

STUDENT ROUNDS

Call of the Wilderness

NATE BAROTT '26 LOOKS TO COMBINE HIS PASSION FOR EMERGENCY MEDICINE WITH HIS LOVE FOR THE OUTDOORS.

Nate Barott '26 has never met an outdoor adventure he didn't like. He's an avid proponent of self-powered endurance sports, including running, skiing, snowshoeing, and cycling across road, gravel, and mountainous terrain. A cross country runner in high school and college, he has biked the length of the Erie Canal in Upstate New York, hiked a dozen of the Adirondack high peaks, and has volunteered as an EMT, firefighter, ski patroller, and Adirondack search and rescue team member.

So, it's not surprising that Barott didn't choose a conventional locale when looking for a study abroad program as an undergraduate college student. He wanted to go to Nepal.

"I've always been interested in the Himalayas, and I honestly just wanted to get into some really high mountains and see Mount Everest," he says.

The Cornell University biology major found a program through the School for International Training. In addition to learning about the country's history, the program included a six-week independent study component for a student-designed research project.

Barott, who was considering a career in medicine, focused his project on the occupational health of porters, the labor class that carry packs and equipment up the mountain for climbers.

"They carry tremendous amounts of weight at high altitude," he says. "There was a surge in tourism in Nepal and people attempting to climb Everest. I wanted to explore the impact on the porters."

Traveling to the Everest region, Barott befriended locals to learn about the rural healthcare system in Nepal and the inter-

national organizations that also assist in providing care. His research found that altitude illness and respiratory infections were common diseases for the regional porter population, and impediments to well-being included inadequacies in equipment, accommodation, insurance, and education.

"That experience was a foundational reason for my decision to go into medicine," he says.

Barott graduated magna cum laude from Cornell in 2020, at the height of COVID. He headed to Utah, where he

served as a ski patroller providing first aid and rescue services to injured skiers, while taking the MCAT and applying to medical schools.

By chance, Barott saw a post on a Facebook wilderness medicine group from a Stanford University physician looking for volunteers to go to Nepal to study altitude sickness.

"I wasn't even a medical student yet, but I tried to sell myself as a source of local knowledge," he says.

It worked. Barott joined Project Curtain (Current Understanding of



Nate Barott '26 in the Himalayan mountains



Relevant Trends in Altitude Illness in Nepal), and after a year of study design, headed back to Nepal April 2022 with a team of Stanford emergency medicine doctors on a research expedition.

“We flew to Kathmandu for a briefing, then took a small 10-passenger plane to the district of Solukhumbu, where we spent about a week hiking up to the small village of Lobuche, located about 10 miles south of Everest base camp,” he says. “We were in the middle of nowhere, super high up. It was exhilarating.”

The point of that location was to study altitude sickness where it was happening. “We collected information in the form of surveys from as many people as we could to get a sense of the prevalence of altitude sickness in the region,” Barott says. “The elevation in our village was 16,200’, which was great for the purposes of our study—an investigation into trends in altitude sickness among trekkers and climbers visiting the region.”

Over six weeks, Barott and a team of healthcare professionals from Stanford and Patan Hospital (University in Kathmandu) distributed 1,200 surveys, each with questions relevant to their experience with altitude sickness.

The study results, published in *High Altitude Medicine and Biology* in June 2024 and on the American College of Emergency Physicians website, affirmed the correlation between altitude sickness and time spent adapting to altitude but found no protection from female hormones estrogen and progesterone, another aspect of the study.

In addition to conducting research surveys, Barott also helped deliver lec-

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tures to the local community on altitude sickness, assisted with an emergency evacuation of a man with HAPE (high altitude pulmonary edema), and summited his first 6,000m mountain.

He says taking that trip just before his MS1 year provided a full-circle experience that has shaped his study of medicine in many ways. “I have parallel interests in emergency medicine and emergency medical services,” he says. “I think I’d like to do some sort of fellowship training at some point with the goal to pursue a career that can combine medicine with my interests in the outdoors.”

Barott spent the summer after his MS1 year working as a park ranger in Acadia National Park in Maine, where he responded to emergency medical incidents and conducted search and rescue missions. Those incidents formed the basis of a poster presentation at the Wilderness Medical Society summer conference in July 2024.

He has served as a student volunteer

with House Calls for the Homeless, which provides services to Syracuse’s unhoused population, and is a member of the volunteer ski patrol at Labrador Mountain. He’s also participated in disaster response training exercises through New York Project Hope, including whitewater rescue, structural collapse, and mass-casualty response. “I’m currently assisting with 2025 exercise logistics, including recruitment efforts and curriculum design for medical modules,” he says.

After taking Step 1 last year, he celebrated by biking down the Pacific Coast from Vancouver, Canada, to Tijuana, Mexico.

A native of Canandaigua, New York, Barott is enrolled in Upstate’s rural medical program. As a third-year student this year, he spent both his family medicine and emergency medicine blocks in Glens Falls, New York, in the Adirondacks. “I fell in love with the place,” he says. “I immersed myself in the small-town culture and was able to go on hikes every day,” he says.

Barott says the experience provided a model of what his future career might look like. “I think it would be great to benefit a small, rural community, to get involved in a local ski patrol, search and rescue team, or EMS system, and also to find a way to do global health work in Nepal or elsewhere,” he says. “But that’s a lot. We’ll see if I can do it all.”