

Mishaps manifest lessons

Oh the things I wish I knew.

International travelers quickly learn the journey is anything but predictable. Factor in a new place, a foreign language and jet-lag, and common sense gets put on autopilot as you find yourself completely confused and headed in the wrong direction – both literally and figuratively.

But there is hope. Many have gone before and are willing to share their lessons learned the hard way to keep you from making an idiot of yourself the same way.

Transportation alone could fill a library of experiential learning.

Senior Jessica Rasmussen warns that in Paris Metro stations, ticket gates close quickly and relentlessly with little regard for fragile American bones. If you value your limbs – or suitcases – take heed.

In Italy, cross-country train stations can be just as much of a hassle. Last summer, my roommates and I missed a train because we were looking at arrivals instead of departures. Likewise, another friend spent a day in Rome waiting for a train that would never come because she didn't realize trains are listed by final destination, and if yours isn't final, it won't show up.

Lesson learned: Know the Italian – or Spanish or Finnish – words for "arrival" and "departure," and your final destination.

That same friend learned the hard way not to fall asleep on night trains.

Don't be lulled by the sense of security from everyone else in your car sleeping. My friend was tired and consequently fell asleep, only to wake up with a man standing above her, her pants unzipped and her money belt, which she thought was securely under her clothes, partially open.

Thankfully nothing was stolen, but let this be a lesson to you: Even if you must drink your weight in espresso, don't snooze.

One mistake I won't repeat is a lack of choosiness in travel buddies. When selecting mates with whom to head across the Pond,

more does not equal merrier. When a friend and I wanted to go to Ireland for spring break and stay in a cottage, we thought, "Hey, it'll be cheaper with 11 people."

First mistake: thinking it was a good idea to travel with 11 people.

On that trip, fights were had, friendships were tried, everyone was frustrated, and I came home a tad wiser.

Lesson learned: Ireland isn't the place to hammer out issues and resolve conflicts. It's cheaper in the States. Choose companions wisely, don't take very many, and make sure no one has a serious beef with anyone else.

Senior Erin Sadzewicz learned that just because it's spring doesn't mean it's warm and sunny – especially in England.

If you want heat and bikini-clad bods, head for Mexico or Florida. Erin reported nonstop rain for her week of outdoor sightseeing in London, and she's got the pictures of gray skies and her Columbia coat zipped to her nose to prove it.

Lesson learned: Our friend the Internet will happily tell you what's up with the weather in just about any country that fits your fancy. Check out CNN.com before you go, and pack accordingly. The high today in Nicosia, Cyprus, is 79 degrees. In Helsinki, Finland, the low is 40. Just thought you might like to know.

Yet another lesson I learned is when everyone – Truman's study abroad people, the American University of Rome people, seasoned travelers, my mom – said to carry my passport with me whenever I went city-hopping, they weren't just playing.

I got to Florence from Rome to find that Marco, the concierge at our hotel, would not let us stay because none of us had our

passports with us. Marco was quite frazzled by our rookie mistake and called the police and American embassy to ask what to do. I talked to a guy named Steve from the embassy who helpfully suggested we try to cry our way out of it. We didn't get arrested or deported, thank goodness, but we did have to pay 88 euro to not stay in the hotel.

There's another thing – if you make reservations in advance, you will have to pay for the room whether you stay there or not. Be forewarned. And for the love of Betsy, take your dang passport with you.

Mishaps, mistakes and misadventures are just part of the package of travel abroad.

You'll learn to be flexible, to appreciate the road less traveled – and completely unplanned for – and not to sweat the small stuff like missed trains and stolen wallets.

One last bit of advice from me is to play the "How could this day be worse?" game when things go amazingly wrong, as they undoubtedly will.

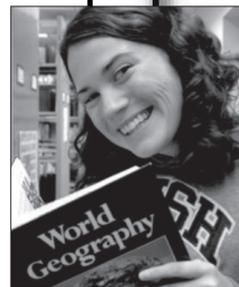
This wonderful game, which originated with my Truman roommate and me freshman year, consists of making up hypothetical situations in which your day would be worse. Example: After getting rerouted across Italy because of a train strike and near molestation by Albanian men on the train, "This day could be worse if I had gotten deported for not carrying my passport." Or, "This day could be worse if an elephant excreted in my suitcase." And we can't forget the classic, "This day could be worse if a llama ate all my underpants."

The key is to laugh and relax, friends.

You've just got to laugh, or you'll cry.

And hey, it's always an adventure. Happy travels.

Mishaps, mistakes and misadventures are just part of the package of travel abroad.



Christine Albrecht

Elizabeth, played by Reese Witherspoon, and David, played by Mark Ruffalo, share an intimate moment in "Just Like Heaven." Witherspoon's and Ruffalo's characters play a couple separated by the worlds in which they exist.

Wire Photo



Movie's moral message destroys ending

Alison Bowen
News Editor

"Just Like Heaven" is a just a little too much.

The first five minutes set the tone for the entire movie, which includes entirely too many flowers, cutesy jokes that lack actual humor and things of the color pink. The film opens with Elizabeth, played by Reese Witherspoon, sitting placidly in a picturesque garden with flower petals swirling all around. Cue a boyfriend's worst nightmare.

Fortunately, the movie quickly cuts from the flower fest to the meat of the film: the life of Elizabeth, a young, beautiful and workaholic doctor. The audience follows along as Elizabeth rushes through a hectic day, plagued by a lack of sleep and a desire to succeed that overrides everything else, including, of course, being on time to a blind date.

The movie leaves Elizabeth as she agrees to take one last patient and enters the life of David (played by Mark Ruffalo), who has moved into Elizabeth's apartment. The audience knows only that Elizabeth is no longer living in the apartment but with no promise of whether she will return.

After David moves in, he begins to see visions of Elizabeth in the apartment, which are neither frightening nor well-

done. Elizabeth and David develop a relationship, and he begins to help her find out who she is, why she no longer lives in this apartment, and why she can walk through walls.

Although other movies, such as "City of Angels" and "Ghost," created cinematic relationships that successfully join a real person and a transparent person in love, "Just Like Heaven" does not get the job done. As the relationship between Elizabeth and David develops, the audience is left trying to believe characters that are following a far too unrealistic plot.

The one redeeming quality of this film might come as no surprise to the average college film: Jon Heder of "Napoleon Dynamite." Heder plays Darryl, a helpful store employee who eventually is the lone cheerleader of a couple that nobody believes exists. Heder's dry humor and perfectly delivered lines are a breath of fresh air in a film so lacking in actual entertainment.

As the plot of the movie thickens, so does the political

statement. By the end of the film, those still in the theater are left more with a moral lesson than a fairytale ending.

As far as the acting, even Witherspoon cannot save this

movie. She portrays the character well – a workaholic trying to find the meaning of life and possibly even receiving a second chance. She is believable as a troubled woman but frustrating in what seems to be a restrictive role. Ruffalo is endearing, but his character also is weakly developed. He is a shade more believable as a man who just lost his wife, but he loses points when he falls in love with the woman who keeps walking through his kitchen table.

"Just Like Heaven" is just a bit too much. The accomplished actors cannot save this film, not even Napoleon Dynamite himself. And whatever might have been salvaged by a cute ending is overpowered by an overbearing moral message.

Movie Review

'Just Like Heaven'

Starring:

Reese Witherspoon,
Mark Ruffalo

Genre: Romantic
Comedy



Horoscopes

Oct. 16 to 22

By Madame Hughes

ARIES: (March 20 to April 18) As kids we were warned against speaking to strangers. But as adults we can back off of that admonition in many situations. Certainly taking the initiative to introduce oneself to an unknown partygoer is perfectly permissible and might even lead to making a wonderful new friend.

TAURUS: (April 19 to May 20) A snag in your plans will likely occur. With some quick thinking and fast acting, you should be

able to avoid a major inconvenience. Happily, your Taurus disposition is tailor-made for on-the-spot adjustments to plan reversals.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 20) Cloistered living is the norm for monks, but hardly the type of existence you should seek. If you've been cutting yourself off from social interaction lately, that is not prudent. Get back in the mainstream: Your sluggishness will pick up pronto.

CANCER: (June 21 to July 22) Do you have a special place that you consider your retreat? It needn't be grandiose – just some spot that welcomes you when the world presses down a little too hard. Those born under the sign of Cancer are in particular need.

LEO: (July 23 to Aug. 22) Upon hearing the term Ivy League, it is not unnatural to conjure up the notion of elitism. Although some might be put off by this stereotypical image of snootiness, your Leo sense of entitlement affirms and endorses it.

VIRGO: (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) Clearly you are trying to do too much, trying to tackle aspects of your job that don't suit you. Better

to concentrate on your strengths and delegate to others those tasks that only serve to slow down your efficiency.

LIBRA: (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) An ancient philosopher once said, "To like and dislike the same things, that is indeed true friendship." Good friends are awfully rare. Put it on your mental checklist to touch base with someone you consider a soul mate.

SCORPIO: (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) Your vibrant, sparkling self is being smothered by current negative influences. Fight back! Do not allow the flames of your peppy personality to be robbed of oxygen and deplete you of your vigor.

SAGITTARIUS: (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) Any project that requires a hammer, saw or drill should be evaluated carefully. Blessed though you are with many talents, you do have a tendency toward clumsiness. Have a first-aid kit handy.

CAPRICORN: (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) "Taking the fifth" when your wife confronts you just isn't going to fly. She will never let you get away with hiding from her questions. Accepting your licks while being forthright is, believe it or not, the better path.

AQUARIUS: (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) You might have overreacted to a

loved one's recent remarks. Either he or she caught you at a bad moment or expressed him- or herself poorly. In any case, be open to making it right between you.

PISCES: (Feb. 19 to March 19) If there is anything you cannot abide, it is the curse of bureaucracy – paperwork, regulations, controls. They are not for any one of your sensitivities. Give you the open road, no one to supervise you, and you are happy as a clam.

IF YOUR BIRTHDAY IS Oct. 18: You share your birthday with Chuck Berry and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis. You have leadership traits but can also keep a low profile.

AROUND THE VILLE

Campus

French Film
The French-American Cultural Exchange presents the second film in the Tournees French Film Festival at 8 p.m. tonight. "Confidences Trop Intimes" will play in Violette Hall 1000. Admission is free.

Branded a Bulldog
Homecoming 2005 begins with a Homecoming Kick-off at 5:30 p.m. Monday at Red Barn Park. Various Homecoming events include Karaoke at 8 p.m. Tuesday in the SUB Down Under, Truman RoundUp at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Centennial Hall Field and Skit Competition at 7 p.m. Thursday in Baldwin Auditorium.

Cloning and Stem Cell
The Kirksville Right to Life is sponsoring a presentation by John Roules from Rockhurst University at 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Catholic Newman Center. The event will cover cloning and stem cell research and the moral issues surrounding it, and it includes a free dinner. Sign-ups are in the Newman Center lobby.

Chinese Acrobats
The Shangri-La Chinese Acrobats will perform at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in Baldwin Auditorium as part of the Kohlenberg Lyceum Series. Tickets are available for students, faculty and staff at the Student Activities Board office or Center for Student Involvement office. Visit <http://lyceum.truman.edu> for more information.

Truman Debate
The Truman Forensic Union will sponsor a Truman Speaks debate at 8 p.m. Wednesday in the Baldwin Hall Little Theatre. The topic is "The U.N. Should Have a Standing Army."

Local

Lewis and Clark
Missouri Humanities Council in partnership with the Kirksville Arts Association, Adair County Historical Society and Quota International of Kirksville presents the first of four programs about Lewis and Clark. Fred Fausz from the University of Missouri-Columbia will present "Passages to the West: From Lewis and Clark to Many Trails of Tears" at 7 p.m. Friday at the KAA Building, 119 Franklin St.

Concerts

Rock Show
Detour will perform at 9:30 p.m. Friday at Toons. Admission is \$5 for those 21 years and older and \$7 for those 18 to 20 years old. Must be 18 to enter.

Free Concert
Redwing will perform at 10 p.m. Friday at Il Spazio. Admission is free.