



Travelling in Depression

When I was very little, I caught the travel bug. It started after my grandparents first brought me to their home in France and I have now been to twenty-nine different countries. Each has given me a unique learning experience. At five, I marveled at the Eiffel Tower in the City of Lights. When I was eight, I stood in the heart of Piazza San Marco feeding hordes of pigeons, then glided down Venetian waterways on sleek gondolas. At thirteen, I saw the ancient, megalithic structure of Stonehenge and walked along the Great Wall of China, amazed that the thousand-year-old stones were still in place.

It was through exploring cultures around the world that I first became interested in language.



It began with French, which taught me the importance of pronunciation. I remember once asking a store owner in Paris where Rue des Pyramides was. But when I pronounced it PYR-a-mides instead of pyr-A-mides, with more accent on the A, she looked at me bewildered. In the eighth grade, I became fascinated with Spanish and aware of its similarities with English through cognates. Baseball in Spanish, for example, is *béisbol*, which looks different but sounds nearly the same. This was incredible to me as it made speech and comprehension more fluid, and even today I find that cognates come to the rescue when I forget how to say something in Spanish.

Then, in high school, I developed an enthusiasm for Chinese. As I studied Chinese at my school, I marveled how if just one stroke was missing from a character, the meaning is lost. I loved how long words were formed by combining simpler characters, so *Huǒ* (火) meaning fire and *Shān* (山) meaning mountain can be joined to create *Huǒshān* (火山), which means volcano. I love spending hours at a time practicing the characters and I can feel the beauty and rhythm as I form them.

Image Map

