

My Project GO Story

Today, I'm in Saty, a small farming village in Kazakhstan, where we don't have running water. Our alternative to a shower is a trip to the shed with a boiler and a teapot to fill with steaming water, a collection that is called a **Баня** - which translates to bathhouse. I was talking with another student concerning my reservations about using the **Баня**, when a bus driver leaned out of the shadows, took a drag of his cigarette and said to me, "Ah, but you must use a Kazakh **Баня**, once in your life! When will you be able to do this again?" I guess he's right!



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Memorable Moments

Funniest: I stopped at a restaurant and ordered stir fry with rice noodles to-go. When I went to the register to pay and ask for a fork, I said, "I'd like a spoon please." "Do you mean a fork?" they asked, perplexed. "No, I'd like a spoon," I replied, self-assured. I walked a block before realizing what I actually said. They gave me a fork.

Most challenging: Classes were an exercise in restraint. We weren't supposed to speak English at all in class, or anywhere on campus.

Favorite: My first trip into the mountains was the peak of my trip to Kazakhstan. Trails snaked up the mountains, and a gondola stretched up in the direction of the highest peak.

Cultural Differences

Something I found interesting... People on the street don't greet each other, but in the mountains, you greet everyone you pass. The segment of the population that hikes isn't that big, so it's like a miniature community.

New Perspective

What I learned from my host family: New foods are better than you might expect!

A worthwhile experience: Being the foreigner was incredibly enlightening. My respect and admiration for people who study, work, or move to a country where they can't speak their native language has grown immensely.

Advice to students considering this program: Don't fret too much over the location of your language study. It's what you make of it, so don't spend your spare time alone in your room. Get out and explore your surroundings!

How this experience will help me in my future career: After I finish a few tours as a Navy line officer, my dream is to work in intelligence, specifically so I can use the language I'm learning.