a touching moment because his mother told me he hadn't painted for five years—since his father's death. She felt I inspired him."

In some cases, students have a harder time adjusting to the return home. "The most difficult part about coming home was that I didn't want to leave," Gurian says. "Even after being in Europe for more than eight months, I still wasn't ready to come home. When I got back, I initially had a hard time adjusting."

Gurian's reaction is not unusual. It takes time for students to balance the fresh lessons of a new experience with the conditioning of their own culture. Buschman says reverse culture shock is sometimes even more debilitating because many students don't expect it. For that reason, DIPA offers assistance to students as they return home

and get back into the swing of campus life.

Many students also find comfort in getting together with other DIPA participants and swapping adventure stories. "When you travel to a foreign country, you know life there is going to be different," Buschman says. "You don't know what to expect, but you can mentally prepare for the changes. When you come back, you don't think anything will be different, but it usually is. Your friends and family may have changed. And more than anything, you have changed."



Today, Radke leads a summer seminar for undergraduate students and heads a graduate program in Renaissance art in Florence. "Students get to the end of a summer session and say, 'The time went by so quickly!' That's because every minute you are learning something new," Radke says.

Students studying in Italy, Spain, Zimbabwe, and France usually live with host families. "Some of the most positive feedback we get is about the host stay," Shane says. "Some of these relationships continue for a lifetime."

### DIPA AND A CHANGING WORLD

The benefits of studying abroad continue long after students return home. "It gives them a certain amount of insight that, wherever they go in the world, they can adapt to a different culture," Buschman says. "It certainly contributes to the image they project."

As society becomes more globally interdependent, DIPA's place in the education of undergraduates has become increasingly important. DIPA staff constantly monitor how the programs will help prepare students for the future. Buschman points to the Zimbabwe and Hong Kong programs as evidence that DIPA is very much in step with the



changing face of the global society. "Before we established those programs, we had four centers in Western Europe," he notes. "We understand the world is more than just Western Europe. Students must have opportunities in other places. That's why we started a program in Chile last fall."

As good as SU's study-abroad programs are, Galson is always looking to improve them. "I would like to see more graduate programs abroad, and more of a presence in Latin America and Asia, possibly in China," she says.

Cultural enrichment is bound to have a positive effect on SU students and faculty. Those individuals, in turn, bring their awareness back with them, and the entire campus benefits. "Students come back transformed, not just academically, but psychologically and physically," Korman says. "They see themselves more as citizens of the world."

As students demand more of a global perspective in their education, Shane foresees DIPA developing more programs in which different fields of study converge. "We are constantly retooling the programs to reflect the educational needs of the students," she says.

Korman is confident DIPA will meet those needs. "Foreign study is a process of forcing oneself to confront personal limitations," he says. "This generation really is the first global generation, and I firmly believe that in the future, opportunities will go to people who have that kind of global view."



italy  
ITALY

## At 40, the University's Florence Program is Pre-eminent Among the Competition

In fall 1959, a group of 15 SU students boarded a ship bound for Italy. For two weeks they traveled together, building friendships and learning as much as they could about the culture they would soon experience. Most didn't speak a word of Italian.

Somehow, it worked. Today, 40 years later, students fly to Italy. Yet the ultimate destination remains unchanged: It is Villa Rossa, home of the Florence Center, where thousands of SU students have studied since 1959. The Florence program now serves the largest number of DIPA participants—about 300 each semester—and is considered the pre-eminent study-abroad program there. "The program that educators usually mention first is run by Syracuse University, which has been a sizable presence with its own campus in this arts capital, a virtual museum without walls," *The New York Times* reported in August 1998.

Mike Calo '71, an SU recruitment consultant, developed an affection for Florence as a DIPA student in 1970. He has twice directed the Florence program and now travels the country talking to students about its offerings. "The Florence program hasn't changed much," Calo says. "For many students, this is a pivotal experience in their lives, just as it was for me."

In recognition of the Florence program's 40th anniversary, reunion events will be held at the following locations:

- |                                       |                     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| • Syracuse campus, Homecoming Weekend | October 29-31, 1999 |
| • Lubin House, New York City          | November 18, 1999   |
| • San Francisco                       | February 26, 2000   |
| • Greenberg House, Washington, D.C.   | March 18, 2000      |
| • Florence, Villa Rossa               | April 29, 2000      |

