

BARNEY'S TRIP TO SRI LANKA, NOV 2009 with Kathryn and David Hamling

I took Kathryn and David to this wonderful island, where the people are warm and friendly, the weather hot and humid, the scenery beautiful, very tropical, with jungle and beaches stretching for miles.

My first week was spent looking at the cultural side of Sri Lanka, and the highlight for me was sitting on a veranda, enjoying a cold beer, and watching the elephants enjoy their time in the River at the elephant orphanage. The herd is 80 strong now, and the majority have been a victim of poaching, they were babies abandoned in the forest when their mother were killed. Happily many have now had young of their own and the herd is growing. Sadly, these elephants can never be let back into the wild, but they are well looked after by the mahouts.



I was hiding in Kathryn's bag for this picture of a male 'tusker'. He was found shot 7 times in the head by poachers, and is blind. He was magnificent, but looked so very sad. He would normally live around 80 years, is now 40, and is not well, he suffers from depression, I wonder if it was kindest to treat him so he survived. However, when visitors are gone, he is taken for walks in the jungle and taken to the river by his mahout, who is dedicated to his needs, so has the best quality of life he is capable of having.

I found the heat quite tiring, and an exhausted Kathryn and I enjoyed a nap back at the hotel, this was after wrestling with the swans that had invaded our room, until Kathryn explained that this was our room boy's way of greeting us at this hotel with towels!!



My tiredness could also have had something to do with the little tipples I enjoyed – I went to a liquor store, and the young man there was intrigued by my story and of how I had travelled the world. Kathryn found herself explaining many times about my adventures



with the Pink Ladies.

He was happy to be photographed with me before I purchased my bottle of wine and went on my way!! He was busy counting his takings, and security was very lax as you can see from the money on the table!! The store was very basic, and only frequented by men, so Kathryn had a few strange looks!!





I took several visits to temples, where shoes had to be taken off and shoulders covered, I rested in Kathryn's bag, whilst we waited to go into the temple, which is built into solid rock, and the Buddha statues within carved from the rock also.



I did have some leisure time, and did manage to swim in the lovely hotel pools, in beautiful surroundings, gardens, flowers and wildlife. In my last hotel was a working elephant and his mahout, who went off each day to work. Kathryn took bananas each day from the hotel and fed him.



There is a lot of wildlife to see, and some are very

friendly as you can see from this bird who came to see me – he was trying to drink from the condensation on my beer glass!! This chipmunk was very quick, and Kathryn never managed to get him quite in shot - he is rummaging in Kathryn's bag for a treat to eat!!



This was a wonderful journey, the people of Sri Lanka were so welcoming to me, they were so interested in my story. I will never forget the people I met and their kindness in welcoming me to their country, which has been so troubled in the past by war and the terrible Tsunami, which destroyed lives, but the Sri Lankan people are resourceful and continue to live their daily lives which is often a struggle, and they are welcoming

tourists which so many of the people rely on for their livelihood – myself, Kathryn and David felt privileged to see a small part of their world.

Much Love, Barney xx