Seven Months
ALUMNI COUPLE COMPLETES TRIP OF A LIFETIME

By Rachel Strayer

Above: A stop in Morocco provided an opportunity to try a unique form of transportation.
Left: Robert ’99 and Lyn (Farruggia) Bartorillo ’04 celebrate their stay in Paris.
ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ROBERT AND LYN BARTORILLO
HEN ROBERT ’99 AND LYN (Farruggia) Bartorillo ’04 made plans to sell their newly remodeled Chicago condo and move back East, they had no idea they were about to become world travelers.

“Months earlier we were trying to decide on where to go on vacation,” says an entry on their travel blog. “We dreamed of an around-the-world trip, but knew that it was not possible to take that much time off of work and we had a mortgage to think about.”

But when their condo sold after being on the market for just two weeks, the couple found themselves in a unique situation—no jobs, no mortgage and no excuses.

So after a month of planning, they embarked on a seven-month around-the-world trip of a lifetime. Armed with backpacks, five dictionaries, around-the-world plane tickets and Eurail passes, they hit 25 countries and six continents by train, bus, plane and boat.

In late summer 2006, they took off from New York City and flew straight to their first stop: London, England. Their first month was spent exploring the sights, sounds, flavors and histories of classic European cities such as Paris, Madrid, Monte Carlo, Munich and Rome. They rode the London Eye, the world’s largest Ferris wheel; drank champagne under the Eiffel Tower; rooted for the bulls during a Spanish bullfight in Madrid; played with monkeys on the Rock of Gibraltar; and enjoyed food and drink at Germany’s Oktoberfest.

After Europe, the adventurers continued to northern Africa, Asia and Australia. In South America, they discovered family members they never knew they had. Robert tracked down relatives in the Argentinean cities of Cordoba and Mendoza. “They had never met us before, but they took us in like we were old friends,” says Robert. “They even had an Argentinean barbecue, an asado, in our honor.”

The food they encountered was an adventure all its own. From traditional favorites—escargot in France, for example—to more unusual fare like musso (cartilage from the jawbone and knees of a pig) in Sicily or pumpkin and feta fritters in New Zealand, the couple tried it all.

As they look back on all the countries they visited, Greece and Thailand are easily their favorites. Thailand is “so different than what we are used to,” says Robert. “Yet it is so tourist-friendly, many of the locals spoke English, and the dollar goes very far.” The couple loved the history and archaeology in Greece. While there, Robert joined “The Marathon,” the ancient road race that finishes in the Olympic Stadium in Athens.

“It was 38 degrees that morning and I almost did not (run the 5k),” Robert wrote on their blog. “But the sense of accomplishment was very rewarding as I crossed the finish line in the middle of the Olympic Stadium in much better time than I anticipated!”

The journey ended where it began, in New York City, seven months and countless miles later. After returning to northeastern Pennsylvania, Lyn and Robert embarked on a new adventure: They married and now reside in Pittston, Pa. Robert works for Prudential Poggi & Jones Real Estate and is active with the National Ski Patrol. Lyn works for First National Community Bank and is treasurer of her church. The couple welcomed a son, Gianni, in May 2009.

For more pictures and stories, check out their travel blog at http://www.travelpod.com/members/rbartorillo.

From left to right: Lyn enjoys a moment by a canal in Venice, Italy.

The Iguazu Falls on the border of Argentina and Brazil was a stop on the South American leg of the journey.