This study looks at the motivation of American students to travel abroad. The specific subset of students studied was the participants of the International Perspectives in Water Resources Management program. The International Perspectives in Water Resources Management (IPWRM) course looks into the specific water resources issues of a particular region in an annual short course planned by the IIHR-Hydroscience and Engineering department of The University of Iowa. This year’s course looked into Turkey with a concentration on the GAP project affecting the Anatolia region during the span of two weeks at the end of May 2005. This survey looks at what factors makes certain students want to participate in traveling abroad for such a trip compared to their fellow students. The concerns and factors that are used in the decision process such as time, money, safety and motivation are examined. The driving factors for studying abroad are examined such as experience, cultural diversity, site seeing, globalize work force, and break from everyday life are ranked and compared. A sample group of American student of similar academic standing and research interests were sampled and contrasted to the participants of the trip on these issues.

In general, the group’s motivations for travelling abroad were to experience and to learn first hand about other cultures, about water resources issues in other countries (being of interest for future work options), to gain a perspective of the people outside of the United States, and to gain a deeper understanding of international environmental and social issues.

Some from the group had travelled abroad before and the ones who didn’t listed reasons such as time or money constraints, but the whole group agreed that it is really important for a student to travel abroad. It was thought that travelling provides students with a broader perspective of life and gives a personal perspective of how one’s culture is viewed from outside. It was mentioned that people in the U.S. are relatively isolated from the rest of the world and that travelling abroad is a good opportunity to break that. Understanding other people brings tolerance and respect for others. Experiencing the outside world and expanding horizons is necessary for growth of ideas, insight, and knowledge. It is a unique way to learn about other people, places, and ourselves and our own cultures because it helps to broaden our minds.

Before travelling the main concern for the persons travelling were financial constraints, then time and last was safety. The breakdown for the rankings is given below in Figures 1 and 2.
Figure 1

Top Reason for Not Traveling Abroad

- Safety: 43%
- Money: 0%
- Time: 0%
- Not Prior.: 57%

Figure 2

Second Reason for Not Travelling

- Safety: 23%
- Money: 15%
- Time: 8%
- Not Prior.: 54%
The driving factors for students travelling abroad were in order, to gain experience, cultural diversity, followed by a tie for 3rd between site seeing and global workforce, with a break from every day’s life coming in last. The graphical breakdown is given below in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

![Driving Factors Graph](image)

After the trip everybody responded saying that they had learned a lot about Turkey, the Turkish culture, an understanding of the way the Turkish people use their water resources, and how the need for water affects the development of a society. An insight into the lives and places that affect and are affected by the GAP project was also taken into consideration. Another thing mentioned was the gain of a new perspective on American culture viewed from outside the U.S. and how the world outside the U.S. differs. For all of the participants involved, his or her motivations were satisfied and there is a clear willingness to continue travelling abroad after the experience.
The participants in the study were asked to give their reflections on their host and home country after the trip to see how the trip affected them. In general what the group learned about the host country was that it is very welcoming to guests, and that the people of Turkey are very hospitable, friendly, and gracious people. The group became educated on how diverse the Republic of Turkey is with the different cultures that have passed through Turkey and its long and rich history with multiple historic civilizations and kingdoms. Because of these aforementioned reasons, the people of Turkey are extremely proud of their homeland.

The group mentioned some things they learned about their home country that were both positive and negative. It was a consensus that in the U.S., people take a lot of things they have for granted. These included the health care and sanitation systems. It was also interesting to see how little religion has an influence on the U.S. compared to a country like Turkey.

To review and test the results from the surveys given to those who traveled, a sample survey consisting of the same questions as the pre-travel survey was given to students of the same background and age who didn’t participate in the IPWRM trip to Turkey.

When faced with the question, “Which are of a concern, or are limiting factors in your decision to travel abroad?” Those who didn’t participate replied, with reasons such as time or money constraints. This was, for the majority of the group, the same reply received from the participants of the class. Overall, safety was still a distant reason for not traveling abroad. There was less of a desire to travel abroad from multiple participants who responded that they didn’t think it was important to study abroad or viewed at as just another experience. The majority of the group however still felt that studying abroad was an important experience.
Figure 5

Top Reason for Non-Travelers

- Safety: 0%
- Financial Restraints: 50%
- Time: 40%
- Other: 10%

Figure 6

Limiting Factor

- Safety
- Financial Restraints
- Time
- Other

Priority (1=Highest, 5=Lowest)

Percent
When asked what the driving factors are for a student fitting the subject’s profile to travel abroad, the group’s motivations for wanting to travel were basically the same as those who participated in the class. The top reasons were to experience and to learn first hand about other cultures, get an understanding for the level of water resources infrastructure in the country, to gain a perspective of the people outside of the United States, and to gain a deeper understanding of environmental and social issues on an international level.

**Figure 7**

*Top Motivating Reason for Non-Travelers*
Overall, the desires and discerning factors of both parties seem to be similar. Both, the placebo group and the class participants would like to travel abroad to learn about the different cultures and gain experience that would otherwise be impossible to receive in their home country. Neither group mentioned safety as an important reason to avoid traveling.

In the placebo, or test group, there were those who expressed an interest in living within the society for six months instead of visiting for three to five weeks. This trend seemed to depend partially on the commitments of the students (married, job) not just the desire to experience another culture. However, there were also a few outliers who didn’t comprehend a reason or show any desire to travel abroad. They expressed beliefs that you could learn the same amount in your home country. The small set of students that fit the profile of Hydraulics students I think in the end made it hard to draw strong comparisons between the test group and course participants. The deciding factor between the two groups could possibly be something like motivation which is hard to quantify. If this study was continued for multiple IPWRM trips more robust conclusions could be drawn.
Course Feedback
The main objective of the IPWRM survey was to look into American students motivations and factors in traveling abroad, this portion was discussed in the previous section. Along with questions pertaining to that topic the participants were asked for feedback about their trip and for consideration that event organizers should take into account during future trips. The section show the question asked followed by a summary of the answers.

What was your favorite experience from the trip?
Most of the responses to this question had responses relating to the social aspect (Liverpool fans/night before UEFA final game,, free time at the bazaars and markets, the Uzuners dinner), water resources (old water system/aqueducts, Cistern) and Site Seeing(Castles, Mt. Nemrut, Bosporous).

Would you recommend the IPWRM course?
All of the participants recommended the trip some rather enthusiastically. Some of the answers that included comments are given below.

I think the course is great. The chances to see the engineering feats of the world come only once in a life and much is gained from seeing the various applications and aspects. I would, especially as an introduction to traveling abroad for students who haven’t done much international travel in the past. It helped me gain a better understanding of the water resources practices in a region I knew little about before the trip process

Yes, for Hydraulic and non-Hydraulic students alike.

Without hesitation. The program was well planned to give the right amount of touristy things and the right amount of educational things. It would be very difficult and expensive to do all the things we did on the course as an individual on vacation.

Do you have any suggestions for further IPWRM trips? Please elaborate.
This question drew the lengthiest comments from the participants. The subjects that were brought up multiple times included a need for more rest, more free time, and shorter lunches. Some other suggestions that were only broached once include spending less on accommodations, having only one group leader, and including participants in the planning process.

Do you think the arrangement of the cultural activities, sight seeing and water resources aspects had the correct balance or do you think the course should have been emphasized towards a certain aspect?
Overall as a group the consensus was that the correct balance was achieved. The only comments that were given were one person wanted more water resources aspects but wouldn’t cut out the other parts while another person wanted less tourist activities.

Do you think 2 weeks are enough?
The majority of the participants agreed that 2 weeks was an adequate amount of time while a couple people wanted closer to 3 weeks and one said you can’t spend enough time in Turkey. Another useful suggestion was to encourage students to plan an extension of the trip on their own.
Were there any negatives you experienced about the trip to Turkey (besides the sickness)?
The main negative aspects mentioned were the tour guides and slit toilets which were both accepted to be hard things to control.