

Livin la Vida Loca in Lombok!

Because some call me crazy for following my heart, living & serving in developing countries.

And so here I am in Indonesia - Mataram, Lombok to be precise.

It started out a little rough, the 4am 'call to prayer' was blaring & confirmed I was living abroad again.

My exposed legs & arms in a Muslim country was pointed out to me on day one & I thought, this is going to go one of two ways. I had bought trousers but had them cut off below the knee (in consideration of the climate) & I had bought loose fitting cotton shirts, my shoulders covered but my head, neck & arms exposed, but fortunately by day 3 all my exposed bits were forgotten as my teaching style was far more discussion worthy. I had the students laughing, singing & engaged. I had the teacher's videoing me. By day 4 the school had bought a local journalist in to take pictures of me teaching & by day 5 the female teachers are referring to me as 'sister', I am in, it seems tolerance & acceptance has prevailed.

Being very active in classrooms with no fans or AC in this humidity is very challenging. Learning teachers' names was easy, not knowing the language is challenging, I struggle taking the staring in my stride (I am very white & very blonde) & crossing the road in front of school is a game of 'russian roulette', ohh & I have a new motorbike to ride - eeeek. Years of doing it in Cambodia, yet my nerves are very present.

Also by the end of week 1, I had had my usual initiation, by means of a whole day spent in the bathroom & the purchase of a tube of steroid cream to deal with the awful heat rash, so initiation done & dusted!

Week 2 and as was the 'brief, I had already identified several issues with the students & teachers pronunciation of our language, so away we went working on just that, students quivering with nervousness as they knew Miss Linda is going to make them speak, in English!

Miss Linda's favourite lines – 'you can't learn it if you don't speak it' and 'if you're not making mistakes, you're not learning'!

After some time spent with the local teachers, and in discussion about some of the work I'd done in Cambodia, Teacher Irwandi invited me out to visit his village & so I jumped at the opportunity to see, learn & immerse myself more. OH MY GOSH, this poor little island paradise is drowning in garbage – he asks 'can you help?' I teach him 'does a 1 legged duck swim in a circle', funny colloquialisms' & cause for much hilarity.

Geez Craig said 1 page - alter the margins, haha!

I'm now at the end of my 1st month & what we have planned will be nothing short of a miracle to pull it all off by my departure date of 01/07.

Very briefly, Craig put me in contact with John Phillips of KESAB – I read his email which gave me much food for thought.

On the agenda is:

World Environment Day (WED) 05/06 – planning a 'garbage-laden' beach cleanup with students, local media, (hopefully a politician), Teachers etc..... talk about perfect place, perfect time!!!

A poster competition with WED & 'marine/plastic pollution' as the theme – friends in AU donating some art supplies & some prize money. Prize money will be spent on purchasing non-recyclable items such as cloth shopping bags, drink bottles, SS take-away food containers etc to reduce single-use plastics.

I'm developing a **PowerPoint presentation on Lombok**, tourism, economy, garbage & its impact on all things Lombok & effecting change, for a group of 45 students & teachers. From that group we're **developing a 'student environment council'** a group of 'waste warriors' as such – more on that as things progress.

A big 'clean-up' at Mambalan Village (Teacher Irwandi's village) is being planned – my friend donating some funds towards this. Following the clean-up I will be **delivering education in the village** schools with Irwandi translating for me & hallelujah for Google Translate I say.

We have already had a mini clean up (a practice run) at their local Community Centre, which was a great success & saw about 20 young people involved with Irwandi & me carting bags of garbage into the city on a motorbike late that night. What a sight! More on plans for the big cleanup as we progress.

So, it's been a very busy month & I'm extremely excited about the next few. While I'm here, let's talk funding – pushing it? That's what I do! Would love some extra dollars to throw at some of these projects, maybe match what my friends are donating, dollar for dollar?

I'm now riding the motorbike to get my weekly groceries, though I wish they wouldn't move it whilst I shop – causes me some anxiety when I cannot find it.

I've been invited to another 'informal' school out in the village to swap skills, learning to cook their traditional foods for my English, but I think I'm getting the better deal.

I've slipped on a green, moss covered road & grazed my knee, I've sliced my finger & had an allergic reaction to the band aid, I've had 2 days down & out due to a migraine (the humidity, I'm sure), the internet tests my patience, I miss ham & bacon & I'm content.

My students now yell out to me as I walk past their classrooms, they rush to greet me as I enter school in the mornings & I hear them singing the letter 'I' (la-lala-la) as they wait to be picked up in front of school.

The head English Teacher at school shared with me that his friends who teach in other schools have invited me to teach, though I thanked him for their kind offer, I advised him very kindly that I think 'I have enough on my plate' just for now. Teacher Nas replies curiously 'oh your plate, you want to eat?'

And I retort with a very cheeky grin 'I wouldn't be dead for quid's'!

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Everyday activity at School



Respectful greeting to Teacher.....



Ohhhh the sweet joy of living in SE Asia. Straight from the tree.....



And then there's this.....



Walkabout Village style



huge lump in my throat

Out of the blue, comes a small hand offering me a flower,



You like Chilli she said?Chilli soup, mouth numbing and ohhh so delicious.....



Local Beach, Garbage everywhere and most likely the location of our cleanup on World Environment Day.