

Going Back Home

Name: Marin Lusk

Grade: Senior

Countries Travelled To: 10

Lesson: There's a whole world out there to embrace and explore.

STORY BY ANA KRASUSKI
PHOTO BY ANN RASSMUSSEN

Not many people get to say that by the time they are 17, they have travelled 8,387 miles outside the United States. Senior Marin Lusk is among the few who have gotten the chance to leave America for a mission abroad.

This past summer, Lusk jetted from Denver to Los Angeles to Bangkok, Thailand for a month of missionary work in southeast Asia. Although she enjoyed a month abroad, Lusk said there were many challenges that she had to overcome. "By the second week," she said, "I was really homesick because I hadn't learned to embrace the culture. I kept comparing it to America. I could easily be critical with things, like some of the restaurants weren't very nice and were unsanitary, and I really missed my friends at home."

Instead of being judgmental, Lusk was open-minded and ready to tackle any challenge that came her way. "One night I was talking to one of my friends on Facebook and telling her how I was homesick and she was telling me that it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and that I just needed to embrace it," Lusk said. "From that point on, I was determined to embrace it and not be critical, and look for all the good things about Thailand. After that I had such a great time and it was one of the best trips ever."

Coming from a family of missionaries, Lusk was born in Thailand and lived there until she was two years old. She said she is proud of where she comes from and stated that she has a "soft spot" for Asia. "It was really cool going back to where I was born and being able to have an identity that's so much bigger than Highlands Ranch," Lusk said.

A month of being on another continent brought on a variety of hardships and situations she was not prepared for. After missing a flight from Bangkok to Singapore due to the stomach bug, she had to travel internationally on her own. Everyone on the mission team got a stomach bug at least once, and for a couple of days Lusk was bedridden.

When she had to travel by herself without the comfort of her parents and peers, Lusk confessed to feeling a little nervous. "When I was on the airplane, at first I was really scared," Lusk said, "but then the song called 'This Is The Life' by Two Door Cinema Club came on while I was

looking over the clouds and I thought, this really is the life. Not many people get to do what I'm doing right now. After that, I was fine."

Being in a third-world country triggered different emotions and gave Lusk a greater appreciation of where she lives now. "Just walking around the city and seeing different things was sad because you would see really nice, first-world type buildings right next to really shanty villages and homes and people on the streets. It made me appreciate where I grew up and I'm really thankful for America," Lusk said.

Even though Asia is not the first place Lusk would prefer to travel, she said, she appreciates many things about Thailand and their culture, and chose to see the good in the situation.

"Everyone wants to go to places like Greece and Italy and other places in Europe, but Thailand is really cool as well," she said. "Once you embrace the culture of other nations it's so much fun to travel."

She said that her favorite part about Thailand was the people she encountered. "Thailand used to be called Siam, which means the land of smiles. People are really happy and friendly," Lusk said.

Lusk said she learned a lot from being in a third-world country for so long, and it gave her a broader, more global perspective. "I think ultimately it gave me a greater global vision of the world and of people and an appreciation for different cultures," she said.

Lusk said it was also a challenge coming back to America after such a fun, eye-opening trip to a place with so many people who were less fortunate. "It was weird coming back, especially to school, because everyone was so focused on the little things, like who's dating who — silly things that aren't very significant. But my mind was so focused on the future and things beyond Highlands Ranch. It totally expanded my view and it was sad to see that other people didn't have the opportunity to see what I saw and experience what I experienced," Lusk said.

When asked how she felt about the trip as a whole, Lusk said she wants to go on more missionary trips in the future. "It helped me realize that I want to go to third-world countries to do missionary work and be a nurse overseas," Lusk said. "It's not every day that you get to see the world and to get out of your comfort zone."