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Welcome

James’ adventures in Japan!

James Martin is in his final year of studying for a BA (Hons) in Social Anthropology with a Year in Japan. James writes about his experience of a year abroad - his highlights and why he’d recommend you do it.

Like many other students I love to travel and, as such, found the opportunity to spend close to a year steeped in different surroundings, cultures and experiences difficult to resist. It was for this reason that I was drawn to the ‘Social Anthropology with a Year in Japan’ programme offered by Kent. I admit, I chose Japan on a whim, not really knowing much about it beyond mostly general knowledge. Part of the appeal was the opportunity to experience something wholly new.

While it is not easy to sum up the entire year in brief, I consider my time spent in Japan as worthwhile. Granted it was not always easy being away from home, and in an unfamiliar setting, but it was ultimately an exciting and enjoyable experience. Mostly it was through the many people with whom I would become friends that my stay would become particularly enriching, and just as importantly, fun. My favourite memories being those trips shared around Japan exploring locations like Tokyo, Nagasaki, and Okinawa, to name a few.

The academic side of this experience was straightforward with lessons taught in English. Modules available were completely different from those offered by my main degree providing opportunities not restricted to the study of Social Anthropology. I found Japanese lessons particularly engaging and challenging. However, for me, the focus of my time abroad has been more about the experience of living in Japan and exploring the country and the cultural heritage.

I would definitely encourage anyone to consider the possibility of taking a year abroad. It is an amazing experience full of the promise of excitement and discovery.

Our School’s mission, ‘Understanding a Changing World’, has a biological, environmental and social relevance that underpins our research themes and programmes of study. Our interpretation includes the study of humans and wildlife, their presence in the world and how they interact with a changing social and ecological environment now and during the course of our evolutionary past.

This mission drives the research that our academic staff carry out in their respective fields and in turn becomes instilled in our undergraduate teaching programmes. Studying in SAC provides you with a wonderful opportunity to be taught by leading and pioneering research academics giving you a window into projects and activities that are shaping and changing our world; and consequently unique opportunities for you to begin your own inspiring journey.

You will benefit from a vibrant and diverse community attracting students from over 80 countries. There are regular events to facilitate professional development outside of the degree programme through lectures, seminar series, field trips and student led initiatives. Additionally the School supports activities focused on enhancing your employability skills. Your personal growth and development is paramount to us, therefore you’ll be allocated an academic adviser and you will have access to the School’s dedicated Student Support Team. Furthermore you’ll have opportunities to access our extensive network of partners and colleagues around the world; the benefit of studying in a School with world-leading research, as evidenced recently by the Stirling Lecture given by Professor Lee Berger.

We are passionate about training a new generation of leading conservationists and professional anthropologists and hope you will join us as together we seek to understand a changing world.

Professor Jim Groombridge
Head of School
On the 8th November 2016, the School welcomed world famous palaeoanthropologist Professor Lee Berger to give the 2016 Stirling Lecture as part of the university’s Distinguished Lecture Series. Dr Berger is a professor of human evolution and a National Geographic Explorer. He has been searching South Africa for over two decades for the fossil evidence of human evolution, and in the last 10 years he has discovered two of the most important new fossil human species: Australopithecus sediba and Homo naledi. For these discoveries he was named one of Time Magazine’s 100 most influential people of 2016.

The evening began with a reception where students, researchers, and staff had the opportunity to meet Professor Berger in an informal setting. Many of the students took this opportunity for a selfie and have Professor Berger sign copies of the recent National Geographic article on Homo naledi. After the reception, everyone was invited to view an exhibit of fossil casts spanning the whole period of human evolution (from 7 million years ago to present). These casts come from the SAC cast collection which rivals those of other universities around the UK. In particular, partial skeletons from both of Professor Berger’s recent discoveries were available for viewing and graduate students were there to answer questions. The audience were fascinated at the opportunity to touch life size models of these exciting new finds and to have Professor Berger on hand to highlight particularly important aspects of their shape that link them to our own evolutionary history.

Finally, Professor Berger delivered his Stirling Lecture to a captivated audience. He began by highlighting the difficulties palaeoanthropologists face in finding the fossil remains of our ancestors and how he began in the early 2000s to use satellite imaging to find prospective fossil sites on his personal computer. Using this technique he quickly identified 100s of new potential sites that had not been discovered despite decades of searching in the region. Professor Berger recounted the events surrounding the discovery in the Malapa and Rising Star cave systems and his use of social media to find skilled excavators to extract these precious fossils from deep within the earth. Professor Berger’s enthusiasm is contagious and it was clear from the audience’s reaction to his presentation that many were thinking about how they might explore the unknown to shed light on the mysteries of our evolutionary past.

Alumna Michaela Reichard campaigning for WWF in Austria

We asked BSc Wildlife Conservation alumna Michaela Reichard to update us on what she’s been doing since she graduated.

I have been working for WWF in Austria for over two years now and I absolutely love my job!

My project aims to establish the world’s first five-country UNESCO biosphere reserve in the Mura-Drava-Danube region. The area covers about 1 million hectares across Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia. Within that area, the 3 rivers form a 700 km green belt with an incredible high biodiversity (e.g. rare bird species, large floodplain forests, river islands...).

My work involves a lot of political and lobbying work, especially fighting against new hydropower projects in the region. This last year we ran a number of exciting events including our “Save the Mura - Stop Dams” campaign launch in Slovenia. The event was a regatta where more than 40 rowers from Slovenia, Austria and Croatia came together to send a clear message to the Slovenian government; that the Mura is unique and that it must be protected for future generations. To see so many people come together to protect that special river was amazing to see and makes me love my job even more! You can read more on our website: www.amazon-of-europe.com/

I was always enthusiastic about nature and wildlife and I always wanted to have a job where I could help change things for the better. My bachelor degree from SAC has helped me get employment at one of the largest nature conservation organisations. The programme is so varied and diverse and provides not just scientific knowledge but it really opened my mind to the many possibilities there are in the field of wildlife conservation. The familiar atmosphere was great, as it meant that I got to know fellow students and staff well which made it easy to set up a network with other conservationist.
Improving your facilities

Enhancing the School’s facilities and presence on campus

In December work commenced on our latest building project. We are embarking on the remodelling and extension of the main entrance to the School, giving us a stronger and more prominent identity.

We will gain eight new office spaces for SAC staff but the main features of the new space are the two meeting rooms, providing additional locations for seminars and quiet study space, and social spaces on both floors. These large social spaces provide, for the first time, designated space for SAC students to occupy for group work or for gathering together with friends, helping to create an even stronger community within our School.

In addition we have upgraded some existing spaces within the School. A £40,000 refurbishment of the Hugh Brody Room creates a fresh space to house our suite of 16 iMacs. This temperature controlled room includes a new 75 inch high definition LCD presentation screen. This excellent resource is utilized for teaching, film screenings and is available for private study.

On the second floor we have renovated space to create a specialist store for our extensive fossil cast collection (including casts spanning the whole of human evolution including specimens from the most recent excavation of Homo naledi, a new human fossil species, in South Africa). We also invested £100,000 to upgrade our 32 piece PC suite. Our new ergonomic PCs boast high definition screens and state-of-the-art hard drives for increased performance. The room features new presentation AV equipment, new furniture, blackout blinds to facilitate film screenings or detailed PC work plus … really plush chairs!

We are delighted to have been able to invest heavily in our facilities and space and we continue to work with our students, through our student led committee, to identify further areas for improvement to enhance your experience of studying in SAC.

Contact us!

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