



to
Sri Lanka
aka Bury Cricket Club and
friends on tour





Directed by Rob and Tina

Produced by Hisham and Damian

Screenplay by Ace Cricket Exchange

Starring Mike and Julie

Mark and Sue

Dave, Sue and Josh

Mike and Jane

Derek and Fiona

Wiggy and Helen

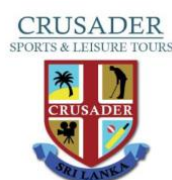
Stan

Wedding Co-ordinator John White

Guest Appearances The elephants, the turtles, the lizard, the black monkeys, our driver and his assistant, and the entertainment team at the Heritance Ahungalla

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Tour Travel Blog

Day 1 Travelled from Manchester to Colombo via Dubai, a pretty uneventful trip apart from Emirates Airlines offering us a Taste of English Cuisine on the flight, I have now learnt that Pakoras apparently are now part of English cuisine.

Arrived at Colombo airport to be greeted by a large duty free hall selling such wonderful items as fridges, freezers, washing machines and large screen televisions, we declined the offers and searched for our driver amongst the 150 differing drivers awaiting their customers. On the fourth trawl we found him and he went to get his vehicle and we set off on our supposedly one hour journey to the hotel, it took just over two hours and for some of the others who arrived the day later it was nearer three hours, welcome to Sri Lanka, where time expands to suit.

On our trip to the hotel another couple joined us, the Whites, they had flown in from Florida. We had a cricket chat as he was originally England and was attending his brother's wedding who had already flown in and also joining the Test Match.



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from

us at





On arrival at the hotel we were offered a welcome drink, wood apple juice, it had the look of Brown Sauce, with the consistency of branston pickle, the smell of neither wood nor apple and the taste of well nothing I had tasted before and I don't mean that in a good way.

Anyway we move on and after viewing four different bedrooms in the hotel we picked the one to suit us best, alongside the



swimming pool on the ground floor, we were quickly on the beds by the pool having asked the swimming pool attendant if the weather was good, his reply was clear

rain today, within 5 minutes a rather large lizard headed across the garden into a planted area



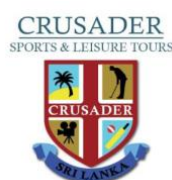
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within 20 minutes it was raining very heavily, a lesson quickly learnt, if you ask a Sri Lankan a question they would always answer with what they thought you would like to hear not necessarily the truth, nothing malicious in it they just wanted to please and never upset.

We headed to the bar had a drink, met up with our hosts Rob and Tina from Ashwell Cricket Exchange (ACE) and Hisham and Damian from Crusader Sports and Leisure then before you knew where the time had gone we were walking down the beach to the Jungle Beach Restaurant with Wiggy and Helen, they were staying at a Sri Lankan Guest House just down the beach from the hotel. Fish was eaten and a few drinks consumed, back to the hotel and a good night's sleep which was needed after the long day travelling.

Day 2 After breakfast it was to be a day by the pool with Wiggy and Helen, now as I stated Jon and Helen were not stopping at the hotel



but they did take full advantage of all the facilities, including the pool, the bar, the free Wi-Fi, and even the welcome drinks on arrival not to mention tickets for the Test and transportation to Galle.

The breakfasts were buffet style with everything you could wish for including four different types of sausages, beef, chicken, lamb and pork not to mention the obligatory curry. Plentiful and very good quality apart from the wood apple juice

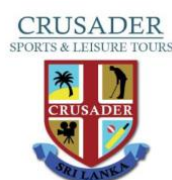
The rest of the group were due to arrive in the evening, the sun was out and the weather was set fair for a relaxing day, about 85 degrees, clear sky and we just relaxed from early morning until about 2.00 when the lizard appeared once more and yet again disappeared into his lair and within 5 minutes it was raining heavily again, this lizard knew more about the weather than the pool attendant, that was obvious.

Another trip to the bar, a little bit of lunch and drink as the rain came down and the time just disappeared, before we knew the night was upon us and the rest of the party arrived, Mike and Julie, Dave, Sue, and Josh, Mike and Jane, and Derek and Fiona. Again a few more drinks at the bar, a pretty consistent theme that was to happen throughout the trip. Dave informed us that he was going to have curry at every meal time, a brave man we thought.

Day 3 Monday by the pool, hot, humid and cloudy with a wedding taking place on the beach, the Whites , and then the heavens opened for the heaviest rain I have ever seen for a solid 6 hours, it started just as the wedding party arrived on the beach, a dog from the beach also decided to christen one of the beautiful floral wedding arches, no one seemed to mind as it was obviously a ritual that the dog carried out regularly as part of the service the hotel offers, must be a Sri Lankan good luck charm.

In the evening the group ate together in the open air a la carte restaurant, Dave had his obligatory curry. Another good meal as was the standard throughout apart from the wood apple juice,

Days 4 to 7 at the Test

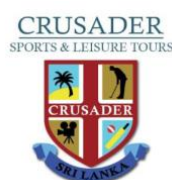


The test match must be in doubt we thought, at the very least it would be delayed as we all went to bed with the rain still flooding down. We awoke though to another beautiful morning, a pattern that would follow throughout our time in Sri Lanka, mornings beautiful every day and as the day went on a 60% chance of rain.

Off to the test for day one, a hearty English breakfast was had, apart from Dave who had his morning curry, our driver and his assistant awaited us at the front of the hotel for our 45 minute journey down the coast to Galle, a version of wacky races ensued, cars, Tuk-Tuks, mopeds, bikes, pedestrians, dogs and cows, all just appeared from all angles on a regular basis, do any of you remember that scene in the Harry Potter film where a red double decker bus splits in to two and then half's its size to get through gaps it otherwise wouldn't then you get the idea, the journey took an hour, that's Sri Lanka for you.

Our coach driver and his assistant certainly knew how to drive in Sri Lankan traffic, we weren't sure what the assistant's job was as the majority of time he just dozed off at the front but then lo and behold we pulled up halfway one journey and he got out and went outside the coach sprayed the windscreen with water, the wipers went on and he jumped back in, apparently it was easier than getting the water jets on the coach fixed.

On the first day we were expecting to get to Galle with no chance of the game going ahead on time due to the overnight torrential rain but on arrival the covers were off and hundreds of Sri Lankan ground staff were preparing the ground ready for an on time start. I just don't know how they managed to get that ground ready but they did. It was a tremendous achievement.



When I say ground staff were working away, they were also just putting the last scaffolding posts up on our stand which consisted of a tiered area with 500 white wedding chairs, apparently for another 300 rupees (£1.50) we could have been in the air conditioned stand but surely that could not have compared to the fun in our stand.



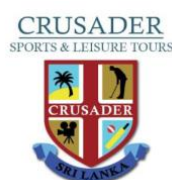
The ground staff were happy to put our Bury flag up on the outdoor nets for free on day one, by day four serious money was needed to guarantee that the flag had a spot, these Sri Lankans certainly understood market forces supply demand.

They sat alongside us each day, were always smiling, always helpful, always ready to earn a few rupees.



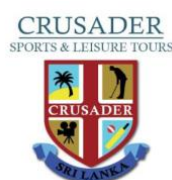
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Our tickets said that no one was allowed to take cameras, batteries, food, drink, coolers, umbrellas and just about anything else you could imagine into the ground, since the ground was 90% full of English we obviously took no notice and we positioned ourselves in the grandstand. What the English are good at though is queueing, and the queue was forming already for the beer.





In our stand we had about 10 yards to the boundary which people used as a walk way and a viewing point which made it difficult to see anything in the beginning let alone see the square until Sue Bowen came along in a move reminiscent of her actions in Weatherspoon's in Llandudno some 6 months ago, she got out of her seat and proceeded to tell about hundred people of both British and Sri Lankan descent, especially the Lasith Malinga look alike with the large flag, that they would not be standing there as she could not see the game and not surprisingly they all did as they were told and moved out of the way with resounding applause coming from the stand for Sue as she returned to her seat.

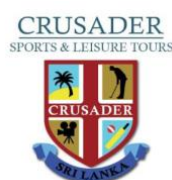


The loudspeakers blared out at every interval with the only ten songs that the dj knew, Lion Sleeps tonight meets 1970's Disco music and you get the idea, our President MKB didn't take kindly to the noise, by the second day someone had turned the speakers round so they were facing the outfield rather than the stand, thank you MKB.



The game commenced on time and the fun begun and so did the beer, 1800 rupees (about £9) for 12 beers, the queue was now long but that small obstacle was overcome with the help of a few rupees for the ground staff and we had waiter service for the beers, Wiggy and Helen didn't have any tickets but Rob sorted that out also for the price of a few beers.

On the second day for some reason we thought not enough beer had been consumed on the first day so we started the beer order at 10.00am and it did flow throughout the day. Mike Bailey found a new friend on the second day, Alex, now other than he was from down south, Sudbury as I recollect nothing more was found out other than Alex's friend was a Gareth Southgate look alike and that was enough for the bromance that ensued between Mike and Alex.





More tickets were found for Wiggy and Helen who were now staying in Galle, aka Wally and Wenda, who arrived at the ground in their costumes.

The days at the cricket passed by peacefully we were well looked after by the police, Sergeant Bilko ambled by every day and smiled at us with his khaki

uniform and rigger boots, a surprising combination not often seen in Bury.

Each day the atmosphere was rather special as were the toilets, to get into the portaloos you had the obstacle course to deal with first, over the river of liquid and then onto the wooden pallet bridge which all came with the smell, which was described by Julie as similar to the Guinea Pig hutch she had as a child.



Both Mike and Mark had the pleasure of our ex professional Milinda Siriwardana coming to see us at the test, it was great to spend some time with the Sri Lankan test player once more.

One day the Smiths were allowed to sit on the front row of the coach to enjoy/endure the view from the front row, it was relatively peaceful journey until we began to overtake a tuk-tuk with the normal pip of the horn then we heard another horn and a car was on our outside overtaking us, we were now one of three in this manoeuvre then another horn and a bike came up the outside, now there were four of us. All this on road with only two lanes and a car heading towards us, we all breathed in and everything was fine in



the end but it was interesting to say the least. We were happy to return to our normal seats on the coach later that day.

Every day there was something new, the day that Stan looked like a volcano ready to erupt, too much sun and beer was the cause. Mark was caught hiding under an umbrella due to the burning heat of the sun in mid-afternoon, MKB making it very clear from day one his views on Ramprakash being Englands batting coach, it was not complimentary to say the least, as Foakes scored his century MKB was asked his views he said its fortunate that Ramps hasn't had opportunity to ruin him yet. MKB at his best.

To celebrate Helens birthday Wiggy brought a superb birthday cake along for us all to enjoy, it was Test Match Special at its best.



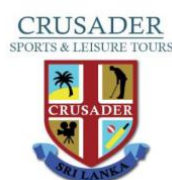
Another first, Tina after 12 visits to Sri Lanka and Rob managed to get her into a tuk-tuk so that they could go to Dominos Pizza and bring pizza back to the ground for lunch,

lets see if we could get away with that at Emirates Old Trafford.



Mark being mistaken by Phillip White as MJK Smith, a man twenty years older and 6 inches taller was a mystery to us all.

On our way to the ground we always had a sweepstake, on the last day of the test we had to guess at what time the game would finish that day, MKB always wanted the question clarifying but unfortunately never won, Mike Baileys face when Rangana was out in his last game for Sri Lanka which meant he lost out on winning the sweep by minutes, Mike wasn't an happy man.

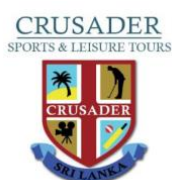




We had a great four days in Galle, great people, great atmosphere and the celebrations afterwards were something else, Damian brought along the Sri Lankan drink Arak for us to celebrate, again an acquired taste. He certainly knows how to celebrate though. Just right click on the photo and press play to watch the video.



Each day we went back to the hotel for our dinner and the evening's entertainment. Not to mention the towel art in our bedrooms, from crocodiles, to monkeys. For some reason only the Smiths and Rob and Tina managed to have this pleasure.



The entertainment was varied to say the least, Ice sculpting, Bingo one evening, the caller was pretty unique, twenty three came out and was shouted as 2 and 3 so you had to have your wits about you, Tina was the winner, a cocktail was the prize, fire eating one evening and MKB was refused permission to take part as Rob told him that he wasn't insured for it, is anyone insured for fire eating?, water polo with no rules always went down well as well as the Josh Bowen Quiz which according to Stan was slightly biased towards the Bury element in the crowd, hard to argue when Joshs dad won especially since it was the same quiz that had taken place at our golf day earlier this year, I think Dave might have won that day as well.

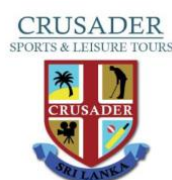
For some the highlight was the managers cocktail party, we arrived back from Galle on day three and there was 40



minutes of freebies left and a few of our party were not going to miss this opportunity. The head massage and the free flower were not what they were looking for, it was the Sri Lankan Surprise cocktail that was needed, looking at the photos afterwards it was clear some had more than one. I think that was the evening that someone asked Mike if he had drunk a cocktail before and his response was classic, never had a cocktail before unless you count a Boddington.

We could now relax as the match was won and we could enjoy the hotel and

Sri Lanka.



On our free days we had the opportunity to go to snake island and the turtle sanctuary, at the turtle sanctuary, there were five different types of turtle and as was pointed out 99 % of those that are hatched there die within seven days of being released from the sanctuary, quite cheery that was.

The black monkeys paid our hotel a visit for a couple of days..



The group went past snake island on our boat trip around the lakes and swamps and got off at Cinnamon Island where we tasted cinnamon tea and watched how cinnamon sticks were made and they tried to sell it to us, it wasn't happening and we were quickly moved off the island so the next gullible tourists could arrive.

Mark and Sue decided to go the elephant orphanage and were told that it was anywhere between two hours and five hours away, we asked Mike Bailey if he wanted to join us and his reply was classic Bailey, "four and half hours to see two dumbos I don't think so".





Anyway Derek and Fiona, and subsequently Dave, Sue, Josh and Stan went as well, it was only three hours away so that was good news, the elephants seemed happiest in the river and when they were eating but was it natural? I am not sure it was.



The Beach cricket was good, two great highlights, Fiona doing the now famous Fiona Flop, head first into the sand and the best wicket to fall was that of Mike Bailey who was most upset by the dismissal, he was out bowled by Rob and caught by Derek, exit a muttering Bailey, he went complaining it was a head height no ball, to the umpires were useless or words to that effects. Just right click on the photo and press play to watch the video.



The other side of Mike Bailey was evident as he celebrated Janes birthday and twenty years of bliss by taking her to the jewellery shop and buying her some celebratory jewellery. He did manage to get some discount though.

I hear from a distance that Hisham found love whilst at the Heritance, I am not sure his secret is safe with us.

There is no question that the holiday was enhanced by the unfailing pleasantness of Damian and Hisham as well as the way that everyone got on with everyone else. The only thing missing was those that didn't come along.

SRI LANKA 2018



