



ProjectsAbroad

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad



Sri Lanka



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EXPERIENCE SRI LANKA

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THE LAND LIKE NO OTHER

Vibrant, baffling, chaotic, stifling, colorful, beautiful, spiritual!

Vibrant, baffling, chaotic, stifling, colorful, beautiful, spiritual... are only just a few words to describe this fascinating country! After months of preparing, visualizing and bracing myself for the unknown, I am pleasantly surprised how I have adjusted to this crazy pace of life so quickly.

In a bid to satisfy my curiosity and get closer to the culture, each day I attempt to understand the psyche by consciously observing the local Sri Lankan "way". Realizing this is very difficult without the language, I attempt a few words, however, most of my communication either ends in sign language, English or just plain frustration. Bartering with a tuk tuk driver over text message was strange, but fun :).

My host family is just adorable, hospitable and caring. The delicious array of curries is lovingly and tirelessly prepared by host mum "Aunty". Aunty was also thrilled to learn I bought a Saree, meticulously wrapping and pinning it for me.

My Teaching placement at local government school Siri Sweevali has been honoring, challenging, rewarding, hilarious, endearing... the children are so, so precious, cheeky, yet respectful (much more than Australian students!). And what amazingly fast learners they are!

Two weeks have passed, and I only have two weeks left! If time could stand still, I wish it was now. After a few days of acclimatizing, the fun is only just beginning and I am not ready to leave so soon!

Leonie Brackenreg

Message from the Editor

March was a month of usual activities for Projects Abroad but not for schools. Most of the schools had their sports meets and exams as it was the first term of the year. Our teaching volunteers had the time to spend in school grounds assisting and organizing games with local teachers a lot than spending time in classrooms.

Projects Abroad | Sri Lanka has conducted all usual activities such as medical seminars, medical camps and outreach programmes in this month.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankans are getting ready to celebrate Sinhala and Tamil New Year in April. This will offer the rare opportunity for our volunteers to get a deep understanding about Sri Lankan culture, values and how most of these customs are interrelated between different communities in the country and geographically with India.

New year falls according to traditional calendars of south Asia. Many Asian countries has New Year celebrations in this period and all these were based on traditional calendars. According to Sinhalese astrology, New Year begins when the sun moves from Meena Rashiya (the house of Aries) to Mesha Rashiya. It also marks the end of the harvest and spring.

History of the 'Traditional New Year' which is celebrated on month of April, goes back to an ancient period in Sri Lankan history. Various beliefs, perhaps those associated with fertility of the harvest, gave birth to many rituals, customs, and ceremonies connected with the New Year.

Gishan Perera

Desk Officer - Sri Lanka

Shoe Donation to kids.

Date : 26 th of February, 2013

Location : Panadura—Sri Seevali School

Task : Shoe Donation



Medical Camp

Date : 2nd of March, 2013

Location : Panadura

Task : Medical Camp



It was an amazing month...

This month's medical camp was held in the seaside village of Wadduwa. There were more than 250 patients, so all of the medical volunteers had a great opportunity to help our local community while gaining some real hands on experience. At the start of the day the volunteers checked the patient's fasting blood sugar levels, measured the blood pressure levels and then wrote down the results. After this, the patients had a chance to go to the doctor with laboratory results. According to the ailment, the Doctors prescribed medications. All of the volunteers tried to understand the disease with the help of Doctors. Finally the patients came to take medicines. As a Pharmacist I had to dispense medicines for them. I tried to teach some important medications which are commonly used in Sri Lanka to volunteers. The volunteers also assisted me in making prescriptions and I answered all of their questions. So they all were happy about that great day..!

Roshini Rathnathilake

Medical Supervisor

Mawala I.T. Centre

Mawala I.T. Centre is located in a village next to the seaside town of Wadduwa. This village is surrounded by lush green tropical forests and rice paddies. There are many tropical birds, some luminous in colour, and cheeky monkeys (the animals as well as some of the children who attend the I.T. centre!). When walking from our host family to the placement (about a one mile walk) the fresh smell of the forest accompanied by beautiful singing birds is, excuse the cliché but, good for the soul. When our volunteers arrive here they know that they are now long away from the 'hustle and bustle' of Colombo (Sri Lanka's capital city, where all of the volunteers arrive).

Despite the idyllic location, the village accommodates some extremely poor people, and some of these people's income is underneath the poverty line (less than 1.25 USD per day). With this in mind Projects Abroad was eager to help in some way. After a lot of discussion the team decided to make an I.T. centre in this village, because we believe that the improvement of computer literacy can be a key way to ultimately reduce poverty levels in the area. An I.T centre would mean that the children of the village can learn I.T skills, something that they may not have had the chance to obtain if there was no I.T. centre. Also the volunteers teaching I.T. in English will help the children with their spoken English, another useful skill that can potentially help some of these people escape poverty. Therefore in 2006 we converted a top floor of a shop into an I.T. centre.

At first, we donated five computers and employed a full-time member of staff to assist the students and our volunteers. We promoted the centre and arranged for children to have free computer lessons every week after school (and on some weekends). It was not long until the whole village knew about this centre and the children flooded in with so much enthusiasm to learn. The age range of the students was around 10 to 20-years-old (now we also offer additional lessons for adults) so one of our previous volunteers created a primary and secondary syllabus for these children and young adults to follow. Each week they learn a new skill and when they complete the syllabus, Projects Abroad arranges a graduation ceremony. The graduation ceremony is held every two months and is always the talk of the village. Projects Abroad prepares a certificate for each person who has completed the course and we give them this certificate at the ceremony.

Now we have had over one thousand students that have graduated at the I.T. centre while nearly 100 volunteers have played a key role in this! There are 12 new computers that have been donated by previous volunteers and Projects Abroad, and the centre has been painted and had a new carpet fitted. Our member of staff is still there and always greets our volunteers with her beautiful smile!

Projects Abroad is extremely proud, because a lot of the students that our volunteers have taught at the centre have gone on to study I.T. at university and many have got a job in this field after university. It just goes to show how much of a difference volunteering can make. They have changed lives, for the better, and they have really made a difference to an entire community. All of their work is really appreciated in the local area and this is obvious. As soon as a foreigner walks in the area they are treated with so much respect and sometimes the children even bow to the volunteers!

To the volunteers from around the world who have taught at this centre over the past seven years, I pass on a message from the people of this village.....Thanks, es toothe, danke schon, danku vel, merci, tak, gracias, nandri, danybad, kapunkap, assante sana, obrigado, arigato, terra magase X.



Rich Liam Egan

Social Manager

ANYTHING can be

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child.

Listen to the DON'TS

Listen to the SHOULDN'TS

The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS

Listen to the NEVERHAVES

Then listen close to me-

Anything can happen, child,

ANYTHING can be."

Shel Silverstein

One thing I learnt from being with people, children especially is that NOTHING is IMPOSSIBLE. If you have a positive outlook to life, you can find a way around anything. Be it a large noisy class or children who do not speak the language. In Zambia, South-Central Africa, I worked at a rural Anglican Mission Station that held an orphanage in the area. My town speaks a language called Bemba, but this area called Fiwila with transport going in once a week if we were lucky does not bring much of the outside world to it-nor take those in it out much. So the language spoken here, Lala, I was told is closely related to Bemba before I got there...only to find out it was a deeper version of Bemba and I could understand NOTHING! So, put with a language I cannot understand and people who do not understand English and given the pre-school children from the orphanage for six weeks to teach, I was totally unprepared! So alone, with mostly the Father from the Anglican Church nearby who spoke English, my only thought was: "I need to learn something in Lala for my first day." So up the hill I ran to his house and panting, introduced myself and asked for help in basic Lala to do my first lessons with the children introductions. I shouldn't have even worried with anything for that first day; the children were so interested in just touching and following me around the classroom, but with the Lala I'd written down I got to make name tags that they coloured and scribbled on. So my first lesson, name tags and "My name is..." with a little song of "My name is Aruni, My name is Aruni, My name is Aruuuuni" (using the Yankee Doodle tune). I got past that little nervous barrier and slowly worked my way from there. Not to say there weren't days I didn't want to pull my hair in frustration when I felt "Am I even doing anything, do they even understand what I'm trying to teach them?" but at the end, the hugs, the holding hands, little games and songs we played and learnt (me too), the tiny, tiny, TINY bits of English words, phrases and songs floating between them, I couldn't help missing the life I had there, in that simple village with no electricity and running water and where I came back sick from Typhoid and Malaria and stayed bed-ridden for three months. It was an amazing experience, and when I went back again, I know a huge part of me remains there. Volunteering, no matter how hard, how impossible things can be, how much language can be a massive barrier, how ill and tired you get, is an absolutely amazing thing...because you're giving yourself to help others... and what better way to live life, than for others.



Aruni Jayawardane

Teaching & Care Supervisor

Date : 26 th of February,2013
Location : McDonalds, Colombo
Task : Trip to Colombo and treat

Anula Wijerama children - being treated at McDonalds by Cecilie Jensen.



Date : 15th of March, 2013

Location : Panadura—Thanthrimulla School

Task : Painting and Cleaning

Social Outreach!



Voyage

Mon arrivée à Colombo ,quoi en dire? À l'aéroport tout va comme prévu, Surangam attend avec son petit carton et un grand sourire. À la sortie ce qui frappe le plus est la circulation. Mon guide de voyage recommande de ne pas conduire et je comprends très vite pourquoi. Autos , motos , autobus , tuktuk , tout ça dans ce qui semble une belle anarchie. Le lendemain c'est le trajet jusqu'à ma famille d'accueil qui me permet de voir un peu de pays et de confirmer ma première impression sur la circulation.

Puis c'est l'arrivée dans cette famille où je vais passer un mois. L'accueil est chaleureux de la part de Melani et son fils Anouk , ainsi que des colocataires et futures compagnes à l'orphelinat. Et cette chaleur se maintient depuis dans les contacts et aussi ... dans la nourriture très épicée .

Pour ce qui est de l'orphelinat, la première impression est un peu mitigée . De l'extérieur une belle bâtisse , à l'intérieur une impression de chaos au début, la question qui vient est : Est-ce qu'il y a un pilote dans l'avion? Puis d'une journée à l'autre on voit un certain ordre apparaître . On est très loin de l'idéal et on voudrait tout changer. Il faudrait probablement se contenter de petits changements mais quelqu'un a déjà dit que le plus long des voyages commence par un simple pas. Et le plus important il y'a les enfants , certains souriants d'autres moins, des actifs , des contemplatifs, des charmeurs, des casse-pieds. Chacun vient avec sa personnalité et c'est ce qui fait que j'ai le goût d'y retourner chaque jour.

Lise David

DANISH ARTICLE

Jeg ankom til Sri Lanka d. 6 november 2012, med maven fuld af sommerfugle og forventning til min næste måneds ophold.

Varmen da jeg trådte ud af lufthavnen, var meget overvældende og det blev bestemt ikke mindre overvældende da taxaen bevægede sig ud i trafikken og det massive trafik kaos der hersker i Colombo.

Overvældende er nok den overordnede følelse der bedst beskriver især mine to første uger i Sri Lanka...

Mødet med børnehjemmet var hårdt, men også meget livsbekræftende. Dets at det i den grad min hverdag i Danmark i perspektiv. Glæden fra børnene ved bare den mindste opmærksomhed fra os frivillige, var i den grad overvældende og fantastisk... Her kan man virkelig mærke at det betyder noget at man er der.

Min værtsfamilie var rigtig søde og gjorde alt for at jeg skulle føle mig velkommen. Maden blev tilpasset så det ikke var for stærkt og der var fin variation imåltiderne:) weekenderne blev brugt på at opleve dette vidunderlige og smukke land, med besøg i regnskoven, Yala nationalpark, Galle Fort og ikke mindst den smukke strand i Unawatuna...

Månedens fløj afsted og før jeg vidste af det skulle jeg desværre hjem igen. På den måned gennemlevede jeg alle følelser, lige fra frustration og sorg til glæde og lykke.

Jeg har mødt nogle fantastiske mennesker og fået venner for livet. Jeg har fået et perspektiv på min hverdag som får en til at sætte pris på det man har. Jeg har fundet ud af, at jeg kan klare mere end jeg troede, jeg har oplevet den smukkestenatur og jeg er i tvivl om at jeg helt sikkert skal tilbage til Sri Lanka igen. :)

Camilla Hansen

