

Hayley Travis and Josh Sloan
January 2010

Being our first time in Sri Lanka, and having never spent time in an orphanage, we had no idea what to expect when we arrived at the home. Thinking we were going to come to a home of sad stories and shy children, we prepared ourselves for emotion. However, as soon as we stepped out of the car, 16 crazy children attacked us! We soon had two on each arm, a few on our backs and one on each shoulder! The eldest of the group, Wasantha, held out his hand straight away for a handshake and a hug! These were the most outgoing, confident children who just wanted to play at every opportunity and we immediately fell in love with them all!

Every child in the orphanage was loveable and very charming. All having very different characters, they were an absolute joy to get to know. One of our favourite moments when all their individual personalities really shone through was the night they decided to put on a performance for us. All the children were involved and all their talents (and humour) were highlighted. Gayathri, one of the girls, ran the show, directing every child into their place, the youngest boys were dressed up in the girls clothes and danced around, Sajee showcased his amazing voice while Wasantha put on his best boy band/Michael Jackson moves for us. Prekash and Sumpat, the two “cheeky” boys, sat in the back with their arms crossed, but with big smiles on their faces!

The children have a packed timetable full of school, arts/crafts, learning languages and chores, however, as far as they are concerned, these are all just activities to fill in time until cricket! One of the funniest things to see was during “gardening” time, all the boys grabbing a lawn mower and other gardening tools and racing to the cricket pitch to work intensively on it for the entire gardening hour to make sure it was in prime condition. Even the little ones came in to pull weeds around the pitch! The passion surrounding cricket at the home was so strong that at dinner Josh was still being congratulated about a catch he had made that morning.

This same passion runs through everything they do. A school sports day for a couple of the older boys was one of the main talking points in the few days leading up to it. There were countless high fives and a lot of training sessions between them. On race day itself, all the boys did so well! Wasantha, who achieved one of the certificate winning positions, ran straight home (during school hours) to tell Olivia all about it! Olivia was thrilled with the result, but quickly shooed him back to school!

Olivia and Fred are two of the most amazing people we have ever met, they really care so much about these kids and the community around them and are so appreciative of every little thing you do or give to them. The orphanage feels just like a big family, you forget that these children have been through so much. This is due to the incredible atmosphere Fred and Olivia have created. There are so many stories we have of Fred, Olivia and the children that revolve around their love and respect for each other from just our two weeks with them, and we cannot wait to go back again!

This was the last place that we visited in a ten week trip which included major cities around the world, and the highlight by far was this small orphanage in Hewadiwela, Sri Lanka.