

August 26, 2016

Why I will miss India

Why wouldn't I miss India would be a more appropriate question. Admittedly India has its problems and frustrations as does every country, but it also has many wonderful and amazing qualities that are unique to this sub continent and the reason that after a year here I am more in love with it than ever before.

I will miss the people I have met; their generosity and kindness in welcoming me willingly into their homes time after time, their ability to share everything they have, being invited to stay at someone's house after meeting them once and being happy to accept, the inspiration of people like Sr Lucy and the work that she does, the helpfulness of locals whenever you're lost or in difficulty, the interest in where you're from, why you're here, their keenness to learn English, the Namaste greeting, the shake of the head that only Indians can interpret correctly, the necessity to pose for a photo with everyone. The lessons I have learnt in how to treat guests and foreigners is something I can't wait to put into practise and teach others.

I will miss the joy of the children; the fact that they can play for hours on end without the latest iPad or smartphone, their giggles as they shyly smile at you walking down the street, the general excitement of having a white person in their community, their freedom of being able to go from one house to another in the rural areas, of having all their extended family living close by, their ability to make cricket wickets out of nature, of recycling anything and everything to make a game of some sort, their love for their friends.



I will miss the lush green state of Kerala; the fresh clean rivers flowing from the mountains, the gorgeous sunsets and sunrises which change every day, the view of only green as far as you can see, the sounds of nature. I will miss the abundance of fruits; coconuts, bananas and papaya which grow all year round, of enjoying jackfruit, guavas, the sweetest pineapples, the most delicious mangoes, custard apples and other new fruits.

I will miss the food; the spices and flavours which I will never be able to recreate, the taste of fresh chapattis, the Kerala style breakfasts, the traditional thali meals which are different in every state, being able to buy wadapoms (typical Maharashtra street food) for 10p, eating with my hands, homemade paneer, tapioca, the excitement of having chicken once a month, fresh fish in Alleppey, coconut and mango chutney, vegetables such as cauliflower cooked with such flavours that it tastes delicious, of having cake for breakfast whenever it's someone's birthday...this list could go on and on, it's safe to say Indian food went down very well with me and I never got bored even of eating rice every day!

I will miss the train journeys; the sleeper class carriage where you can travel up to 40 hours for the grand total of £7, people watching for hours on end, of seeing a family of 5 sleeping comfortably in one berth, getting excited to see what train snacks the next seller will bring, the constant call of chai chai, being amazed by the variety of things sold on trains, sitting in the doorway of the train with the sun and breeze on my face, getting out onto the tracks when it stops in the middle of nowhere for no reason, watching the environment outside change endlessly, being offered new foods from other passengers.



I will miss the auto rides; of bargaining with the driver, of fitting an unimaginable amount of people inside one vehicle, the disco lights, the Bollywood music playing, the driver being impressed by my attempts at Malayalam or Hindi, him telling you all about his family, or singing you a song, or of taking you somewhere he has absolutely no idea where but just wanted the fare...

the brightest, most colourful, most patterned clothes and it be normal, of constantly admiring women's saris, of never seeing the same outfit twice, the colourful houses, the colourful autos, buses and lorries, the colourful market stalls, the colourful food, the colourful temples.

I will miss the faith of the people; whatever their religion it is taken seriously, engrained in their culture, the different festivals which are celebrated every other week, the rituals that are so important within each family and community, the singing and dancing involved, the sincerity of the prayers, the coming together of people for every occasion no matter their religion, the dignity which people have, people's hopes and dreams for the future, the willingness to study hard, the never giving up attitude that comes alongside always having faith. I have learnt how important it is to have faith and the joy that it brings.





I will miss the chaos on the streets; the fact that you can walk the same street every day and it be completely different, you will always see something newly weird and wonderful, avoiding the cows, pigs, dogs and goats when you drive, the street wallahs ringing their bells and shouting chai, icecream, fruit, vegetables or whatever it may be, being able to get anything and everything fixed by a cobbler, walking out into full traffic as its the only way to get across the road and taking your life in your hands, of seeing full families on one scooter or motorbike complete with baby and a piece of furniture, of getting a lift on the back of someone's scooter or bike and feeling completely free.

I will miss the variety of the country; the fact that every state is like a new country, a different language to learn, a different religion, different festivals celebrated, different clothes worn, different food, different climate, different geographical features, different environment, the excitement of travelling somewhere new and not knowing what to expect making it more like a continent than a country.

I feel extremely lucky to have experienced such a wonderful country and I will miss India dearly but I can say for sure that I will be back, there is so much more to experience and explore.