



Photo courtesy of Hillary Martin

Kate Shirley, Phoebe Wahl and Lizzy Woolf relax near ancient standing stones on Scotland's Orkney Islands, while studying at the Findhorn Ecovillage.

Bulldogs abroad: Stones, scooters and sustainability

Students experience global perspectives through study program

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In northern Scotland lies the Orkney Islands, where students participating in UNC Asheville's study abroad program were able to experience standing sacred stones firsthand which date before the pyramids and Stonehenge. These sacred sites are just one aspect of the study abroad experience.

"An ecovillage is a human-scaled community, harmlessly integrated with nature, supportive of healthy human development and sustainable," said **Kate Shirley, a senior at UNCA studying psychology and women, gender and sexuality studies.** She is studying

abroad in Findhorn Ecovillage in northern Scotland. "Other than being an ecovillage, Findhorn is a spiritual community and education center."

The study abroad program at UNCA offers different ways to gain worldwide experience while receiving course credit. Exchange programs and faculty led programs can transfer in as credit for UNCA classes.

"There's a Cambridge program that goes every summer and one of the programs is Humanities 324, so that's a requirement. But instead of taking it here on campus, students have the option to take it abroad," said **Cara Gilpin, study abroad advisor at UNCA.**

Shirley said her classes are much more unusual than UNCA's, though.

"The classes I am taking are on topics that I haven't studied while at UNCA so it's been nice to break away from the usual coursework and delve into some new subjects. I feel like UNCA encouraged me to think outside of the box and look at topics from a bunch of different viewpoints, and that has proven to be really useful in my classes here," Shirley said via email.

Shirley participates in courses in environmental design, communications, service learning and education while at Findhorn.

"Of all of the classes I've taken while at UNCA, my LSIC,

Women and the Environment, best reflects my classroom experiences I've had at Findhorn. Similar to that class, I spend a lot of time looking at the intersection of different belief systems, cultures and disciplines as well as experiential learning through gardening and farming," Shirley said.

Apart from course credit, students said they also receive useful life experience for the future.

"Anyone who has studied abroad will have a certain level of adaptability and flexibility, which is highly coveted. Even if they choose to not work internationally, we are working with a large diverse population and it only helps to have that

kind of aptitude," Gilpin said.

The Study Abroad office works closely with the Career Center at UNCA to help students see the value of studying abroad in the workforce today. Gilpin said studying abroad also provides personal experience as well.

"Sometimes students will find out that they have a strong interest in a certain area of study or they may come back with a newfound passion that they didn't have before they left," Gilpin said. "There's a new sense of self many times, and sense of independence that they didn't have before or confidence that they've navigated

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