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It's the living experience that attracts young people to work in other nations. 'Instead of wasting my time working at a crappy job in Toronto to save money for the trip, I can work at a crappy job in Europe and see more of the world'



DOWN UNDER: Montreal university student Bruno Georgescu, 19, stands at Uluru (Ayer's Rock) in Australia's Northern Territory. At left, Georgescu and friend Nao with mock Statue of Liberty on the Sydney waterfront.

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BY DEBORAH GARDNER
YOUNG PEOPLE'S PRESS

Imagine leaving your summer job at the end of the day and getting on the subway near Buckingham Palace in London.

That's what Adrienne Edmunds did last summer.

Edmunds, 20, a native of Goose Bay, Labrador, and a University of Guelph student, was a bartender and waitress at the Barbican, a hotel near the Queen's residence, for almost two months.

"It wasn't my dream job. It was like any other summer job," says Edmunds. But it was in London.

Edmunds found her job with the help of the Student Work Abroad Program (SWAP), an international exchange program run by the Canadian Federation of Students through Travel Cuts (or Voyages Campus in Quebec).

The program is aimed at students who want to work in a foreign country but would also like the flexibility to travel. SWAP staff arranges work visas for each applicant and then sends information packages to the applicants about the countries of their choice. Upon arrival in the host country, there is an orientation session that includes tips on how to find a job.

"The point of SWAP is to provide support. Sometimes planning a trip can be quite an ordeal," says Christine Pivetta, national co-ordinator for SWAP Canada. However, the program does not place

students in jobs or find them places to live, Pivetta notes.

With the help of SWAP, Edmunds found both within a week. She began work among a multicultural staff, who were mostly students, in a hotel with multicultural guests. "I liked working with people from a lot of different places because you learn so much more," says Edmunds.

She feels working with people from different ethnic backgrounds opened her mind to different lifestyles and cultures.

"Work experience, no, that wasn't why I went. It was living experience," she says.

Edmunds waited on tables and poured beer for 40 hours a week. Most of her shifts were in the evenings, which left her days free to do what she really wanted to do in London — see the sights.

"Whatever I wanted to do that day I could do — I learned to rely on myself," says Edmunds. "It (travel) did wonders for my self-esteem and my self-image. I'm so much more confident in what I'm doing."

Bruno Georgescu, 19, a law student at l'Université de Montréal, joined SWAP because he wanted to see Australia but didn't have enough money to do so.

In two months, Georgescu worked in three restaurants — in two as a waiter and in one as a bartender — packaged magazines and did a bit of busking on the streets. He spent a third month trav-

elling through Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.

"To find a permanent job in Australia is really hard because people there don't stay in one place for very long," says Georgescu.

He arrived in Australia near the end of last May and through SWAP, had his first couple of days arranged for him. His SWAP registration fee included setting up a bank account, arranging a visa, in-country orientation and hostel accommodation.

"It (SWAP) was like having a personal guide," says Georgescu.

Through SWAP, he found a job at a packaging company. Then, going out on his own, he got work in three restaurants by walking along the streets of downtown Sydney and asking if anyone needed part-time help. Almost every restaurant manager said yes and asked him to call again.

Georgescu also began busking on the streets, posing as an angel. He got the idea from a janitor who posed as the Statue of Liberty and made good money. The young Canadian painted his face, wore a borrowed costume and soon was making up to \$100 a day.

"I'd see my friends walk by and they wouldn't recognize me. It was fun but you feel like an idiot," says Georgescu.

He recommends joining SWAP to any-

Self-esteem gets boost in program

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one heading for Australia and he believes working there was a beneficial experience.

"When you travel, you see places but not people," says Georgescu.

"If you work there, you become an Australian. You're part of it and you live with them. It's a lot more interesting."

Jean-Charles Chabot, 22, of Sherbrooke, Que., thought that utilizing SWAP would be a good way to create a little security while in New Zealand. Chabot, who is now studying counselling at l'Université de Sherbrooke, spent 10 months working on farms and busking on the streets.

His jobs were not found through the SWAP resources. However, the program's services were still available to him if needed.

"For my first (travel) experience it (SWAP) made me feel more secure," says Chabot. "I could always have assistance if I needed it but I never did."

Chabot went to his SWAP orientation and then took off on a WWOOFing job (Willing Workers On Organic Farms) he found through the hostel where he was staying. WWOOFing is a common form of employment in New Zealand and other countries (including Canada), where four to five hours of farm work is exchanged for food and lodging.

For six months, Chabot WWOOFed on several farms — milking cows, weeding, prun-

ing, cleaning and doing other odd jobs.

"It (WWOOFing) gave me the chance to experience different types of jobs. I didn't want to have a permanent job," he says.

Chabot found out that he could play his guitar for money so he started busking on the streets of several cities. As often as four times a week, Chabot played his guitar and sang for about \$100 a day.

"I built a lot of self-confidence," he says. "I learned how to deal with the real world."

SWAP participants usually find jobs, often in the tourism and hospitality industries. These sorts of jobs can be easy to find in many countries because of their high turnover rate. They also have the most flexibility.

"That's what is nice about SWAP. You're not stuck in any job that you don't like and you don't have to work all the time," says Pivetta.

Mira Oberman, a 20-year-old journalism student at Ryerson Polytechnic University, joined SWAP so she could spend more time in Europe.

"Instead of wasting my time working at a crappy job in Toronto to save money for the trip, I can work a crappy job in Europe and see more of the world," she says.

But Oberman soon realized there was more available to her in Paris than dead-end jobs. Using the SWAP binders that listed news agencies, she called all of the American and Canadian organizations in Paris to



MICHAEL STUPARYK/TORONTO STAR

HOME BASE: The point of SWAP is to provide support for students planning to work abroad, says Christine Pivetta, national co-ordinator for SWAP Canada.

see if any were interested in hiring an intern.

Unfortunately, Oberman found out that professional jobs for foreign students are hard to come by in France.

She is now working as an unpaid intern at Bridge News, an American news company in Paris.

Her employers are in the process of trying to find money for a paid internship. If it comes through, Oberman will stay with them for the length of her three-month visa.

"The work I'm doing right now is what I want to spend my life doing and the chance to work as a journalist in Paris may never come again," she says.

Deborah Gardner, 22, is a student at Ryerson Polytechnic University.



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