Welcome back Anthropology majors!

Let me welcome you to the club and applaud your academic and scholarly interests in Anthropology. The club this year is trying to develop ways to involve students in professional disciplinary meetings and activities, as well as the important informal discussions and get-togethers that help in developing your understanding of the field. Please talk to one of the club officers for more information on discussions, colloquia, fundraising, and volunteer activities.

Now, just a bit about my recent Anthropological research. This summer I conducted fieldwork in Bodaibinskii Raion of Irkutsk Region and in the Taimyr (Dolgano-Nenetskii) Municipal District (renamed in 2007). In June and July, I spent three weeks with partners from Irkutsk State Technical University, Chita State University, and Boise State University conducting ethno-archaeological and ethno-graphic surveys of reindeer herding communities on the Zhuya River in northern Irkutsk Region. The area is just to the south of the Republic of Sakha-Yakutia, Russia’s largest subject, and there are many historical ties to Sakha-Yakutia. In fact, Bodaibo was settled from the north by Russian merchants, explorers, and gold miners who went north to the Lena River, then back south up the Zhuya and other nearby rivers. We spent three days with an Evenki and Yakut family, walking up to their reindeer herding camp, and surveying it, as well as conducting interviews on subsistence cycles and economic exchanges.

In July and August, we flew up to the Arctic to spend three weeks in the Central Taimyr Lowlands conducting research on the vernacular architecture of Dolgan and Nganasan mobile dwellings, as well as renewing community census information. Research supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0631970, and a 2007 Faculty Research Associates Fellowship from Boise State University.

Contributed by Dr. John Ziker, Anthropology Club Advisor

A traditional Buriat sod-covered house outside of Irkutsk. Photo: John Ziker
In August 2006, I left school at BSU to spend the next four months studying abroad in Amman, Jordan. My trip was partially sponsored by a Benjamin A. Gilman scholarship and I went as a member of the Center for International Educational Exchange (CIEE) program. Participating in this program gave me the opportunity to attend the University of Jordan, attend a two week lecture series of distinguished speakers, travel to historical sites around the country, and participate in a proactive community of international students and Jordanian families.

During my time in Jordan I studied both Jordanian colloquial Arabic and classical Arabic intensively, as well as Jordanian/Palestinian archaeology and Islamic civilization. The Jordanian people were very welcoming and often just walking down the street people would yell out to me, “Welcome! Make yourself at home!” Jordan is known as the Switzerland of the Middle East and there is a constant flow of refugees from surrounding countries. Although Jordanians generally disagree with American policy, they make it very clear they do not judge Americans based on their government.

While in Jordan I also had the opportunity to travel around the country. In the north of Jordan there are many Roman and Greek ruins like Um Quais and Jeras, as well as Crusader castles like Kerak and Aljun. To the west there is the Dead Sea where you can visit the city of Jericho or one of the several spots on the Jordan River where Jesus was said to have been Baptized. The eastern deserts are almost completely empty except for a handful of Umayyad and Abbasid castles that have survived from the peak of the Islamic Empire. And finally, to the south, there are the remains of the Nabataean civilization at the ancient city of Petra. Bedouin people that still live in goat hair tents and ride camels, and the city of Aqaba on the Red Sea.

My time spent in Jordan was priceless to me and I believe that the opportunities and experiences I had there will be an invaluable part of my life for years to come.

—Contributed by Betsy Venard, 2007