

SWARTKRANS, SOUTH AFRICA

EMILY NETTESHEIM

Program: UW Archaeology Field School, Summer

Emily's Majors: Molecular Biology; Anthropology

Academic Life: About half of the program is spent touring museums and the University of Witwatersrand, and the other half is spent at the Swartkrans site, sitting in the dirt and excavating. These days were when I learned the most. Not only was I gaining practical experience in excavation techniques and dealing with field conditions, but each artifact we found was also a learning experience. There were 7 other students, all from UW, on the dig. The professors, Dr. Pickering & Dr. Sutton, were around every day of excavation and were always excited to see what we had found. They would quiz us on landmarks of the artifact or explain to us anything we may have missed. Swartkrans is by far the best classroom I have ever studied in.

Living in the Field: Our accommodations in South Africa were far better than I ever expected them to be. All of the basics were covered- running water, hot water, flushing toilets, elevated tents, a common area, and a large kitchen. We lived in groups of 3 or 4 per tent, which was basically like a sleepover every night. The highlight of the accommodations is by far the location. We were living on a nature reserve, where wildebeests, ostriches, and elands could walk right up to your windows.

A Resume Builder: Studying abroad at Swartkrans has given me an amazing set of real-world skills that I can apply to any future dig. At Swartkrans there are a variety of sites to dig in, each of which requires different techniques to excavate properly. I excavated on horizontal surfaces, vertical surfaces, and even in a cave. Now how many people can put that on their resume?

For Students Considering Swartkrans: If you are interested in paleoanthropology, Swartkrans is by far one of the best places to study as you are right in the heart of where all the evidence is being found. Not to mention you will be learning from the best.



Emily, on a trip to the Gondolin field site, sifting through the breccia pile to find some fossils.

“One of the most memorable experiences was the day I had my first large artifact find.”

