



In the transition from college to the workforce, it is not uncommon for graduates to spend time traveling abroad. The experience can be liberating, broaden world views and provide time to figure out one's next steps. Indy Nelson, *California '15*, felt all that and more as his post-graduate travels were a bit more involved than a typical backpacking trip. Indy is now a newly-minted Guinness World Record holder for being the youngest and fastest person to visit every country in the world.

In the course of 539 days, Indy visited 196 countries (the 193 countries recognized in the United Nations plus Vatican City, Kosovo and Taiwan). He took more than 400 flights on 165 different airlines,

and he left with countless tales of adventure and lessons learned. Now, after submitting a 9,400-page evidence packet to Guinness, he also holds five world records. Indy has become the youngest person and youngest male to visit every country in the world, beating the previous record by six months. It also took him the least amount of time to complete his journey, making Indy the fastest person and fastest male to visit every country in the world. He has also flown on the more airlines than anyone in the world.

Growing up, Indy traveled abroad on a number of occasions, however, it wasn't until taking his first overseas trip without his parents that he was truly bitten by the travel bug. That trip was over winter break of

his senior year, when Indy and his DU Big Brother Kevin Fulgham, *California '16*, traveled to Greece to volunteer at a camp for Syrian refugees. The exhilaration of that trip left Indy inspired. From there, he signed up for a very untraditional spring trip—one to North Korea. It was during this trip Indy would start to think about visiting every country in the world. As other students pondered the possibility for themselves, Indy took action. After a bit of online research, he set the goal to visit 100 countries. If he could complete that, he would find a way to visit the rest of the world.

"At this point, I was at 19 countries I had visited," Indy recalled. "I was about to graduate school. I was broke. I was planning to start

looking for jobs, but I kept wondering if it was possible to actually try something like this. I wanted to make myself a better person by seeing the world."

Before setting off on his voyage, Indy looked at the current Guinness records so he could make plans accordingly. As part of the deal to become the fastest person to visit every country in the world, Indy would need to revisit all of the countries already stamped in his passport, including North Korea.

"I got permission from Guinness that if you cross the 38th Parallel, technically, that's North Korea," Indy said. "I crossed the border at the DMZ, and that was, well, interesting."

During Indy's year and a half long journey, he had many interesting—and sometimes dangerous—experiences. In addition to beautiful tourist destinations, he also visited those ravaged by conflict and war. On numerous occasions, Indy was detained at the airport. He was accused by Russians of being a spy. He visited the front lines in Iraq. Indy truly saw the world in both its beauty and its flaws.

"For me, exhilaration is going to areas that others wouldn't go," Indy said. "It was much cooler to go into the unknown and not know what was going to happen each day. The only way you can learn how to solve the most difficult situations that you can't even fathom, is to be exposed to it. That was the most exciting and valuable aspect of [the trip]: being exposed to so many different situations."

Indy planned all of his travel—from booking flights to securing visas—himself. Often, he would spend hours online researching the best ways to enter a country or obtain a visa. He planned the entire trip as he went.

On average, Indy spent three days in each country he visited. However, in several countries, he spent only a few hours, whether it be to avoid danger or because the country was very small. For example, when visiting West Africa, he visited 35 countries in 35 days but would spend mere hours in some, and a few days in others.

To verify with Guinness that he had indeed visited a country, Indy took a photo of himself there and provided copies of his visas, passport stamps,

travel itineraries and boarding passes. His evidence packet totaled 9,400 pages. His goal was that no matter which section of the book Guinness turned to, there would be no doubt he had visited a country. Indy completed his journey Nov. 11, 2017, after visiting Yemen.

Since his travels have ended, Indy has focused on re-acclimating himself to a "normal" life. He has returned to California and begun looking for jobs. Ideally, he will end up in Silicon Valley working in software development. Regardless of where he lands, Indy now has quite the fun fact—not to mention resumé boost—to share during interviews.

"All of this has made me into a stronger man of character that I otherwise would not have been," Indy said. "I hope to continue to grow into my character throughout my life, but in the last year and a half, I've probably gained 10 years of expertise."

