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Experience

Have you ever dreamt of driving a tuk-tuk, practicing the wobbling 'yes/no' head move, getting physically close to the locals in crowded buses and trains, bargaining pretty much everything from your bus fare to your guesthouse room, answering 100 times the question 'Where are you from?', moving one toe and losing 10L of water because of the heat, eating rice as a French person would eat 'a baguette', etc...?

Well, if so, don't wait any longer and get a single ticket to Sri Lanka!!

Being just back from almost two months spent in this country, the temptation was high to stay there and I can only urge people to discover this so-called Gem Island.

I had decided to follow the Project Abroad Journalism Project in Colombo for one month then to extend my trip by three more weeks to visit further.

First 'mistake' there: so much to discover on this tiny land. Do not get deluded by the size; allow yourself plenty of time to really infuse yourself with all the treasures that the country has to offer. I sadly could not do everything I had planned on doing.

There is an incredible diversity of landscapes; nature-lovers will be delighted to swim in the ocean and, 2hrs later, to climb Adam's Peak, Sri Lanka's legendary pilgrimage mountain. Then you will probably find yourself hopping on a jeep for a safari in one of the numerous National Parks. Eventually, you will end up cycling around ancient cities' massive dagobas.

www.projects-abroad.net

Country Director's Message



Sri Lanka will turn into an array of colour and light, when the Wesak full moon adorns the sky in the third week of May. Each village, home lights up with lanterns, oil lamps and decorations to signify the most colourful festival of Sri Lanka. This is when the Buddhists prepare to commemorate the birth, enlightenment and his passing away into Nirvana of Lord Buddha.

Projects Abroad events for the month of May.

The medical seminar will be held at the Saffron Hotel and this month we will be having two Medical Camps one at the Malamulla Community Centre and another at the Leela Hapuarachchi Elders Home in Gampaha, all medical volunteer's participation is greatly appreciated.

Projects Abroad monthly get together will be held Hotel Topaz in Negombo with boat rides and a buffet to follow and the outreach for the month will be at the Dutch Anne Montessori, a day spent with cleaning the Garden and making a fence.

Enjoy reading this edition.

Shyamalee Wijesinghe
Country Director
Sri Lanka

The beauty of the nature is one thing, however, it does not make the whole traveling experience. There is no better way to discover a country than through its people and Sri Lanka is definitely a land where you feel welcomed. Always a smile upon their faces and always willing to help the lost traveler! Whatever smile you get, whether this is a pure white toothed one, a tooth-free one or a 'betel smile', you always feel reassured. And you kind of need it when you find yourself lost in a crowded bus stand where destinations remain a mystery since everything is usually written in Sinhala!

The opportunity to live with a Sri Lankan family during the Journalism Project in Colombo was simply excellent. The door always open with amazing and healthy food, a festival of local fruits and most importantly so much attention and care to ensure we, foreigners, had all we needed is always on offer. Just feeling at ease and... at home, in a way.

As for the work placement in the Island Newspaper office, it was another chance to get fully immersed into Sri Lankan culture by covering various assignments throughout Colombo city: attending business talks, musical shows, cultural events, interviewing locals, getting in touch with students, etc. Full autonomy and many articles published as a result.

My final advice to future explorers? Just get yourself ready to answer all the questions that curious Sri Lankan people will bombard you with!! 'Where are you from?' is only one of many and I leave you the pleasure to discover them all by yourself. Just try to reply as if it was the first time you were asked the question, full of enthusiasm and with your best 'Colgate smile'!!

Geraldine Bouvry

Donations

Projects Abroad donations

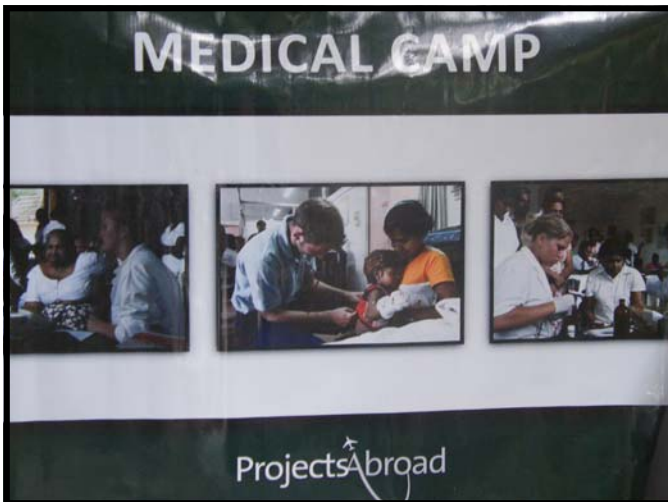
- Projects Abroad donated Rs 20,000/= to the purchase gifts to the Malamulla Community Centre for the Elders Day

Projects Abroad appreciates the donations from

- Jolinka Freenstra, Anna Batterlink, Jenny Bonda & Iise Leusink donated Rs 500,000/= worth of stuff for the activity room at Sukitha Orphanage.
- Janet Tate : Monthly sponsorship for the tsunami children

Medical Camp - Leela Hapuarachchi Elders' home

The Medical Camp in May was organized by Projects Abroad with the assistance of Lions Club International at Leela Hapuarachchi Elders' Home, Gampaha on 26th. All volunteers were very happy about the programme as that was a chance to use their knowledge and skills and importantly helping elders.



Medical Lecture at Malamulla

Projects Abroad is adding more medical events in Sri Lanka such as Medical Camps, Medical Lectures and Meetings with Doctors in order to deliver the best experience for Medical Volunteers and support their future careers. These photos were taken at the Medical Lecture at Malamulla, Panadura.



Almsgiving - Welapitiya, Panadura

Welapitiya Montessori staff and parents organized an almsgiving event on 25th of May for Buddhist monks. Our volunteers were invited for the event. It is a different experience and our volunteers were really excited to see this religious event and to know the idea behind it. It was the opportunity for volunteers to see religious rituals and participate as well. Please check some photos taken at the event.



Money | For your Journey

Approximate cost per week (including weekend travel)

Volunteers can spend a week including weekend travel comfortably if you could spend \$80 per week. This could cover weekly expenses such as bus fair, cost for internet café and some toiletries. However, this figure is the average and that could be higher or even lesser according to the plan you make.

Tipping

Although a 10% service charge is added to food and accommodation bills, this usually goes straight to the owner rather than the worker. So tipping is a customary way of showing your appreciation for services rendered. Drivers expect a tip, as do people who 'guide' you through a site. A rule of thumb is to tip 10% of the total amount due. If there's no money involved use your other thumb for this rule: Rs 10 for the person who minds your shoes at temples, and Rs 20 for a hotel porter. It is important to remember that you will not come across a situation where you have to tip more than Rs.200/= whatever the total amount is.

Money

The Sri Lankan currency is the rupee (Rs), divided into 100 cents. Coins come in denominations of five, 10, 25 and 50 cents and one, two, five and 10 rupees. Notes come in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000 and 2000 rupees (You might see Rs.5000 notes rarely). Break down larger notes (Rs 500) when you change money as most vendors never seem to have change. Dirty or torn notes might not be accepted, except at a bank.

ATMs

Commercial Bank has a wide network of ATMs accepting international Visa, MasterCard and Cirrus/Maestro cards. Other options include Bank of Ceylon, NationsTrust Bank, People's Bank, Hatton National Bank, Seylan Bank, Sampath Bank and HSBC. ATMs have spread to all of the cities and major regional centres, though you can't rely on the network paying up every single time.

Cash

Any bank or exchange bureau will change major currencies in cash, including US dollars, Euros and pounds sterling. Change rupees back into hard currency before you leave the country for the best rates.

Credit cards

MasterCard and Visa are the most commonly accepted cards. Other major cards such as Amex and Diners Club are also accepted.

Upcoming Volunteers' Corner

Hey everybody,

Not far away and it's time for travelling to Sri Lanka. I'm already excited when I think for my trip in June'11.

My name is Marko and I come from Germany. I'm single and I live in Bochum. This Town has close to 380,000 citizens and is in the hearth of the "Ruhrgebiet". In this part of the country is the most people in Germany and it's established for their industry. I'm 38 years old and I am working as an Engineer for Economics in a big company for energy.

I have two younger brothers, and those are all my skills for my one month in Sri Lanka.

On my holidays I do a lot of sports and I like to travel all over the world. In my whole life I have seen lots of countries and their people. Most of my travels are guided tours, you can see and learn a lot about the country, but most things are close to you. That's why I started searching for an exciting trip, and I soon found *Projects Abroad*. I'm looking forward to meeting my guest family, the Projects Abroad Team and, last but not least, the children.

So, the time for me to leave is coming and I hope I have a wonderful time that I never forget in my life.

See you soooooon!

Marko



Hello,

My name is Cole Dabbs and I am from Kentucky in the United States. Aside from my parents, I have one brother and a dog. We originally lived in Mississippi but moved to Kentucky because of my father's job. Currently I am completing my first year of college at the University of Louisville. I am studying Psychology and Chemistry and have the hopes of becoming a doctor in the years to come. I have chosen to take part in a medical internship in Sri Lanka so that I can experience more of the medical field first hand as well as have the opportunity to take in an entirely new culture. I know the experiences from this journey will be invaluable and I have so much to gain. Not only will it broaden my knowledge of the medical field, but it will grant me the opportunity to learn about other values in life. I am incredibly excited for this adventure and look forward to learning all I can with such a fantastic program.

Cole Dabbs



Mon nom est Jean-Baptiste Valbrun et je suis âgé de 20 ans.

Actuellement en 1^{ère} année d'École de Commerce, la mienne est spécialisée en Commerce International. Je parle anglais et espagnol, en plus du français. J'ai eu la chance de passer un mois au Canada et un mois au Mexique pour pratiquer ces deux langues en « immersion ».

J'habite à Paris, où je suis né, avec mes parents, ma sœur de 17 ans et mon petit frère de 9 ans. Je joue au rugby depuis 6 ans et suis licencié de la Fédération Française de Rugby. J'aime le sport en général et fais donc partie, comme vice-président, du Bureau des Sports de mon école. J'ai appris la guitare classique au Conservatoire, ce qui me permet d'avoir une connaissance « correcte » de la musique.

J'ai fait l'été dernier une expérience qui m'a profondément marqué : je suis parti comme volontaire au Ghana avec Projects Abroad. J'ai été bouleversé par l'accueil des gens sur place qui, bien qu'ils aient peu, partagent ce qu'ils ont. J'ai appris qu'on pouvait voir la vie différemment, moins matérielle et plus humaine. Je suis rentré avec la ferme intention de repartir l'été suivant. Plusieurs pays ont retenu mon attention, mais le Sri Lanka est vite devenu une évidence. Petite île paradisiaque, perle de l'océan indien, riche de culture et de tradition, me semble être la destination idéale pour passer des vacances inoubliables et être utile !

En donnant un peu de moi-même, je sais que je recevrai beaucoup en échange, la richesse d'une autre culture. J'attends avec impatience ce départ au Sri Lanka pour vivre une nouvelle et grande aventure...

Jean-Baptiste



Hi!

My name is Taylor Forns, and I am currently finishing my first year at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky. I am studying Biology with minors in Spanish and Finance. About 5 hours after my final exams end in May, I will begin my trip to Kalutara, Sri Lanka, where I will do a medical internship at the local hospital. I will be living there for a month, and while I am an experienced traveler, having been to China three times, Japan, Tibet, Vietnam, and Cambodia, this will be my first experience of living on my own in a foreign country. I am so excited to begin my trip; it really is all I can think about nowadays!



I expect my trip to Sri Lanka to be filled with many unforgettable memories, all the while meeting many different people with whom I will form life-long friendships. I hope to learn about many different aspects of healthcare in Sri Lanka and deepen my passion for the medical field, as I plan to become a doctor. In particular, I would love to work in Pediatrics.

I am thrilled to be heading to Sri Lanka in just over two weeks from now! I cannot wait to learn about the rich and vibrant culture there and experience the beautiful and captivating land that is Sri Lanka!

Taylor Forns - Medical Internship, May 2011, Sri Lanka

Hi everyone,

My name is Grietje and I'm twenty years old. I live in Holland on a farm in a small city in the north with my parents, younger sisters and a lot of horses. My hobbies are playing volleyball and horse riding. At this moment I study Biomedical Science, but at the end of this year I hope to make a switch to Medicine. Since I left high school I wanted to make a trip to Sri Lanka, because it seems a beautiful country to me. Via the internet I came in touch with Projects Abroad and discovered that there are a lot of volunteer programs to do in Sri Lanka. Because my passion is to work with people I decided to volunteer for a Medical program, so I can learn a lot about working in the hospital. Also this can be very useful for when I study Medicine next year. I'm arriving in mid-July, and staying for a month. I hope to meet a lot of other volunteers there! I have never been so far from home for so long, so this will be a big adventure for me. Although I'm very excited to learn about a totally different culture and getting to know my host family and all the people I have to work with.

Perhaps I meet you there!

Grietje

Hi, my name is Arrani and I am from Canada. I look forward to getting away from the cold weather here in Canada and finding some sunshine in Sri Lanka!

I just completed my Bachelors of Science and will begin my Master of Science later this year. My area of research is focused on Brain Trauma and Concussions. I hope to pursue a career in the medical field in the future.



This is one of the reasons I chose to volunteer with this program. I hope to gain some valuable skills and knowledge, while meeting new people and gaining new experiences. I also look forward to learning about a different medical ideology and observe the daily workings of a hospital in a foreign health care system. I hope to take back all of the things I learn in Sri Lanka to better prepare myself for a future career. I also hope to be able to give back to hospital and Sri Lanka for providing me with this great opportunity.

I choose to volunteer in Sri Lanka because I am actually of Sri Lankan descent. The last time I visited Sri Lanka was when I was three years old and I barely remember anything. I decided to take this opportunity to experience a culture that I have heard so much about. While in Sri Lanka I hope to do some sightseeing, reconnect with relatives and create some great memories.

As the time for me to leave to Sri Lanka quickly approaches, I am filled with excitement, wonder and curiosity. I can't wait for this journey to start!

Arrani

Opening the activity room of Sukitha Girls Home

A new activity room with all required equipments was completed as part of the Rs.500,000/= donation made by Jolinka, Anna, Jenny & Ilse. A detailed article will be in July edition.



Pepper Crab

Ingredients

- 1 kg Crab
- 3 tbspn white pepper
- 1 tspn coriander seeds
- 1 tbspn minced garlic
- 1 stalk spring onion (cut into 1 inch section)
- 1/2 tbspn cornflour
- 1/4 tbspn dark soy sauce
- 1 tbspn light soy sauce
- 1/2 tspn sesame oil



Directions

1. Blend white pepper and coriander seeds in a blender until fine.
2. Wash and clean crabs, discards lung and organs. Chop crabs into 4 pieces. Scald crabs in 250g of hot cooking oil for about 30 secs. Remove from wok.
3. Stir-fry minced garlic in 2 tbspn of hot cooking oil until fragrant.
4. Add in 1 cup of water and 2 tspn of blended white pepper and coriander seeds, and mix well. Add seasoning and 1 tbspn of cornflour solution. Bring to a boil. Add crabs and cover the wok. Cook for 5 minutes or until crabs are cooked.
5. Remove the crabs from wok. Add sectioned spring onion into gravy and stir-fry for 2 minutes.
6. Serve hot.

My one-month-stay in Sri Lanka / Orphanage in Galle

It was one of the best things I ever did in my life. Escaping my daily life as a Banker in Switzerland I decided to do something different to help children in a foreign country. So I started on 27th March 2011 in the orphanage in Galle, South of Sri Lanka. I was really lucky to spend a month with such a lovely family and I enjoyed many funny hours together with them. They also supported me with my plans to fix up some things in the orphanage; it was my desire to do something useful for the children, to give them a nicer environment, happiness and as much of an "education" as possible in this short term. So my host father came with me to the orphanage to help me plan all I would do in fixing it up.

The children's classroom was awful and very dirty. We talked about a total renovation and a new painting in the classroom, to grind off all the wooden furniture and to paint them new with poppy colours. I saw a very old damaged black board and I decided to replace it with a new white board.

In the garden there was a lovely Buddha temple, but the roof was broken and had a big hole in it, so the rain dropped in. I decided to fix a new roof and the painting around the temple.

In the doctors room there was a big mess. Such an ugly floor and wall's, a very old and dirty cabinet, and it was not possible to preserve all the bandaging material as clean as it should be. So I bought a new cabinet and removed the old one. I remarked that there was no water inside this doctor's room and I asked, where the doctor will wash his hands after treating the children. ... big silence..... It was a MUST for me to place a water supply line into that room.

In the children's bathroom the walls where damaged, the water heating also, so the children had no warm water for washing. All this we gave in order to fix it up. Because I was only there for one month stay I would not invest my time in fixing it all up by myself and I decided to create some short term jobs for local people. The people where very willing to work and they achieved great results in a very short time. After a 4 day trip to Kandy I came back and so many things where already new.

Now I could start my own ideas and I got some help from other volunteers. We came together for a brainstorming session and as a creative team we performed with our useful and lovely ideas. For the bathroom I had my own "Swiss" idea. I would like to show the children a little bit of my country...go ahead and see for yourselves.

But time was running out and I realised that without help I can not finish everything by my departure after 4 weeks. In meantime I got a real great friend, he helped me the whole last weekend to finish my work. Hanas was not only my Tuk Tuk Driver to the orphanage and back home, but he helped me with paintings, he organised screws for me to fix up the white board, we went together to the different shops to buy all the painting stuff and he brought me together with his friend, and I gave this guy the orders to fix up a completely new slide for my kiddies. Without Hanas it would not be possible to do everything, he invested a lot of his time with me and I am very thankful to him. In addition he showed me so many beautiful places in south Sri Lanka, and we laughed so much. Thanks a lot, Hanas!

At the beginning I told to myself, I would like to do as much as I could do, but I wanted to see the finished results on my last day. After I spent so many hours with Hanas I also got a very precious confidence and am sure he will look after my work since I left Sri Lanka.

Today, one week after my return to Switzerland, he sent me photos of the new slide by email and I am sure, the children are now really happy using a new slide every day.

For me it was a great time, to see how quick the children learn. They realise so quickly that it is so important to wash their hands after using toilet, they learn immediately why brushing their teeth more than one time a day is a good thing, and I never will forget how all of them jumped when I presented them their first own toothbrush. I tried to give all of them a little bit of love, to pay them attention every day, show them useful treatments and tried to leave them with a little bit of education. At the end I came back much more than twice of all of that in the form of love. It was not easy to say goodbye but I will be back as soon as possible to take my kiddies in my arms, to hold "two dums up" and send them thousands of blown hand kisses.

Dorli Wittwer

Get together in Negombo

Get together in May was organised at Topaz Beach Hotel—Noegombo on 13th May. Volunteers joined the programme from different towns. A boat trip too was organised in the river “Maha Oya”. After the boat ride, all joined the buffet lunch which served at Topaz Beach hotel.



Medical Camp at Malamulla

Second medical camp in May was organised at Malamulla Community Centre. We have arranged medical camp in Malamulla Community Centre previously. It was a well organized medical camp mainly targeted women in the area and was well attended.

