

Dubrovnik, Croatia



by Laura Katirayi

Laura Katirayi will be graduating this Spring with CHID and Political Science, along with a minor in Human Rights. During four years, she managed to study abroad in New Zealand, Prague, and Auroville, India.

The Bus(t)

by Danny Hanlon

Here are some important numbers that have to do with my bus ride from Iquique to Santiago:

Twenty-seven is the number of hours that it took me to arrive in Santiago by bus from Iquique. Eight is the number of kilograms of cocaine that were discovered in the luggage of the woman sitting a few seats away from me.

So needless to say the bus ride from Iquique was an interesting one, tortuous and potentially dangerous I suppose. Let me explain:

Danny Hanlon graduated from UW in 2005 with a degree in Cinema Studies and a minor in Landscape Studies.

He was awarded the Bonderman Fellowship and traveled to South America, India and China.

After nearly 24 hours on the bus, we were stopped at a control point two hours outside of Santiago. I came to find out that all busses from Arica and Iquique are stopped because they are both on major smuggling routes. When stopped, a drug-sniffing dog came aboard, sniffed around and left. Then some policemen came aboard and sniffed around. They began to ask to see people's tickets and they focused on two people, a young mother with infant, and a twentysomething gringo. They were sitting across the aisle from me the whole time, and I was sure that the kid wasn't stupid enough to be smuggling drugs—and who would suspect a nursing mother of being a mule?

The Chilean Police, that's who. And they were right. Within half an hour the whole bus was waiting on the side of the highway, watching them take pictures of enormous plastic bags full of cocaine atop our luggage beneath the bus. Aside from a tiny baby, she had been carrying eight kilograms of cocaine to be dropped off in Santiago.

This is where the story gets better.

So after all of this time waiting we are finally back on the bus, wondering what will happen to her and her baby, thinking we will never see them again. Wrong. Two detectives escort her back on the bus and handcuff her to the seat. We are told that since someone is waiting for her on the other end, we are all to act like nothing is wrong while exiting the bus, so these cops can make the bust.

Well, despite my worries, I came out of the situation without a

single stray bullet entering my body, but I will never forget that bus ride. It was so strange to see her again as we got off the bus, and I hoped as my eyes met hers for a second, she didn't think that I was looking down on her or judging. I was only wondering how she got herself into that situation, how much she was supposed to be paid for doing it, how neither her life nor her baby's would ever be the same after that day, and how the majority of the people in the bus terminal had no idea any of this was happening.

Finding Food (and other things) in Cuenca, Ecuador

After leaving the internet cafe very hungry, I made my way up the block to my hostel. My hostel is called El Cafecito, and in the center of the lobby is a restaurant. When I walked in I felt like I was in the wrong place. The tables that were empty earlier in the day were now full of travelers and locals, eating and drinking. I felt very strange making my way to the bar and asking for my room key instead of a drink. I went into my room to drop off my stuff, and decided to search the neighborhood for a vegetarian restaurant that some friends from the Galapagos had recommended. I made my way to the opposite side of the block, because that was the supposed location of said restaurant. I passed a Columbian restaurant that was recommended by the people who work at my hostel, but I was determined to find the other restaurant, so I continue on.

I passed several restaurants, one of which is advertising pizza in their window. I know that pizza can be very bad, but bad pizza is still much better than other bad food. I once ate a pizza in Costa Rica with a corn, peas, and carrots medley on it, which had obviously been recently thawed—even that still had the basic desirable qualities of pizza. I made my way further down the street, and seeing nothing promising, I decided to ask. I feel strange walking into restaurants to inquire about other restaurants, but I was hungry and I had my heart set on finding this restaurant. My question was met with confused faces, as all I could provide was a vague remembrance of the name and that it served vegetarian food only, which I know is notable. I got another recommendation, based on my dietary requirements, and I set off to find this restaurant that apparently had really great pizza. I had been pointed onto a street I had explored earlier in the day, and I was sure there was no pizzeria within any distance I was willing to walk in the dark of night, so I returned to the restaurant I had passed earlier.

I came to find out that they did not have pizza, and while I was not surprised, I was still hungry.

I settled for an empanada de queso and a beer. It wasn't much, but it was a start and I felt obligated to order something from the ragged band of youths running the small cafe. I felt very awkward sitting in the restaurant due to the fact that the line between customer and worker was practically nonexistent, except in my case, so I sat at a table and waited for nourishment.

The beer that came was enormous, as it is often hard to find a 12-ounce bottle of beer in a restaurant here. The empanada had just been microwaved, but there are a great deal of terrible things that can be done to fried dough and cheese that will not render them inedible. As is my custom, I broke open the pastry to examine its contents. What I found was ham—something that is not on my list of things acceptable to eat. I asked if there were any empanadas that did not have ham, and I was told no. Again: Not surprised, still hungry.

So I sit, surrounded by this gang of cafe-running, Spanish punk-rock listening, ham-and-cheese empanada eating kids, to finish my enormous beer on an empty stomach. I couldn't finish it but I did my best, and while I was sitting alone in this strange place, I became aware that the ham in my empanada was a blessing. As I sat at a small table working, I observed the ringleader/bartender of the group tending to the fire on the burners that were cooking french fries. But he was not cooking; he was sterilizing his needle.

While I sat no more than ten feet away from him, and while he sat no more than four feet away from sputtering french fries, he began working on his tattoos. He was using a homemade needle to work on his myriad tattoos while he leaned over the bar of the restaurant. While he worked, several of the other characters moved in and out from behind the bar to change the music, tend the fries or check the progress of the tattoo. After working for awhile, he paused when the pain became too great, and grabbed a napkin from the stack to blot the blood and ink away from his arm. He returned to tend to the food, and I got up and paid for my beer. I have to say that this event did leave me very surprised, and surprisingly, still very hungry.

Without even thinking about continuing my search, I returned to the Colombian restaurant I had passed that turned out to be an amazing choice. Run by a very cheerful, and friendly Colombian couple, the restaurant served authentic Columbian food and drinks. I had arepas, which are thick rustic corn tortillas topped with beans, cheese, and sort of thick cooked tomato relish. I decided to try Colombian "avena," a drink similar to horchata made with milk, oatmeal, vanilla, cinnamon, and sugar. The food was amazing and filling, and before I left I bought a square of dulce de leche for the walk back to the hotel.

I walked back towards my room in the middle of that crowded restaurant, feeling pleasantly surprised and absolutely not hungry—in a good way.