

Charlotte Darnell - Sri Lanka 2014 Report

This year- after I attended the Bucks Girl Guiding International selection Weekend- I had the amazing opportunity to go on a trip to Sri Lanka to celebrate their Scouting Centenary. When I received the news that I had been selected, I was so super excited because I hadn't been anywhere like that before. All the prep made me super excited too, because I really liked everyone in the group and knew the leaders would be fantastic. It was really exciting picking group t-shirts and hoodies and designing a badge.

The Flight was actually really good, considering how long it was, because we all chatted a lot and when we got tired we all slept on each other's shoulders, which was really nice. The minute we stepped off of the plane a wave of heat hit us and I don't think we stopped sweating from then till we got home! Everyone was really excited about getting a Sri Lankan stamp in our passport and then we were greeted by some of the camp organisers and this was really nice and made us feel very welcome. We then headed off to Kandy.

We spent a few days in Kandy, pre-Jamboree, which were amazing! We went to a Gem factory and some of our group were so good at bartering! I bought a very small emerald because it is my birth stone. We also went to a spice garden and a tea factory which were both really interesting, but the tea factory was really hot. My favourite parts of our stay in Kandy were going to the Elephant orphanage, climbing Sigiriya and visiting a Batik factory. I loved seeing how the batiks were made as I have done it before and they were very beautiful. I bought a green bandana with a peacock pattern on. Climbing Sigiriya- a huge historical rock which a prince, from hundreds of years ago, made his palace because he was in hiding- was really hard but I also really enjoyed it because the views were amazing and we were all working together to get each other up the really steep steps. It was really funny because there were lots of monkeys around and one of them came and stole a packet of Starbursts which was hilarious, especially because of the reaction to it. Also it was very windy and lots of people's hats blew off! The Elephant orphanage was absolutely fantastic as we got to see the elephants and touch them. This was amazing because I've not seen one close up before, never mind touch one! It was also lovely to see them being fed. One of the very best bits of the whole trip though was sitting in the back of the coach, that took us to all these wonderful places, and singing really loudly all together, various different songs, ranging from High School Musical and Grease to Bohemian Rhapsody.

We were really sad to leave Kandy and the lovely Hotel, but super excited for Camp!

The camp was in Colombo and Colombo was EVEN hotter than Kandy! As soon as we arrived we sort of flaked out for a while before going to pitch our tents. Unfortunately during this process it started raining really, really heavily and we hadn't fully pitched yet, this was annoying because it increased the humidity quite a lot but we settled in and started to meet people as there wasn't much to do because camp didn't officially start until the next day, after the opening ceremony. This ceremony was great as we got to see amazing performances and see all the participants together.

The rest of camp was brilliant: we went on a trip to a temple and a beach, which was fun because no one had seen a sandcastle before and all wanted to help us; we taught some Slovenians British Bulldog and learnt one of their games; did various activities towards a special badge, such as attending a messengers of peace course. Everyone wanted our autograph, which made us feel like celebrities- we even went on national television and radio! Other things we did included: performing at a cultural show in front of all 3000 people, singing We Will Rock You (very scary but also very fun!) covered in luminous face paint; having dinner with our newfound Australian friends and doing various water and land activities where we got very muddy. Most nights there was a disco and this is where we made friends with some French people and met loads of random people while dancing. It was quite funny though, because they tended to be a bit behind schedule for everything but as soon as the disco was supposed to start, we were all at the front, singing our hearts out to the likes of mama mia whether there was music or not!

Overall it was a wonderful, once in a lifetime trip and I am ever so grateful to all those who helped make it possible.