

India 2013

In Summer 2013 I went on a ten day trip to India with 10 Buckinghamshire Guides and two leaders, an amazing trip to an incredible country. India is such a different environment to what we are used to. Each day brought something new.



The first of many new experiences for me during the trip was in fact the plane journey, I have never been on a long haul flight before, but I enjoyed it thoroughly.

We spent the first day in Mumbai which allowed us to get used to the Indian traffic!



We explored some of the local markets and area near our hotel. The next day we had a half day city tour of Mumbai. We saw the Gate of India where people who were visiting India in the past would have been dropped off by ships. We also went to the hanging gardens - these are gardens that hang three feet above the water store for the city - went to the dhobi ghat which is the government owned washing



sites where only dhobi men with permits can wash and dry clothing and the Mahatma Gandhi museum which depicted his life and his work he carried out during it.

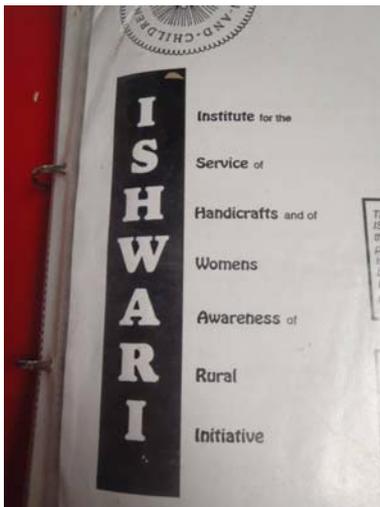


Our main stay was at Sangam World Centre, we followed the programme called Discover your Potential III. During the first few days we were integrated into Indian culture, experiencing traditional Indian culture and customs as well as food. The first true India cultural experience we had was our welcome ceremony. We were all traditionally greeted with cumcum and turmeric dots as well as a flower garland.



We explored the local neighbourhood and visited a local house. It was surprising how many people lived in such a small place. The house was unusual in the fact it was so long because they have now started building upwards due to a lack of space in over populated areas. We also visited an area called Laxmi road the following day. We visited the Black palace and various market stalls. It was here we were allowed to pick and buy our saris which was a very interesting experience indeed. We also visited bangle angle, which is an area with lots of bangle stalls. The owners were shouting "big size, England England come here we got big size": this was because Indian's have much thinner wrists than people in the western world. We also were set a market challenge which involved communicating with market owners to try and buy the item on your card. On our card was 'gajar' which was written in English but not in Mharati or Hindi script so if they couldn't read English they couldn't help us; but there was also a picture on the bottom of the card

of garlic and lady's fingers so all the market stall holders were telling us to pick this up. Gajar actually translates to carrot, for 10rupees (which is about 10p) we got 4 carrots.



One of our main activities whilst we were in India was to take part in a community leadership development project. I spent four and a half days helping at Ishwari, an institute to help women learn life skills and crafts to sell to generate an income. The centre was about an hour away in the Indian countryside, it was a very bumpy journey to and from it every day – English roads are definitely better maintained! We taught the ladies basic first aid skills and how to apply



plasters; it was fun watching how excited they became to practice doing it on each other, along with basic hygiene and why it was important to wash hands. Communicating was a slight barrier but we managed through gestures and a couple of the ladies acted as interpreters to convey the message and instructions. We taught them crafts or skills that they could sell: this included knitting, dragonfly and gecko broaches, friendship bracelets, beaded bracelets and necklaces and recycled paper bags. We also looked at how we are one of 10millions girls in girl guiding and looked at the Millennium development goals and how we were helping to empower women and therefore aid the achievement of MDG3.



We also had a session with the local Nivedita Guides. I made friendship bracelets with them as it was national friendship day. They also played some games with another group and made posters of what they would like to be in the future. They gave us best friend ribbons at the end of the session because it was national



friendship day.



My favourite day was when we had an Indian afternoon, a Maharashtra dinner and bollywood dancing in the evening. During the Indian afternoon we were taught how to tie our saris that we had brought earlier in the week, had mhendi done on our hands, created rangoli patterns on the floor and played Indian games.

Thankyou very much for your contribution to my trip, I thoroughly enjoyed myself and will remember it always.

