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Jong-Ro is the most famous place in Seoul, Korea. Jong-Ro consists of a long street and a little town surrounding the street. Cars and people crowd the area, so everyday life is complicated there. Jong-Ro is famous for its many pharmacies, English academies, theaters. It also has a lot of pubs, clothing stores, and entertainment places, so Jong-Ro is always full of young people.

Jonggak and Insadong are very famous places in Jong-Ro. Jonggak is well known for the Boshingak Bell, a big bell that chimes 33 times when the new year comes. The bell ceremony is held at Boshingak pavilion in Jong-Ro, and it is broadcast nationally on TV and radio. Insadong is a small town where traditional Korean culture is preserved. All kinds of traditional things can be seen in the streets, and there are lots of traditional food restaurants, galleries, and cafés. For this reason, old people feel nostalgic in Insadong’s quaint atmosphere, and many foreigners find it an interesting place to visit. When I was a freshman at the university, I sometimes went to Insadong, and I always had interesting experiences and nice times with my friends there. We ate traditional food, drank traditional tea, and took pictures in front of traditional food restaurants. If you ever come to Korea, you must visit Insadong.

Jong-Ro has a very special meaning for me. On my birthday and on my friends’ birthdays, we always go to Jong-Ro and have a very good time together. We eat delicious food, drink alcohol, and sing in a singing room. When the 2002 FIFA Korea-Japan World Cup was held in our country and Korea played Poland, my friends and I went to Jong-Ro even though it was final examination period. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered on Jong-Ro Street and supported our Korean soccer team. When our team won, everyone hugged each other and cheered. Fireworks were shining in the sky all night long. I will never forget that night. I have a lot of precious memories related to Jong-Ro. I love the place and the special meaning it has for me.

Porto de Galinhas means “Port of Chickens.” Behind this odd name is an interesting story. Although slavery was abolished in 1888, it continued to be practiced for a while in Pernambuco. Africans were still being shipped over and forced to work on sugar plantations. The slave traders could not publicly announce when slave ships were arriving, so they developed the code phrase “Angola chickens arriving in port!”

Today Porto de Galinhas beach and village are the most popular places on Pernambuco’s southern coast. From January to December, visitors come to enjoy the natural beauty of the landscape and stay as long as possible at the beach to delight in its warm waters and gentle waves. The natural pools that form around the coral reefs when the tide goes out are a big attraction. There tourists can find many exotic fish to feed. In the village, filled with bars, restaurants, and shops, there is always something to do, day and night. Two popular activities for most visitors are to eat ice cream while admiring the beautiful sunset over the ocean and to eat delicious seafood as they take in the harmonious view of the waves and little ships.

Porto de Galinhas is an unforgettable place. After you leave, all you can do is think about when you will be able to come back.
The Three Worst Places to Visit in Japan

Tomoko Yoneda
Japan

I like to travel in Japan, but I'm not a real traveler because my parents have to pay for me. Unfortunately, airline tickets to the various islands of Japan, even to Okinawa, where I'm from, are very expensive. I haven't traveled to many places, but I've already visited the three worst tourist stops in Japan. There are many famous places in Japan, and people tend to visit them with big expectations. However, the diminutive size of some of those places may let us down—or make us laugh.

I went to Hokkaido, the northern part of Japan, with my mother and sister. It was a tour, so we could see lots of famous places in Hokkaido from the bus. My sister and I wanted to see the clock tower in Sapporo because a couple in a love story TV drama met there after they hadn't seen each other for a long time and that scene had impressed us. Nearing the tower, we got excited, but we didn't even notice that the building we'd just passed by was the one with the clock tower. When we realized that it was it, we turned around and cried, "That?!" all at the same time. It was so much smaller than we had expected! From that experience, I learned that expecting too much before visiting a place can lead to disappointment. However, there were other nice places in Hokkaido, so we were satisfied with the trip, anyway.

I used to work in the river section of the prefectural office, and I was interested in the rivers in the area. Kouchi has a huge clear river, Shimanto, so my mother and I decided to go there. There were also many famous places in Kouchi. We enjoyed them all very much except the Harimaya Bridge, which is known for a story about a famous guy who met his girlfriend there a long time ago to make sure of their love. I didn't know the story about them well, and I don't care about it now, but I'd heard of the bridge's name, Harimaya Bashi. A hotel receptionist told us that the bridge was nearby, so we tried to see it on our way to go shopping. Unfortunately, we couldn't find the bridge. Once again, we unwittingly passed right by the famous place we were looking for. When we finally found it, we doubted whether more than four people could stand on it. Since I didn't have any information about the size of the bridge before going there, it also let me down.

Shortly after my visit to Kouchi, I called my sister, who was living in California at the time, and told her about the trip. She laughed and said, "Now you've visited the three worst places in Japan, according to a TV program I watched once—the clock tower in Sapporo, Harimaya Bashi in Kouchi, and..."

"And what?" I asked.
"What's the third place?"
"Shureinomonom!"

Shureinomonom?! What a letdown to find out that Shureinomonom, the castle gate in my hometown, Okinawa, is considered one of the three worst places to visit in Japan. But I had to laugh. Like the other two places, it's smaller than people expect it to be, so many people find it disappointing. Actually, I like the gate because I've gotten close to it. It also has a special historical value in that it didn't collapse during World War II.

I know that the other two "worst places" also have historical value and important stories attached to them, so no doubt the local people take good care of them and are proud of them. However, the size of the place sometimes lets us down.

Maybe no place in itself is a good or bad place to visit; it depends on how people relate to it. I suppose many tourists who visit Shureinomonom might be disappointed, but we Okinawans aren't ashamed of it; in fact, we're proud of it. I recommend that you see Shureinomonom. But don't get your hopes up too high before you see it.

Hey, how about doing a tour called "The Worst Places Tour?" If people know what to expect before they visit such places, they won't be disappointed and they'll be able to enjoy them more.

Tomoko Yoneda
Cuyagua
Luis Mutti
Venezuela

Have you ever dreamed of going to a beautiful natural place near the city that remains untouched by it? A place where you’re free to do whatever you wish as long you don’t disturb the other visitors, where nobody will interrupt you while you’re resting, where you don’t have to worry about paying big bills to enjoy it? Does such a place sound like an impossible dream? It’s not, it exists—a beach in Venezuela called Cuyagua, a place full of sun, sand, nature, and magic.

Cuyagua is located less than three hours from the capital city, Caracas, but as a part of the Henry Pittier National Park, there is almost no trace of civilization there; commercial development is not allowed. This beach is so special. With its great combination of natural features, it’s almost a paradise. It has the shape of a half moon, and near one end of it is a river that flows into the sea. There you can take a bath after a day of beach and sun. At both ends are mountains you can climb for a view of the entire beach from higher ground. From your perch on one of these mountains, you can feel the sea breeze against your face and the sun on your skin, and watch awesome sunrises and sunsets. When there is a full moon and a clear sky, you can view the entire beach at night. It’s like having a big, sweet neon light shining over you. If you like to surf, Cuyagua is perfect. Almost all year long, there are good waves around three to five feet high, and if you go when a storm is passing by, you can ride even bigger waves.

If you run out of food during your stay, you won’t have to go hungry; at the entrance to the beach and in the middle of it are two small food stands where you can enjoy delicious arepas fritas with cheese, ham, and various other fillings, and a variety of fresh fried fish. You can also buy water, soda, beer, and a special tropical drink called coco frio (cold coconut) there. And the price? Don’t worry, in Cuyagua nothing is expensive.

Cuyagua is truly like a paradise. Check it out. I’m sure you’ll like it.

Mohamed Al-Dhaheri
UAE

There is a very special place on the Arabian peninsula, a city called Mecca. Every year, two million people go to Mecca during the pilgrimage season to pray at Al-Ka’aba, the 15-foot-high brick building believed to be the link between Muslims and Allah.

Mecca is a very important place for all Muslims in the world, including me. In Mecca, you see a manifestation of one of the most important rules in Islam, equality. All people in Islam are equal. Mecca is considered to be the capital of the Islamic religion because the holy mosque is located there.

In the past, Mecca became a city as a result of its being along the trade route between Yemen and Syria. All caravans coming from Yemen used to stop in Mecca. Most of the people who lived in the city worked in trade. There were twelve tribes in the area fighting each other constantly.

Once, a flood destroyed Al-Ka’aba and almost destroyed the holy mosque. The leaders of the twelve tribes got together and decided to rebuild Al-Ka’aba, but there was a big controversy over which of them was going to have the honor of setting the black cornerstone. The leaders were about to fight over this but decided to have the first man who entered through a certain gate choose one of the twelve leaders for the honor.

The first man to enter the gate was the prophet Mohammed—may peace be upon him. He asked for a piece of fabric, placed the stone in the center, and had all twelve leaders move it to a position where he could lay the stone in the designated spot. In this way, each of the leaders was honored at the same time.
Two Turkish Tales
Tomris Bok
Turkey

Pan

One day, Nasrettin Hodja borrowed a pan from his neighbor. After he had finished using it, he took it back to his neighbor with a small pan inside it.

When the man saw the extra pan, he was surprised.

“What’s that?” he asked.

“Well,” Hodja replied, “when I borrowed your pan, it was pregnant, and it brought a child into the world.”

The man smiled and accepted the small pan.

A few days later, Hodja borrowed his neighbor’s pan again. His neighbor was so happy, thinking he was going to get another extra pan when Hodja returned his pan. But this time Hodja did not return it. After waiting for a whole week, the man went to Hodja and asked, “What about my pan?”

“I’m so sorry, but it died,” Hodja replied.

“Don’t joke with me,” Hodja’s neighbor said. “How can a pan die?”

Eat, My Fur Coat, Eat!

Nasrettin Hodja was invited out to dinner.

He went to the event in his old clothes, and nobody seemed interested in talking with him. So, he rushed home and put on his fur coat.

When he came back, he was treated with great respect. Everybody wanted to speak with him.

When everyone had sat down for dinner, Hodja said to his coat, “Eat, my fur coat, eat!”

People looked at Hodja curiously. Why was he telling his coat to eat?!

“If this regard is for my coat,” Hodja explained to them, “it should eat, too.”

What I’ve Learned
Miguel Irausquin
Venezuela

I’ve learned from my many mistakes, and from other people’s mistakes, too. Sometimes we learn from the living, and other times we learn from the dead. We learn bad things and good things from experience.

It’s interesting when we learn something, and we learn something every day. The most important thing I’ve learned is to think more about other people and not so much about myself. People have to learn that; we have to think about our friends and other people who need help from us.

Why do people fight with each other? Just for stupid reasons. If we fight, who’s going to protect us? What have we learned from wars? That question is so easy to answer: We’ve learned how to hate each other, how people die, and so on.

It’s important to live in peace and with love. We can learn things from our enemies and from whatever breathes in this world.

Do you want to know what I’ve learned? Well, I’ve learned that we can live together, and I’ve learned that I cannot hate anybody.
Do you believe there are ghosts in this world? Some people believe in their existence, claiming they have seen them. In some cases, people try to believe in them, even though they haven’t actually seen them. If such belief makes them feel good, why not let it be true for them?

My father died when I was a teenager. I remember feeling great sorrow and bursting into tears when I saw how hard it was for him to draw his last breath. Then he passed away. He had been a strict man and our relationship had not been so close, so I recovered soon. But my mother’s losing her partner in life was a great blow to her. She was eager to make sure my father had a comfortable life in the other world.

It is believed that some psychics can talk with dead people. A woman who lived near my home claimed to have this ability. My mother thought this woman would be a good channel to communicate with my father’s soul, so she went to see her. After a few minutes’ wait, the psychic said that she had found my father’s soul and that he was fine and in Heaven. This was good news, for some dead people are said to have various problems, such as suffering from a bad positioning of their grave, feeling uncomfortable in the world of the dead, or not having finished something before death.

You can imagine the many terrifying scenes that can happen in this situation. The most unusual stories I have heard include: The ghost ate all the food, there was some strange noise heard during the night, and someone caught a glimpse of the ghost from the keyhole of the bedroom. Were these experiences true, or just hearsay? It is really difficult to prove, one way or the other.

But most important is the fact that the memory of the dead unites the rest of the family members. Each year in early April, the Ching Ming Festival is held in Chinese society. At that time, most families gather together and visit the graves of their relatives. There they burn some specially-made paper money and clothes as an offering to their dead relatives because they believe their souls are still living with them.

Most Chinese people believe in ghosts. In my childhood, I heard various horrifying stories about ghosts coming back home on the third day after death...
In a Crisis
Jong Myong Lee
Korea

Two years ago, I went backpacking, alone, in Europe. At one point during my trip, I decided to visit the city of Amsterdam because I had heard that I could see many beautiful women there and that I could smoke in McDonald’s. People told me that the city was a good place to do almost anything.

One winter day in Amsterdam, I met a shy young Korean traveler. He asked me to look around the city with him. So, we set out together for the Goya museum, but we got lost. While we were standing in front of a topless bar trying to figure out where we were, a Canadian man approached us and asked us if we were lost. He smiled and guided us down a strange alley.

As we walked on and on down the alley, we passed by a suspicious-looking big man three times. We found ourselves feeling a little uncomfortable.

Suddenly, the big man stood in front of us and pulled out a gun. My shy friend screamed and quickly ran away. Our Canadian guide, the big man, and I were all surprised by his reaction and just watched him run.

Then the big guy said to me, “Freeze!”

I gave him a perplexed look because I hadn’t understood him.

So he said the same thing in several other languages.

I still didn’t understand.

So then he pulled out a business card that unfolded and revealed seven more cards, each with phrases for robbing people in various languages. When he got to the Korean version, he tried to say “Take out your wallet” in Korean, but he didn’t get the pronunciation right and instead said, “Take off your clothes.”

This time I pretended not to understand.

He was astonished by my inability to comprehend.

Suddenly, a group of people passed by and I called out to them for help. The big guy and the Canadian man ran away.

The point of this story: When you are in a crisis, relax; if you remain calm, you can delay things and possibly prevent bad things from happening.

I still don’t know if the gun was real or not.

Sarikiz
Ozge Turan
Turkey

A long, long time ago in Turkey, there was a beautiful girl who had such long, yellow hair that everybody called her Sarikiz (“Yellow Girl”). Every boy who saw her wanted to marry her, but she turned down each of their proposals. Because of her refusal to marry, everybody in the village began to gossip about her. Eventually, Sarikiz got fed up with all the rumors about her and began to think about getting married.

One day, another brave boy told her of his deep love for her and asked her to marry him. In response, she asked him to prove his love for her and demonstrate his physical strength by carrying a full, heavy bag of salt to her house, near the top of the mountain.

The boy shouldered his heavy load of salt and headed up the mountain for her house. Nearing her house at last, he lost his footing and fell down into the lake. The bag of salt quickly absorbed water, and it became so heavy that the boy sank under its weight and drowned.

The angry townspeople blamed the death of the boy on Sarikiz and complained to her father about the unreasonable task she had imposed on the boy. To appease the townspeople, the father took his daughter to the top of the mountain to kill her.

When Sarikiz and her father arrived at the peak, her father asked her to go and fetch him some water. She walked back down to the lake where the young boy had died, got some water, and brought it to her father.

As soon as he tasted the water, he realized it was salty, so he told her to get him some fresh water.

At that moment, something amazing happened: Sarikiz struck her foot against the ground and pure spring water gushed out. Seeing this, her father immediately understood that instead of killing his daughter he had to respect her. He built a wall around the spring and let his daughter live.

People still believe this spring water has a special power to cure illnesses and injuries. It is also believed that the site of the spring is sacred and that if you make a wish there it will come true.
Strange Restaurants
Yoshitaka Ozaki
Japan

What do you think of as necessary equipment for restaurant customers? Lights, tables, chairs, music? In my country, Japan, there is a unique kind of restaurant that doesn’t have what most people probably consider two of the most important facilities.

This kind of restaurant, called Tachi-gui, doesn’t have tables and chairs. Instead, it has just a counter at which people can stand and eat. The term Tachi-gui is composed of two parts: Tachi means “standing” and gui means “eating.”

Tachi-gui restaurants are very popular in Japan, especially in urban areas. Can you imagine why they are located mainly in urban areas? Is it because there is no space for tables and chairs in the cities of such a small country as Japan? Or do urban Japanese like to stand while they are eating? Neither.

Because a great number of Japanese are usually very busy doing their tasks, they want to save time, even eating time, so they choose standing meals at Tachi-gui, where meals are served very quickly—in less than two minutes—and customers don’t have to sit around in the restaurant after they finish eating. Tachi-gui are able to meet the demands of busy people, especially business people in urban areas.

Generally, Tachi-gui are either Japanese noodle shops or bars, and they sell food much more cheaply than other types of restaurants because their overhead is low and they can serve a lot of customers since customers finish their meals quickly and leave as soon as they finish eating. The low cost is another reason Tachi-gui are popular.

I often used to go to a Tachi-gui noodle shop when I was a student because it was cheap and I didn’t need to wait long for my meal. The procedure was simple and efficient: First, I would purchase a ticket showing what I wanted to eat and how much it cost, and then I would show my ticket to the cook behind the counter. After one or two minutes—I’m not exaggerating—my food would be served. Because I could eat a bowl of noodles in ten minutes, I could be on my way within fifteen minutes. If I ate fast, I could finish the process in just five minutes.

I sometimes also went to the bar type of Tachi-gui. Tachi-gui bars usually open at 5 p.m., the time people get off work, and stay open until the time the last train leaves the nearest station. In a Tachi-gui bar, you have to follow the directions that you are not to face the counter directly when the bar is busy. In other words, you have to stand at an angle to the counter so that as many customers as possible can stand there and drink.

Although Tachi-gui may seem strange to foreigners, they satisfy the Japanese demand for saving time and money. If you ever go to Japan, be sure to experience Tachi-gui. You will get a clear sense of what busy people the Japanese are.

My Generation
Mohamed Al-Dhaheeri
UAE

From an exciting, difficult life, I developed into an open-minded striver. While I pushed myself to be involved in sports, music, money, and sex, I was strict and careful to get myself out of the variety scene. I was popular but separate, I was different but great. I was the one to love but not really care. I was the one to laugh but always to stare. My generation is a movie, all up in flames, but to stay alive my mind must stay sane.
When I was 14 years old, I went with my grandfather and my cousin Marifer to Guanajuato. I had never been to this small, magical city in Mexico, and I enjoyed the trip very much. Everything looked wonderful to me. The buildings there were constructed under the Spanish influence, so Guanajuato looks like an old European city. The narrow, stone-paved streets are beautiful, and the houses are all made of the same materials and painted the same colors. Everyone who visits this little Mexican city can feel the past. Being there is like being in the epoch of the 18th or 19th century.

The parties, legends, and stories of Guanajuato also show the elegance of Spanish influence, mixed with colorful, magical Mexican customs. October is a cultural month in Guanajuato. Every year at this time, the city holds an event called Cervantino in memory of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, a wonderful Spanish writer. If you go to Guanajuato during this month, you can enjoy special theater presentations, expositions, music, and many other cultural events.

One of the things that I enjoyed very much during my visit in Guanajuato were the Callejoneadas, strolls through the streets and alleys with participants drinking and singing along with a group of musicians playing guitars and other kinds of instruments. The songs are about typical stories, sometimes humorous ones. These strolls always take place in the afternoon or at night.

The most representative feature of the city, a big tourist attraction, is the mummy museum, which houses a lot of very well preserved dead people. You will probably feel a little scared when you see how lifelike they look. The guides will tell you about the role of Guanajuato's unique soil in preserving them and will also tell you a lot of stories about them.

The most famous legend of Guanajuato is that of Llorona, which means "crying woman." This story is about a woman who had many family and financial problems. She had two sons and she couldn't provide enough food for them. Because of that, she killed her children and then threw herself into the river and died. According to the legend, her spirit returns every night, walks the streets, and cries out for her children: "Oh, my children!"

Do you like this story? Well, you should visit Guanajuato and get to know more stories like it. I think you will agree with me that Guanajuato is a magical and mysterious place.

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Baiana
Isabel Cuellar
Mexico

Carnaval for contagious rhythm.
Float, Baiana, sing and dance at the celebration.
Enjoy your friends. The grand groups are beginning to play.
Call for music, Baiana, and a lively party will occur.
When colorful masquerades of love organize the deep mystery, luminous eyes appear.
Night after night, the bright moon touches your soul and makes your face rise.
Float, Baiana, sing and dance at the celebration.
Why do so many women spend money on fortunetelling? Why do they want to know their future? Do they feel uneasy about it?

Her name is Brenda, she was born in Japan twenty-eight years ago, and she has lived there ever since. Before she was born, her parents had immigrated to Japan from America, and they became Japanese citizens in 1973. They can speak Japanese and English.

Japanese women, including Brenda, generally like fortunetelling very much. Many kinds of fortunetelling are popular in Japan—astrology, wind and water analysis, palmistry, inspiration fortunetelling, and so on. Brenda reads her horoscope in the newspaper every morning. When bad things are predicted, she is careful that day because she believes in fortunetelling.

In 1998, Brenda traveled to Sydney, Australia, to visit her best friend, who was going to the university there. The two young women had grown up together in Tokyo, and they knew almost everything about each other. During their first night together in Australia, they stayed up late talking about their recent experiences. Brenda’s friend told her about her experience with a fortuneteller in Sydney. When Brenda heard this story, she decided to go to the fortuneteller’s house the next day.

The following morning, she woke up early because she was so excited. She and her friend ate breakfast and went to downtown Sydney by train. This was Brenda’s first trip abroad, and when they arrived in the central part of the downtown area, she was amazed to see so many different-looking skyscrapers and people.

They walked directly from the station to the fortuneteller’s house. Soon Brenda found herself in a narrow room with three small desks and chairs. This fortuneteller practiced the inspiration kind of prediction. Fortunetellers usually need the client’s date of birth to get started, but this seer didn’t. She just touched Brenda, closed her eyes, and began to concentrate.

Suddenly, she opened her eyes and started telling Brenda about her future.

One prediction was about her father. Her father liked to drink alcohol. He drank every day, and sometimes he got drunk. “If your father continues drinking too much alcohol,” the fortuneteller said, “he will become diabetic.” Her next prediction was about Brenda’s driving. “If you drive too fast, your car will be hit by another car.” The last prediction was about Brenda’s marriage. “You will marry when you are twenty-nine years old,” she said.

“Your husband-to-be is working in the U.S. right now.”

Three years later, it was a beautiful summer day in Japan. Brenda had planned to meet a friend in Tokyo, and she woke up a little late, so she was in a hurry driving into the city. Suddenly, another car crashed into hers. Brenda’s car was damaged and couldn’t move, so she wasn’t able to meet her friend after all.

One year after her car accident, Brenda’s father was still drinking excessively. One day, he received the results of his medical checkup by mail. The results showed that he was diabetic. At that moment, Brenda recalled what the Australian fortuneteller had said.

In 2003, Brenda will be twenty-nine years old. She sometimes thinks about her fortunetelling experience in Australia. Will she in fact be getting married next year? Maybe! Only God really knows her future.
Minsu is busy working on lots of papers his office manager wants for the meeting. As he works, he hears the manager scolding one of Minsu’s coworkers for not submitting some papers. Cold air refrigerates the large office. Minsu feels a little unsteady. Despite the rush he has been in all day, he can’t suppress a smile on his lips. In three hours, Dakasi will be arriving at the airport. At last.

Last Saturday he received a long letter from Dakasi. The letter was so long that it took about an hour to read it all. In it, Dakasi was trying to get his Korean friend Minsu to understand his viewpoint. At the end of the letter, he wrote that he would be in Korea on business the next Friday and that he was eager to meet Minsu. When Minsu read that part, he felt his heart expand. “Wow!” he exclaimed out loud, delighted.

Minsu is at the airport one hour earlier than the scheduled arrival time. The place is crowded as usual. He sits in a chair near the window and looks out at the endless horizon. Minute waves catch his mind. “Dakasi is a true friend. I was so lucky to meet him in Columbia.” Minsu’s face brightens with happiness. After Dakasi left Columbia, Minsu felt that though he considered Dakasi his close friend, he would never see him again. That got him thinking deeply about what friendship was. “Hmm!” he sighs, frowning now as he watches a plane take off. Memories keep stirring his mind.

Minsu has never forgotten the day he met Dakasi for the first time. After a Bible class, the teacher introduced Minsu to Dakasi.

“Dakasi, do you know Minsu needs a friend?” the teacher asked Dakasi.

“I’ll be glad to be your friend, Minsu,” Dakasi said warmly. “If you need someone’s help, call on me anytime. Everyone has trouble adjusting to a new country. When I came here, everything made me feel embarrassed. I didn’t even know how to talk on the phone.”

It was at an international church that Minsu had met Dakasi. When Minsu came to Columbia, South Carolina, to study English at USC, Dakasi had already been living there for two and a half years. His company had sent him to the U.S. to manage a field factory in Columbia. Dakasi already had a good command of English. Minsu had never been to America before. His English was clumsy.

“Yeah!” Minsu said loudly. “I feel scared whenever I have to do something like that. I’ve been eating my meals in my room since I came here. I don’t know how to eat in a restaurant.” Minsu looked uneasy.

That evening, Minsu ate delicious Japanese food with Dakasi. From that day on, Dakasi helped Minsu get accustomed to living in the new country. Rather than talking all the time, they often used body language. When they spoke English, Dakasi took Minsu’s level of proficiency into consideration, and Minsu didn’t need to worry about whether he would be understood. As the number of their meetings grew, their relationship became deeper. Minsu was happy to make a good Japanese friend with whom he could share feelings and thoughts about the world, life, and God. He never imagined that any problems between them might develop. Yet something happened on their trip together to Washington D.C.

It was July 4th, Independence Day, and by far the hottest day Minsu had ever experienced in his life. The sunshine was so strong that the crowd of tourists in D.C. could barely breathe. Nevertheless, Dakasi and Minsu were walking on air as they toured the historic city. The Washington Monument stood tall and sharp, and Minsu thought it was the perfect symbol of the American spirit. The Independence Day parade was also really impressive to both of them.

“America has so many kinds of people,” Dakasi said, watching the parade. “Now I can understand how so many different ethnic groups live together so well in one country.”

“Yes, relativism holds this country together nicely,” Minsu said, echoing his friend’s words. “Compared to America, our countries are short of relativism, aren’t they?”

Their conversation flowed seamlessly into various observations about their respective motherlands, and then from there into contrasting opinions about the way history is presented in textbooks.

“History can’t be written without a writer’s view!” Dakasi seemed to be getting irritated. At some point, their conversation had subtly begun to turn into an argument over a sensitive issue they had never talked about.
A Friend . . .

before.

"I'm with you, but history has to be written on the basis of reality," Minsu insisted. "If it's not written that way, it's just fiction. Hey, friend! You won't admit that some textbooks have fatal errors? I agree with your 'writer's-view' opinion, but historians must not distort the facts of what happened in the past."

"I completely understand, and I agree that some textbooks contain mistakes, but a lot of the contents of textbooks—in every country—are written on the basis of historians' opinions," Dakasi replied forcefully.

Their argument grew more and more heated. In fact, it was so intense that they barely felt the sweltering temperature, which was at least 102°F. Some spectators standing next to them shot the two men a glance. The more they talked, the more apparent their differences became. Meanwhile, the parade continued. The street was full of joyful music and interesting cultural icons. In contrast, Dakasi and Minsu were in a dark mood. Minsu thought about the fact that many other people besides him were upset about the contents of some textbooks. He strongly believed that it was unfair to distort historical events. But here was one of his best friends, who had a different way of looking at the matter. "I have to try to put myself in his shoes!" Minsu said to himself.

The two friends stopped arguing and just watched the parade for a while.

"I love my motherland so much," Dakasi said, finally breaking the silence. America is a paradise to live in, but soon I'll be going back to my home country, where I belong."

Dakasi's words kept ringing in Minsu's head. How beautiful to love your country so much! Minsu always admired Dakasi's affection for his country.

"Is it possible to build a friendship across borders," Minsu asked himself, "even though there are some conflicts between the people involved?" Minsu's mind was wandering. He felt dizzy. The parade was coming to an end.

"Let's forget today's conversation!" Dakasi said, patting Minsu on the shoulder. His voice sounded faint. All around them, people dressed in American costumes were dancing and singing joyfully. Soon after the parade ended, they returned to their hotel.

Back home in Columbia again, Minsu hesitated to call Dakasi. Even though he still considered Dakasi one of his best friends, something inexplicable prevented Minsu from breaking the barrier that had come between them on that hot day in Washington, D.C. "Dakasi must not have understood me," he thought. "If he'd understood, he would have called me several times by now." Minsu tried to shake off thoughts of his friend, but it seemed impossible.

A few weeks later, Dakasi left Columbia. Minsu found a brief note from him taped to the door of his apartment: "Minsu, have a good time in Columbia. We need more time. You are my true friend, I'm sure. Bye." After reading Dakasi's message, Minsu felt empty.

Minsu hears someone call his name and feels the touch of a hand on his shoulder. He stands up quickly, turns, and finds Dakasi standing before him.

"Hi, Minsu!" Dakasi says, grasping Minsu's hand tightly. "I'm really happy to see you! I've missed you so much!"

"Dakasi, it's been too long!" Minsu says, smiling and shaking his friend's hand vigorously. "I'm sorry I didn't get in touch with you, but I was worried that you'd rejected me."

"Oh no, not at all, my friend! I've been longing to see you. In fact, the real reason I came here was to see you."

The two good friends keep shaking hands. The sun setting in the west shines brightly on them. ☀

Nak Song Kim
Rainy Yaku-Shima

Can you believe that there exists a place where, as it is said, it rains 35 days a month? And is it true that more-than-1000-year-old Japanese cedars grow there? If somebody were to ask me these questions, I could answer “Yes” with conviction to the former question and “Probably” to the latter.

In the summer of 2001, I visited Yaku-Shima, a small island located in the southern part of Japan about 100 km south of the Main Island. Before traveling to this fascinating island, I had thought of it as just one of many destinations my friend and I would be arriving at during our four-week motorcycle tour—starting from our hometown in the very middle of Japan and proceeding all the way down to Okinawa and a few tiny isolated islands southwest of there—but now I think of Yaku-Shima as the most unforgettable place that I have ever visited in Japan.

Landing on the island in a middle-sized ferry with a fully loaded motorcycle, we were welcomed by heavy rain and magnificent mountains covered with dense, forbidding forest. After putting on our raincoats, we decided to look around for a place to camp. Shortly after leaving the ferry terminal, we reached a narrow forest road and entered an endless green tunnel formed by long branches, thousands of leaves of so many different kinds of plants, and wet moss-covered rocks. It was amazing to see how the tremendous power of nature could overwhelm such man-made things as roads. And, thanks to getting so much rain, the island was such a vivid green.

From wherever we were on the island, we saw thick forest and a tall mountain called Miyanoura-Dake sticking straight up from the coast to a height of 1935 meters. We wanted to climb it so that we could see the old Japanese cedars said to be there and have the satisfaction of reaching the top, but the incessant rain held us back. Even now I sometimes ask myself, “Should we have tried to climb the mountain under such dangerous conditions?” But the answer comes instantly, “No, we made the right decision. We could easily have gotten lost.” In fact, several people have lost their lives in the dense forest of Yaku-Shima.

Every time I think of our five-day stay on the island, the first thing that comes to my mind is rain. Only for six or seven hours one day during the whole time we were there did we have sunny sky. But I will never forget the sky that night, when I saw the most beautiful stars I have ever seen in my life. The seemingly darker-than-black sky spread out its great wealth before our eyes: Millions of stars sparkled like scattered jewels. My friend and I lay on the ground near our tents for a couple of hours gazing up at the awesome spectacle.

The impressive images of two hot springs on the
Rainy Yaku-Shima...

island still remain in my mind, too. The incessant rain left us stranded in our tents most of the time, but every day we emerged for a while to enjoy a couple of hot springs, twenty minutes by motorcycle (in the rain) from our campground. One of the hot springs was available for only a few hours a day because it was “in” the sea, appearing just two hours before and after low tide. There we soaked in a natural hot spring tub, surrounded by huge rocks and cold waves crashing against the shoreline right next to the tub. When that hot spring was submerged, we relaxed in another one only about five meters away from the sea. In that comfortable tub, with the beautiful scenery of the horizon in front of us and the thick green mountains behind us, we could forget about there being too much rain on the island.

Yaku-Shima’s greatness of nature and abundance of nurturing water made me feel so relaxed and happy. Whenever such things touch me, I can’t help respecting them. Nature is not always kind to me, but I welcome it with a broad mind.

Even now that more than a year has passed since I visited the island, and even though my friend and I were forced to abandon our goal to climb Miyanoura-Dake and see incredibility old Japanese cedars, the vivid images of the untouched, magnificent nature on that island still fill me with happiness. And the nonstop rain during my first visit to the island gives me a good reason to return someday: to have a chance to experience the place without rainwear.

The only thing I had was a dream that would probably be unacceptable to my family: to come here to America and do graduate studies in social work, my major.

As I had expected, my father strongly opposed the idea, and my grandmother also opposed it because she was afraid she would feel lonely without me. Fortunately, my mother and two brothers were supportive. But I wanted my father and grandmother to approve of my goal, too.

For a while, it seemed that it was impossible for my dream to come true; however, I persisted. At long last, I persuaded all of my family members. I know how difficult it was for them to let me go to America, and how lonely my grandmother feels. But finally they all respected my dream. To my happiness, my grandmother promised me to be of good heart until I return to Japan.

Now one month has passed since I came here, and every day I experience things that extend my world view, enrich my personality, and make my life more beautiful. My family has given me a great opportunity by supporting my dream. Whether all of my dream comes true or not, I want to express to them once again my great appreciation for their letting me come here and have a chance to fulfill my dream.
Romania—Just Like a Bunch of Flowers
Andreea Brezaie
Romania

Romania... What is Romania? It's a word that seems to mean so much to some people but so little to others. It's a country, just one among many others, but still, what a country!!!

Romania is situated in the East of Europe. It's a small country, almost hidden on the map. Maybe you've never heard of it, or maybe you have. But even if you have, you have to see it for yourself to understand what it means.

A Romanian poet once described the country as being like a bunch of flowers standing in the waters of the Black Sea. Why? Because that's how Romania looks on the map. There are plains here and there throughout the country, so the map shows a lot of green, like the flowers' leaves. If you look towards the center of the map, you find some yellow spots representing the foothills, like the flowers' petals. Then closer yet to the center of the bouquet are the Carpathian Mountains, so impressive with their great height and beauty. And right in the middle of the country, surrounded by mountains, sits Transylvania, Romania's most beautiful and richest region.

But Romania is not only an image on a map; it's a lot more. It's a place where the mountains and the sea live together, one so high, aiming for the sky, and the other so deep, gravitating toward the center of the globe.

Even though Romania is a poor country, a country that has suffered so much during its history, a country punished by invaders, it has the blessing of nature. And maybe that's exactly why the Romanian people have suffered so much over the centuries, why Traian decided to conquer it the moment he first saw it, and after him so many other great rulers.

Nature has blessed Romania with everything, and maybe just a little more. The famous Danube, for instance, Europe's second most important river, flows into the sea in Romania, forming one of the world's greatest deltas. The Danube Delta was designated by UNESCO a "Reservation of the Biosphere." When I saw it, I couldn't believe my eyes. It's like a natural paradise. For 5000 years a small community of people have lived in harmony with the Delta's extraordinary ecology. The villages, crossed by the waterways, seem untouched by time.

When I first got there, I thought it was just like any other lake—with some water, some plants, and no more. Just after I began my trip by boat through the delta, though, I started realizing the immensity of the place. Once the boat had departed, it was like I was in another world, or maybe just dreaming. I walked around the area for about ten hours, but I knew I'd seen less than a quarter of it. All around you in this paradise is water, and if you look deeply into it you can see thousands of fish, so different and so impressive. And all the other fauna of the Delta are impressive, too. It's amazing to see how so many animals, birds, and fish can live together in the same place without paying attention to anything but themselves. They are all so preoccupied with their own activities. They didn't even turn their heads to look at us human visitors. It was as if we were an eternal part of the environment along with them.

The Danube Delta is one of the world's most beautiful places. If you really want to feel
Romania...

being a part of nature, you should go there. It’s a place that technological development hasn’t touched. And I hope that’s the way it’s always going to be, because we need places like that.

There are so many places in Romania that have to be seen. It would take me forever to describe them all, maybe even just the ones I’ve seen.

The Carpathian Mountains are another place where nature has its own law. They are so magnificent and silent and high. You are so close to the sky that you feel you could talk to God. I had a very special experience in Balea, a mountain resort in the Carpathians. I got there at about 11 o’clock in the morning, and the scenery was beautiful, with the sun shining brightly all around. But about an hour later, it suddenly became dark and cold, and you could barely see two feet in front of your face. I was so scared—what was happening?! The friend I was with explained to me that I was in seventh heaven, as Americans would say. I was sitting in the clouds. The cloudy darkness lasted for about half an hour, and then the clouds started rising. They disappeared as suddenly as they’d appeared. It was awesome. I just can’t describe it in words.

There are so many things to say about Romania. But however much I sang its praises, it still wouldn’t be enough. You need to go there and experience it directly to understand what it means.

Romania—a small paradise on Earth...
Have you ever eaten fermented food, the kind of food that is leavened by yeast? You probably have. Cheese, beer, and bread are some well-known fermented foods commonly enjoyed here in the U.S. We Koreans have our own particular fermented foods.

Yesterday, I ate a typical Korean dinner with lots of side dishes. I ate seafood soup, salted fish, tofu, and Kimchi. We Koreans enjoy a variety of side dishes with rice. Seafood soup is made from fermented soy paste and hot pepper paste. Tofu is made from fermented beans. Kimchi, the most famous Korean food, is fermented as well. Does it sound weird that just one meal consists of so much fermented food? It is not strange at all to Koreans. We can’t even imagine meals without fermented food.

We make various fermented foods in the late fall and winter because they need time to ferment during the winter. The length of time a food ferments is a particularly crucial aspect of fermented food preparation. The period of fermentation depends on the kind of food being prepared. Usually it takes from two weeks to three years. Therefore, fermented food has the taste of time. For instance, from two to three weeks is the appropriate period of fermentation for Kimchi. On the other hand, one kind of soy sauce needs no less than three years. The reason that it takes so long is that a certain color and taste are desired. This soy food gains a stronger taste and darker color during the long period of fermentation it undergoes.

When I was an elementary student, my family and relatives went to my grandparents’ house to make fermented foods every winter. Since I was only a little girl, I just watched what they were doing and asked now and then for a piece of cabbage, one of the ingredients of Kimchi.

While my mother and my aunts prepared the foods, my father and my uncles dug a hole in the garden where the foods would be buried to ferment during the winter. This event was not only for making fermented foods but also for gathering our family together. After all the work, we would enjoy a very good time together over a delicious meal. For this reason, Korean fermented foods represent a kind of experience, not just something to eat.

Fermented foods are extremely good for health. Numerous research studies have shown that they prevent cancer. They also contain vitamins A, B, and C. Therefore, during the winter, when fresh vegetables with lots of vitamins aren’t readily available, Koreans obtain these vitamins from fermented foods.

Fermented foods have a special worth to Koreans. Here in the U.S., I have become somewhat sick of Western-style food. However, I am going to go back to Korea soon, and I am really looking forward to eating the fermented foods that my mother will have ready for me.

Innocent Love
Miguel Irausquin
Venezuela

Disappear into innocent
Love. A rippling dream
Arrives in a spacious, empty
Mirror. A crystal without brightness
But with moonrises in it
Glows beside the mysterious wall,
Like a luminous planet absorbing the rays.
Radiant presence in a cool breath on the mirror
When delicate love makes its appearance in it.
A Very Special Place in My Heart
Marilyn Machado Mosquera
Colombia

Located in the Pacific Colombian jungle is a place where some indigenous people still live and the great majority of residents are black descendants of African people brought to Colombia during the colonial epoch. My father was born there, but like many other people from economically poor areas, he left his home seeking opportunity. When he was still very young, he moved to Cali, at that time a growing city on its way to becoming one of the most important cities in Colombia, and the one with the highest black population in the country.

It is difficult to travel to my father’s home region, as it is to most other places in the Colombian jungle. The roads are very uncomfortable, and you can spend up to 35 hours traveling by car from Cali to Quibdo, the principal city of the Pacific region. By airplane, it is very expensive. So, I had never gone to the region until three years ago, when I had the opportunity to work there. It was a wonderful experience.

Although I worked in Quibdo, the capital of the state of Choco, I often went to Penhalosa, my father’s hometown. Penhalosa is just a 30-minute drive from Quibdo, and the trip is magical. The road to Penhalosa, Camino de Herradura, is an old one lined with beautiful old trees. On one occasion when I was traveling to Penhalosa on a public bus, I saw a young tiger—so amazing! It was a little afraid of us, but it kept going its way. Also along the way, you can stop and visit the small rivers, which are warm, clear, and uncontaminated.

The best way to travel in the Penhalosa area is by canoe. Paddling down a deep, wild river, you can see the riverbanks and the simple, primitive homes built on stilts because the region’s average rainfall is the second highest in the world and the river often overflows its banks. You can also receive the faraway greetings of the people waving at you; enjoy the children running, singing, and calling out “Hello!!!” to you; and admire the old people sitting outside gazing so deeply they seem to be seeing the future as well as the past. Along the sides of the rivers, you can see all the generations living together harmoniously.

There is a beautiful, rich diversity in plants and animals, including microorganisms. Trees and palms such as chontaduro, borojo, and pepe e pan abound. Small trees and herbs grow beneath the tall ones. There is a magnificent variety of fish and wild animals, which people hunt for their meal every day. Of course, fishing is a daily activity that anyone can do, including the children, who are quite adept at handling boats and fishing. Rivers are the roads for people who live in the jungle.

When night comes, Penhalosa becomes a different place. It looks so mysterious, and there is a magical sensation in the air. Though day may belong to man and woman, the sole owner of night is nature. And the people know this from centuries of living there; the knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation. So, night is the time to stay home around the fire listening to the old people tell stories about Uncle Rabbit and his friend the turtle, stories that teach youngsters about respect for people, for nature, for the magic forces in the universe, and, of course, for God. In various ways, these stories tell about LIFE and the rules of the jungle. With the wisdom of these stories, you can survive in this wild world.

My grandfather still lives there. He is 97 years old. Since visiting the Pacific jungle, I have been able to understand more clearly the importance of family and of the relationship between human beings and nature. I can’t remember all the trees’ or animals’ names, but I will never forget the magical sensation that I felt there and my connection with nature.
Chung-r, the Moon Fairy
Yi-Wen Chen
Taiwan

We Chinese believe that there is a fairy who lives alone on the moon. On the day of the moon festival, the 15th of August according to the lunar calendar, we always celebrate by eating moon cakes and talking about the legend of this immortal fairy.

A long, long time ago, there were nine suns in the world, the sons of the king of heaven. Everyday, one of them had to go to the sky and give sunshine to human beings. With sunshine, humans could cultivate the land and survive. But each of the king's sons always felt bored when he had to be alone in the sky.

One day, their father had to go somewhere, and he was away for a long time. During his absence, the nine suns decided to go to the sky together everyday to keep each other company. However, because of the excessive sunshine they generated together, the climate became so hot and dry that people could no longer cultivate the land and many of them died.

One day, Hole-i, a brave and strong man, resolved to save human beings. He took his bow and shot down eight of the suns. Once there was only one sun in the sky again, the climate returned to normal and humans could survive. People appreciated Hole-i's saving them, and they made him their king.

Hole-i was a generous king at first. However, as time passed, he became an arrogant tyrant. He enjoyed his power so much that he even wanted to become immortal and rule the world forever!

One day, Hole-i commanded the people to find him a drug that would keep him alive forever. Until they found such a drug, he warned them, he would kill one person per month as punishment. Of course, under the circumstances, the people all did their best to find the drug, and, both fortunately and unfortunately, they eventually found it.

Hole-i's wife, Chung-r, a thoughtful queen, worried that if Hole-i became an immortal, people would have to suffer his tyranny forever. Therefore, she decided to steal the drug while Hole-i was celebrating the fact that he was going to be able to live forever. But just as Chung-r got hold of the drug, Hole-i caught her and tried to get the drug back from her. To prevent Hole-i from getting it, Chung-r ate it.

Immediately after swallowing the drug, Chung-r discovered she was able to fly. She flew to the moon, and she has lived there ever since. And the Chinese have been grateful to her ever since, too, for saving them from the tyranny of Hole-i.

Ghost Festival in Taiwan
Hao-Ming Chen
Taiwan

Taiwan has several popular holidays and festivals—for example, Ghost Festival, Lantern Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-autumn Festival, and Double Ninth Day. Ghost Festival, in lunar July, is one of our important festivals. We usually call July “Ghost Month” because a lot of ghosts from the underworld are said to come back to Earth at that time. Most people throughout China believe in this return of ghosts.

Most Taiwanese believe the door of the underworld slowly begins to open on July 1st. July 15th is a very important day since on that day the door is completely open. After July 15th, the door slowly begins to close until July 31st, when it is shut tight again. Many people won't buy a new house or go swimming in lunar
Ghost Festival . . .

July, believing that if they do they will be unlucky in their future.

A number of important ghost-related activities are held on July 15th, the day of Ghost Festival. In Keelung, in northern Taiwan, people float water lanterns in the sea and the river. These house-shaped water lanterns are made from paper and bamboo. People believe that the ghosts who live in the sea and the river will see the water lanterns, come ashore, and eat the food prepared for them. People usually slaughter pigs, sheep, and cocks and set up a prodigious table of wine and meat, offering it to the ghosts of their ancestors from the underworld. The ghosts can feast on the victuals offered by the living. The most significant purpose of Ghost Festival and Ghost Month is to remind us of our family's ancestors.

By the way, I think you don't need to worry about ghosts if you never do anything wrong.

A Friend in Need
Ayman I. El-Dessouki
Egypt

One day, my friend and I were driving to the university. We were late, so I was driving fast. At the same time, I was preoccupied with my friend, an attractive young woman dressed in tight washed jeans and a blue T-shirt. Her pleasant voice, straight dark hair falling just to her shoulders, colorful eyes, and very beautiful face in general were getting at least as much of my attention as the road was. She was that perfect little cheerleader with perfect teeth and perfect hair that everybody fell in love with in high school and stayed in love with in the university. I was talking with her about love at first sight, my great admiration for her, and things like that.

Suddenly, when I turned my eyes back to the road, I noticed a man crossing the street. But it was too late and I hit him. Terribly shocked, I stopped the car, picked the man up from the ground, and took him to a private hospital.

His injury was bad but not fatal. His leg was broken, and he couldn't speak. When a member of the hospital staff asked me what had happened to the man, I replied, "I am the president's personal secretary. This man is our gardener. While he was working, a big tree fell on him."

Of course, this statement was a big lie, but I felt desperate.

If the police arrested me for hitting the man, I would be sentenced to at least a year in prison. Then I wouldn't be able to travel abroad to study for my Ph.D.

The staff member wanted to take down my phone number. Without hesitation, I gave him my friend's phone number.

Later, of course, the police arrested my friend and put him in jail. "What did I do?!" my friend cried.

For weeks after the accident, I moped around feeling guilty because of what I had done to both the pedestrian and my friend. "But what can I do now?!" I asked myself.

After a month's stay in the hospital, the man I hit had recovered, and I reached a settlement with him: I paid him EGY 5000 and he told the police that he had decided not to press charges against my friend. So, the police let my friend go free.

Since that time, my friend has often thanked me for my favor, saying, "I owe you a great debt of gratitude."

And I just smile at him meekly and say, "No, no. A friend in need is a friend indeed."
Real del Monte is a beautiful little town located 30 minutes from Mexico City in the State of Hidalgo (the name of the man who started the movement toward Mexico’s independence on September 16th, 1810). This town has a rich history, beginning when the British came to mine and confiscate the abundant silver in the area.

Today, the economy of the town is based on jewelry made of silver. Gold, salt, zinc, and other minerals are also mined in Real del Monte. Most of the townspeople are involved in either jewelry sales or mining.

Although the main attraction of Real del Monte is its cheap jewelry, tourists can also have fun listening to the amazing stories of an old man who has lived and worked for forty-five years in the town’s old British cemetery. The old man likes to give people a little tour of the cemetery, telling them stories about the people who are buried there. One of his stories, for instance, is about a British clown who ended up being buried in Real del Monte...

"In Great Britain there once lived a clown who owned a circus. As emigration to the Americas became popular, circus audiences became smaller and smaller, so he decided to sell his circus and go to Mexico to try his luck. He arrived first in Veracruz and started traveling until he reached Real del Monte. There he discovered a lot of mines and decided that he wanted to buy one. But the aristocratic British mine owners there, who had known him as a clown in Great Britain, laughed at his ambition to become 'one of them' and made it impossible for him to realize his dream. "Since he couldn’t buy a mine in Real del Monte, he returned to Veracruz and started working as a carpenter. When he became old and felt that he was about to die, the clown told his wife that when he died he wanted to be buried in Real del Monte with his feet pointing away from Britain in order to show his rejection of the country and the people that had rejected him."

Although the main attraction of Real del Monte is its cheap jewelry, tourists can also have fun listening to the amazing stories of an old man who has lived and worked for forty-five years in the town’s old British cemetery.

So, if you go to the cemetery in Real del Monte, you can easily find that British clown’s grave. All the graves except his are arranged in such a way that the feet of the dead point in the direction of Britain. To hear such stories as you walk through an old cemetery is so fascinating.

Another interesting place to visit in Real del Monte is a museum called Mina de Acosta. There you can go into a house where you can see how the miners used to live, and you can put on a helmet and go inside a real mine to see how silver is taken, transported and processed.

I recommend that you visit Mexico, especially Real del Monte. And please don’t leave this amazing place without sampling the town’s delicious pastes, a combination of British bread with Mexican food inside. ☺
The Life Train
Isabel Cuellar
Mexico

Our life is like a train trip. Along the way, various people get on board, and some of them stay with us, while others go off in other directions. Some things we experience on the trip are pleasant; others are not so pleasant. There are rises, and there are descents.

When we are born and take this train, we are generally received by two persons who love us so much that they would give their life for us anytime: our parents. Lamentably, they eventually have to get off the train, but we have to keep going and put their teaching—all the good things, principles, and values we have learned from them—into practice.

On this journey, we get to know many interesting people: our brothers and sisters, friends, and lovers. Some of them stay with us for just a little while, and others stay longer. Some may even stay with us forever, sharing all the happy and sad things of life with us. We have to try to keep the friends who give us time to talk, cry, and laugh with them, the people who always tell us the truth, support us in the heavy moments of life, and help us make our dreams come true. It is very important that we reciprocate and take good care of them, too.

When people we love get off the train to go to that great place all of us want to go ultimately, the place where everything is quiet, beautiful, peaceful, and magical, we might feel very upset, but we have to understand that this trip of theirs is necessary; we shouldn’t be selfish about letting them go. Those who make that trip have to do it alone, and someday our time will come, too. The important thing is to receive all the good things they offer us before they go, and to follow in their footsteps.

Some of the people we would like to sit near on the train may be sitting far away from us. This means that we need to profit from the opportunities given us at the moment. Maybe the person sitting right beside us is very interesting. We just need to open our eyes and accept it when the people we want to sit with are sitting somewhere else.

You Have Me
Dick Holmes
USA

You have me fall through the surface
You have me surrender to namelessness
You have me tell You my thoughts
You have me sing in my veins
You have me dance all around You
You have me smile in the dream
You have me pull You into the shadows
You have me work and rest
You have me build on a theme
You have me ripen in the waning light
You have me ripple in the stillness
You have me play day and night
You have me grow from the ground
You have me sway to the sound
You have me remember the possibility
You have me intimate the ultimate
You have me get to know everyone
You have me feel the silence
You have me look up and see
You have me begin again and again
You have me sail beyond my destination
You have me plunge into the ocean of Love

The life train travels just one way; it never comes back. So it is very important to identify the good things along the way, take advantage of them, and live very intensely all the time. How? By smiling, helping people, making our travel companions happy.

The grand mystery of this trip is that we don’t know which station we will get off at. Consequently, we always have to be prepared. We have to avoid bad influences and embrace great experiences as often as we can. And we have to give the best of ourselves to the other passengers. If we do these things, we don’t have to worry about our destination.

So, let’s enjoy our trip because we have just one! ☺
They were a very close family, and Christmas Day was coming. In this poor country, the celebration of Christmas is a very important time, and the whole atmosphere is charged with a magical vibration. Everyone is always smiling, and for this short time of home-coming people seem to forget about their problems, as if another dimension is empowering the earth. It is marvelous to be in this country during the Christmas holiday.

The various neighborhoods adorn the streets with colorful arrangements. Even in poor neighborhoods, people become very creative and make beautiful Christmas trees and other things with the simplest of materials. All the children in this country, even the poorest ones, eagerly anticipate receiving Christmas presents.

The young mother of this very close, but also very poor, family had five children, who were between five and thirteen years of age. Unfortunately, she didn’t have enough money to buy presents for each of her children. Her husband, who worked in another state, was having problems in his job, and the money that she made was just enough for food. So, she decided to have a meeting with the four oldest children.

“I don’t have enough money to buy Christmas presents for all of you,” she told them at the meeting. “I just have enough to get a little something for your baby brother.”

Sara, the youngest girl of the family at seven years of age, thought to herself, “Last Christmas, my mom promised me a Sussy doll...”

Her thought was cut short as her mom continued, “I want to know whether you all agree that I should buy a gift for your baby brother. Or should no one get a gift?”

The oldest of the children replied, “It’s not a problem, Mom. Joshua is still a baby, and we can have a good Christmas without presents.”

Of course, Sara was very sad, but she didn’t show her feelings. It was at that moment that she discovered that Christmas gifts weren’t brought directly by God. “Oh,” thought the little girl, “my mom is the one who buys the Christmas presents. I wonder why God doesn’t give her enough money to buy us all gifts?” She wanted to ask her mom about that, but then she realized that the meeting had ended and her mom had turned her attention to her chores.

Then Sara’s best friend came over and invited her to play. Sara played the rest of the day and forgot all about money, gifts, God, and Sussy dolls, but without being conscious of it she still felt some sadness in her heart.

Christmas Day came, and Sara began to remember why she had felt so sad when her mother announced that there would be no Christmas present for her. But then her little brother came running up to her and almost screaming with happiness exclaimed, “Sara, Sara, look at my present! It’s the most wonderful Christmas gift that I’ve ever received!”

And suddenly Sara was so happy, too. Just seeing her brother’s face turned her sadness into happiness.

On Christmas Day in this close family’s town, the children are the owners of the streets, and Sara and her little brother went out to play with his new toy. Their little friends approached them and said, “Oh, what a beautiful gift! Can we play with it, too?” And Joshua shared the gift with all his neighbors. It was a very simple plastic toy, a beautiful black horse with a pink wagon. It was smaller than most other toys, but it was a big hit with all the children because nobody else in the neighborhood had that kind of toy. And no other toy had such a special meaning in Sara’s heart.
Little Songs
in the Wilderness
Dick Holmes
USA

Sings a Mountain . . .
I'm not the same old mountain
I was a moment
ago, you know,
though you might like to think so.


Sings a River . . .
Without a thought,
I flow from
mountain to ocean,
never doubting my lot.


Sings a Tree . . .
Let the words come
through you.
Forget from
and to.
Stand still,
lift your arms.
Songbirds will fill
the air with their charms,
and the wind will dance
right into your hands.

The Love
Angie San Martin
Peru

To find the love of your life
after facing a lot of obstacles is like
arriving at the summit of a steep mountain
after a hard climb.
When you love somebody,
you can see the sunrise every morning
and radiant sunshine the whole day.

Your Eyes
Marilyn Machado Mosquera
Colombia

Your eyes like
delicate pieces of moon
since you touched me
I feel as if I am
hovering in the sky
bright, warm in the day
bright, cool in the night
beautiful . . . inescapable
as I am from your sight

Peace
Hyun Jin Kim
Korea

Yellow wildflowers blossom
Birds fly in the bright blue sky
Beyond the crystal in this mountain
Is the mysterious mirror
Under the delicate moon
Luminous fireflies dance
And in the flowing music
I dream of peace
Picnic
Personal Messages
Personal Messages
We hope that when you return to your home country you will share this magazine with your friends. And if any of them express interest in studying at EPI please copy or cut out the application form on the next page and pass it along. Thank you!
CONFIDENTIAL FINANCIAL DECLARATION

US Immigration requires EPI to have a letter from a bank to prove that there is enough money to pay for tuition, fees, and living expenses for one (1) term. This amount of money must be at least $4100. You may not need to use all of this money, but you must prove that it is available. If your sponsor is a school, company, or other business, please attach a letter of support on official stationery.

Name of student

_/ (family/last) (given/first) /

Name of person responsible for providing money for the student

_/ (family/last) (given/first) /

Estimated costs for one term: $1725, tuition; $175, fees; $150, books; $950, housing; $800, food and $300 personal expenses.

Please read the following statement and sign below: “This is to confirm that I will financially support the student named above. I certify that I am aware of the costs of EPI and living in the United States, and I guarantee that the money shown in the bank statement will be available to this student during his/her studies in EPI.”

Signature of person responsible for providing money for the student

Date

Name of bank

Address of bank

Official bank seal

ENGLISH PROGRAMS FOR INTERNATIONALS
University of South Carolina, Byrnes 207
Columbia, South Carolina 29208, USA
Telephone (803) 777-3867
Fax (803) 777-6839
epi-info@epi.sc.edu
http://www.epi.sc.edu

APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION

Please complete this application and return it with a $80 non-refundable application fee.

When would you like to start?

____ Fall I 2002 August 11 - October 11
____ Fall II 2002 October 20 - December 20
____ Winter 2003 January 5 - March 7
____ Spring 2003 March 16 - May 16
____ Summer 2003 May 25 - July 25
____ Fall I 2003 August 10 - October 10

(Orientation first Sunday only; Classes Monday through Friday.)

Program costs for each nine-week term:

$1725 Tuition
$175 University fees

The program costs include instruction, activities, academic counseling, computer laboratory fees, health insurance, and services of the campus health center. The student will have to pay for housing, food, and textbooks. All fees are subject to change without notice.

How did you find out about EPI?
Average EPI apartments have one bedroom and one bathroom, providing space for two students. All apartments have two beds. All students share a bedroom with a roommate of the same gender. Kitchen facilities include a stove and a refrigerator. The apartments are furnished and all fees for electricity, water, one telephone, local phone service, a study lamp, cleaning supplies, and utensils for cooking and eating are included in the housing fee. Linens are available upon arrival for $35. Please note: EPI housing fees per term are as follows:

- One Bedroom Apartment Fee: $950
- Two Bedroom Apartment Fee: $1,700

There is a non-refundable $30 application fee due with the housing application. Once you have moved into the housing space, you must pay the housing fees for the entire term. EPI housing fees per term are as follows:

- One Bedroom Apartment Fee: $950
- Two Bedroom Apartment Fee: $1,700

Please note: One or two bedroom preferences can be requested, however, preferences may not be available upon arrival.

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**Housing Information**

- **Address**: 234 Main St, Anytown, USA
- **City**: Anytown
- **State**: Anystate
- **Zip Code**: 12345

**Contact Information**

- **Name**: John Smith
- **Phone Number**: 555-1234
- **Email**: johnsmith@email.com

**Education**

- **High School**: ABC High School
- **Graduation Year**: 2023

**Personal Information**

- **Date of Birth**: 01/01/1998
- **Sex**: Male
- **Race**: White

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**Visa Information**

- **Visa Status**: F-1
- **Issued by**: Consulate

**Financial Information**

- **Bank Account**: ABC Bank
- **Routing Number**: 123456789
- **Account Number**: 0987654321

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**Signature of Applicant**: John Doe

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**Signature of Parent**: Jane Doe

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**Signature of Counselor**: Jane Smith

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**Expiration Date**: 01/31/2024

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**Cash Card Number**: 1234

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**Credit Card**: Visa

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**Application Fee**: $110