



# ProjectsAbroad

The Official Newsletter of Projects Abroad



*Sri Lanka*



01 Message from the  
Editor

## **VOLUNTEERS' STORIES**

01 Sri Lanka

## **SOCIAL EVENTS**

04 Social Outreach  
at Garden School

## **VOLUNTEER ARTICLES**

06 An incredibly strong  
force!

## **NEWS AND UPDATES**

09 Medical Camp

# EXPERIENCE SRI LANKA

2013 September- Issue no 102

***THE LAND LIKE NO OTHER***

# SRI LANKA

It was in September 2012 when I heard that some of my friends did volunteer work that summer and it seemed fun. So my mom looked up some information and found Projects Abroad. After a long time I decided I wanted to go to Sri Lanka and I wanted to volunteer in an orphanage. We had a lot of contact with the organisation, so after reading the handbook, stories and seeing pictures I knew everything about Sri Lanka. So on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> of August, I left Belgium with a lot of stress for my first vacation without parents or friends.

After a long trip I finally got there. On my way to my host family, Bianca got in the car and told me everything about the people, my host family and the orphanage. When I arrived at the host family there was Eva, also from Belgium, who took me to the swimming pool to relax after my long flight. When I came back home I met my host dad and my host mom and their little son Nethika. The first weekend the family took me and the other 2 volunteers to Kataragama to see the famous festival: The Perahera. In that weekend I got to know the 2 other volunteers who were staying with my host family.

After the weekend I got my first day at Sukitha's Children Home. It's an orphanage for people that have physical or mental disabilities. The first time it was a little bit hard to go there because the kids have nothing there and you have to keep them busy every single minute. But after my second day I always looked forward to going there.

Hi All,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the September Newsletter!

First of all, let me introduce myself. My name is Manjula Meemanage and you can call me Manjula!. I will be your new Information Manager and also the newsletter editor.

I started my career with Projects Abroad in early 2010 and I have been working for the development of social media platforms. From now on, I will be working closely with the volunteers in Sri Lanka and it would surely be a remarkable experience for me. Though I was in a different team, I always loved all the opportunities I had to join with volunteers for activities such as outreach programmes. So with this new responsibilities. I am sure I am going get more chances to join as such and I'm going to love it more!

I look forward to your articles and interesting stories in the upcoming newsletter.

Once again, I would like to appreciate all those who contributed to this newsletter. These contributions have required a generous contribution of the time and effort to share their experience and knowledge. We value every bit of it!

Thank you all!!!!!!

Enjoy the newsletter!

*Manjula Meemanage*

Information Manager-Sri Lanka

My day started at 8am so everybody was eating at that hour. And when I got there and they saw me and Sarah (the other volunteer) they all got really excited and finished their breakfast as fast as possible. First we went to the activity room to make something creative. We always brought some things with us, like paper or balloons for the kids. After that we went outside to play some cricket or netball. Most of the time we played cricket; Sri Lankan people are addicted to cricket. It was really nice to see the kids were having fun. There was this little girl who didn't smile at all when I first got there and then, after a few days, she was smiling all the time and joking and laughing etc. But it was hard because no one speaks English so the communication was really difficult.

The same day I went to the fab, which was the place where all volunteers met to talk about their experiences or share stories. Being 16, I was the youngest of the volunteers. I met nice people and with 4 of the other volunteers I met there I spent the next weekend at Adam's Peak. We climbed the Adam's Peak which had a huge effect on our legs (I couldn't walk for days) but we had so much fun.

I had an awesome time in Sri Lanka. It was the first time I went alone to a country and my first time volunteering but it was also the best vacation I ever had. Sri Lanka is a lovely country and the people are lovely too. The experience was great. I wished it could've lasted a little bit longer because 2 weeks is way too short, but I will keep those memories in my heart. I miss my host family, the people of Projects Abroad and the other volunteers, and I hope that I can meet again.

Projects Abroad is a great organization and I'm going to do volunteer work again next year but in another country. Thank you for the time of my life Projects Abroad!

*Josefien De Ridder*





# Social Outreach

Date : 27th of September 2013  
Location : Wadduwa Garden School  
Task : Painting the walls, Doors, Tables









# AN INCREDIBLY STRONG FORCE!

When I was having my roti-breakfast this morning in our dark but lovely dining room, trying to wake up and prepare myself to face about 35 children, I couldn't believe what the Calendar was telling me.

September 4<sup>th</sup>? No... Can that really be true?



*Me teaching at Sri Seevali School in Panadura.*

I realized that I have actually been here for more than 6 weeks now, which means that I'm halfway. And that is crazy in so many ways. Before I came here, I really tried to not expect anything at all. I think I didn't even realize that I was leaving Amsterdam, including my whole life there, for 3 months: on the evening before my departure I was packing my suitcase, but I kept thinking: "No... But this won't really happen. I mean, it can't." I just couldn't imagine.



*At one of the Projects Abroad Social Outreaches.*

The only thing I *did* expect, was that this experience would bring to me and teach me *a lot*. And already, I can honestly say with all my heart that it has. The smile of my warm-hearted hostmother for example, every morning when she brings us our breakfast. Or the noise of more than 40 eight-year olds, together in a very crowded classroom without any kind of air-conditioning. The crazy bus rides: quite a workout for your arm muscles actually, since you have to use all your power to not fall down, accompanied by lovely local music and around 30 Sri Lankan people staring at you (have they truly *never* seen a white girl before??). The stinky grumpy dog with a cripple leg, always resting in a corner, guarding our house, with the name “Sendang”, whom I find very sympathetic in a way.

The coloured tuktuks everywhere, some of them being used as a shop, to sell coconuts or all kinds of white bread, looking so cute. The other amazing volunteers, always taking care of each other and looking after each other, sharing stories about their crazy daily lives here, while having super sweet cake and the lovely Sri Lankan tea (oh how I will miss that!). A woman on the street: looking distant at first, but as soon as she gives you her smile, her whole face transforms and becomes so beautiful: to me, it is like receiving a gift.



The simple way of living: waking up in the morning because the birds outside are having a little party, having a cold shower, watching the little chip monks walking around the house from my balcony, walking to school, seeing all these beautiful, smart-eyed children with their dark hair and white uniforms, singing their “Good Morning Teacher”-song... It makes me very happy. Even though there have been and will be hard times as well, I’ve never doubted the incredibly strong force of this journey, this adventure.

*Elephants at a National Park!*

And because I know that the difficulties are a fundamental part of this force, they possess a strange kind of beauty. Being homesick, feeling alone, lost, *confused*, totally uncomfortable or maybe even desperate at times: it will pass. I know that now. And especially those moments and the way you deal with them, teach you so much about yourself.

I would encourage everyone, every person who is reading this little story I’m trying to write here: take the chance! Yes, I know, it is scary as hell.





*Stilt fishermen on the beach!*

But if you have the courage to jump into an adventure like volunteering abroad, packed with fully unknown situations, places and people, if you are willing to try to participate in a whole new culture without prejudices and with an open minded outlook, you'll be amazed by the effects.



Believe me, I'm so happy that I am doing this. Six more weeks to come, I'll live them to the fullest!

All the best to you, whoever reads this.

*Anna Kooi*

*(September 4<sup>th</sup> 2013, Panadura, Sri Lanka)*



# Medical Camp

Date : 28th of September 2013

Location : Paragasthota Temple

Task : Medical Camp

