



The Meantime Coffee Co.  
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FEATURE PROFILE

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Nov. 27, 2023

## INTERCONTINENTAL CAFFEINE: ROSE HOUCK’S JOURNEY AS MEANTIME CMO ABROAD

Aside from sightseeing and trying new cuisines, what excites Rose Houck the most about traveling across Southeast Asia is finding new local cafés where she can work on the latest marketing initiative for the Meantime Coffee Co.

Houck, a junior from McLeansville, NC double-majoring in Biology and Applied Data Science, is acting as the chief marketing officer of the Meantime Coffee Co. from Salaya, Thailand this semester. She said the past four months traveling around Asia have facilitated much personal growth and reignited her passion for global learning.



Rose Houck smiles at an elephant in Chiang Mai, Thailand Nov. 27, 2023.

Houck is spending her fall semester studying abroad at Mahidol University International College outside of Bangkok, Thailand. Despite the 12-hour time difference, Houck has continued to conduct weekly meetings with Meantime’s marketing team and do individual remote work, such as website design.

“Working remotely creates much more flexibility in terms of time and place, but it also requires much more communication to best support the success of the company,” Houck said. “As a college student, I’m grateful that Meantime has allowed me to earn this much needed income regardless of my location.”

Houck first decided to join Meantime’s team as a sophomore after relying on its coffee to balance life as a student worker her freshman year. Her initial interest in the company was inspired by the prospect of getting free coffee to fuel her busy lifestyle as a double STEM major. To her surprise, she said working at Meantime as a barista and on the marketing team provided her with a sense of purpose and an incredible community on campus.

Meantime is a certified Orange County Living Wage employer with a mission to provide professional development opportunities to its student baristas. For this reason, every worker at Meantime, from the Chief Executive Officer to the Chief Financial Officer, is a current student at UNC-Chapel Hill. These immersive roles give students insight into how to run a business, helping to develop important interpersonal and teamwork-based skills.



Houck said her experience abroad this semester has shown her the power of coffee to connect people across cultures and places.

“Every cup of coffee has a story behind it,” Houck told me. “When you have that cappuccino in your hand, just know that so many people have touched it before you.”

Houck prepares a tea in the café in Chapel Hill Feb. 4, 2023. [Source: Ira Wilder Photos].

No matter where she has traveled, Houck said she has seen coffee, and no shortage of it. She noticed how different cultures roast or brew their coffee differently in ways that are unique to their regions. Because of these variations in production, Houck has also seen how coffee production can often be unethical. She mentioned that common problems are coffee growers not being provided fair wages for their work and farmers using inputs like pesticides which can be harmful to workers and the environment.

Despite these variations in preparation, coffee is a popular product due to its distinct taste and the energetic effects of caffeine. From Thailand to Chapel Hill, coffee fuels workers, professors, and students alike. The coffee trade is highly globalized, with the U.S. importing more coffee beans than any other country [in 2021](#). That same year, Thailand exported [\\$4.66 million](#) in coffee, 11.7% of which was sent to the U.S.

The Meantime Coffee Co., UNC's only student-run nonprofit café, holds global sustainability as one of its core values. Meantime buys coffee beans from Carrboro Coffee Roasters, a local roastery committed to ethically sourced products through direct relationships with bean growers.

“I’m glad to be working for a company that cares about where its products are coming from,” Houck said. “A coffee bean grown over here in Thailand can reach students in Chapel Hill and all you do is grab your drink off the bar, but there is so much unrecognized love that went into it.”



Houck takes a hike in Sapa, Vietnam Aug. 2023. When she’s not in class, she uses her Meantime savings to travel to nearby countries in Asia.

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