



**RUSSIAN ORTHODOX** church in  
Menlo Park celebrates its feast day. | Page 5

# The Almanac

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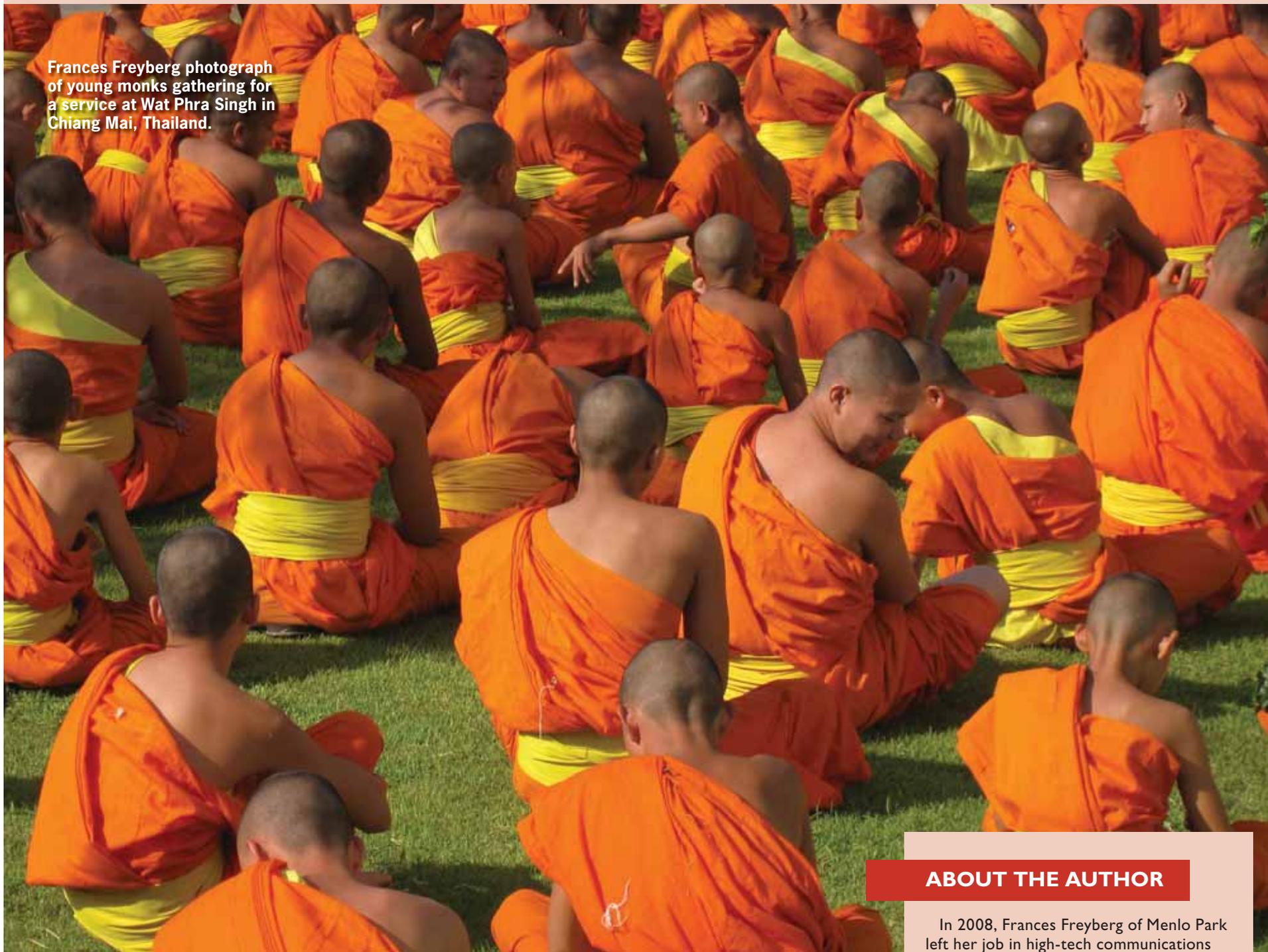
A year well traveled

MENLO PARK PHOTOGRAPHER FULFILLS CHILDHOOD DREAM

[ Second Section ]



Frances Freyberg photograph of young monks gathering for a service at Wat Phra Singh in Chiang Mai, Thailand.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In 2008, Frances Freyberg of Menlo Park left her job in high-tech communications to travel the world for a year, taking photographs and writing about her experiences.

Ms. Freyberg, 30, grew up in Menlo Park, attending Oak Knoll and Hillview schools, and Menlo-Atherton High School.

After graduating from Brown University in 2000, she returned to Menlo Park to take a job at Sun Microsystems. "Menlo Park was a wonderful place to grow up in, and it's a wonderful place to be a young professional," she says.

Upon returning from her travels, Ms. Freyberg joined Mission Hospice of San Mateo as director of development. She is an emerging photographer specializing in vibrant color portraits of people, wildlife, nature and architecture from more than 45 countries.

**During her worldwide** adventure, Frances Freyberg fulfilled her childhood dream of visiting the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt.

## A year well traveled

MENLO PARK PHOTOGRAPHER FULFILLS CHILDHOOD DREAM

Story and Photographs by Frances Freyberg | Special to *The Almanac*

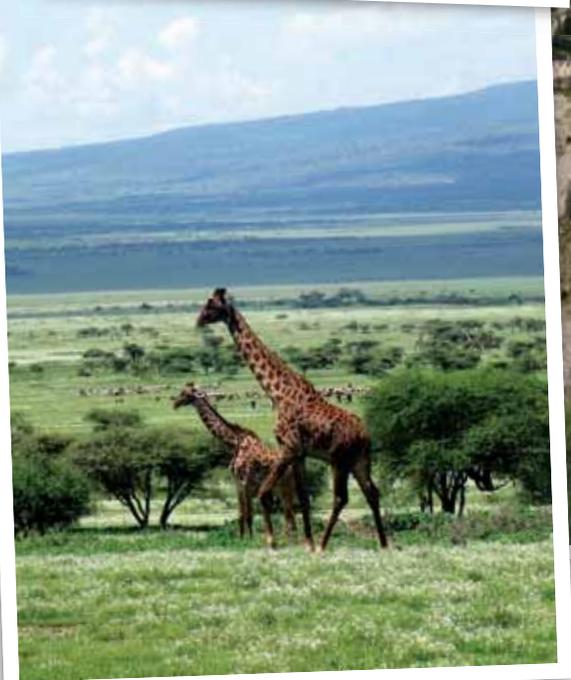
I always wanted to be an explorer. From the time I was in kindergarten, I was leading "expeditions" through the jungle gym at Willow Oaks Park or across the duck pond by the Menlo Park Library — a place that ignited my imagination and sense of adventure as a little girl.

Most of the places I dreamed of exploring were ones I'd seen in photographs: the ancient pyramids of Giza, the Great Wall of China, the jungles of the Amazon.

In 2008, at the age of 28, I fulfilled my childhood dream of traveling the world for a year. I planned a journey that would take me through five continents and 41 countries, many of which I'd only seen in pictures.

See **FREYBERG**, page 23





Frances Freyberg photographs, clockwise from top left: Aromatic spices and teas for sale by the scoop in Damascus, Syria. Early morning sun illuminates the ancient Incan city of Machu Picchu, Peru. An adult and baby giraffe walk through fields of wildflowers in Serengeti National Park and Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania.

## A year well traveled

### FREYBERG

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I set out not only to see the world for myself, but also to share it with others.

My goal was to learn and experience as much as I could, and to use my own photographs and writing to inspire others to do the same. While traveling, I built an extensive weblog ([wheresfrances.blogspot.com](http://wheresfrances.blogspot.com)) with weekly photos, as well as historical and cultural information, about the places I visited. Now home, I've been exhibiting my photos at local galleries, cafes and community centers.

Over the course of the year, I naturally experienced some minor travel lows: food poisoning in Turkey; lost luggage in Denmark; a stolen camera in Thailand.

But the highs just can't be beat: staring into the mouth of an active volcano (Chile); ballooning over the Serengeti at sunrise (Tanzania); walking in the footsteps of ancient Roman emperors (Middle East); dangling my feet from the top of 14,497-foot Mt. Whitney (California); exploring the vine-tangled ruins of Angkor Wat (Cambodia).

I met terrific people from all over the world, and from all walks of life, many of whom I still hear from regularly. And I'll never be short of funny stories to tell at holiday parties. One of my favorites: being detained at the Canadian/U.S. border for innocently carrying orange peels and elk antlers.

I got more questions entering the U.S. from Canada than I did coming home from Syria!

### Capturing the experience

During my travels, my pocket-sized digital camera and journal went everywhere with me. The more I traveled, the more comfortable I became approaching people to take photos. I found that simply asking for a photograph could often be an introduction to a fascinating conversation.

And sometimes, the locals wanted to take photos of me: a group of giggling Egyptian girls swarmed me with so many cell phone cameras that I didn't know which way to smile. While at the Royal Palace in Cambodia, I was trying to take a photo of a shy young monk when I realized that he was trying to take a photo of me. In the end, we asked someone to take a photo of us together!

I'm drawn to photography because of its unique ability to capture a personal moment in time and share it with others. Photographs enable people to see familiar surroundings from a fresh perspective, or to explore uncharted territories for the very first time.

In fact, pictures have often sparked my own adventures. I've been known to plan entire trips around a view in a photo that I just had to see for myself.

Through my photographs, I hope to educate people about our world, and to interest them in the natural beauty that surrounds us. I'm particularly drawn to scenes that express beauty, excitement,

humor and diversity, whether through a brilliantly colored blossom or a poignant face in the crowd.

Of course, a single photograph could never convey the entirety of an experience, a location or a culture. But if my photographs inspire others to explore and learn, or to simply pause and reflect, I'll consider that success.

### The ultimate classroom

There are nearly 300,000 travel books available on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), not to mention more than a million books on history, culture and art. I alone took more than 30,000 photos to share my journey. But nothing compares to simply getting out and seeing the world for oneself.

Nothing brings the brilliance of Incan architecture to life like walking through the ruins of Machu Picchu. The best-filmed documentary could not convey the full sensory experience of a Syrian souq (market): the heady scent of spices, the jostling crowd of shoppers, the distant calls to prayer.

While traveling, I was struck by not only how different other people and places could be, but also by how many similarities and values we share. As I encountered and embraced other cultures, my perspective of our planet — and my place in it — grew.

Now that I'm home in Menlo Park, I realize that this adventure was much more than a lesson in history, geography or culture; it was also a lesson in patience and perseverance, and in the joy of following my dreams. ■

### CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

Photos from Frances Freyberg's worldwide trip may be found in galleries and private collections throughout the United States, as well as online at [francesfreyberg.com](http://francesfreyberg.com). Current and upcoming Bay Area exhibitions include:

- Planet Granite solo exhibition, 924 Old Mason St., San Francisco, through November 2009 ([planetgranite.com/](http://planetgranite.com/)).
- Cafe Zoe solo exhibition, 1929 Menalto Ave., Menlo Park, Oct. 8-Nov. 6. ([cafezoemenlopark.com/](http://cafezoemenlopark.com/)).
- Sebastopol Center for the Arts "Portraits" group exhibition, 6780 Depot Street, Sebastopol, through Oct. 18. ([sebart.org/](http://sebart.org/)).
- Santa Cruz Art League "Beasts on Broadway, Animals Galore" group exhibition, 526 Broadway, Santa Cruz, Oct. 24-Nov. 22 ([scal.org/](http://scal.org/)).
- Sanchez Art Center "Angels: Artists Imagine the Invisible" group exhibition, 1220-B Linda Mar, Pacifica, Oct. 29-Dec. 5 ([sanchezartcenter.org/](http://sanchezartcenter.org/)).
- Little House Activity Center Holiday Craft Fair, 800 Middle Ave., Menlo Park, Nov. 7-8. ([penvol.org/littlehouse/](http://penvol.org/littlehouse/)).
- Yoga Mind Warrior Body Studio, 609 B Cowper St., Palo Alto, permanent collection ([yogamindwarriorbody.com/](http://yogamindwarriorbody.com/)).