

To say that modern day teachers have a lot to contend with is an understatement. With attention spans steadily declining with each generation, it's become an arduous battle to maintain a classroom's attention. Social media algorithms intentionally entice users to stay logged into apps as long as possible, making it difficult to focus for an entire class period, especially on subjects they feel disconnected from. While it's easy to see that we live in a global community, it's understandable that for some students, faraway places are just that - a page in a textbook, a headline on the news, a lesson in a class.

The vast information on the internet allows for people to form their own opinions about said places, but the trouble lies in whether or not those opinions are based on accuracy. **MTI member and High school teacher Catherine Patton** saw this trouble firsthand. While diverse, her students still held mostly ethnocentric world views. Valuing global education, she pondered how to bring the world to her classroom, as it wasn't feasible to tote her classroom around the world. Though the current lesson plans challenged her students to think about experiences outside their own culture and socioeconomic status, Catherine felt she could challenge her students even further if she could speak from experience.

She recalled an organization she'd heard about during a PD class - an organization, GEEQ, that sent teachers on educational tours around the world for discounted rates. As a teacher of both AP World and Religion, Culture, and Democracy, she was naturally drawn to an India and Nepal itinerary. Rich in history, culture, religion, and politics, it was the ideal trip. Next thing she knew, summer break had arrived, and she was on a plane crossing the ocean.

As expected, the difference in culture between Madison, Wisconsin and this region was colossal. The confluence of religion and architecture was ever present in India, a concept seldom seen in the US - from a palace in Jaipur that was half Muslim and half Hindu in appearance, to the artwork adorning the cities, the cultural syncretism was prominent.

While hitting the highlights that anyone visiting India would want to (hello, Taj Mahal and Delhi), Catherine and her group also strayed off the beaten path to dive into culture seldom experienced by traditional tourists. She partook in sunrise yoga, morning tea, and a bike ride with the locals, venturing into areas of the city typically unseen. Determined to maximize her trip, she took every opportunity to learn from the inhabitants that lived and breathed the culture. No textbook can quite capture the authenticity of the real deal.

After covering as much of India as humanly possible in their limited time there, her group continued on to Nepal. As their vehicle rumbled into Chitwan National Park, a group wide double take followed as they laid eyes on a black rhino. Classified as critically endangered, the prospect of seeing one in the wild was not even in the realm of their expectations that day. A plethora of phones and cameras popped up to capture the moment, though it would be unforgettable regardless. With just a few thousand of the animal left, it was an experience that future generations may never have.

Catherine returned to her Wisconsin classroom that fall with an increased sense of pride in her role as a teacher, and an excitement to be able to relive her summer adventure in the form of teaching.

With GEEO, educators earn professional development credit and optional graduate credit while seeing the world. The programs are 5 to 23 days in length. GEEO also provides teachers with educational materials and the structure to help them bring their experiences into the classroom. The trips are open to all nationalities of pre-K-12 and university educators, administrators, retired educators, as well as educators' guests. The deposit is \$350 for each program and then the final payment is due 60 days before departure.

In 2024, GEEO is offering programs in over 57 countries on 5 continents. Detailed information about each trip, including itineraries, costs, travel dates, and more can be found at <http://geeo.org>. The registration dates are flexible, but space is limited and many programs will be full well before the deadline. You can see a [list of programs here](#). If you prefer to browse via a search engine, you can [search the catalog here](#). GEEO also partners with universities, national resource centers, professional associations, and other groups to offer private programs. To learn more, visit [GEEO's website](#), email travel@geeo.org, or reach out seven days a week, toll-free at 1-877-600-0105 between 9:00 AM and 9:00 PM ET.