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John Green

University of New Hampshire - Main Campus

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Center for International Education

Spring 2008

FOR STUDY ABROAD, THIS STUDENT TOOK 'THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED'

by John Green '08

History major John Green spent fall semester in Novi Sad, Serbia, where he was enrolled in intensive Serbian language courses.



John Green, second from left, with friends in Serbia

When people learned that I had chosen to study in Serbia, part of the former Yugoslavia best known in America for Slobodan Milosevic and the 1990s wars, I was often asked: Why did you go there?? While my friends spent semesters in Western European countries, I chose the path less traveled. I wanted a study abroad experience that would teach me something meaningful and unique, both in learning an unusual language and experiencing a country unlike my own, and Serbia gave me just that.

During the time I was there, a great political crisis was brewing, which exploded shortly after I left when Kosovo broke off from Serbia and the U.S. Embassy was attacked. Since the study program included only two other students, I spent much of my time with Serbs whom I met while

volunteering to lead a conversation group of English language students. While Americans are still reasonably uncommon in Serbia, I faced many questions from the people I met; unfortunately, often times these questions related to the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999. Some of my friends had very difficult personal stories associated with the receiving end of the U.S.-led bombing. However, I found Serbia to be a wonderful place; the people are friendly, the food tasty, and the natural settings can be very beautiful. Novi Sad was a great city in which to live, easy to walk around and very safe.

When I got a chance to travel outside of Serbia my experiences remained unique; rather than going to popular destinations in Western Europe like so many of my classmates did, one of several places I spent vacation time in was Bosnia, where my hostel featured bullet holes left over from the fighting of the 1990s. The former Yugoslavia offered a wide range of travel experiences for me, from quiet villages tucked in the snowy Slovenian Alps to the old walled cities of Montenegro that were overrun with tourists.

The path that brought me to Serbia began when I took UNH's Russian language course for my general education requirement in my sophomore year. My Russian instruction at UNH has proven helpful in learning the similar Serbian language and was the

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encouragement to make my initial visit to the Balkans. I spent the summer of 2006 working at an archeological site in Croatia, followed by a visit to Serbia and Bosnia.

Because I was the first UNH student to participate in this program or study in this country, there was a lot of hard work involved in getting the program approved, but the one-of-a-kind opportunity to study in a place like Serbia was well worth the extra effort. Despite the political tension that was a constant undertone during my time there, my study was enjoyable and educational.

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223 Hood House • 89 Main Street • Durham, NH 03824
tel: 603-862-2398 • fax: 603-862-0169
study.abroad@unh.edu • international.affairs@unh.edu