India 2019

Mary Anand
Sade Fullard
Rya Jones
Marisa Metropoulos
Clair Sirofchuck

Dr. Christopher McMahon and Kelly King
This was one of the highlights of the trip. We had just got off the longest train ride ever and a boat! Then we (most of us) decided to wake up at 4 in the morning just to catch the sun rise. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever experienced and at this moment I gained a similarity with Morgan Freeman!

--Sade Fullard
I’m not used to being the center or attention. I don’t like people paying a lot of attention to me on the regular basis. But while in India I couldn’t help but to stick out like a sore thumb. While I was enjoying the wonderful view, people were just staring at me—lol. It took me out of my comfort zone a lot but I’m glad I got to experience the country at the expense of my personal space. --Sade Fullard
This was THE highlight of the trip! I LOVE elephants. They are big gentle creatures who don’t harm people or other animals unless provoked. On this day I learned that many of them are harmed and “tamed” to serve humans. Their ears are torn, and they are beaten into submission. (I literally cried while the video played). But the bright side is in this captivity they are nursed back to health so they can live healthy lives and stay safe from those trying to harm them. I wish I could have stayed there with them, but we had to get on a train in less then 4hrs to go to our next destination.

--Sade Fullard
The picture of the giant Buddha statue is significant to me because it really made me realize how big our world is, and the statue itself is very inspiring. I never thought that I would see this statue in my entire life and seeing it even farther away made me awestruck. Looking up at the details in the stonework allowed me to see the beauty in the craftsmanship and attention to detail, which also in turn shows their reverence for their religion.

--Marisa Metropoulos
The picture of the sunrise on the Ganges River stood out to me because of the reverence of the river itself in the Hindu religion. I loved waking up at 5:00 am just to see the sunrise because I also saw all of the people waking up to start their workdays. It allowed me to observe how their society works and take it all in a different way. The River, though dirty, looks really peaceful and pretty with the sun right by it, and I thought it was nice to see the beauty of nature next to a bustling city. --Marisa Metropoulos
The picture of the elephant was from a sanctuary about an hour outside of Agra. The elephants that we saw were all so beautiful and large, yet so peaceful. It was very upsetting to see some of their injuries like damaged toes and ripped ears, but I was very relieved to see that the elephants were being taken care of and treated for their injuries. The lighter spots against their darker skin was so pretty and unique, and I loved to see that as well because elephants are so prominent in Indian culture.

--Marisa Metropoulos
I walked this street every morning with Dr. McMahon on our way to Nirmal Hriday, the Missionaries of Charity's house for the dying. The roads were littered with vibrant colors reflective of the crowded market stalls displaying goods for the local Kali temple. As a Catholic, I was impressed by the way that religion permeated the lives of the people; I wish the unity between daily life and spirituality were more prominent in America. Kali is a Hindu goddess; the booths selling her wares had everything from brilliant flowers to brightly-hued images of her, and devotees of her flocked to the merchants bearing bright red and orange powders to mark their devotion. It was a somewhat strange experience to walk through such a lively place and then arrive, in the midst of it all, at the dying house (which is best compared to a bustling, yet simple, nursing home), where so many lives were fading away. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the bus ride and short trek to our work site with the other volunteers. For the first time ever in my travels, I felt like I had a place in a foreign country--I had a job to do, and I belonged.

--Claire Sirofchuck
I was deeply honored to have the opportunity not only to visit where Mother Teresa lived and worked, but also to see where she had been laid to rest. Every day, there seemed to be something different displayed on her tomb, whether fresh flowers or a newly-arranged Rosary. Stopping by afforded me several moments of comforting quiet time. Calcutta remained a foreign environment, especially with its large Hindu population. In the U.S., most religions don't vary as blatantly from each other (at least all Christians maintain a belief in the same God, for instance), but in India this relationship was not the case. Being able to attend daily Mass with the sisters, and visit the motherhouse, was a blessing—a little Catholic oasis in the midst of a very strange and exciting environment. I selected this picture because the service aspect of our trip was an essential to me. Without it, we would have merely been tourists like everyone else. Having the chance to serve our fellow people revealed to me that, regardless of culture, we're not that different. At the end of the day, we're all human beings, and a smile speaks a universal message.

--Clair Sirofchuck
Prior to India, I'd never heard of the Ganges River. However, it holds intense religious and cultural significance, especially evident in Varanasi. As we walked the shoreline streets at 6 am, watching the sun begin to beat down on the gray water, I observed whole families wading down the steps into the murky water to bathe or to be purified. Little children played while their more dignified family members did laundry. Others said their final goodbyes to loved ones as they were cremated and sent down the holy river for the last time. Many people relied on the river for their living, whether shoreline hotels, fishermen, or various transportation services. We took several of these ferries (small skiffs that sometimes had a tarp for a roof, if you were willing to pay extra) to get to different parts of the city, a much swifter way to travel than on foot through the crowded streets and alleyways. On one of our boat rides, I dipped a blank page of my journal into the river to be able to say "I was there." --Clair Sirofchuck