Tibet, located in southwest China, is one of the most famous touristic places in the world. It attracts people every year from both home and abroad and rewards every visitor with an unforgettable experience of the land, the people, and the mysticism.

In 2013, I traveled to Tibet with my friend. Before the trip, I found out that the altitude in Tibet is much higher than anywhere else in China. At high altitudes, the air is thin, and one is exposed to strong ultraviolet radiation as well as a huge temperature variation between day and night. However, even though I had made good preparations before my trip, nothing seemed to work when we arrived. It was much colder than I imagined, but the worst thing was that I had a terrible headache because of the high altitude. So, I instantly went to my hotel to rest as soon as I got off the plane.

After several hours of sleep, I felt much better. I couldn’t wait to visit the most famous place: Potala Palace. Potala is named after a holy hill in South India and is a Sanskrit word which means: “Abode of the Avalokitesvara”. Legend has it that in the 7th Century, to greet his bride, Princess Wen Cheng of the Tang Dynasty, the Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo, built a 9-story palace with a thousand rooms up on the Red Hill and named it Potala.

Later, with the collapse of the Songtsen Gampo Dynasty, the ancient palace was almost destroyed because of wars. What we see at present is the architecture of the Qing Dynasty and the continuous outcome since the 17th Century.

Potala Palace is composed of 2 parts: the Red Palace as the center and the White Palace as two wings. The Red Palace is the highest part in the center that is completely devoted to religious study and Buddhist prayer. It was painted red to represent power. It consists of a complicated layout of different halls, chapels, and libraries on many levels with an array of smaller galleries and winding passages. The White Palace once served as the office building of the Tibet local government; its walls were painted white to convey peace and quiet. The Great East Hall on the fourth floor, occupying a space measuring 717 square meters, is the site for momentous religious and political events. The fifth and sixth floors are used as the living quarters and offices of regents, while the seventh floor is the living quarters of the Dalai Lama.

The next day, I went to Jokhang Temple. It is located in central Lhasa.
With an area of 25,100 square meters, it is the ultimate pilgrimage destination for Tibetan pilgrims. The Jokhang Temple is a four-story timber complex with a golden top. It adopted the architectural styles of the Tang Dynasty as well as those of Tibet and Nepal.

Standing in its square, one can view the entire complex. On the square, there are two steles, one recording an alliance between the king of Tibet and the emperor of the Tang and the other portraying the teaching of the local people to prevent and treat smallpox, a once incurable disease in that region.

Every day early in the morning, the local pilgrims as well as the visitors come here to pray for their future, their families, and a good harvest. Nothing can stop these prayerful pilgrims because they believe one day God may hear their prayers and make them come true.

LinZhi, located in southwest of Tibet, has the most natural scenery. It’s a little far away from Lhasa (the capital city of Tibet). So, on the third day, we decided to drive there. It was a sunny morning. We got up early. Taking our cameras, we set off.

On the way to LinZhi, we were greatly attracted to the beautiful scenery. Lhasa River is the longest river in Tibet and flows from Lhasa to LinZhi. The water is so pure that one can drink from it directly. It is also called “Mother River” by the locals because it has helped raise the local generations. In the middle of Lhasa River, there is a huge stone engraved with four Chinese words: “中流砥柱”. It means a tower of strength. For thousands of years, the stone has stood firmly in midstream like a loyal soldier who is devoted to protecting the river from being destroyed.

After about two hours of driving, we arrived to MiLa Mountain, which is one of the greatest mountains in Tibet. The altitude of this mountain reaches 5,503 meters. The air at the top is thin, and visitors can easily get mountain sick. It was difficult and dangerous to drive there; however, once I got there, I was amazed by the natural scenery when I stood on the top of the mountain. The blue sky was so close that it felt like I could touch the white clouds. The distant snow-covered mountains looked so majestic. It is the most beautiful scenery I have ever seen. Without a doubt, people say that Tibet is the closest to paradise.

The big tree, located in Linzhi region, is a famous sight which has attracted thousands of visitors yearly. It is said that this tree is over three hundred years old. Many hadas (a piece of silk used as a greeting gift among the Zang and Mongol nationalities) were hung on this tree by the locals to greet the visitors from all over the world. According to the local custom, people who run around the tree three times will have tremendous luck the following year. Even though I didn’t believe it could give me good luck, I did it anyway because I wanted to show respect for the local custom.

We stayed in LinZhi for two days. Then we came back to Lhasa. We made a scheduled visit to Yamdrok Lake. It is one of the three largest holy lakes in Tibet. The lake is surrounded by many snow-capped mountains and is fed by numerous small streams. There are many good photo opportunities here. We truly enjoyed this breathtaking and lovely view of Yamdrok Lake. Yamdrok Lake was the last place I visited in Tibet. I couldn’t tear myself away from this beautiful place.

It was really an enjoyable trip that I will never forget. I definitely believe I will go back because Tibet is the most beautiful place I have ever been to. The holy land and friendly Tibetans are waiting for you!
A Little Bit of Fresh Air

When was the last time you took a little stroll around campus aside from rushing to GC at lunch time or across from the ELI to Starbucks in order to get your daily dose of caffeine? I’ll bet the answer is NEVER! As a student, that is one of the things I really liked about FIU’s campus: finding these hidden places where I could go and study all the while enjoying FIU’s luscious greenery. Honestly, this is one of the things I treasure most about my time spent at FIU. Now, no longer a student but a faculty member, I still enjoy finding the many little oases that FIU has to offer. The first picture shows a spot in DM, which is adjacent to the library. The bottom panoramic picture shows another spot across from the ELI’s parking lot. Go ahead and give it a try. Take time out of your busy schedule and enjoy the great fresh air and wonderful view. I promise that you won’t be disappointed!

SnapChat Corner

Here are our most recent Snapchats. Students had a great time ice skating. For some, it was the very first time and contrary to their belief, they didn’t fall! Of course, some did but they shall remain nameless. After a few good hours of fun and exercise, they all went out to dinner. This semester has just been filled with laughter and a good old fashion time! The picture in the middle features Elaine and the students as they are walking over to the Panther Arena to take a picture with their flags. Stay tuned! More Snapchats coming your way.
The ELI newsletter is a bi-weekly publication of the English Language Institute that updates students on upcoming events and important dates. It invites students to participate in its publication process. It also includes news, trivia, quotes and reading suggestions.
You may email any suggestions to Laura Lamour at: lauralamour@gmail.com

Check out all the pictures posted to the ELI Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/FIUELI