

LAUREN'S MAJOR: Communication and Culture with a certificate in Journalism

YEAR/TERM ABROAD: Spring 2006

REASON YOU CHOSE THIS PROGRAM: I wanted to go somewhere in Africa and I thought that Cape Town would be a great place to study race relations. I also saw pictures of the city and they were beautiful!

DESCRIBE THE HOUSING SITUATION: I lived in a house with seven other Americans on the program, kind of like the Real World!

GREATEST CHALLENGE: Staying focused on school. I wanted to do well because my grades were going to affect my GPA. However, all I really wanted to do was go and explore Cape Town and Southern Africa. I kept thinking, "When am I going to be here again? I have to do as much as I can now!" The key was finding a balance and managing my time.

WHAT I KNOW NOW: A semester goes by really quickly when you are abroad and I could have spent a whole year there. I never considered staying a year before I left, but now I wish I had...

BEST MEMORY: Visiting Cape Point with my mother. I had been trying to describe to her how beautiful it was but my words were not doing the city justice. To stand at Africa's southern-most tip with my mother and see the Indian and Atlantic Oceans coming together was a great memory for both of us.

WHAT I WISH I KNEW BEFORE I LEFT: I wish that I would have researched South Africa's history more. I knew the basics of the apartheid era, but I would have liked to know more about how class stratification has damaged the country and more about the South African political process before I arrived.

ADVICE TO FUTURE STUDY ABROAD PARTICIPANTS: Go in with an open mind. Immerse yourself in the culture; this is an experience in which you should be learning and growing, not only as a student but also as a person.

BIGGEST SURPRISE: Downtown Cape Town is nothing like the representations of Africa that Americans see on television. It is a major metropolitan city and it felt like being in the U.S. much of the time.

IF I COULD DO IT OVER, I WOULD... want to meet more locals. I wish I had been more proactive about making lasting relationships. I met a lot of local people but I wish that I had stepped out of my comfort zone a little more.

laurenrochester

Cape Town, South Africa



Lauren Rochester holds a baby ostrich while visiting a game sanctuary in South Africa's Western Cape province.

"Figure out what you want from your overseas experience and then do everything you can to accomplish it!"