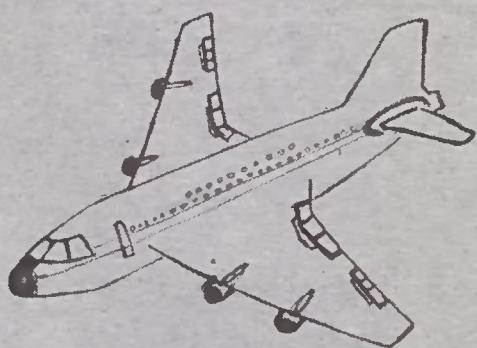


# The Defining Mini-Term Experience

Should students spend thousands to venture overseas instead of utilizing the available school community and its surrounding resources?



## Yes

As Mini-Term looms ahead on the near horizon, a question that remains to be answered is the perpetual, "To go off campus or not to go?"

I say give yourself the "go ahead" to embark on the educational trip of a lifetime. Delve in and explore the complex workings of your inner academic and get out of the confines that limit you to what can be learned in this school. After all, there really aren't too many travel opportunities offered that combine memorable experiences, with proper edification, which are half as good a deal as the various courses offered by NCSSM.

Go on. You can also admit that you're especially frustrated with the issue of the potentially staggering boredom you may face if you remain at school.

So, instead of answering the bigger question aforementioned, ask yourself this: how often is it that you'll go out by yourself, or with your family, to view the Northern Lights? Or, how common is it to take a recreational vacation to the lush tropics of Belize? Perhaps I just don't know where to look, but I haven't seen a travel agency with a tour package that will take a group of people to spend one night on a glacier in Iceland.

Even taking part in a course that goes to a tourist hotspot such as Spain, Italy or the Galapagos Islands will give you an experience that you would never obtain after graduation from NCSSM. Would you question the work of Darwin without being asked the questions, experience real Italian culture without the guidance of an Italian instructor or truly understand the sights you see in Spain without researching them further? It is possible, but doubtful nevertheless.

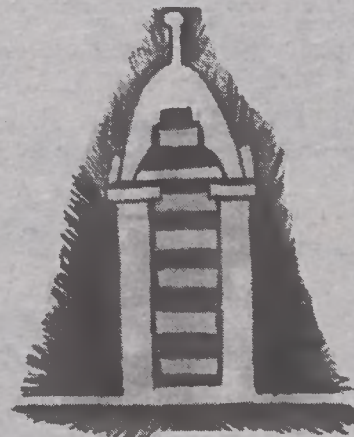
However, one fact remains that cannot be downplayed in any argument with the parents and legal guardians: pricing. Though prices may seem to run high, let me give you an example of how reasonable each course fee is for what is encompassed in the cost. Take the Italy trip as an example. The total cost is roughly \$2,500, depending on how much you spend by yourself abroad. Research on various popular online travel search engines, such as Expedia and Orbitz, turned out similar results: it would cost an individual a minimum of about \$4,000 during low season to see what will be seen on this particular trip. Even so, the pricing may fluctuate with hotel availability and the rise in airplane ticket prices. This tentatively determined price includes guided tours, admission, lodging, transportation and meals, but excludes possible extraneous purchases abroad.

With so many course trips available, there is bound to be one that appeals to you. Mind, there may be an interested friend or two that you would like to take along with you for the experience. In light of such favorable circumstances, is it not sensible to take advantage of such an opportunity? Is it not lucid that one of your two years here at NCSSM should be spent encountering the new or clarifying the vague away from campus? A good dose of traveling, learning and enjoyment may broaden your horizons.

Now it becomes clearer that it is not the pleasures of travel that makes such new places and opportunities so exciting. It is the certainty of knowing, within the span of days, that friendships will be solidified, much will be learned and the experiences and memories gained will never ebb or recede with time.



By Laura Chao



## No

Expensive trips abroad for Mini-Term are wasteful and staying on campus is the better and cheaper alternative.

There is a commercial for a fast food restaurant which measures cost in units of crispy chicken nuggets. Maybe we should think in the same terms to put the cost of a Mini-Term abroad in perspective.

I can pay 2,500 junior bacon cheeseburgers for 14 days in Italy or 11 days in Greece. Or maybe 2,000 small sodas for a trip to Korea. The bargain of the year is Germany, at less than 1,500 Caesar salads.

All of this, to view a few museums and famous sights. Sure, the Acropolis is probably breathtaking and there are hundreds of gorgeous cathedrals in Spain, but Mini-Term is not the time to experience these wonders. A rushed tourist experience, moving from one

spot to another every couple of days, is the worst way to sample the many intricacies of a foreign culture. You can only learn so much about a place from its art museums. A carefully structured trip allows almost no time for exploration.

The point of traveling abroad is to immerse oneself in a new culture. It is the smell of the food and the rhythm of the native music. It is the friends you make with whom you will stay in touch forever through e-mail. Sure, during Mini-Term I would taste what it means to be Greek or Spanish, but I certainly would not get this full experience.

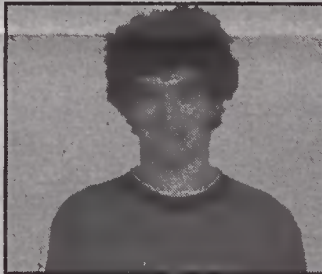
Instead, for about the same price, I can spend an entire summer in a foreign country and come back almost fluent in the language and with weeks of stories to tell my friends. Or maybe I'll do a 13th year of high school in Spain, estimated at 8,000 bowls of chili, or just a little over three times the price of a 10 day Mini-Term trip.

It is always appealing to go abroad with good friends, but it is difficult to have the full experience of a foreign country if speaking in English the whole time. Short trips leave no time for learning the language and force people to get by on what they know. I would spend more time finding out how to ask to use the bathroom than I would actually enjoying my surroundings.

The logical alternative is Mini-Term at school. It is the only time on campus when no one has a physics test and no one needs to catch up on American Studies reading. The courses are interesting, but the opportunity to do individualized projects allows us to make Mini-Term whatever we want it to be. It is the one time that we can focus on one thing that we love and go after that passion without bring preoccupied with other academics. The price is minimal if existent, and there is plenty of time to sit back and enjoy the time off. The relaxed afternoons and evenings at school are in marked contrast to constant tours and sightseeing.

So I will catch up on sleep, use one of the last opportunities before graduation to be together with my friends from school and generally choose to have a good time. My Mini-Term will be challenging but will also give me a break from the constant business of the school year. I don't have to spend thousands of side salads to have a Mini-Term that is rewarding intellectually and satisfying spiritually.

I will choose to stay in the country this Mini-Term.



By Max Rose