

Spring 2020
Newsletter



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Hiking

| Best Therapy For Your Mind |

SJSU | INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

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Note From The Editor

| Michelle Lauricella



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During the time of the publication of this newsletter, we are currently in the midst of a global pandemic. For some of us, going outdoors is a luxury we can still participate in and appreciate. I myself have found it very helpful as a source of stress relief through these past few months. Though COVID19 has taken many of our daily routines and turned them upside down, we hope that everyone is staying safe and that this newsletter, wherever you may be in the world, gives you and your family some source of entertainment and happiness.

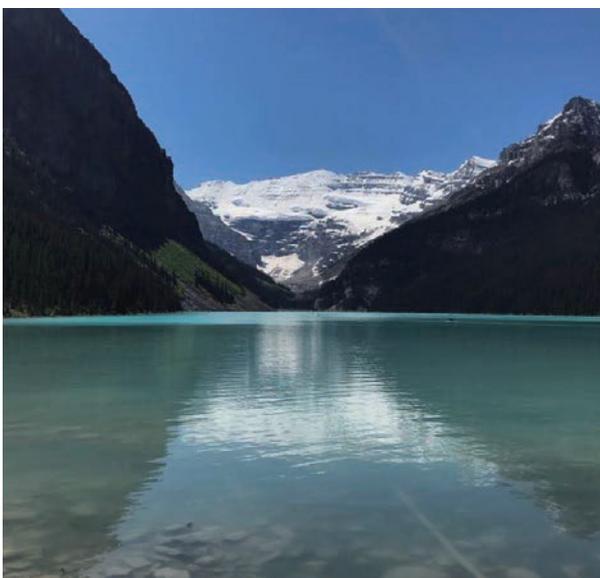


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The Great Outdoors

| Leann Cherkasky Makhni



Photo credit / Leann Cherkasky Makhni

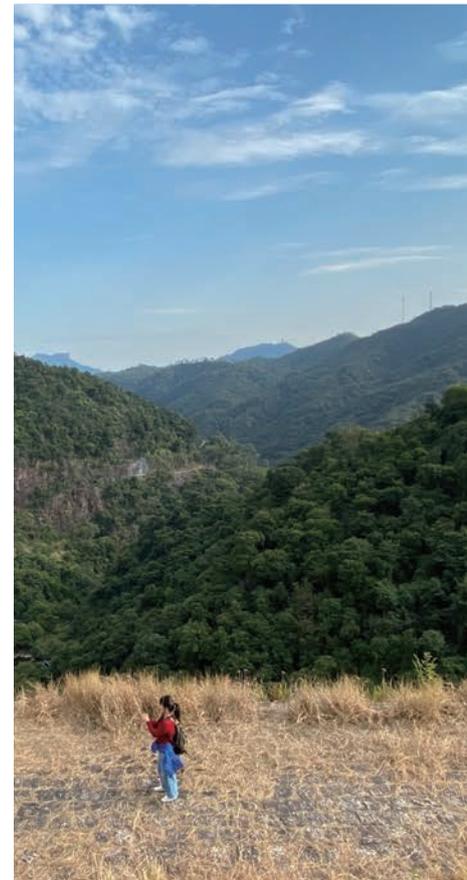


Photo credit / Vicky Chan

Like each of the contributors to the Spring 2020 newsletter, I have a passion for hiking. Growing up in the Midwest of the United States, I had the good fortune to be able to walk daily through the woods behind my home to Lake Michigan. I considered myself quite brave as I hiked on my own, and in great company as I hiked with my friends. We had miles and miles of woodlands leading to miles and miles of sand dunes lining the lake, which seemed to be as large as an ocean.

One of my favorite memories of my backpacking trip through Europe, which I did for 8 months on my own between College and Grad School, involved a stopover at a small town in Austria. I got off the train with a fellow traveler who introduced me to his family and led me on a wonderful hike through the forest that surrounded his home.

In California, living in San Jose, I am very lucky to live at the base of hills surrounded by a County park. We walk daily around the neighborhood and on the weekends hike up into the hills to appreciate the contrast between views on one side of rolling hills stretching as far as the eye can see and on the other side, views to distant downtown San Jose and beyond.



Photo credit / Leann Cherkasky Makhni

Especially during the pandemic when we've been sheltering in place, we've still had the luxury in our region to leave our homes and go outside, to enjoy the spring flowers, and the lush green hills. Residents of I-House who have been Sheltering in Place together, have been able to get outside and take walks in the Naglee Park neighborhood, to Williams Park, and on campus. Knowing that so many others around the world have been confined to their homes, or have been struggling in other far more significant and challenging ways, I appreciate very much the opportunity to get outside, hike, and breathe the fresh air.

New Beginnings

| Michelle Lauricella

Being a part of the outdoors is something that I enjoy. Breathing in the fresh air and looking at the beauty of nature is something that soothes my soul. I often find outdoor activities like hiking to be most therapeutic. Growing up in the Bay Area, I have gone to my fair share of hiking spots. From the redwoods in Henry Cowell State Park to the scenic ocean side of Wilder Ranch State Park, both in Santa Cruz, California, I always find myself at peace in the great outdoors.



Photo credit / Michelle Lauricella

Hiking is not something that always interested me. As a child, my mother would drag me outside with her on her hikes. At the time, I did not appreciate this. As an introverted bookworm, I hated our outings. I longed to run back to the safety of the indoors, to be lost with my books and imagination. Now I look back at those times with fondness and appreciation. Throughout the years, her love of the outdoors slowly but surely began to touch me and as I entered SJSU, the bug had bitten me and I was hooked. The hustle and bustle of the city made me crave and appreciate nature even more. Each time I venture out, I feel like I am opening myself up to new adventures, possibilities and memories.

I have taken several trips with IHouse residents hiking and each time, I have created memories that will last the rest of my life. In Fall 2019, I took a group of residents to Mission Peak in Fremont, California. Anyone who lives in the San Jose area knows of Mission Peak. The summit which reaches at 2,520 feet or 768 meters, can be daunting even for the most experienced of outdoorspersons. I had heard the name before but did not know what I would be getting myself into. I, in my foolishness and naivety, suggested this route to a group of new residents, who like me, had only heard of the trail. This turned out to be, personally, the most challenging trek I had ever been on.

The journey was grueling, with seemingly never-ending twists and turns running up and up the side of the summit. I had wanted to give up several times but my stubbornness and pride compelled me to finish. As our group reached the top of the summit, I stood and looked out over the view of the city. The air was fresh and clean with the sun shining and the houses and cars almost non-existent from view. I felt a source of accomplishment I never had before. The trip bonded us together and made us stronger than before. We sat on the top, exhausted but proud of our strength and willpower.



Photo credit / Vicky Chan

Sunset

| Ahn Chang Hyun

When I was young, I often went to the mountains with my parents. Being home alone was boring, and I was bribed with the opportunity of getting ice cream afterwards if I tagged along for the hiking. Hiking was just a hard walk for me back then, but now, I miss the atmosphere and air. Although my hometown is a big industrial city, the sea and the mountains are so close by. When I was younger, I used to go hiking and camping lots, and I would play in the water. Even now as an adult, I still go outdoors from time to time. I go for a drive to the beach with my friends or go hiking in search of famous mountains.

One of my favorite and most unique hobbies is photography. I started about 4 years ago, and it has made me go outdoors more often. I like photographing beautiful landscapes the most, so I go looking for cherry blossoms in spring, sea waves in summer, maple leaves in fall, and snow-covered scenery in winter. When you visit the iconic scenery of each season, you can feel the beauty of nature in its different forms. Nowadays, humanity still lives surrounded by nature. However, we are less ingrained in it. Surrounded by the many conveniences that artificial technology has created, we have become alienated from nature. Now, visiting nature is seen as nothing more a get-away trip, a vacation, or a healing retreat instead of an immersion into the beauty that Earth provides for us.

I am an exchange student from South Korea studying in the U.S. While there are so many differences between South Korea and the US, one of them that I cannot help but marvel at is the natural environment. From geographical features to all of the tree types, everything was so different that it was strange to me at first. However, one part of nature in the US especially impressed me: the sunset. Here, you can see the sun rise and set every day from anywhere. The sunset in South Korea and the sunset seen in the U.S. just feel somewhat different. While the sun may have set on my love for nature at one point, coming to the U.S. has allowed me to see it rise again.

My Favorite Things

| Benjamin Salter- Former Head Resident Advisor Fall 2019

Hiking is one of my favorite hobbies; it has always been an escape for me. When things get too busy or too stressful, hiking helps me recharge and reflect. Throughout my time in school and working, I've always found it too easy to be consumed by what needs to get done. There is always a paper that needs to be written or an email that needs to be sent. Even when I'm taking a break from doing work, there is a feeling in the back of my mind that something needs to get done, and that I should be doing something productive. But hiking requires setting those things aside, even if just for a little bit. It's the best way for me to remind myself that it's okay to take a break, and it doesn't negatively impact my work to do so.

In addition to being a great way to get some distance from my stress, perhaps my favorite part of hiking is that it's also a great way to get closer to others. I'm a very social person; those who know me know my favorite thing to do is make friends. With that in mind, I also greatly value my alone time. I need time to recharge and relax. I love hiking with others because it gives me both the ability to socialize and to recharge. Spending several hours in nature with someone gives plenty of opportunity for long conversations. However, unlike a lot of other social activities, there is no obligation to make conversation. Silences are frequently long and comfortable.

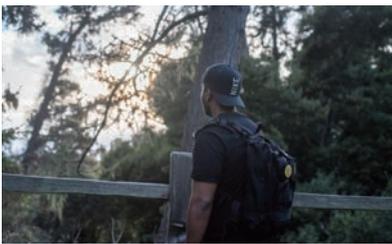


Photo credit / David Koster

Growing up, I frequently went hiking with my family in areas near Santa Cruz. I got closer to many of my friends at the International House hiking in those same spots. It was an opportunity for me to share some of the special places where I go to relax and escape with others. In the future, I hope that I'll be able to go hiking with them in the places that they go to relax and escape.



Photo credit / Flora Alexandra Rees-Arredondo

Studying Abroad Makes It Possible For Me To Try...

| Chihiro Ban



Photo credit /Chihiro Ban



Photo credit / David Koster

Hello, it's Chihiro from Japan!

I came to the United States last August as an international exchange student. Since my major is cultural-anthropology, I love participant observation (researching and figuring out how to fit into culturally different groups)! After I came here, I learned hiking is part of the Californian culture. My first experience of hiking was Mission Peak. After that, I decided to try a hike in Santa Cruz. The last hike that I went on was at Point Reyes.

Studying abroad makes it possible for me to try anything that I have wanted to do for a long time. I just didn't realize how much I wanted to hike among California's beautiful scenery until I arrived!



Hiking

| Wei Huang

I'm not a fan of outdoor activities. Usually, I'd rather be cooped up indoors all day than going out. However, that changed after going on a couple of hiking trips with some friends at I-House.

On the first hiking trip, we went to Mission Peak. According to the Peak's website, this hike is not recommended for beginner hikers. However, I did not think about it that much at the time. I was just looking for something to do during my first holiday in the U.S., and a hiking trip sounded fantastic. It is a craggy and rocky mountain with few trees.

For the second hiking trip we went to Almaden Quicksilver County Park. In contrast to Mission Peak, Almaden is covered with lush green vegetation. As it used to produce silver in the past, we saw lots of mining ruins along our path and took many interesting pictures during the trip. We had a lot of fun having a small picnic after hours of hiking and enjoying the cool mountain breeze.



Photo credit / Michelle Lauricella



Photo credit / Chihiro Ban

Hiking and Mind

| Imogen Chan
Former Resident Fall 2019

When mentioning Hong Kong, most people would think of a concrete jungle with extremely tall and dense buildings. It might be surprising, but about 70% of the land in Hong Kong is actually country parks or protected areas. Therefore, hiking has always been a popular past time activity for many Hongkongers. Even for someone like me, who does not like outdoor activities due to the hot and humid weather, hiking is important. I take hikes from time to time. Hiking allows me to take a break from daily pressure and urban lifestyle.



Photo credit / Figure 1.journeyera.com

Recently, under the influence of the coronavirus, it is extra important and exciting to go hiking. It allows us to stay healthy both physically and psychologically without contacting too many people. Physically, after weeks of home-schooling, my body was aching for exercises. With all the gyms and sports stadiums closed, hiking became my only option for outdoor activities. Luckily, I live right next to a country park where I could stretch my body, bathe under the sunshine, and breathe in the fresh air. All these activities also give me psychological relaxation. During the few hours that I hike, I don't need to think about my schoolwork nor all those things bothering me. I just need to focus on the beautiful view of mother nature and my breathing. After finishing a hike, my body may be tired but my mind is refreshed. That is also how I gain mental energy to stay at home and work for another week.

During my stay at I-House, I also hiked in Yosemite National Park on my Thanksgiving break. It was one of the most enjoyable trips I've had in my whole life. The experience encouraged me to do more outdoor adventures during my free time. In the future, I would love to add different countries' parks all around the world to my to-go-list. .

Contributors

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Photo credit / David Koster



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