

Marc Mullinax: Around the World

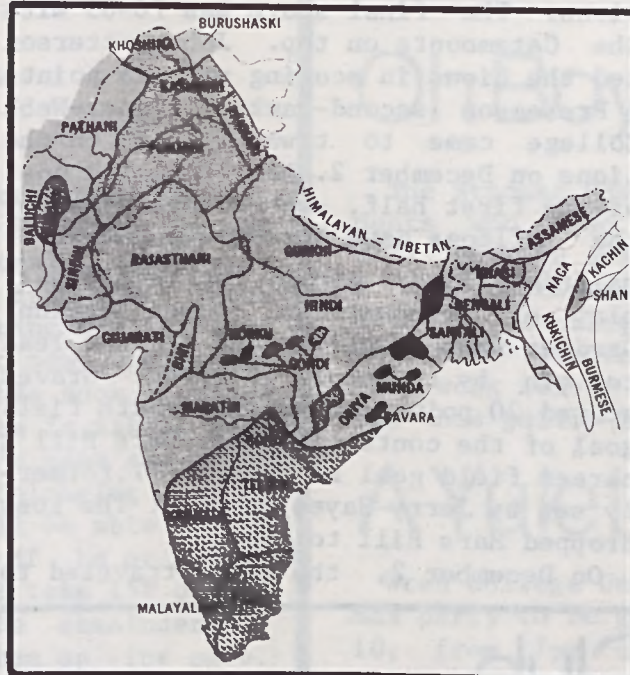
Inexpensive Hash Lures Young To Afghanistan

Editors' Note:

Marc Mullinax, a senior history major from Raleigh, is traveling around the world by air and bus September 9--December 13. In addition to keeping his own journal, Marc is sending students at Mars Hill a record of his travels, hoping that more of them will see the exciting possibilities for gaining credit through independent study projects and travel.

If you like uncivilized excitement, living, and entertainment, Afghanistan is the place for you. This is a poor country lacking in luxury and hygiene, but full of fun and happy people. There is a life unfettered by civilization and ruinous poverty, but a simple and carefree life whose only worry is the crops in the fields. Herat was the first stop and as it turned out the best place to buy Afghan goods. Sheepskin/fleece coats, leather goods made to order, shirts, carpets, carpetbags, camel hair socks and gloves...the list of such seems endless. Changing money was a big hassle. Only one bank in Herat serves the whole place and it took me ninety minutes to get \$20.00 changed to Afghanis. Herat is a main spot for the young travelers for dope is both cheap and illegal only in writing. So there are a lot of young Europeans as well as Americans walking around in a daze--the most pathetic sight in all Afghanistan. On the road to Kandahar are many, many tribes of Kochi nomads--the proudest people in the country--who make up a large minority of the population. Their life consists of traveling from the Hindu Kush mountains in the north in summer to the desert in the south for winter with their sheep, goats, and camels that provide them food. Under their black tents, the world's best carpets are made, taking two or more years per carpet. They sell them to a buyer and by stages the price goes up--from \$100 in the beginning, to \$1000 should it reach the States. I was able to spend a half-hour with one tribe, sharing some fresh baked nan (bread) the woman had just baked. Kandahar is another drug haven. I was saving my jeans to trade in Kabul for Afghani crafts but they would only give me \$2.00 maximum for them as opposed to \$20.00 for bell-bottomed Levis in Herat. Though disappointing in shopping, Kabul was not disappointing in its food and sights. The world's best omelettes are made here, along with lamb kebobs and rice dishes. The local

bazaar 'is extremely colorful and crowded, where the local people buy anything they need for garments and house. From Kabul I went to the heart of the Hindu Kush to an old Hindu monastery called Bamyan. Two Buddhas, one 125 feet tall and the other 175 feet tall, were hewn out of a cliffside by Buddhist monks in 300 and 800 A.D. When the Moslems invaded, their custom of not having graven images of anyone was carried through and orders were given to deface the Buddhas. So today one can see perfectly shaped Buddhas with the face, from chin to forehead, gone. I was able to climb to the top of the head of the 125 foot one where I got a wonderful view of the valley ringed with snow capped mountains. The poplar trees were a bright



yellow, making it the second most beautiful sight in Afghanistan. The first is ten miles away--a deserted Red City/ Fort high on the mountain side, carved out of rust-colored rock. It used to be a veritable fortress, until it raised Genghis Khan's ire. In 1220, his favorite nephew was murdered here while visiting. Khan promised to return the following spring and kill everything in the valley--men, women, children, dogs, trees and flowers. And he did just that.

The drive to Pakistan was also through Khan territory--the Kabul Gorge and the Khyber Pass. Peshawar, at the end of the Pass, has the most extremes that I've ever seen in a city. The worst pollution, poverty and hygenic conditions and their opposites can be found here. Twenty miles from Peshawar is a tribal area that the government does not control and is a haven for smugglers and other types of shady characters. This place, Darru is where Khyber rifles are made as well as James Bond

type pen guns, cane guns and umbrella guns. Also in Darra was a hashish factory where I saw twenty kilos of the stuff, stamped and ready for smuggling. Definitely a different place. Murree, fifty miles north of Rawalpindi, used to be the "R&R" place for British officers in the Paki-Afghani wars in the Khyber Pass. Now a tourist resort, it is the only place in Pakistan where one can buy Kashmiri type goods--shawls, jewelry, carpets, and paper mache boxes. Lahore is another city of extremes. There are many students here--the first place where it is a status symbol to be a student. For the first time on the trip, I saw people with leisure time playing tennis, cricket, and having picnics in the huge, beautiful parks and gardens with parakeets flying wild. The intellectual Pakistanis are the only ones that are nice and helpful--the others seem to have only one thing on their minds--SEX. My premature opinion for the millions of people here is that all the peasant men run around with this on their minds.

India--For the first time, we had a hassle at the Indian side of the border. Six hours we spent there while luggage and bus were ripped apart. We got lectured on the horrors of hashish and carrying in Indian money bought outside of India. In Kabul, I had bought \$66.00 worth of Indian Rupees at better than the official rate on the Black Market. Running the risk of confiscation, I had them in my shoe. but I was declared "clean".

India's people are the friendliest yet. Their Hindu religion makes them more passive than Moslems. Literally five seconds after I got off the bus in Amritsar, an Indian rode up on his bicycle and shook my hand, saying welcome and that I was the guest of all India. Similar experiences have occurred since.

I am now in the disputed state of Kashmir in northwest corner of India, the foothills of the Himalayas. Sixteen thousand foot mountains surround my houseboat on the Del Lake, where for three dollars a day, I live in a luxurious houseboat with my own cook-servant and have three meals a day. These are meals like roast mutton, lamb curry, and roast duck. Salesmen in cloth, shawls, paper mache boxes, jewelry, groceries, and fruit paddle by my front door selling their wares. This is fantastic living.

I've two more weeks in India--the country of countries. Its exoticness has really made me fall in love with it after three days.