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Visits to 35 countries complements global studies major

Akasha Creamer-Sutherland

Senior, majoring in global and international studies with geographic, economic and Spanish emphasis

Anticipated graduation: Summer 2014

Hometown: Leland, Michigan. Growing up, Akasha lived each winter in Paia, Maui, where her father and 4 brothers still live.

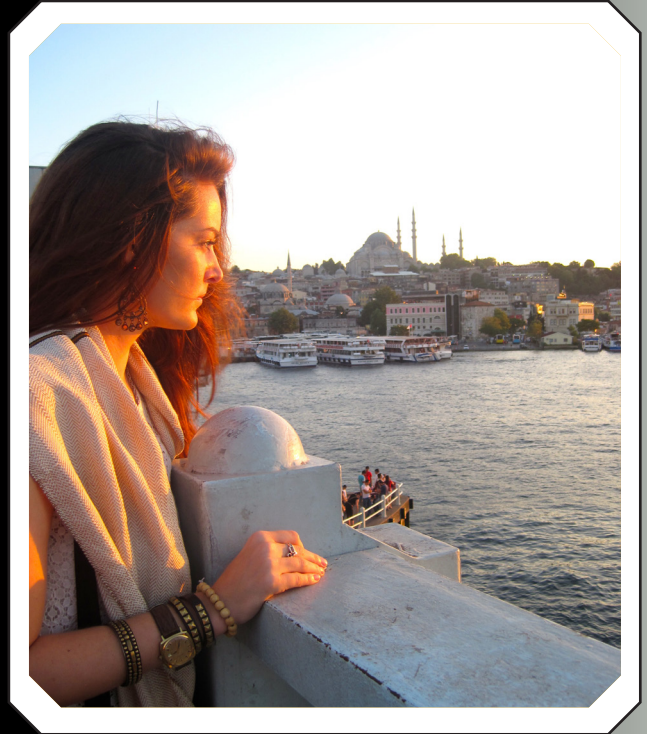
What do you enjoy about majoring in global and international studies?

The global studies major allows me space to breathe. GIS gives me the foundation I need, while allowing me to explore my passions. Encompassing geography and environmental studies, sprinkled with economics and Spanish, the major gives me the tools I need to become a “global citizen.” Something I find unique about this major is that from the very beginning the classes you take serve only to inspire you to pursue the path of greatest interest.

What are your future goals?

After a Turks and Caicos study abroad program this spring, my short-term goals are to take a year off, then begin graduate school in 2015. For this gap year, I am looking to gain more experience for my deepest passion—the marine world. I would like to work with an NGO committed to marine conservation and education, particularly in a Third World country. I am open to live anywhere outside the United States. I love countries with spice and a harsh sense of reality, those commonly referred to as LDC’s or least developed countries, namely those in Africa, Asia, and South America.

Afterward, I hope to go to graduate school and study marine conservation and biodiversity management. Eventually I would like to start my own NGO to help educate people living in small island developing states on how to coexist with the amazing environment that surrounds them. I will accomplish this through my own education on sustainable practices. The GIS degree I will earn from WMU will have served as a stepping-stone on my path to better the world. WMU has given me the fundamental tools and has prepared me for graduate school.



Akasha Creamer-Sutherland





When did you become interested in traveling?

I grew up in a family where traveling was routine. There were no boundaries when it came to where we would go. My father is one of the most amazing people I know and has always said that traveling is an educational experience in and of itself. He shared his love for other cultures with me and my brothers and always pushed us to see the world from different angles. I have been fortunate to see the world from 30-plus angles; each new one leaves me more speechless than the last. When I was 16, I started to venture out on my own, traveling to Guatemala for three weeks to work with a non-profit organization focused on helping children from the city dump called Safe Passage. The years after have been nothing but extraordinary, with special attention to summer 2013.



How did you spend summer 2013?

I was an intern in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for three months working for the Institute for Sustainable Development, a small grassroots organization that works towards educating farming communities and schools on sustainable ways in which to live by creating environmentally conscientious, income-generating activities. Halfway through my internship, a fellow intern from Brazil and I traveled by bus from Kenya to Tanzania and then to the island of Zanzibar. After this trip I went back to Ethiopia for the remainder of my internship.

After Ethiopia, I traveled to Istanbul for two weeks, where I met my best friend, Sara O'Leary, a nursing student at WMU. I then traveled to Argentina for six weeks for an intensive Spanish course at the University of Belgrano. Now I am back at WMU working on my capstone GIS course until I study abroad in Turks and Caicos in spring 2014." I am especially excited for this opportunity because I do not have an extensive biology background and this course will further improve these skills. Typical days include: surveying sites (scuba diving), reef monitoring, coral bleaching assessments and much more.



How many countries have you visited? What do you love most about traveling?

Visiting Turkey marked my 35th country. Traveling around the world opens not only your eyes, but also pulls at who you are as a person. You see things that you would have never dreamed of as being someone else's reality. You eat things you thought only to be a joke. Lastly, you meet people who truly touch you in ways you can only experience when you are out of your comfort zone. There are so many things about other cultures that I believed to be weird that I learned about from books and media, but until you experience it firsthand there is no room for judgment.