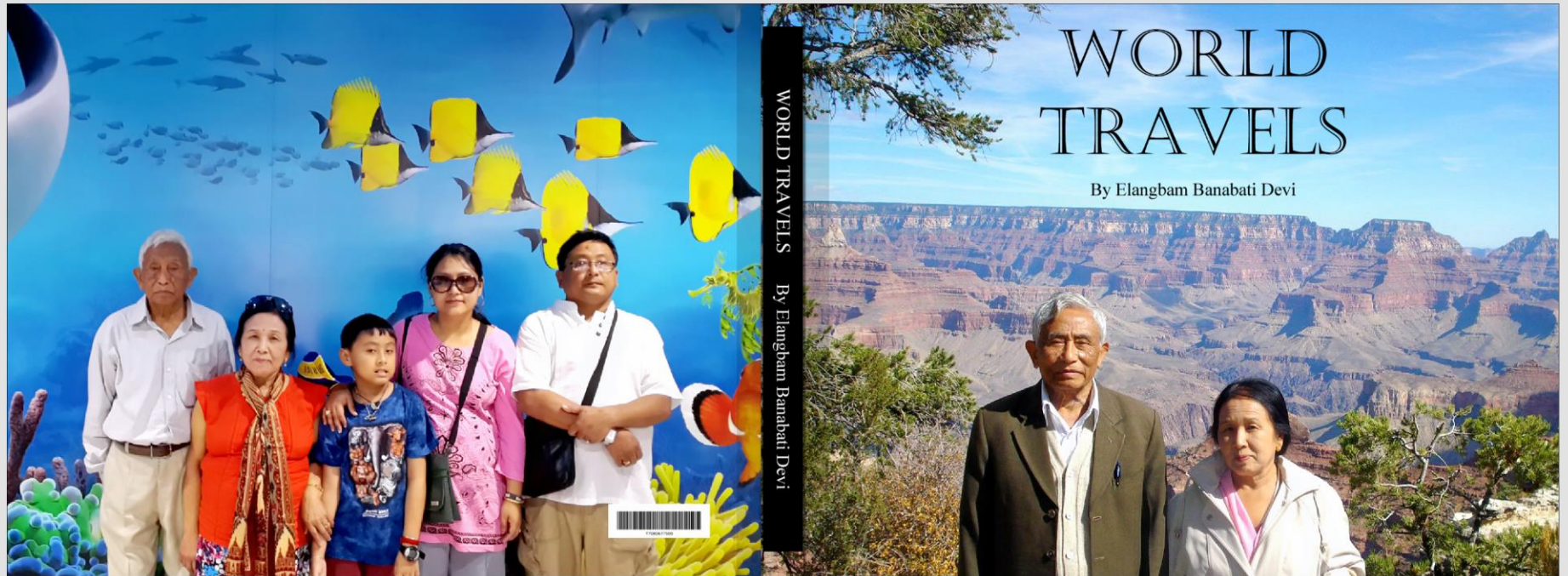


Back

Front



133 %

Start slideshow

Cover of 120

Close preview

Price 3,080.00 Rs. landscape L 28x21 cm Photo cover

Type here to search

mama-travel-book

All Mail - maisnam2...

Vistaprint.In Photo ...

10:51 PM  
2/21/2021

This is the inside of the cover.  
You can not place anything here.

# World Travels

*By Elangbam Banabati Devi*





*This book is dedicated to my husband Prof. Maisnam Iboton Singh,  
My children Riten, Tej, Indira, Nirmala, Bobby,  
Daughters-in-law Remika, Monalisa, Sonia,  
Son-in-law Gautam,  
Grandchildren Kartik, Ilesh, Dhanistha, Pari, Sophia and Nya.  
Who have made my journey of life meaningful and beautiful*

3





#### Author's Note

Life is a beautiful journey where we come across people and places we love and appreciate. The experiences earned and the lessons learned in life's journey shape our understanding, thoughts and emotions. Travelling to different places is a beautiful way to discover this magnificent world we live in. The beauty in the diversity of natural beauty, cultures, food and people across different regions of the world are to be cherished forever.

Taking inspiration from my husband's book "Travels in the USA"; I thought of sharing my experiences of travelling to different areas of the world: USA, Europe (France and Switzerland), and Asia (Bangkok and Sri Lanka).

The travels in the USA have been extensively described by my husband in his book. Europe was a unique and learning experience for me. In Europe, I learnt the importance of preservation of natural beauty and of medieval structures; about the advances in technology making life extremely comfortable even in the most hostile terrain. The kindness and friendliness of the people of Europe are ideals which I appreciate deeply.

Bangkok, in Thailand was a fine combination of the gentleness and devotion of the people of the Orient; and the advances and comfort of the modern world. The devoutness of the people of Bangkok; the reverence for the splendid temples and glorious statues of Buddha are resonant with the values I have been brought up with. The innovations and advances in tourism along with its natural beauty make Thailand one of the most preferred holiday destinations in the world.

Sri Lanka, the "Pearl in the Indian Ocean" has always been deep-rooted in our consciousness, owing to the stories of the "Ramayana" we heard as children. The supposedly rich and magical Kingdom of Ravana; was more beautiful when seen with the naked eye than what we had heard of and imagined about! Sri Lanka is blessed with the natural beauty of deep green forests, vast blue oceans, and glorious mountains. These coupled with its marvelous architectural beauty and lovely people make the journey to Sri Lanka a truly rewarding experience.

I feel blessed and thank God for having given me the opportunity to travel to different corners of the world. My beautiful family has always been my source of inspiration and my companion in the journey of my life. I thank God for them. My travels to diverse places have enriched me greatly. From my travels, I have learnt to appreciate that we are a single human race in this beautiful world bound by the most important emotion of love.

**Mrs. Maisnam Ongbi Elangbam Banabati Devi**

January 2021

Imphal, Manipur, India

5





### About the Author

Smt. Maisnam Ongbi **Elangbam Banabati Devi**, wife of Prof. Maisnam Iboton Singh is a caring wife, loving mother, affectionate grandmother, a deeply religious, kind and compassionate human being. She has brought up each of her five children with deep love and dedication; and today the love has been carried forward to the spouses of their children and grandchildren.

She had an excellent academic and professional life. She participated enthusiastically in the academic and extra-curricular activity of her college during her professional life. She served as the Head of Department of Zoology; and Faculty-in-Charge of Students' Literary Activities, Debates and Symposia at Modern College, Imphal. She was a 'Resource Person' in the 'Entrepreneurship Development Programme' of the Science students of Manipur conducted by Manipur University. Her extra-curricular activity included working as a Programme Office of 'National Service Scheme (NSS)' Women's Unit of Modern College and numerous talks on All India Radio, Imphal and other public forums on social and women issues.

Today, her life revolves around devotion to God and philanthropic activities. She has donated generously to temples and religious institutions. She and her family started the 'Maisnam Iboton Singh and Maisnam Ongbi Banabati Devi Charitable Trust' to help the disadvantaged sections of the society. She and her husband have instituted awards for meritorious students like 'Ima Hiyangthang Lairembi Merit Award' at Kamakhya College, Hiyangthang, Manipur. Her children have also instituted the 'Elangbam Banabati Merit Award', at Modern College, Imphal. She is involved with other benevolent organizations like the Manipur Mahilla Kalyan Samiti, Dewlahland, the Senior Citizens for Society, Manipur and Lion's Club. She is now a life-member and Board of Director (BOD) member of Lion's Club of Imphal Global.

She is an enthusiastic traveler and appreciates the beauty of other states and nations; and is happy to share her experiences. In this book, she has beautifully highlighted the beauty of this world we live in, the zeal and kindness of people around the globe and identified love as a unifying emotion for all human beings.





One "USA (2008)"

I visited USA for the first time in **September 2008** along with my husband Prof. Maisnam Iboton Singh. During that trip, we travelled to various US states: New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, California and Nevada.

On Sunday, September 14, 2008, we visited the Georgia Aquarium (world's largest aquarium), the Centennial Olympic Park (built for the 1996 Olympic Games held at Atlanta), and the CNN Center (headquarters of CNN) in Atlanta, Georgia. The **Georgia Aquarium**, located in Atlanta, Georgia at Pemberton Place, is the world's largest aquarium with more than 8.5 million US gallons (31,000 cubic meters) of marine and fresh water housing more than 100,000 animals of 500 different species. The aquarium's notable specimens in 2008 included two beluga whales.



Photo 1: At the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, with fishes swimming in the background

10



Photo 2: At the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta - people watching fishes through a huge glass wall. This was a very peaceful place

The **Centennial Olympic Park** is a 21 acre (85,000 square meters) public park located in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, USA that is owned and operated by the Georgia World Congress Center Authority.

The park was built as part of the infrastructure improvements for the Centennial 1996 Summer Olympics. The park was paid for in part by the donations of thousands of individuals who "bought" 800,000 bricks engraved with the short message of their choice and laid as pavers throughout the park. The contribution for each brick was US\$35.



Photo 3: At the Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta with our youngest son Bobby

The **CNN Center** in Atlanta is the world headquarters of the Cable News Network (CNN). The main newsrooms and studios for several of CNN's news channels are located in the building. The facility's commercial office space is occupied entirely by CNN and its parent company, Turner Broadcasting System, a division of Time Warner.

The CNN Center also houses a major hotel (Omni Hotel) and a large atrium food court frequented by local business employees, tourists, event goers from Philips Arena and the Georgia Dome, and conference attendees from the Georgia World Congress Center.



Photo 4: In front of a large CNN sign in front of the CNN Center in Atlanta

11



On **Friday, September 19, 2008**, we visited Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina (116 miles/186 km – 2 hours drive from Knoxville). It is the largest privately-owned home in the United States. The estate is so big that we had to drive around by car to go from one part of the estate to another.

**Biltmore House** is a French Renaissance architecture revival Châteauesque-style mansion near Asheville, North Carolina, built by George Washington Vanderbilt II between 1889 and 1895. It is the largest privately-owned home in the United States and featuring 250 rooms. The main house is 4.2 acres big and the entire estate covers approximately 8000 acres. Still owned by one of Vanderbilt's descendants, it stands today as one of the most prominent remaining examples of the Gilded Age, and of significant gardens in the Garden à la française and English Landscape garden styles in the USA.



Photo 5: With Sonia near the stables at Biltmore Estate, Asheville, North Carolina

12



Photo 6: In front of the Biltmore House at the Biltmore Estate, Asheville, North Carolina

Next day (**Saturday, September 20, 2008**), we visited Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, Tennessee (49 miles/79 km – 1.1 hours drive from Knoxville). We also visited Dollywood in Pigeon Forge on the way to Gatlinburg.

**WonderWorks** is an entertainment center focused on science exhibits with five locations in the United States. The company's slogan is "Let Your Imagination Run Wild". Its buildings are commonly built as if they are upside down. The experience is considered an "edu-tainment", a combination of education and entertainment. It contains over one hundred hands on exhibits that challenges the mind and many activities for guests to explore.

**Pigeon Forge** is a mountain resort city in Sevier County, Tennessee, located in the southeastern United States. As of the 2000 census, the city had a total population of 5,083. Situated just five miles north of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Pigeon Forge is primarily a tourist resort. The city's attractions include Dollywood and numerous outlet malls and music theaters.

**Dollywood** is an amusement park jointly owned by entertainer Dolly Parton and Herschend Family Entertainment. It is located in the Knoxville-Smoky Mountains metroplex in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Hosting nearly 3 million guests in a typical season – mid-March to the Christmas holidays – Dollywood is the biggest ticketed tourist attraction in Tennessee. In addition to standard amusement park thrill rides, Dollywood features traditional crafts and music of the Smoky Mountain area. It is also the site of the Southern Gospel Museum and Hall of Fame. Dollywood also features a full-size steam train, one of the park's signature attractions.



Photo 7: In front of the Wonderworks upside down house at Pigeon Forge, Tennessee



Photo 8: At Dollywood, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

13

On **Saturday, October 4, 2008**, we visited Washington DC, the capital city of the USA. We visited the White House, the United States Capitol, Library of Congress, National Botanic Garden, the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, and the Washington Monument. It was an amazing experience visiting the central seat of administration of one of the most powerful and developed countries of the World.

**Washington, D.C.**, formally the District of Columbia and also known as D.C. or Washington, is the capital city of the United States of America. Founded after the American Revolution, Washington was named for George Washington, the first president of the United States and a Founding Father. As the seat of the United States federal government and several international organizations, Washington is an important world political capital. The city has more than 20 million visitors annually.

The **White House** is the official residence and workplace of the president of the United States. It is located at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW in Washington, D.C., and has been the residence of every U.S. president since John Adams in 1800. The term "White House" is often used as a metonym for the president and their advisers.

The **United States Capitol**, often called the Capitol Building, is the meeting place of the United States Congress and the seat of the legislative branch of the U.S. federal government. It is located on Capitol Hill at the eastern end of the National Mall in Washington, D.C.. Though no longer at the geographic center of the federal district, the Capitol forms the origin point for the district's street-numbering system and the district's four quadrants.



Photo 9: At the White House, Washington, DC



Photo 10: At the United States Capitol, Washington, DC

The **Library of Congress (LC)** is the research library that officially serves the United States Congress and is the de facto national library of the United States. It is the oldest federal cultural institution in the United States. The library's functions are overseen by the librarian of Congress, and its buildings are maintained by the architect of the Capitol. The Library of Congress is one of the largest libraries in the world.

The **Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History** is a natural history museum administered by the Smithsonian Institution, located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., United States. It has free admission and is open 364 days a year. In 2016, with 7.1 million visitors, it was the eleventh most visited museum in the world and the most visited natural history museum in the world.



Photo 11: Intricate art work on the walls and roof of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC



Photo 12: At the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC

15



On Wednesday, **October 8, 2008**, we started our trip for Niagara Falls, New York state, which is 495 miles (797 miles) away from Richmond, Virginia. Since it was a long drive, we stopped overnight at Erie, Pennsylvania. Erie is a town on the shores of Lake Erie, one of the five Great Lakes of North America. In the morning, we stopped by on the shores of Lake Erie. Lake Erie was so big that it felt like an ocean, the only difference being that the water was fresh water instead of sea water. It was an amazing and tranquil experience standing on the shores of the huge lake and watching the blue waves and the seagulls.

**Erie, Pennsylvania** is a city on the south shore of Lake Erie and the county seat of Erie County, Pennsylvania, United States. Named for the lake and the Native American Erie people who lived in the area until the mid-17th century, Erie is the fourth-largest city in Pennsylvania, and the largest city in Northwestern Pennsylvania, with a population of 101,786 at the 2010 census.

**Lake Erie** is the fourth-largest lake (by surface area) of the five Great Lakes in North America, and the eleventh-largest globally if measured in terms of surface area. It is the southernmost, shallowest, and smallest by volume of the Great Lakes and therefore also has the shortest average water residence time. At its deepest point Lake Erie is 210 feet (64 metres) deep. Situated on the International Boundary between Canada and the United States, Lake Erie's northern shore is the Canadian province of Ontario, specifically the Ontario Peninsula, with the U.S. states of Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York on its western, southern, and eastern shores. These jurisdictions divide the surface area of the lake with water boundaries. The lake was named by the Erie people, a Native American people who lived along its southern shore. The tribal name "erie" is a shortened form of the Iroquoian word ericthonan, meaning long tail.



Photo 14: On the shore of Lake Erie in Pennsylvania, on the way to Niagara Falls

On **Thursday, October 9, 2008**, we reached **Niagara Falls**, New York state. Visiting Niagara Falls was a breath taking experience. The volume of water going down the falls is tremendous and you have to see it in person to fully comprehend its might and power. The river currents significantly sped up approaching the falls. At night, it was an amazing experience seeing the Niagara Falls bathed in lights. We could also see the lights of the town of Niagara Falls, Ontario across the border in Canada.



Photo 15: On the "Maid of the Mist" boat ride to see the Niagara Falls up close



Photo 16: Niagara Falls, New York state



Photo 17: Niagara Falls at night with the town of Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada across the falls



On Thursday, October 16, 2008, we embarked on our trip of the West Coast of the USA. We flew to **Los Angeles, California**. On October 17, 2008, we visited Universal Studios, Hollywood, Grauman's Chinese Theatre, La Brea Tar Pits and the Kodak/Dolby Theater (where the Oscar Award ceremonies are held).

The next day, **Saturday, October 18, 2008**, we visited the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles. In the afternoon, we visited the Santa Monica beach in Los Angeles. It was an amazing sight seeing the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean at Santa Monica beach.

The **Walt Disney Concert Hall** in downtown Los Angeles, California, is the fourth hall of the Los Angeles Music Center and was designed by Frank Gehry. It opened on October 24, 2003. Bounded by Hope Street, Grand Avenue, and 1st and 2nd Streets, it seats 2,265 people and serves, among other purposes, as the home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestra and the Los Angeles Master Chorale.

**Santa Monica State Beach** is a California State Park operated by the city of Santa Monica. The beach is located along Pacific Coast Highway in Santa Monica. It is 3.5 miles (5.6 km) long and has parks, picnic areas, playgrounds, restrooms, as well as manned lifeguard stations.



Photo 18: At the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles, California



Photo 19: At Santa Monica beach near Los Angeles, California

The next day (**Sunday, October 19, 2008**), we drove from Los Angeles, California to the Grand Canyon, Arizona, a distance of 486 miles (782 km). The Grand Canyon was so wide and majestic. It was an amazing experience viewing the expansive canyon created by the Colorado river. The canyon was so deep that we could not see the Colorado river which cut through it.

The **Grand Canyon** is a steep-sided canyon carved by the Colorado River in Arizona, United States. The Grand Canyon is 277 miles (446 km) long, up to 18 miles (29 km) wide and attains a depth of over a mile (6,093 feet or 1,857 meters). Nearly two billion years of Earth's geological history have been exposed as the Colorado River and its tributaries cut their channels through layer after layer of rock while the Colorado Plateau was uplifted. Several recent studies support the hypothesis that the Colorado River established its course through the area about 5 to 6 million years ago. Since that time, the Colorado River has driven the down-cutting of the tributaries and retreat of the cliffs, simultaneously deepening and widening the canyon.

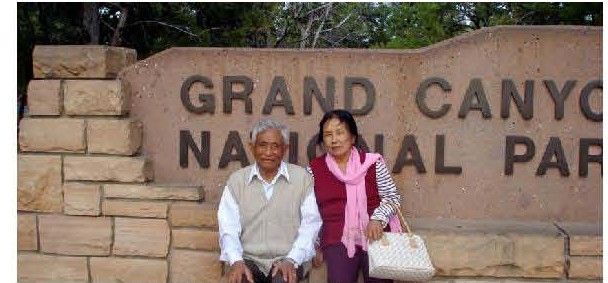


Photo 20: At the entrance of the Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona



Photo 21: At the Grand Canyon, Arizona

That evening (**Sunday, October 19, 2008**), we drove from the Grand Canyon to Las Vegas, Nevada, a distance of 275 miles (442 km). It was an amazing experience seeing the city of lights in the middle of the Nevada desert. We stayed at the Monte Carlo Hotel and Casino (now Park MGM) which was very luxurious. In the evening, we visited the Las Vegas "Strip", enjoying the synchronized and light and sound show of the fountains at the Bellagio hotel, visited the Paris hotel which has an exact half scale replica of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

**Las Vegas** (Spanish for "The Meadows"), officially the City of Las Vegas and often known simply as Vegas, is the 28th-most populous city in the United States, the most populous city in the state of Nevada, and the county seat of Clark County. The city anchors the Las Vegas Valley metropolitan area and is the largest city within the greater Mojave Desert. Las Vegas is an internationally renowned major resort city, known primarily for its gambling, shopping, fine dining, entertainment, and nightlife. The Las Vegas Valley as a whole serves as the leading financial, commercial, and cultural center for Nevada.

**Bellagio** is a resort, luxury hotel and casino on the Las Vegas Strip in Paradise, Nevada. It is owned by The Blackstone Group and operated by MGM Resorts International and was built on the site of the demolished Dunes hotel and casino. Inspired by the Lake Como town of Bellagio in Italy, Bellagio is famed for its elegance. One of its most notable features is an 8-acre (3.2 hectare) lake between the building and the Strip, which houses the Fountains of Bellagio, a large dancing water fountain synchronized to music.



Photo 22: Light and sound synchronized choreographed water feature "The Fountains of Bellagio" at the Bellagio Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada



Photo 23: In front of the Monte Carlo hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada

The next day (**Monday, October 20, 2008**), we visited various other places on the Las Vegas "Strip" including the Venetian Hotel which has a real-life canal inside the hotel and floating gondola boats like the ones in Venice, Italy; along with a sky colored roof. We also visited the Mirage, Treasure Island, New York, New York New York, Excalibur and the Luxor hotel which is shaped like a pyramid with a light shooting into the sky.

The **Venetian Las Vegas** is a luxury hotel and casino resort located on the Las Vegas Strip in Paradise, Nevada, United States, on the site of the old Sands Hotel. Designed by KlingStubbins, the hotel tower contains 36 stories and rises 475 feet (145 m). The Venetian is owned and operated by Las Vegas Sands. The Venetian also serves as the seat of the corporate headquarters for its parent company.

The hotel uses Venice, Italy, as its design inspiration and features architectural replicas of various Venetian landmarks, including the Palazzo Ducale, Piazza San Marco, Piazzetta di San Marco, the Lion of Venice Column and the Column of Saint Theodore, St Mark's Campanile, and the Rialto Bridge.

The Grand Canal Shoppes is an upscale shopping mall inside The Venetian Hotel & Casino and The Palazzo on the Las Vegas Strip in Paradise, Nevada. The mall was opened along with the Venetian in 1999. **The mall has indoor canals, where gondolas take people around the mall.** The mall is anchored by a flagship, high-fashion Barneys New York store and contains many designer and upscale boutiques. Live performances can be found throughout the mall.



Photo 25: In front of the real-life Venice style canals at the Venetian hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada



Photo 26: Trying out the slot machines at the Monte Carlo Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas, Nevada



On Friday, **October 31, 2008**, we drove from Richmond, Virginia to Edison, New Jersey, a distance of 305 miles (490 km). We stayed at my niece Priya Yendrembam's place. The next day (Saturday, November 1, 2008), we took the NJ Transit train from Metropark, New Jersey to Penn Station, New York. We took a sightseeing bus tour which took us to various places in **New York City** including the Empire State Building, Macy's Department Store, the United Nations, the World Trade Center Memorial, the American Express Tower, Central Park and **Times Square**.

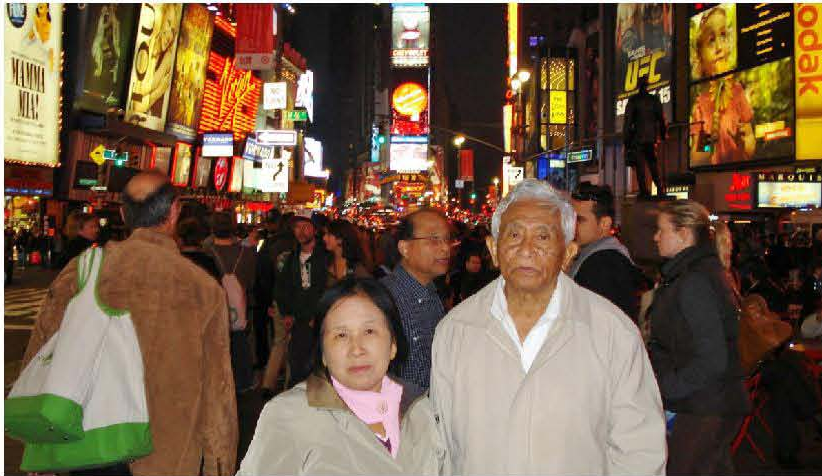


Photo 27: At Times Square, New York City

22



Photo 28: In front of the World Financial Center (American Express Tower)

We spent the next day (**Sunday, November 2, 2008**) relaxing at Priya's place and playing with their son Rahul Noah. We took Continental (now United Airlines) flight CO 82 from Newark Airport to New Delhi, India. It was a direct flight and took 14 hours 25 minutes to travel a distance of 7,323 miles (11,785 km).

We arrived at New Delhi airport Monday, November 3, 2008 after a 2 month visit to the USA where we were able to see amazing places, met near and dear ones, and experienced the expansive country of the USA and its people and culture.



Photo 29: With my niece Priya, her husband Rajeshwar, son Rahul Noah, my husband Ibtan and son Bobby at Priya and Rajeshwar's place in Edison, New Jersey

23



69 %

Start slideshow



22-23 of 120



Close preview



Price 3,080.00 Rs.

landscape L 28x21 cm

Photo cover



Type here to search



mam...



Vista...



Travel...



Worl...



\*Unti...



(8) W...



7:09 PM

2/21/2021







Two "USA (2013)"

My husband Prof. Maisnam Iboton Singh, my daughter Indira Maisnam and myself left for our USA tour on **28<sup>th</sup> September 2013**. It was my husband's third trip to the USA, my second trip and my daughter's first trip. My daughter was going to the USA to present her research papers at two esteemed USA medical conferences: American Society of Bone and Mineral Research at Baltimore, Maryland and American Thyroid Association at San Juan, Puerto Rico.

We took the Air India flight at Kolkata. From New Delhi, we took a direct flight to John F Kennedy airport, New York. My son, Bobby Maisnam, was waiting for us at the airport. We drove down to Frederick, Maryland where my son recently bought a house. Frederick is 250 miles (402 km) from JFK.

On 4th October, after relaxing at home, we left for Baltimore in the afternoon. It is the most populous city in Maryland. We spent some time at the **Baltimore Inner Harbor** and walked along its streets. In the harbour, we saw a granite ball (weighing 10,000 lbs / 4,500 kg) which is actually floating on a thin layer of water. The most interesting part was that we could move the ball with our fingers!

On 6th October, we went to a very interesting place known as the Amish Country. Lancaster county in Pennsylvania is one such place where the Amish reside. We visited the Amish village (a model **Amish Village**) and visited a traditional house filled with traditional and antique furniture and furnishings.

26



Photo 1: Moving the 4,500 kg granite ball floating on a film on water with our hands. At Baltimore Inner Harbor.



Photo 2: At the Amish Village, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

On our way back, we had a short stopover at Philadelphia and strolled around the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**.

We rested the next 3 days at home.

On 10th October, we headed for Niagara Falls by car, a distance of 360 miles from my son's house. It was thus a very long journey and we enjoyed it. We started early in the morning and reached late at night. Along the way we passed through amazing highways and picturesque landscapes with **beautiful colors of fall (autumn)**.



Photo 3: In front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Photo 4: Beautiful Fall (Autumn) colors in Pennsylvania

27

On 11th October 2013, we visited the world famous **Niagara Falls** which is a group of falls extending from New York state in the USA to Ontario in Canada. Horseshoe falls are the largest of the falls and is present along the international border of Canada and the USA. The other falls are the American Falls and the Bridal Veil Falls.

The **sight at of the falls at night** was breathtaking. Lights in varied colors and shapes was seen all around the falls. Across the falls we could see the lights of the city of Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. The next day, we strolled around the falls. We took the Maid of the Mist boat ride. The boat ride takes one to the heart of the waterfall and is an exhilarating experience for many. In the evening, we took a tourist bus ride around the falls. Besides the falls, we saw rainbows, beautiful trees, plants and flowers; squirrels and birds.



Photo 5: At Niagara Falls, New York



28

Photo 6: Niagara Falls at night from the USA side with Canada in the background

On 12th October 2013, we headed for **Lake Erie**. It is the 4th largest lake of the 5 Great lakes of the USA and is present on the international boundary between the USA and Canada. The Lake looks no smaller than an ocean, with islands, beaches and aquatic life. The Lake is fed by the Detroit River and drains into Lake Ontario via the Niagara River and Niagara Falls. After a stopover at Lake Erie, we reached home late at night.



Photo 7: On the shores of Lake Erie, Pennsylvania

29



On 17th October 2013, we headed for **San Juan in Puerto Rico** from the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. We arrived at the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico (means Rich Port in Spanish) is a beautiful island in the Caribbean and is an unincorporated territory of the United States. Though a part of the USA, San Juan is very far from mainland USA. It is a tropical city with views of rolling mountains and the Caribbean Sea, European style architecture and tropical style buildings at many places with the road signs mostly in Spanish, and different flora and fauna.

On 19th October 2013, we visited the **El Yunque National Forest**, the only tropical rain forest in the national forest system of the USA. It is located in the Sierra de Luquillo mountains. The journey to El Yunque was breathtaking, the roads were narrow and steep at some places, but my son managed to drive through those roads comfortably. It is one of the most biologically diverse forests in the USA with lush green vegetation, huge evergreen trees, lovely flowers and numerous waterfalls. The Caribbean could be seen from many points along the forest. The sound of the forest frog 'Coqui' could be heard echoing throughout the forest. We climbed the Yokahu Observation Tower, and enjoyed breathtaking views. Native people believe El Yunque was the abode of their chief god Yúcahu.



Photo 8: At Yokahu observation tower, El Yunque National Forest, Puerto Rico

30

On 20th October 2013, we visited the Old San Juan Town. We could appreciate the Spanish Colonial architecture and the San Juan Cathedral; and visited the **Castillo San Felipe del Morro (El Morro)** and Castillo de San Cristobal. El Morro lying on the northwestern most point of Old San Juan was named in honor of King Philip II of Spain. It is a world heritage site, and was the site of numerous battles of the Spanish with the Portuguese, Dutch and the British. The last active fight at El Morro was the Spanish-American war of 1898, where El Morro was bombarded by the US Navy. With the end of the war and the signing of the Treaty of Paris, the Islands of Puerto Rico along with others were handed over to the Americans by the Spanish. Today, it is a lovely and happy place, with imposing architecture and very strong winds.



Photo 9: At Castillo San Felipe del Morro (El Morro), San Juan, Puerto Rico

31

On 24th October 2013, we went to the Shenandoah National Park and Luray Caverns in Virginia. While the National Park on the western side of the USA like the Yellowstone National Park were established in the 19th century; the National Parks on the eastern side like the **Shenandoah National Park** came much later in the 1930s. A national park in the Blue Ridge Mountains was proposed in 1901 but operations halted. Thereafter, the commonwealth of Virginia acquired property from landholders and donated the same to the federal government. The park was finally established in 1935. The National Park is located along the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia USA. We drove along the Skyline Drive, a 169km stretch of road and had breathtaking views of the majestic National Park bursting with imposing trees, magnificent valleys, gorgeous waterfalls, birds and wildlife; all decorated with the vibrant colors of the fall (autumn) season.



Photo 10: At Skyline Drive, Shenandoah National Park, Virginia

32

Very close to the park, we visited the world-famous lime caves, **Luray Caverns**. Discovered in 1878, the cave is adorned with splendid columns of stalagmite and stalactite translating into amazing structures, shapes and halls. Inside the caves, we could see the "Great Stalacpipe Organ" (a lithophone); drapery shaped "Saracen's Tent"; the "Ballroom of Stalactites"; the "Fried Eggs" rock formation; the Dream Lake where the stalactites are reflected making them look like stalagmites; and the Wishing Well (where I made wishes). It was an out of the world experience in the underworld. I had never seen such an amazing structure before!

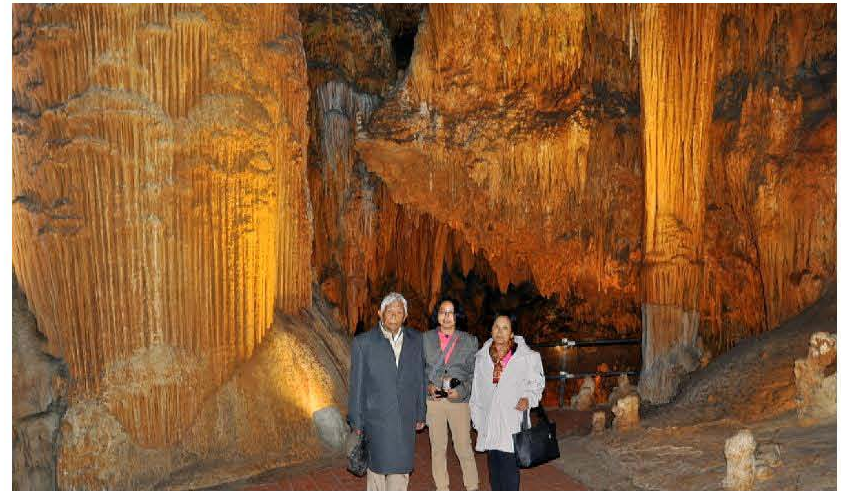


Photo 11: At Luray Caverns, Virginia

33



69 %

Start slideshow



32-33 of 120



Close preview



Price 3,080.00 Rs.

landscape L 28x21 cm

Photo cover



Type here to search

8:19 PM  
2/21/2021



On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2013, we visited **New York City**, the financial capital of the USA. We visited the World Trade Centre Memorial, Times Square, Wall Street and other places in downtown New York.



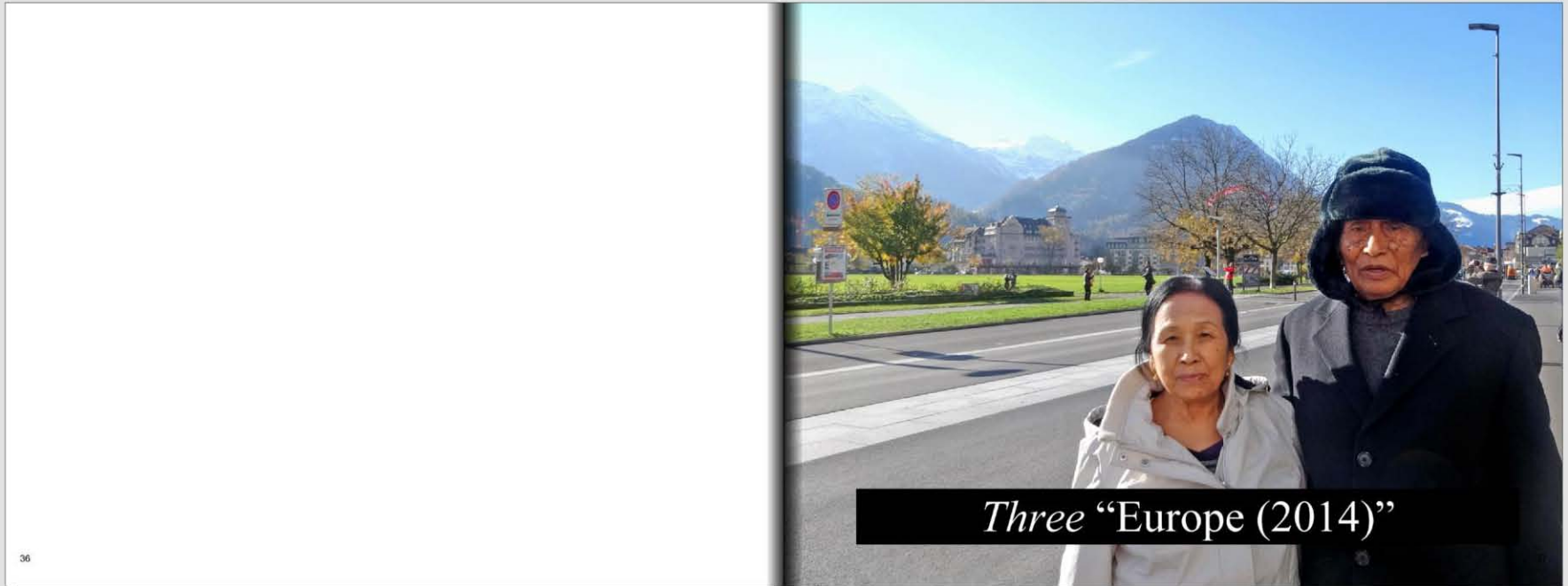
Photo 13: At Penn Station, New York City

In the afternoon, we took a cruise on the Hudson River to see the **Statue of Liberty**. The skyline of New York looked amazing from the river with its impressive buildings and small planes scuttling every now and then. The small planes are the air taxis that is a common sight in busy cities like New York City. The Statue of Liberty was gifted by the people of France to the people of the United States and is located on the Liberty Island in the New York Harbor. The Statue was designed by French sculptor Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi.

After a month's journey in one of the most developed nations in the world, having spent a lovely time with my son's family and a lifetime of memories, we left the USA on 29th October 2013 from JFK Airport, New York and reached Kolkata, India on **30th October 2013**.



Photo 14: Statue of Liberty, New York City





Three "Europe (2014)"

We went to **France and Switzerland** in Europe in November 2014. It was the second overseas tour with our daughter Indira and we immensely enjoyed it.

We took the Air India flight from Kolkata on 3rd November 2014 and reached **Paris, France** on the evening of 3rd November 2014 after a halt and changing aircrafts in New Delhi. We arrived at Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport. It is also known as the Roissy Airport and is the largest international airport in France. From Roissy, we took a taxi to Ibis Styles at Bercy in Paris. The hotel is conveniently located very close to both the metro stations and the Gare De Bercy railway stations.



Photo 1 - At the Academie National de Musique (Paris Opera) in Paris, France



Photo 2 - My husband, my daughter Bheman and myself in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France

After a good night's rest and a fulfilling breakfast on 4th November, we came out to explore the city of Paris. Initially we thought we would explore Paris on our own by utilising the passes we bought as Paris has an extensive network of metro and buses. But it was quite difficult for us to navigate, as Paris has an immensely complex and extensive local transport network. So, we did our sightseeing with the Hop On and Hop off Bus, which took us to major sites of tourist interest in Paris. In Paris we saw the **Arc de Triomphe**, which was built to honour those who fought and died for France in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. On its inner and outer surfaces there were names of all French victories and generals inscribed. On the eastern side of the Arc Triomphe lies the **Champs-Élysées**, a 1.9km stretch famous for theatres, cafes and luxury shops. We strolled along the Champs, and bought a few souvenirs.



Photo 3 - At the Champs-Élysées in Paris, France



Photo 4 - Three of us in front of the Arc de Triomphe



Photo 5 - The Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France

As the bus took us around the city, we saw the Seine, the river in Paris which neatly divides the city into the right and left banks. We saw beautifully crafted and decorated bridges and buildings. Another highlight of our tour was the Eiffel Tower and the **Notre-Dame Cathedral**. The Eiffel Tower, a wrought iron lattice structure is one of the most recognisable structures in the world. At one time in history, it was the tallest structure in the world. Notre-Dame meaning 'Our Lady of Paris' is a beautiful medieval Catholic cathedral and considered one of the finest works of French Gothic architecture. Intricately carved and designed, the cathedral was indeed very beautiful. We reached the cathedral in the evening when cathedral service was going on. The experience was wonderful and memorable.



Photo 7 - In front of the Notre-Dame Cathedral



Photo 6 - In front of the Louvre Museum



Photo 8 - Inside the Notre-Dame Cathedral

On 5th November 2014, we went to Versailles from the Gare De Bercy railway station which was a few minutes' walk from our hotel. We had to change train once and it took us around 1 hour to reach Versailles. From the station, the **Palace of Versailles** was a few minutes beautiful walk. The Palace of Versailles was the royal residence from 1682 till the start of French Revolution in 1789. Inside the Palace we saw impressive rooms like the Hall of Mirrors, private apartments of the King and Queen, State Apartments of the King etc.



Photo 9 - Near the Versailles Railway Station



Photo 10 - In front of the Statue of King Louis XIV at the Palace of Versailles





Photo 11 - In front of the Palace of Versailles



Photo 12 - Inside the Palace of Versailles



Photo 13 - Intricate paintings on the ceiling inside the Palace of Versailles



Photo 14 - In deep thoughts admiring the interior of the Palace of Versailles

42



Photo 15 - Hall of Mirrors inside the Versailles Palace

43

The **Gardens of Versailles** covering around 800 hectares of land had lovely and huge gardens, water bodies and fountains, and sculptures. We went around the gardens in a mini-train that was available at the venue.



Photo 16 - My daughter Bheman, myself and my husband exploring the Gardens of Versailles



Photo 17 - Gardens of Versailles



Photo 18 - Statue of the Sun King at the Gardens of Versailles

44

After an excellently spent day at Versailles, we came back to Paris. In Paris, we visited the **Luxembourg Gardens** in the evening. The Luxembourg Palace situated near the gardens was created by the widow of King Henry IV of France as a new residence. Today the French Senate meets in the Palace and the garden is also owned by it. The gardens are very beautiful with lovely trees, fountains and statues scattered all over it.



Photos 19 (inset left) and 20 (background) - At the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, France

45



69 %

Start slideshow

< 44-45 of 120 >

Close preview



Price 3,080.00 Rs.

landscape L 28x21 cm

Photo cover



Type here to search



mam...



8:51 PM  
2/21/2021





At night we visited the famous **Louvre Museum** where the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci the '**Monalisa**' is housed. We saw impressive paintings by famous French and European artists. Many of the paintings were transferred from the Palace of Versailles after the French Revolution. We had Indian food at an Indian restaurant near our hotel and rested for the night.



Photo 22 - In front of the Louvre Museum



Photo 21 - The Louvre Museum at night



Photo 23 - L'Adoration des bergers avec une donatrice by Jacopo Negretti dit Palma Le Vieux, at the Louvre Museum



Photo 24 - In front of the world famous Monalisa painting at The Louvre Museum, Paris, France

On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we went to the **Sacred Heart Cathedral**, known as Sacré-Cœur Basilica in French. It is perhaps the most beautiful monument in Paris, and stands at the Montmartre, the highest point in the city. We reached the Cathedral by going up in a **funicular** and had breath-taking view of the city of Paris.

We then got back to the Gare De Lyon station and took the train to Zurich, Switzerland. We reached Zurich at night and stayed at the Ibis hotel at the Technopark business centre which was conveniently located around 15 minutes from the main railway station of Zurich. The remainder of our trip in Switzerland was made from this hotel.



Photo 26 - In front of the Sacred Heart Cathedral



Photo 25 - Funicular to climb the Sacred Heart Cathedral



Photo 27 - The Sacred Heart Cathedral, Paris, France

On 7<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we took a guided tour to the '**Top of Europe**' **Jungfrauoch, Switzerland**, a land of eternal snow. The Jungfrauoch railway station is the highest in Europe. It has been accessible to tourists since the completion of the railway line and station in 1912. The ride to Jungfrauoch was the **most scenic ride** of my life. We passed through majestic snow-clad mountains, streams, rivers, fountains and valleys.



Photo 28 - Hint of alpine snow on the journey from Zurich to Interlaken, Switzerland



Photo 29 - Swiss Countryside



Photo 30 - The snow-covered roadside



There was a short halt at **Interlaken, Switzerland**, which was itself an extremely beautiful place. It is an important and well-known tourist destination in the Bernese Oberland region of the Swiss Alps, and the main transport gateway to the mountains and lakes of that region.



Photo 31 - On the Höhweg street at Interlaken, Switzerland



Photo 32 - Misty morning at Interlaken, Switzerland



Photo 33 - Autumn colors in Interlaken, Switzerland



Photo 34 - In front of the Casino Kursaal at Interlaken, Switzerland

50

From Interlaken we continued by bus to **Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland**. From there, we continued the trip onward and upward in the modern **cogwheel railway** through tranquil scenery to Kleine Scheidegg which was located immediately at the foot of the imposing Eiger North Face.



Photo 35 - On the way from Interlaken to Lauterbrunnen



Photo 36 - Looking out of the Cogwheel train



Photo 37 - View from Cog wheel train



Photo 38 - Amazing beauty in white and black

51



From the **Kleine Scheidegg** railway station, we went all the way up through the mountain to the highest railway station in Europe, **Jungfrauoch** at 3454 m.



Photo 39 - Hi everyone! Riding the Cogwheel train



Photo 40 - Alpine Glaciers



Photo 41 - At Kleine Scheidegg



Photo 42 - To Jungfrauoch



Photo 43 - The breathtaking beauty from Jungfrauoch

At **Jungfrauoch**, we also visited the **Ice Palace** and enjoyed its various sculptures. We rested at the Sphinx lookout and from its terrace, saw the Aletsch Glacier, the longest ice stream in Europe.



Photo 44 - At Jungfrauoch



Photo 45 - With my husband at Jungfrauoch



Photo 46 - Inside the Ice Palace at Jungfrauoch



Photo 47 - Ice statue of Sherlock Holmes inside the Ice Palace at Jungfrauoch

On our way back, the train took us to **Grindewald** and from there we took our comfortable bus to Zurich. Grindelwald is a village and municipality in the Interlaken-Oberhasli administrative district in the canton of Berne in Switzerland. It is located at 1,034 m above sea level in the Bernese Alps.



Photo 48 - Eternal Snow



Photo 49 - At Grindelwald



Photo 50 - The train ride back home



Photo 51 - Beautiful view on the train ride back home





We had each bought a **First-Class Swiss Pass** for 8 days, which allowed us to travel first-class in most of the trains and other transport of Switzerland for 8 consecutive days. The next day, 8<sup>th</sup> November, we planned to visit Montreux and Lausanne by train and from there visit the Chateau De Chillon Castle; a castle on Lake Geneva. We passed through numerous crystal-clear lakes of the Bernese Oberland, **lush vineyards** and reached Montreux.



Photo 52 - Vineyards on the way to Montreux



Photo 53 - First Class Swiss Train Experience



Photo 54 - Walking towards Chateau De Chillon



Photo 55 - In front of the Chateau De Chillon

From Montreux station, we took a short bus ride to the **Chateau De Chillon on Lake Geneva**. The whole day was spent enjoying the scenic beauty of the lake, the Alps and the castle. On our return we accidentally boarded a local train instead of a fast train to Zurich. But we were lucky as the journey was breath-taking with the sun setting on Lake Geneva.



Photo 56 - Chateau De Chillon on Lake Geneva



Photo 57 - Inside the Chateau De Chillon



Photo 58 - The Chateau De Chillon and the train track



Photo 59 - Near the Chateau De Chillon



On 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we planned to view **Matterhorn**, the most photographed mountain in the world by taking a steep train ride to Gornergrat. For that we had to first go from Zurich to **Zermatt** by train and then change trains at Zermatt. The ride from Zurich to Zermatt was very beautiful. But it started snowing very heavily and the railway tracks were all submerged under thick layers of ice. Our train stopped somewhere in the midway and from here we were taken by buses to Zermatt. Everything was so well co-ordinated and planned that not a single passenger faced any problem in this foreign land. The bus ride was extremely scenic and we would have missed the view if not for the snow on the railway tracks.



Photo 60 - On the train to Zermatt



Photo 61 - View from the train to Zermatt



Photo 62 - My husband and daughter



Photo 63 - All set for Gornergrat

Moreover, the buses in all of Europe were high-end Mercedes Benz buses with internal heat, internet and big glass windows. So, we could enjoy the beauty from the comfort of our buses. From Zermatt, we took the **Gornergrat**, which is a mountain rack railway. It links the resort village of Zermatt, to the **summit of the Gornergrat at an altitude of 3,089m**. It is second highest railway in Europe. But it was snowing very heavily and therefore the views of the Matterhorn were not very clear, but we enjoyed the journey. We came back to Zurich taking the reverse route.



Photo 64 - Resting indoors



Photo 65 - At Gornergrat



Photo 66 - In front of the Gornergrat Bahn



Photo 67 - World of Snow

On 10<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we took the **Bernina Express**, the most scenic train ride in Switzerland and probably in the world. First, we took a short train ride to Chur from Zurich. From Chur we boarded the Bernina Express. The Bernina Express is a train connecting **Chur (or Davos) in Switzerland** to Poschiavo in Switzerland and Tirano in Italy by crossing the Swiss Engadin Alps. The Bernina Express is a 4-hour, 144 km journey through Switzerland and touches Italy. It passes through 55 tunnels and 196 bridges and is declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. It crosses the famous **Landwasser Viaduct** from mountainside to mountainside.



Photo 68 - Inside the Bernina Express



Photo 69 - Viaducts with the train (photo taken from train)



60

Photo 70 - Magical Alpine countryside



Photo 71 - Train ride with large clear glass windows

After reaching Pontresina, the **Bernina Express** train climbs up to the Bernina Pass, past the Morteratsch Glacier, reaching its highest point at Ospizio Bernina, 2,253 metres above sea level. After sometime, the train reaches Poschiavo. Pine trees covered with ice can be seen all along. From Poschiavo, the train travels via the Brusio Spiral Viaduct to reach Tirano. In the winter the journey ends at Tirano. But in the summer, a bus takes one to the Mediterranean town of Lugano. But since it was winter, our journey finished at Tirano. After spending some time in the Italian town of Tirano, we took the Bernina Express back again.



Photo 72 - The three of us inside the Bernina Express



Photo 73 - Crossing the Alpine glaciers



Photo 74 - The Bernina Express train at Davos, Switzerland



Photo 75 - Inside the Bernina Express

61



On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we took the train to **Geneva** from Zurich. It was a comfortable train ride of around 2 hours. Geneva is the French speaking part of Switzerland whereas Zurich is the German speaking part of Switzerland. Geneva is located in the south-western end of Lake Geneva, almost near the French border, where the Rhône river flows out. **Lake Geneva** is very close to the **railway stations** and the area around the lake is one of the prettiest views of the city with the snow-clad Alps in the backdrop. The Water Jet (Jet d'Eau) is a pretty sight on the lake.



Photo 76 - At Geneva Railway Station



Photo 77 - On the way from the Railway Station to Lake Geneva



Photo 78 - Taking a break on the way to Lake Geneva



Photo 79 - Near the Lake Geneva waterfront

We also saw the Temple de Saint-Pierre, the **English Garden (Jardin Anglais)** with **The Large Flower Clock**. In the park near the clock, we saw the figures of **Helvetia and Geneva**, commemorating Geneva's entry into the Swiss Confederation in 1814. We strolled along the **Place du Bourg-de-Four**, the oldest square in the city. There were cafés and restaurants, souvenir shops etc.



Photo 80 - At the English Garden in Geneva



Photo 81 - In front of the Flower Clock at the English Garden



Photo 82 - In front of the figures of Helvetia and Geneva



Photo 83 - Strolling along the Place du Bourg-de-Four



We took a walk in the Old Town Geneva and saw **St Peter's Cathedral** and other iconic sites. We took a small guided tour of the city where we saw the **Palais des Nations (Palace of Nations) - the European headquarters of the United Nations**. We also saw the **Broken Chair** - a giant chair with a broken leg and standing across the street from the Palace of Nations. It symbolises opposition to land mines and cluster bombs, and acts as a reminder to politicians and others visiting Geneva.



64

Photo 84 - In front of St Peter's Cathedral



Photo 85 - In front of Palais Des Nations, United Nations, Geneva



Photo 86 - The Broken Chair in front of the Palais Des Nations

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we took a 2-hour tour of the city of Zurich known as the **Zurich Trolley Experience**. The tour showed highlights of the city including the business and financial centre, the Bahnhofstrasse (the railway station), the important museums, the historical Limmatquai, the Grossmünster Church, St. Peter's Church with the largest clock face in Europe, the Fraumünster Church with its famous Chagall windows, residential areas and the university quarter. We stopped by the **Limmat river**, the river in Zurich and had some photos taken. Later in the day, we visited the **Swiss National Museum** near the Zurich railway station.



Photo 87 - In front of the Zurich Trolley Experience Bus



Photo 88 - Near the Limmat river in Zurich, Switzerland



Photo 89 - Zurich Hauptbahnhof (HB) Railway Station



Photo 90 - Swiss National Museum

65

On 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we visited **Bern, the capital of Switzerland**. It is indeed a very beautiful city. We visited the **Swiss Parliament known as the Bundeshaus**.



Photo 91 - Bern, the capital of Switzerland



Photo 92 - In front of the Swiss Parliament



Photo 93 - Strolling near the Swiss Parliament



Photo 94 - Visiting the Swiss Parliament

In Bern, we also visited the **Einstein Museum and Einstein Haus** (where Albert Einstein had stayed for few years). Among the works done in Einstein Haus in Bern by Albert Einstein were his most impressive work like writing the Annus Mirabilis papers on photoelectric effect, the Brownian motion, the special theory of relativity, and the world-famous formula of  $E=mc^2$ .



Photo 95 - Inside Einstein Haus, Bern, Switzerland



Photo 96 - Memories of Albert Einstein



Photo 97 - In front of a photo of Einstein and his wife



Photo 98 - In the streets of Bern, Switzerland



We strolled along the cobbled streets of the **Old Town Bern**, saw the 800-year old **Clock Tower (Zytglogge)** and saw **ancient public fountains**. Standing along the **Aare River**, we saw the Bern Cathedral and enjoyed the lovely landscape of Bern. We were very near the Bern Zoo but did not visit it as we had less time. We got into a bus to have an idea of the other parts of the City of Bern. We enjoyed the view. We saw lovely buildings, more fountains and old-time prisons converted to shopping malls.



Photo 99 - In front of the Clock Tower



Photo 100 - Medieval fountains in Bern



Photo 101 - In Old Town Bern, Switzerland



Photo 102 - Aare river, Bern, Switzerland



Photo 103 - On the banks of the Aare river, Bern, Switzerland

On 14<sup>th</sup> November, we visited **Basel**, a city in north-western Switzerland on the Rhine river sharing borders with France and Germany. The purpose of our trip was to get some official papers stamped at any Swiss border. We walked in the old town and enjoyed watching the city and the way of life of the people there. It seemed a significant number of people we saw in the city were elderly. We came back early to Zurich and did some shopping in the city.



Photo 104 - In Basel, Switzerland



Photo 105 - Colourful architecture in Basel, Switzerland



Photo 106 - Taking a break in Basel

70

On 15<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we took a train to the beautiful city of **Lucerne**. Getting out of the railway station, one could see the beautiful Reuss river and the world-famous wooden bridge known as the **Chapel Bridge or the Kapellbrücke**. It is a covered wooden bridge running diagonally across the Reuss. The bridge built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century has numerous 17<sup>th</sup>-century paintings hanging from the roof inside, depicting patron saints and scenes from the town's history. There is a water tower just adjacent to it. The bridge and tower are among the most photographed scenes in all of Switzerland. We walked through the old town and saw fountains, churches and the town hall.



Photo 107 - On the bank of the Reuss River



Photo 108 - In front of the Chapel Bridge at Lucerne



Photo 109 - 17th century paintings inside the Chapel Bridge



Photo 110 - Chapel Bridge with Swiss Alps in the background

71



We also visited the **Lion Monument**. There was a huge figure of a dying lion carved out on the face of a huge rock. The lion and the monument commemorate the death of 26 officers and more than 700 troops of the Swiss Guards, mercenary soldiers who were killed while protecting King Louis XVI during the attack on the Tuileries in the French Revolution in 1792. From many areas along the river and the lake, we could see breath-taking views of the Swiss Alps.



Photo 111 - In front of the Lion Monument



Photo 112 - The Crying Lion Monument at Lucerne



Photo 113 - In Lucerne, Switzerland



Photo 114 - A walk in Lucerne, Switzerland



Photo 115 - Enjoying a joke at Lucerne, Switzerland

On 16<sup>th</sup> November 2014, we took an **early morning train from Zurich to Paris**. We reached Gare De Lyon, the major railway station in Paris. From there we took a taxi to Roissy Airport. We then took the Air India flight and reached Kolkata the next day. We stayed back for some days in Kolkata and **celebrated my husband's 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday** on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2014.

Our Europe tour was an excellent one, something I had never experienced before. It showed and taught me how mankind's intellect, hard-work and innovation can make the most inaccessible places easily and comfortably accessible. The preservation of the natural beauty, of medieval structures and of museums; the advances in modern technology; the friendliness and kindness of its people are some of the things to be learnt from modern day Europe.



Photo 116 - A holiday well spent in Europe



Photo 117 - On the train to Paris, France



Photo 118 - Celebrating my husband's birthday at my daughters home in Kolkata, India

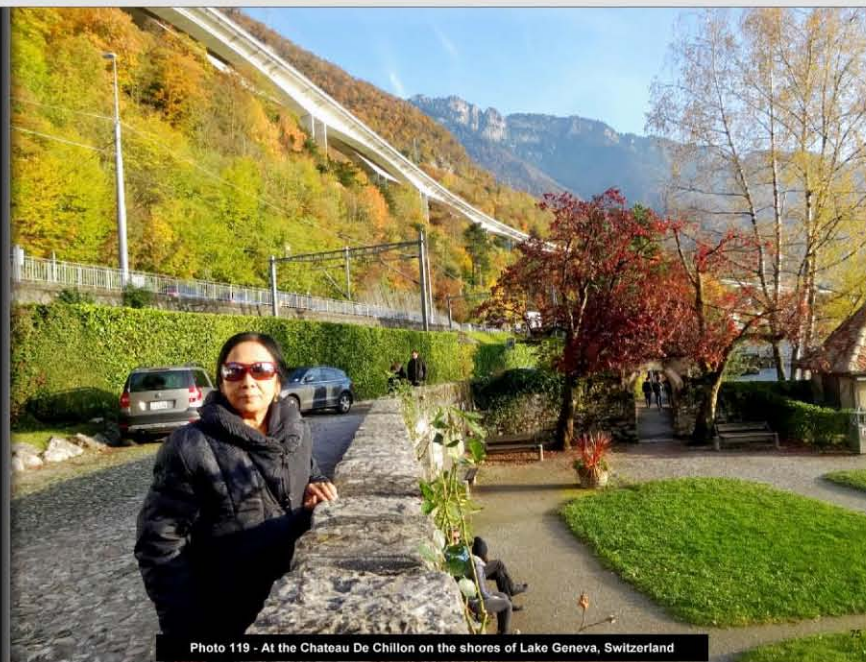
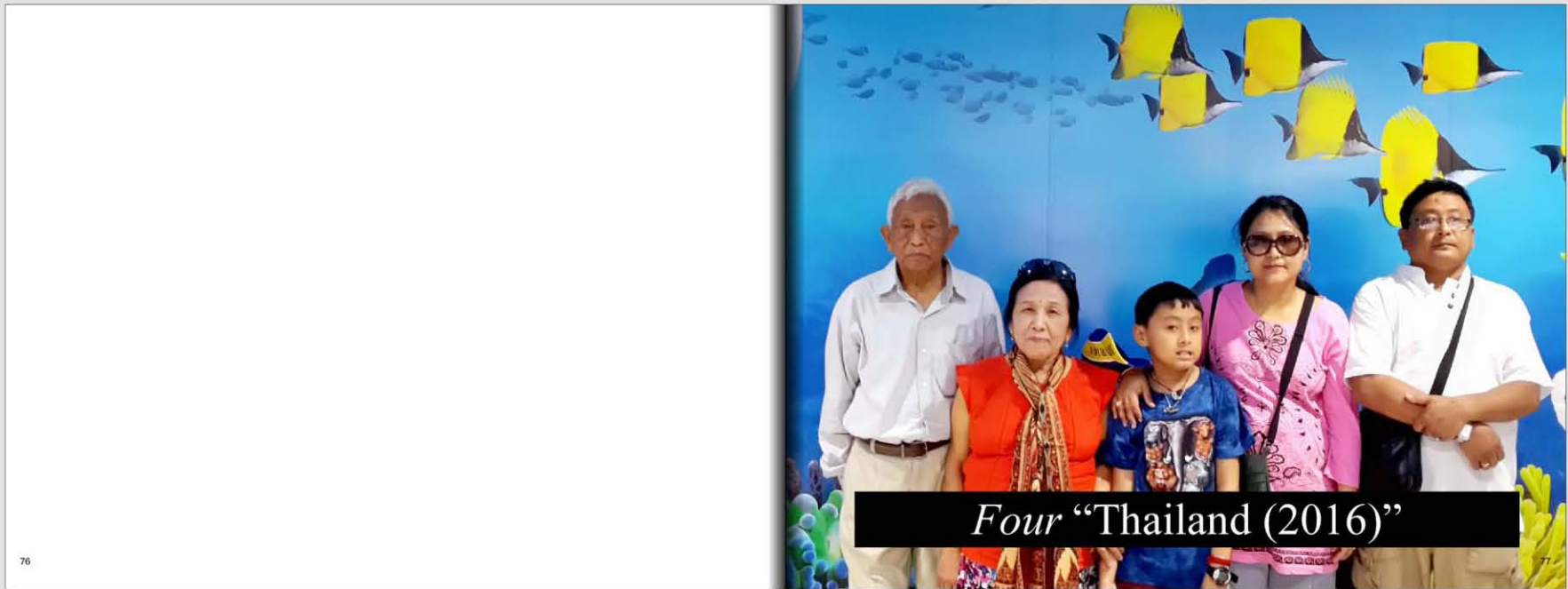


Photo 119 - At the Chateau De Chillon on the shores of Lake Geneva, Switzerland





**Four "Thailand (2016)"**

After our visit to Europe in 2014, we did not travel abroad for some time till we went to Bangkok in Thailand in 2016. Since we were getting older, we decided to visit places where the flying time would be shorter so that we would not tire easily.

One fine day in December 2015, we decided we would go for a short trip to Bangkok, the capital of Thailand. My son Tejendra (Tej) and his wife Monalisa (Mona); and my daughter Indira (Bheman) started planning for the trip with immense enthusiasm. I noticed there were numerous calls between them in the days that led to the trip.

On 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016, my husband, Maisnam Iboton Singh, my son Tej, his wife Mona, my grandson Ilesh and I left for Kolkata. My husband and I rested and relaxed in our daughter's house in Kolkata which is located at a lovely residential complex in South Kolkata. My son and his family went for sight-seeing and shopping in Kolkata while we rested for 2 days. My grandson told me stories about the underground metro rides, visiting Scottish Church College where his parents studied and about the numerous sites and excitement of the bustling metropolis of Kolkata.

78



Photo 1 - My grandson Ilesh and husband cozying up in the bed



Photo 2 - My grandson Ilesh at the hotel

On the morning of 10<sup>th</sup> January 2016, we left for Bangkok by taking a flight from Kolkata. My grandson Ilesh was extremely excited. Being a very intelligent and inquisitive child, he had read and seen on the internet all that we planned to see in Bangkok. An extremely memorious boy, his amazing memories helped me remember in exact detail the precise sequence of events that took place in those exciting days exactly 4 years back. His memories have contributed greatly to the writing of the Bangkok and Sri Lanka chapters of this travel book. It was a short flight of less than 3 hours. But since Bangkok time is ahead of India by 1.5 hours, it was late afternoon when we landed at the Bangkok Suvarnabhumi International Airport. We took visa on arrival which took quite a long time, longer than we expected! I would suggest future travelers to Thailand to have an e-visa in advance (which is a very simple online process). That would make the exit from the airport faster.

With our visas ready we collected our check-in luggage and headed for Asoke Residence at Sukhumvit. My grandson told me that the cab we took from the airport was a Toyota Innova. Though I do not remember the details of the make of the car, my grandson gets great excitement in every details of the car he rides in. The ride from the airport was a very pleasant one and we reached Asoke Residence quite fast. The room we had there was in fact a big air-conditioned apartment, with 3 bedrooms, a large sitting and dining room, well-fitted kitchens with all utensil and world class bathrooms. My grandson excitedly jumped on the bed and chatted comfortably with his grandfather. Since we had a long journey, we were tired and so we rested in the hotel; while my Tej, Mona and Bheman went to explore the nearby area around Asoke Residence. We had an early dinner and went off to sleep.



Photo 3 - In the hotel lobby ready to go to Safari World



Photo 4 - At the entrance of Safari World

79



For **11th January 2016**, we had booked a private tour to see the world-famous **Safari World**. We had a lovely and nutritious breakfast with wide-ranging choices at the hotel. Dressed in our jungle-best, we excitedly waited for our guide! Safari World is Bangkok's most famous and popular animal and leisure park and is located around 40km outside Bangkok.

Safari world has 2 sections: Marine Park and Safari Park. The entrance to Safari World was lovely and welcoming. We could see the grand portrait of the then King of Thailand, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who happens to be the second longest ruling Monarch in history after King Louis IV. The weather was pleasant and warm in January in Bangkok. We saw a number of shows in the Marine Park.



Photo 5 - Ilesh and Mona at Safari World



Photo 6 - Ilesh with an Animation Character

My little grandson Ilesh was extremely excited and happy at the magical moments that were unfolding before his young eyes. We saw shows by Orangutans, Dolphins, Sea-lions, Elephants and other animals. The animals were in a happy mood performing astonishing actions and playing amazing games. What really amazed me was the **paintings done by elephants with their trunk**. My daughter bought one such painting. If I had not seen the elephant paint the tree with my own eyes, never would I have imagined that it was indeed an art by an elephant. After watching the many shows, we walked through the aviary where we could see flamingoes, mandarin ducks and macaws. We also saw dolphins, penguins and sea-lion. We then went for a jungle river cruise on a small boat, which was a 30-minute ride through an area that was representative of the tropical forests in Asia and Africa. We saw trees and vegetations that belonged to the tropical forests of Asia and Africa with models of animals found in those forests.



Photo 7 - Myself, Ilesh and my husband waiting for the River Safari



Photo 8 - Elephants painting at Safari World!



Photo 9 - Mona and Ilesh with Macaw birds in the background

Though the animals were models, they were life-sized and life-like and my grandson immensely enjoyed the ride more than any of us. We saw elephants, gorillas, chimpanzees and anacondas! After the exhilarating moments spent, we took some rest, had our lunch and waited impatiently for the next big thing, the jungle Safari through the Safari Park.

The Jungle Safari was a 50-minute jeep safari ride through the largest part of Safari World. It was an impressive and breathtaking sight, where I saw for the first time in my life so many animals together at a single place. We saw numerous African lions, Bengal tigers, Asian black bear, American black bear, giraffes, zebras and deer. After the fun-filled exciting and adventurous day we got back to our hotel. We had an early dinner and rested our tired legs and bodies while Tej, Mona and Bheman went to visit one of Thailand's famous night markets.



Photo 10 - Mona and I with Flamingoes

82



Photo 11 - Taking a break. Life sized giraffes in the background.



Photo 12 - Royal Bengal Tigers in Jungle Safari

My husband and my children wanted to visit somewhere special on 12th January 2016, as it was my birthday. What better way to enjoy the day than visit the impressive temples and Grand Palace of Bangkok? After our breakfast we waited for our car and our guide. June, was our guide and she came dot on time. She was so surprised when we told her we were Indians, she thought we were Thais just like herself! This reminded me of the artificial boundaries created by humans: the man-made boundaries that divides our beautiful world into countries, states, districts, cities and villages. Thailand lies just beyond Myanmar which shares boundary with my home-state Manipur in India. And yes, we found similarities not only in physical features of people but also in dress and cuisine. We first headed for the **Temple of Golden Buddha, Wat Traimit**. It is a highly revered temple in Thailand. The Golden Buddha in the temple is made of 5500kg of gold and is around 9 feet in height.



Photo 13 - Golden Buddha



Photo 14 - In front of the Golden Buddha

83



After offering our prayers in the temple we headed for the Grand Palace. **The Grand Palace** is located in the heart of Bangkok and used to be the Official Residence of the King of Siam (Thailand) till the 1920s. It is no longer the residence of the King but a number of important events continue to take place there including the coronation ceremony of the King of Thailand. The palace complex has an area of 218400 square meters and is divided into the Outer court, the Middle court, the Inner Court and the **Temple of Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Kaew)**. Wat Phra Kaew is the holiest temple in Thailand and no photography is allowed there. Lord Buddha is seated in a lotus position and clothed in gold. We spent a wonderful time in the Grand Palace admiring the varied architecture from different dynasties of the Kingdom of Siam, appreciating the sculptures that told stories from mythology which found great resonance to and some differences from our epics of Ramayana and Mahabharat and offering our prayers in the temple. There were sculptures of Tosakanth (Ravana), the white faced Sahassadeja (Ravana's ally) in the Grand Palace and a number of Garudas, holding serpents in each hand outside the Wat Phra Kaew. We also saw the golden bell-shaped **Phra Sri Rattana Chedi**, which houses a sacred bone of the Buddha.



Photo 15 - Inside the Grand Palace Complex

84



Photo 16 - At the Phra Sri Rattana Chedi

After the Grand Palace, we got into the car and headed for a Thai restaurant for lunch and on the way, we drove along the Ratchadumnoen Road (The Royal's Way). Along the way we saw City Pillar Shrine, Democracy Monument, Anantasamakhom Palace, Parliament House and the King's Residence. After a lavish lunch we headed for the **Temple of the Reclining Buddha, Wat Pho**. Wat Pho is one of the largest temple complexes in Bangkok.

The highlight of the Wat Pho is the statue of the reclining Buddha which is 15 meter high and 46 meter long. It represents the entry of Buddha into Nirvana. There were 108 bronze bowls in the corridor representing the 108 auspicious characters of Buddha. Visitors drop coins in these bowls for good fortune. Besides the Reclining Buddha, we saw hundreds on Buddha statues in the Wat Pho complex which were brought from Northern Thailand.



Photo 18 - Reclining Buddha statue at Wat Pho



Photo 17 - My Husband and Tej outside the Wat Phra Kaew



Photo 19 - In front of the Reclining Buddha at Wat Pho

85

After Wat Pho we took a boat ride on the Chao Phraya and went to the **Wat Arun, The Temple of Dawn**. It is present on the West Bank of the Chao Phraya river. The first light of the morning sun reflects from the surface of the temple with a pearl-like radiance. The sculptures of two mythical giant demons, Thotsakan and Sahassadeja, guard the eastern gate of the main chapel of Wat Arun.

The main temple is a Khmer style tower decorated with encrusted porcelain in varied colors on a white background. We then took our boat ride back and visited the **Wat Benchamabophit, where the Marble Buddha is located**, which was exquisitely beautiful. After that we headed towards our hotel and rested for the day.



Photo 20 - In front of the Marble Buddha at Wat Benchamabophit

86



Photo 21 - The Wat Arun, The Temple of Dawn

On 13th January 2016, we visited the **Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World** which is an aquarium situated in the Siam Paragon shopping mall. We stepped inside the 270-degree glass tunnel to view the wide range of marine creatures.

We could see numerous marine animals, sharks, whales, crown fish, sting-rays and swimming penguins all around us which we viewed through the glass sitting, standing and walking in the tunnel. My young grandson had the time of his life seeing such an impressive array of marine life. After visiting the aquarium, we bought some food from an Indian restaurant located in the mall.



Photo 22 - At Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World Aquarium



Photo 23 - My husband admiring the amazing sea life at Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World Aquarium

87



We then took the BTS skytrain and got down at the Sukhumvit station to reach our hotel. After having our lunch, we suddenly realized that my grandson's favorite cap which his aunt bought from Sweden was missing. We scanned through the photos in our cameras to see when was the last time he wore the cap and saw that it was at the **Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World Aquarium**. So, we assumed that the cap must be in the restaurant. Bheman and Mona set off to look for the cap in the restaurant. But I was doubtful if they would find it after so many hours. But luckily, the restaurant owner had kept it properly and they thanked him profusely for his kindness and honesty. My husband, my grandson and I rested in the hotel the rest of the day while Mona, Tej and Bheman went shopping at Pratunam shopping mall.



Photo 25 - Penguins at Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World Aquarium



Photo 24 - Waiting to see the penguins at Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World Aquarium



Photo 26 - In front of a Shark and other aquatic life at Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World Aquarium

On **14th January 2016**, we went to the Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport to take our flight back to Kolkata, India. **Suvarnabhumi International Airport** is one of the largest airports in South-east Asia. It is a beautiful airport with numerous sculptures and figures from mythology. Two things that particularly caught our attention were the figure of Sahassadeja and the sculpture of Samudra Manthan. Sahassadeja, the white-faced demon who is supposed to have 1000 heads and 2000 arms, was an ally of **Ravana (Thotsakan)**. We also saw an intricate sculpture of **Samudra Manthan**, which means churning of the ocean of milk. Samudra Manthan finds mention in the Bhagavata Gita, Mahabharat and Vishnu Purana. We also bought numerous gifts from the duty-free shops in the airport. Suvarnabhumi airport is indeed a beautiful and interesting airport and I would suggest future travelers to Bangkok to give adequate time to explore the airport at the time of departure.



Photo 27 - In front of Samudra Manthan at Suvarnabhumi Airport



Photo 28 - In front of Thotsakan at the Suvarnabhumi Airport

We reached **Kolkata**, India in the evening and headed to the comfort of my daughter's home. The next few days I rested, while the others explored the city of Kolkata including the Eco-park. On 17th January my eldest daughter-in-law Remika came with her children Kartik and Dhanisha to Kolkata. Tej, Mona and Ilesh left for Agartala on 18th Jan 2016. The next few days were spent with my beloved grandchildren Kartik and Dhanisha. They went sightseeing in Kolkata and showed me photos of the famous **Kolkata Wax Museum**; and excitedly told me stories about their experiences. My husband and I stayed for a few more days in Kolkata and left for Imphal.



Photo 29 - Chanbi, Buna and Remika with Mahatma Gandhi at the Wax Museum

The journey to Bangkok, Thailand was a special one for us and we really enjoyed our stay there. We could see the splendour and the beauty of Bangkok, the architectural marvels of the ancient Kingdom of Siam, the modern buildings, the majestic wildlife and the breath-taking aquarium. The people of Thailand were beautiful, courteous and kind. Most importantly, this small but significant trip was a family reunion for me where I reunited with the people whom I love most in my life.



Photo 30 - Chanbi and Buna with cartoon character Doremon at the Wax Museum







### Five "Sri Lanka (2017-18)"

Our next trip was to the beautiful island nation of Sri Lanka located in the Indian Ocean. Known as the 'Pearl' in the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka is a breathtakingly lovely country. As Indians and as Hindus, we have heard about 'Lanka' since the time we learnt to hear stories and could learn to remember. An important chapter in the epic 'Ramayana' is the kidnapping of 'Goddess Sita', wife of 'Lord Ram' by 'King Ravana' of 'Lanka' and the war that subsequently followed. Even in the mythology, Lanka was supposed to be a very beautiful kingdom filled with natural beauty, decorated with splendid lights and studded with riches of gold, diamond and emeralds! As a child I often wondered if Lanka was real or mythical!

This time my husband, my daughter-in-law Mona, my grandson Ilesh and I went to Delhi on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2017. My son Tej came from Agartala the same day. We went to my eldest son Riten's house. Their driver Mehboob was there to pick us up from the airport. I was extremely delighted to meet my son and his family: Riten, his wife Remika, son Kartik and daughter Dhanistha. All the children had grown so adorable, smart and intelligent! All of us had planned to go to Sri Lanka together. My daughter, Indira had made arrangements for the booking of hotels and tours through Sameera in Sri Lanka who one of her colleagues knew. For the next few days, my husband and I relaxed in the comfort of my son's beautiful house located in a lovely residential complex while the children went for local sight-seeing in Delhi.

94



Photo 1 - Ilesh, Tej, Mona, Dhanistha, Riten at New Delhi



Photo 2 - Having dinner with our family at New Delhi

The children saw the Science City Centre, **India Gate**, Rashtrapati Bhawan, Indian Railway Museum, Qutub Minar and Red Fort in **Delhi**. My daughter, Indira (Bheman) arrived from Kolkata on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

We were supposed to leave for Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka in the early hours of 29<sup>th</sup> December 2017. However, due to an extremely unfortunate event on the morning of 28<sup>th</sup> December, my eldest son's family could not go with us. We too were in no mood to go, but all the bookings were confirmed. Moreover, Sameera had not taken any money in advance, neither did we have facilities for transfer of payment to his bank account in Sri Lanka, even if we cancelled the trip. So, the only way to pay him was to meet him. He had already made the non-refundable payments to the hotels.

So, with a very heavy heart we left for Sri Lanka leaving Riten, Remika, Kartik and Dhanistha behind. I can never forget and cannot help but appreciate and admire the poise and large-heartedness of my daughter-in-law Remika in those difficult days.



Photo 3 - Ilesh, Mona, Tej, Dhanistha, Riten at India Gate, New Delhi

95



We boarded the Sri Lankan Airlines flight at the Indira Gandhi International Airport at New Delhi at 4 am on **29<sup>th</sup> December 2017**. The flight was very comfortable and the air-hostesses looked extremely gracious in their Sri Lankan sarees. Later during the trip, Mona and Bheman wore and bought the Sri Lankan sarees. Learning from our lesson from Thailand about the uncomfortable delays for visa on arrival, we had already taken an e-Visa in advance and thus the check-out was very smooth.

At **Colombo, Sri Lanka**, Kumar (Cyril Kumaratunga), brother-in-law of Sameera came to pick us up as Sameera was stuck in urgent family affairs. The remainder of our days in Sri Lanka was spent with Kumar as guide. We had our breakfast in a restaurant in Colombo and headed towards Sigiriya.



Photo 4 - In front of our cottage at Elephas resort



Photo 5 - Relaxing by the swimming pool at Elephas resort



Photo 6 - At Elephas resort

The road to **Sigiriya** was interesting. We saw children walking to school. Further down in the countryside, **we saw elephants by the side of the road** and the rich greenery that Sri Lanka is so famous for. On the way, we drank tender coconut water on the roadside which was very sweet and tasty. On reaching Sigiriya, we went to the **Elephas Resort in Kibissa, Sigiriya**. It was a lovely resort in the midst of nature. After freshening up, we headed towards the Sigiriya Lion Rock, which is an ancient rock fortress near Dambulla. The rock shelters and caves around the fortress were occupied by Buddhist monks. We did not climb up to the fortress as the climb was steep. We had an early dinner. In fact, throughout our trip in Sri Lanka we had early dinners, like we do in Manipur and that suited us very well. The resort was very comfortable and we got up to a pleasant morning the next day after a very refreshing sleep. We strolled in the campus of the resort, took a few photographs and then went for breakfast. The food in all the hotels of Sri Lanka was excellent and excelled all the meals I had eaten in my numerous travels across the world. All the hotels were truly cosmopolitan, offering food from different cuisines around the world.



Photo 7 - Elephant on the road, while we were driving to Sigiriya



Photo 8 - With my husband and daughter at Elephas resort

On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2017, we first went to **Habarana Village** for the **Elephant Safari**. First, we learnt about the habits of the elephants and how they were kept, fed and taken care of. We were initially hesitant to take the elephant ride as we were scared and unsure to climb and sit on such a tall and huge animal. But finally, gathering all our courage, all of us got up on the elephant and took the ride. **Our elephant's name was Sita** and she was very mild mannered and kind. Riding on her back, we enjoyed the amazing landscape of rural Sri Lanka. Along the way we fed her mangoes as the elephant-keeper told us she loves mangoes. She swallowed kilograms of mangoes in the blink of an eye. Riding on the elephant, we then went to a crystal-clear pond where she sprayed water on herself and on us! It was indeed very thrilling.



Photo 9 - Elephant Safari in Habarana Village



Photo 10 - Relaxing during the Elephant Safari in Habarana Village



Photo 11 - Crossing water during the Elephant Safari



Photo 12 - Riding on Sita the elephant during the Elephant Safari in Habarana Village, Sri Lanka



After the elephant ride, we took a **country boat** and then a bullock-cart ride to go to another village for our Sri Lankan lunch. In the boat, the boat-man made **beautiful head gear made of leaves and flowers** from water plants for each of us. We put them on our heads and took photos.

Getting off the boat and after walking for a while, we saw a small cottage in the midst of luxuriant greenery and clear ponds. We saw a huge Sri Lankan lizard there. The Sri Lankan meal we had at the cottage was very delicious; rich with a variety of fish and vegetables served in a traditional Sri Lankan way.



Photo 13 - In a country boat

100



Photo 14 - Beautiful head gear made of leaves and flowers



Photo 15 - Group photo during the Boat ride



Photo 16 - Beautiful Sri Lankan countryside



Photo 17 - Mona rowing the boat

101

We then headed for our **Jeep Safari** to the **Minneriya National Park** in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka. The Safari in the open Jeep was exciting. We drove through rugged, narrow jungle roads covered with thick vegetation. Our Jeep drove on the beds of numerous shallow streams and at one point the wheel got stuck on the big rocks in one of the shallow streams. We had to take the help of other vehicles to pull it out. We were both excited and scared! We saw hundreds of elephants in the national park especially around the Minneriya Tank which was a water reservoir built by the ancient civilization of Anuradhapura.



Photo 19 - Elephant at Minneriya National Park



Photo 18 - Jeep Safari at Minneriya National Park



Photo 20 - Jeep Safari at Minneriya National Park



Photo 21 - Herd of elephants at Minneriya National Park, North Central Province, Sri Lanka



After a day well spent, we ended our tour by going to the **Dambulla Cave Temple**. Dambulla is the largest and best-preserved cave temple complex in Sri Lanka. The huge **Golden Buddha Statue** in Dambulla made of concrete, bricks and plated in gold, with the Buddha sitting in Dharma Chakra Mudra posture is located downhill from the cave temple. While the children explored the cave temple, my husband and I rested near the temple as the climb was long, steep and tiring. We went back to the Elephas Resort. We had a lavish dinner with live music and dance. My grandson Ilesh also participated in the song and the dance. We then rested for the night.



Photo 22 - Mona and Ilesh at Dambulla Cave Temple



104

Photo 23 - Dambulla Cave Temple



Photo 24 - Golden Buddha statue at Dambulla Cave Temple



Photo 25 - At the Elephas Resort in Kibissa, Sigiriya, ready to leave for Kandy

On **31<sup>st</sup> December 2017**, we checked out of Elephas Resort and headed towards **Kandy**, the last capital of the ancient kings' era of Sri Lanka. The ride to the Kandy was lovely where we crossed lush plains, green mountains and crystal-clear lakes. On the way we stopped at a spice garden. The guide in the garden was a Doctor of Sri Lankan Ayurvedic medicine. Legend has it that Hanuman went to the Dronagiri mountains in the Himalayas to get the life-saving magical Sanjeevani herb to revive Lakshman who was wounded by Meghnad in the war in Lanka. But Hanuman could not identify the herb and therefore carried the entire mountain to Sri Lanka. The guide told us that the spice garden itself and the area around it was among the various locations in Sri Lanka where parts of the Dronagiri mountains fell. He told us that the Buddhist Monks who lived in the caves around the remnants of the Mountain discovered and made use of the varied magical herbs in the area. Though it was difficult to exactly believe what he said, his immense belief was interesting. We stopped at the Sri Hanuman Mandir on our way to Kandy.



Photo 26 - Intricate woodwork at a shop in Kandy

105

On reaching Kandy, we went to an auditorium in a hotel where we saw **dance and drama performances by Sri Lankan artists**. We watched the performance sitting in the front row. Ilesh was very excited. Then **one of the monsters in the drama came straight to Ilesh** telling him he would eat him. Then he made signs which meant "Too thin, he won't be tasty!". We all had a great laugh.

Kandy is famous for intricate woodwork. All around the city there were beautiful wood carvings, masks, furniture etc. Bheman bought a multi-colored peacock mask which is supposed to bring prosperity, peace, love, good luck and happiness. The mask was made of the light and strong Balsa wood and colored with natural dye. After roaming around the city, we went to the Serene Grand hotel on the top of a mountain. The area around Sigiriya and Dambulla were mainly lush green plains whereas in and around Kandy the terrain was hilly. The Serene Grand hotel was only a 5 minutes-walk from the view-point in Kandy. From the hotel and across the valley we could see the city of Kandy and the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha (Sri Dalada Maligawa). After dinner, we rested for the night.



Photo 27 - Dance performance at Kandy



Photo 28 - Ilesh and monster at dance performance in Kandy

On **1<sup>st</sup> January 2018**, we checked out of the hotel early in the morning. It was a cold pleasant morning in the midst of the mountains. We went to the **Kandy View Point** and admired the beauty of the area and took photos. We could see the Sri Dalada Maligawa and throngs of devotees heading towards the temple as it was the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the year. We had planned to visit the temple but knew that it would be impossible to pass through such a big crowd. As we drove down from the hotel, we crossed the Sacred Tooth Relic temple, offered prayers in our hearts but did not stop there as it would get very late. We then headed towards Nuwara Eliya, a city in the hill country of the Central Province of Sri Lanka. It is the coldest area in Sri Lanka. On the way to Nuwara Eliya, we stopped at a Sri Lankan Emporium; where Mona and Bheman tried Sri Lankan sarees, took photos and bought them.



Photo 29 - The Family at Kandy View Point



Photo 30 - Bheman in a Sri Lankan Saree



Photo 31 - Mona in a Sri Lankan Saree

107



As we moved further towards **Nuwara Eliya**, it was getting colder and the terrain was getting more mountainous. We saw clear lakes and **waterfalls** and occasionally stopped at view points to admire the place and take photos. There were a number of tea-plantations. We stopped in one of the **tea gardens** in Ramboda. We visited part of the garden, visited the factory and relaxed sipping tea in one of their lobby/restaurant admiring the mountains and tea gardens through the glass window. The ride to Nuwara Eliya was breathtaking and reminded me of the rides in the mountainous terrain of North-East India. After a pleasant ride, we reached the city of Nuwara Eliya in the afternoon. We drove along the city and by the side of the Gregory Lake located at the heart of Nuwara Eliya. We had lunch at a lake-side restaurant. The region of Nuwara Eliya reminded me of the countryside and small towns of Europe.



Photo 33 - Waterfalls on the way to Nuwara Eliya



Photo 32 - Mountainous scenic view on the road to Nuwara Eliya



Photo 34 - Tea gardens on the way to Nuwara Eliya

We then headed for our hotel, **Araliya Greens Hills** which is a luxury hotel and among the best in Nuwara Eliya. It was the best hotel we stayed in Sri Lanka. After checking into the hotel, we went out again for a ride, saw the British style town of Nuwara Eliya, went to the market-place and on the way saw the post-office, a British Tudor style building with a bell tower on its roof. We had a lavish dinner in the hotel and rested for the night.



Photo 35 - At the Araliya Greens Hills Hotel, Nuwara Eliya



Photo 36 - Nuwara Eliya Town



Photo 37 - At Nuwara Eliya



Photo 38 - At a temple near Nuwara Eliya

The next day on **2<sup>nd</sup> January 2018**, after a lovely breakfast, we checked out and then headed towards **Bentota**, a coastal town. After a short beautiful ride, we reached **Ashok Vatika**, a holy place for the Hindus. Ashok Vatika was the garden where Goddess Sita was kept captive by King Ravana of Lanka. We entered the compound of the temple and saw statues of Ram, Sita and Hanuman. There were big foot-prints there and our guide told us that they were foot-prints of Hanuman when he came to meet Sita. From Ashok Vatika, we could see a mountain that was directly facing the garden. Our guide told us that the mountain was the area where the palace of King Ravana once existed. It seemed quite possible and real: King Ravana ruling in a magnificent palace just across and Sita waiting for Ram to arrive under one of the trees in the Ashok Vatika. So, after spending our time absorbing history, mythology and the current surroundings, we headed for our car in deep thoughts and discussing the story.



Photo 40 - With my husband and daughter Bheman at the Ashok Vatika

110



Photo 39 - Statues of Hanuman and Sita with footprints of Hanuman



Photo 41 - Taking a break on a hill top with my husband

On the way we crossed more mountains, valleys, tea-gardens and waterfalls. As we headed towards **Bentota**, the hilly terrain gradually gave way to coastal terrain. What surprised us was that even in the relatively plain tropical areas, there were tea-plantations. Our guide told us that there were categories of tea in Sri Lanka and that the highland tea of the mountains were of superior quality compared to the lowland teas in the tropical areas. Another thing we noticed in our long ride over a number of days in Sri Lanka was that there was not a piece of land in Sri Lanka without a natural vegetation or a plantation by humans. We finally reached the coastal area and drove along the **Lakshwadeep sea** to reach **Cinnamon Bay, a sea-side resort in Beruwala near Bentota**. The resort has a private beach that faces the sea. It was hot and humid there, like most tropical sea-sides. We relaxed on the beach admiring the beauty of the sea and its surrounding: the setting sun, the ships and the birds. We spent the entire evening there and early into the night. We then had our dinner and rested for the night.



Photo 42 - Beautiful Lakshwadeep sea at Bentota



Photo 43 - Admiring the sea from the Cinnamon Bay Resort



Photo 44 - In front of the Lakshwadeep sea

111



The next morning **3<sup>rd</sup> January 2018**, we relaxed at the **Cinnamon Bay Resort** and then headed for the **Turtle Farm**. It was a private farm with a number of turtles: old and young, big and small. While I just looked at the turtles, the children held the turtles in their hands and it seems the bigger ones were very heavy. This I could make out from the expression on their faces! Later I got to know that holding a turtle spontaneously without any suggestion brings good luck. And Bheman held the turtle spontaneously!



Photo 45 - At the Lobby of the Cinnamon Bay Resort



Photo 46 - With my husband in front of the Lakshwadeep sea



Photo 47 - Clear blue waters of the Lakshwadeep sea



Photo 48 - Turtle at the Turtle Farm near Bentota



Photo 49 - With my family at the Turtle Farm near Bentota, Galle District, Sri Lanka

We then headed for a **River Safari on the Madu Ganga river**. Located south of Colombo and north of Galle, the river begins as a small watercourse from Galle, becomes the Madu Ganga Lake at Balapitiya and then becomes a 4.4 km river before draining into the Indian Ocean. The flora around the Madu Ganga as seen from the River Safari was quite similar to though less varied and much smaller than the ones in the Sundarbans delta, the largest river delta in the world located between India and Bangladesh. There were small islands on the river. We stopped at the Cinnamon island and had cinnamon tea. Next, we visited a **Buddhist temple in another island** and a Ram-Sita temple in another. Finally, we reached the edge of the sea but did not take the boat to the sea as it was risky. We then got back to the land and headed for our lunch at an Indian restaurant.



Photo 50 - Boat ride on the Madu Ganga



114

Photo 51 - All of us on a boat ride on the Madu Ganga



Photo 52 - Buddhist temple on an island on the river cruise

After the lunch we headed for Galle, a major city situated on the southwestern tip, 119 kilometers from Colombo. We reached the area around the **Galle Fort**. Galle Fort was built in 1588 by the Portuguese, and later extensively fortified by the Dutch in the 17th century. The Sri Lankan government and many Dutch people still own many properties in the fort. Besides the fort with its impressive gates, we also saw the Galle lighthouse, the old Dutch hospital, **Galle Clock Tower**, a Mosque and a Dutch Church. We walked towards the Galle lighthouse at the tip of the last piece of land that met the Lakshwadeep sea. There were no compound walls separating the path to the lighthouse from the sea and therefore we had to tread very carefully. It was a refreshing and windy evening and we enjoyed the fresh air from the sea. After visiting Galle Fort, we visited the **huge Buddha statue** built by the Japanese in an area where once stood the rail-tracks that was destroyed by the Tsunami. We also visited the Tsunami museum. We then went to our resort for our last night in Sri Lanka.



Photo 53 - Galle Fort Clock Tower



Photo 54 - Mona, Tej, Ilesh and my husband at Galle Fort



Photo 55 - Huge Buddha Statue built by the Japanese

115



On 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018, we headed for **Colombo, the Capital of Sri Lanka**. Our ride from Beruwala to Colombo was a scenic one along the blue Lakshwadeep sea. Locals in Sri Lanka call the Lakshwadeep sea the Arabian sea. As we headed towards Colombo, we saw the massive and the impressive Hambantota Port which was built with Chinese assistance. Sri Lanka is situated on the key shipping route between the Malacca Straits and the Suez Canal, which links Asia and Europe. Approximately 36,000 ships use the route annually and therefore the building of the port was expected to be economically rewarding for Sri Lanka. But because of the heavy debts associated with the building of the port, the government of Sri Lanka in 2017 leased the port to China Merchant Port Holdings for 99 years. This agreement has helped Sri Lanka remain the owner of the port while helping it clear its debt to the Chinese. However, many debates and controversies around the decision still exist.



Photo 56 - With Ilesh at Independence Square, Colombo



Photo 57 - Driving through Colombo City

Colombo was unlike the natural landscape of the rest of Sri Lanka and was a sea-side metropolitan city with imposing buildings and tall skyscrapers. We drove around the city and saw important official buildings and got down at the **Independence Square** to explore the area. We then got into our car and headed for the airport. On the way, we met Sameera, the man who had arranged our Sri Lanka trip and who was supposed to be our guide. He got into the car and came with us to the airport. On reaching the airport, we bade good-bye to Kumar and Sameera. After completing all the formalities, we waited for the Sri Lankan Airlines flight that would take us to New Delhi. We reached New Delhi late in the evening and by the time we reached Riten's house it was night-time. We had our dinner and rested. The next day, Bheman went to Kolkata and we all came back to Imphal.

We went back home thinking about the **small but magical country of Sri Lanka**. It is indeed a marvelous country with breathtaking landscapes and beautiful and warm people.



Photo 58 - With my son Tej and husband Iboton at Independence Square, Colombo, Sri Lanka

**Nanao, her husband  
Gautam and their  
daughter Sophia**

Though we did not travel with them to these places, we carried them with immense love in our hearts. We are indeed blessed to have them in our lives!

**Nya Leima - our  
beloved youngest  
granddaughter**

She was not yet born, or was too small when the travelling took place. We are blessed by her presence in our lives. The whole family has become young all over again!



69 %

Start slideshow

118-119 of 120

Close preview



Price 3,080.00 Rs.

landscape L 28x21 cm

Photo cover



Type here to search



mam...



Vista...



Travel...



Worl...



\*Unti...



Dell I...

8:59 PM  
2/21/2021



