Students and faculty in the Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management are studying cultures and helping develop new tourism initiatives in countries around the world. Recently, TRSM has formed partnerships in Russia, Armenia and Turkey where they hope to unite different cultures through a shared interest in tourism development and social connectivity.

Kars & Ani, Turkey

Students and faculty from the University of Florida’s College of Health and Human Performance traveled to Turkey this summer as part of an ongoing effort to promote peace through tourism and cultural understanding. There, they researched, created and implemented tourism initiatives in collaboration with students and professors from Dokuz Eylül University in Turkey and Armenian State University of Economics.

This trip is part of a three-year cooperative agreement among the three universities to strengthen tourism education, research and industry outreach while bridging the gaps between cultures. Historically, relations between the Turks and Armenians have been strained by a number of political and societal issues that have hindered efforts to unite the region. In October 2009, both countries agreed to establish diplomatic relations, an effort that is still in the early stages of development.

Asli Tasci, assistant professor in the department of tourism, recreation and sport management, and Stephanie Thorn, Eric Friedheim Tourism Institute program manager, traveled with 11 UF students over a 10-day period as they visited Istanbul and Kars and Ani. They collaborated on a project to employ regional tourism development initiatives at the Ani Ruins, also known as the City of 1001 Churches. The ruins are a major cultural feature...
and heritage site significant in both the Armenian and Turkish cultures. Students used social media and online networking tools such as Pinterest, Facebook, Flickr and WordPress to help promote tourism within the Turkey-Armenia border region. In addition, participants from all three universities shared presentations on various aspects of their cultures, covering topics such as music and dance, cuisine, religion and daily life.

This project was funded by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Turkey and was sponsored by the EFTI at the University of Florida. The Eric Friedheim Tourism Institute is committed to building a bridge between the tourism industry, organizations, destinations and higher education through excellence in interdisciplinary research that provides strategic information focused on a wide array of travel, tourism and hospitality opportunities.

Nizhni Novgorod, Russia

From May 10 to June 18, six University of Florida students along with Dr. Svetlana Stepchenkova (TRSM) and Dr. James Goodwin (Russian Studies) were hosted by the State University of Nizhni Novgorod (UNN) in the Russian Federation. This visit was part of a 3-year partnership agreement between the two universities.

In the five-week time span prior to this visit, UF hosted five UNN students as part of this collaboration. Selection for participation in this trip was very competitive and each student must complete a major project related to their major at UF and tourism in Russia. The trip provided the opportunity for students to immerse themselves in and learn more about the Russian language, history, and culture. Students also studied the tourism sector by visiting related businesses in Russia.

The destinations during the trip included Nizhni Novgorod, Suzdal, Gorodets, and a boat trip on the Volga River.

By the numbers...

20.3 million
The number of tourists that visited Russia last year, generating more than $9 billion for the economy.

2018
The year that Russia will host the FIFA World Cup. Nizhni Novgorod plans to build a stadium on an island in the Volga river where it will host some of the matches.

Gorky

Nizhni Novgorod was known as Gorky from 1932 until 1990. It was named after the famous Russian author and political activist, Maxim Gorky, who was born there in 1868.

31 million
The number of Facebook users in Turkey, currently ranking 7th in the world. The United States is 1st, with over 158 million users.

2492 B.C.
The date traditionally associated with the foundation of the Armenian nation.