

## Expedition Fund Report – Medical Internship in Sri Lanka

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### About the project

The Project that I chose to undertake consisted of a three weeks internship in the teaching hospital of Karapitiya, in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka. My aim was to observe the medical practice in Sri Lankan hospitals and build upon the knowledge I gained during my first year of medical school. In order to do this, Projects Abroad offered a wide selection of specialities from which I could assist and shadow the best doctors in the country. As I am confident that my primary interest is Surgery, I spent those three weeks in different wards which included Paediatric Surgery, Neurosurgery and Emergency Medicine. After a total of 75 hours in the leading hospital in the Galle Province, I believe that it has given me an invaluable insight into the world of Global Medicine and the environment in which doctors practicing in Third-World countries and the struggles that they have to face on a daily basis.



### About the hospital

Located in the isolated town of Karapitiya, the teaching hospital is at the centre of medical care in the south of Sri Lanka. Having built a new Emergency building with cutting edge technology, we could easily mistake this hospital for the Royal London Hospital. Some of the most renowned surgeons in Asia come to work in this teaching hospital to practice in this brand-new Emergency wing, with modern surgical equipment and an A&E system based on the Australian guidelines. The main body of the hospital is very different however, where stray dogs, kittens and cows invite themselves in the corridors to hide from the 35°C humid heat of Karapitiya. As you walk along the never-ending corridors of the hospital you will certainly find long queues of patients waiting for the single doctor in each ward to pay them a 30 second consultation (and then British GPs complain that 10 minutes visits are too quick), beds of admitted patients waiting for surgery with “not-so sterile” dressings and of course the intrigued stares from all the local residents as you shuffle your way to your assigned ward.



All in all, after adjusting to the environment, I can safely say this experience has helped me decide the career that I want to pursue and allowed me to meet mentors who have given me unforgettable knowledge and advice which I will transfer into my studies in London and later in my career.



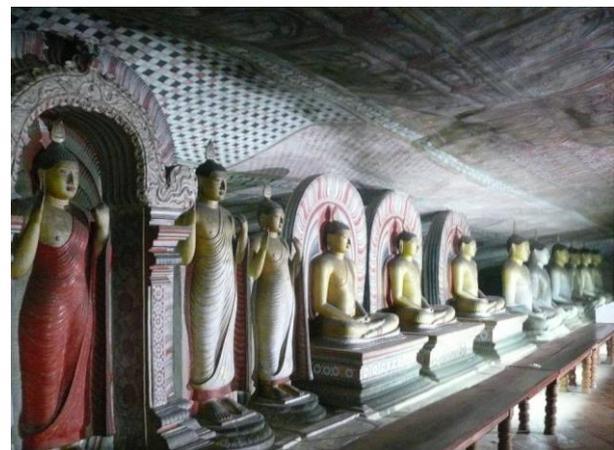
### **About the hosts**

In order to be as immersed as possible into the Sri Lankan culture, we stayed in an amazing host family within a 10 minutes' walk from the hospital. The family (Upali, Akille, Deepika and Tharushi) helped us settling in this unique environment and made our stay very enjoyable. Whilst Tharushi – the daughter – became the translator between us and the parents, the whole family showed us their lifestyle which turned out to portray a whole different side of the country compared to the one that tourists get to see. We saw the local temple and were taught about Buddhist religion and virtues, ate the local food (although we had to ask for a little less spice in the curry) and shopped in more authentic places, rather than the overpriced touristic gifts. Although we might not see the family again, we are still keeping in touch and hope to see Tharushi again as she is currently trying to move to England to study Economics at university.



### **About the leisure**

Working at the hospital from Monday to Friday meant that we could use the weekend break to travel around Sri Lanka. Although it proved difficult to visit the Northern attractions that the country had to offer due to a very unreliable transport system, we still adventured to the East coast of Sri Lanka, which often meant taking a 7-hour bus with terribly loud Sri Lankan music with several passengers leaning on your shoulder (that's if you are lucky enough to find a seat) and of course the traumatic train journey consisting of us trying to escape from the cockroaches below and the number of train passengers that felt like the equivalent of the entire population of Tower Hamlets.





However, seeing the sights that Sri Lanka had to offer made it all worth it – the breathtaking views from the top of Sigirya, the countless statues of Lord Buddha in the Dambulla Cave Temple, the fearless animals we saw at Yala National Park, the beautiful Tooth Relic in Kandy and the amazing tea plantations that we could see during our train journeys. Seeing these incredible only made us wish that we had more time available to travel around this wonderful country.

### **About the Funding**

In conclusion I am eternally grateful that the Expedition Fund enabled me to not only travel to this beautiful country, but also to have given me the chance to learn new skills about medicine and surgery that will help me in my future studies at Queen Mary University. Additionally, this experience has helped me gain extra motivation to finish the long degree that is Medicine and fired up my dream of practicing Medicine abroad in amazing environments such as the one I spent my last month in. I hope that I will have the opportunity to do similar work in another country or continent in the near future, as I have discovered a real passion in travelling and working abroad.

