

A Journey to Reflect on Migration and the Work of Women

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First Stop

We headed on a cross-country train to the scenic and quiet beach town of Batticaloa. The city had been devastated by the Sri Lankan civil war and 2004 tsunami yet was slowly recovering in the aftermath.



Batticaloa

Batticaloa is a Tamil town and we spent a large portion of our trip enjoying the culture and people of the town. We interviewed two women in Batticaloa and met with a colleague over dinner.



Batticaloa

Our two interviews were facilitated by the manager of the hotel we were occupying. He volunteered his services as he was an active member of the community.



Second Stop

After Batticaloa, we headed to Kandy, the second biggest city in Sri Lanka.



Kandy

Throughout our time in Kandy we stayed in the Elephant Shed hostel, as seen in the image to the right. The hostel was in the heart of the city and even the hostel manager had worked as a migrant worker overseas



Kandy

With our visit to Kandy, we realized how easy it was to get in contact with people who migrated for work overseas. Almost everyone we bumped into had either worked overseas themselves or had a relative who had done so



Kandy

While in Kandy we ran into a woman who had worked in Qatar, she introduced us to a friend who could translate our interviews for us. Between her and another contact, we managed to get a in-depth view of what it meant to work overseas as a Sri Lankan



Kandy

We were also able to see more of the administrative side of the migration process while in Kandy by talking to an agency official and by visiting the Divisional Secretariat's Office of Migration



Kandy

We love tea and through our tour of Kandy's tea factory we learned that Sri Lanka was the 3rd greatest producer of tea in the world! Sri Lanka specializes in black tea and were lucky to see the production process as well as enjoy a delicious cup of tea!



Kandy

While also in Kandy, we were exposed to the cultural heritage of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Buddhism is the most popular religion in Sri Lanka and while in Kandy we were able to visit several temples



Kandy

Kandy is the home of the famous temple of the tooth: home of Buddha's tooth. Not having been exposed much to the Buddhist religion, we were excited to have an opportunity to learn more



Kandy

Throughout our journey, Kandy ended up being our favorite locale. A beautiful and relatively calm city, we eventually felt at home in the heart of the Sri Lankan hill country



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Pinnawala

We love elephants! In a town between Kandy and Colombo we spent a day with elephants, watching them bathe, feeding them, and trying to strike up a conversation.



Pinnawala

Us and Anusha
the 67 year old
elephant! She
doesn't look a
day over 30!



We came to Sri Lanka during monsoon season so the only the eastern and southern coasts of the country were safe to swim. We headed to Unawatuna looking for a fun beach weekend!

Unawatuna



Unawatuna

This beach town had also been severely impacted by the 2004 tsunami. Several shops in the town told us stories of the tragedy that had occurred. The town is incredibly beautiful



Negombo

The site of our next interview, Negombo is a typical Sri Lankan town and is only 30 miles from Colombo. This sign was near the airport and reminded us of the changes on going in the country since the end of the civil war.



Nuwara Eliya

Cold Town, Sri Lanka!
Nuwara Eliya, nestled in the high hill country of Sri Lanka, is lush and green and serves as a great retreat from the heat. It is also a large tea-plucking site and one of our translators was from the area



Nuwara Eliya

We visited a tea plantation in the area and were able to see some of the women working. Tea-plucking is performed mainly by women and is physically taxing work



Horton Plains

Sri Lanka is beautiful. It is a host to a range of habitats from coastal regions, to lush hill country, to stretches of arid land. Horton Plains was atop the highest reaches of Nuwara Eliya and offered stunning views of the Sri Lankan landscape



Perahera!

Kandy Perahera is a festival that happens once a year in the city of Kandy. During the many days of the festival, elephants from the temple of the tooth carry Buddha's tooth (not really – just a representation) throughout the streets. This is accompanied by dancers and drums.



Last Stop

With the completion of our interviews in Sri Lanka, we headed to Dubai!



Dubai

Dubai was another world. We actually arrived at the hottest time of the year. As you see in the figure to the right, Marica is basking in the searing heat of the hot summer sun.



Dubai

The picture to the right was the view we had one morning. Though it was close to 100 degrees Fahrenheit, these workers were scaling a building for the day's work. Dubai is a city of work. With nationals from 80+ countries, it's a city with an interesting and complicated dynamic.



Dubai

Paradise for some, back breaking work for others.

If not a citizen of the UAE, you need a work permit to reside in the country, and a work schedule that barely leaves room for 15minute breaks.

This was clear in seeing who went to the malls everyday and who was busy at work. It was hard getting in contact with a Sri Lankan woman while in Dubai as most women were busy at work and could not speak English.

We eventually contacted and interviewed a housemaid at a home we were staying in.

The End of our Journey

Traveling for 8 weeks was an amazing adventure. Interviewing women about their experiences working abroad was challenging, emotional, and also rewarding. Seeing the contrast between Sri Lanka and Dubai reminded us of the origin of our project idea and our involvement in both societies invigorated our passion to continue with our current interests . Our time abroad was also a great way to celebrate the friendship we developed while at Rice . Thank you so much and we are incredibly grateful for this opportunity you gave us!

