



# Travel & Tourism



## The Land of the Royal Bengal Tiger

by Ms Naseem Huq

**Khulna city**  
**K**HULNA, the country's third biggest industrial city and a thriving inland port is located 352 km, south-west of Dhaka. It is a divisional headquarter which serves as a gateway to the seaport of Mongla (Chalna) and the Sundarbans. The country's only Newsprint Mill is located in Khulna. Other than this about half a dozen jute mills, a modern shipyard, two large match factories, a telephone cable factory, a number of cold storages and fish freezing plant, and a big power generating station all go to Khulna's credit. Khulna is connected to Dhaka by rail, road and water.

**Bagerhat**

Lying 40 km on the south-east of Khulna town, on the River Bhairab, and on the northern fringes of the Sundarbans, Bagerhat, a district headquarter is a most interesting site. It is reached from Rupsha by rail or road. The most popular tourist attraction of Bagerhat is the famous Shat Gambuz Mosque. "Shat" meaning sixty and "Gambuz" meaning dome (but actually, the mosque has 77 domes) was built in 1459 AD and the Shrine of the Muslim patron-saint-warrior, Khan Jahan Ali (RA), beside which is located a big tank (pond) in which crocodiles live. The legend

goes to say that Khan Jahan Ali transformed the non-believers of Islam into crocodiles, which are still alive in the tank. Two of the crocodiles respond to the names of Kala Pahar (Black Hill) and Dhola Pahar (Fair Hill) given to them. The priest of the shrines upon the request of some devotees call out to Kala Pahar and Dhola Pahar with a sacrificial chicken for them and the crocodiles come to the bank to take away the chicken. The crocodiles come out only

once in a while and any devotee lucky enough to sight and feed them thinks himself as blessed.

### The Sundarbans

Chalna, the country's second seaport, situated at the upper tip of the Sundarbans, attracts many visitors. It has safe channels deep enough to take ocean going ships and handles a cargo volume of the country's export and import. Chalna is well connected to Khulna by telecommunication, river and road transport.

The Sundarbans, meaning "Beautiful forest" is the natural dwelling place of the world famous Royal Bengal Tiger and spotted deer. The Sundarbans are a cluster of deltaic swamp islands with an approximate area of 3600 sq km. Forming the world's largest block of dense, evergreen forest. Thousand of weaving streams, creeks, rivers and estuaries make the forest seem like a huge maze. The tide in these creeks also seem to dance to and fro to nature's magical tune as they flow in two different directions.

The Sundarbans are a nature-lover's delight as Mother Nature, herself seem to have laid out the forest with as much care as a planned pleasure — ground. Game-lovers, anglers, botanists, poets, painters, photographers and the like — the Sundarbans is the place for you. You may come across a Royal Bengal Tiger, swimming across the stream or crocodiles lazily basking on the river banks. Early morning or evening is the time for the spotted deer to come out. Their meal of Keora leaves from the Keora trees are showered down by the monkeys. One may also come across the jungle fowls, pythons, wild boars, lizards

and innumerable variety of beautiful birds, such as snipes, herons, coot, yellow legs, sand pipers etc. To add to the charm of the Sundarbans, thousands of migratory Siberian ducks join their Bangladeshi counterpart in winter.

The forest of the Sundarbans is unique in character. It is the world's largest mangrove forest. This means that the tropical maritime trees of the forest send out many prop roots and form dense thickets. These prop roots, which are approximately a foot long spike, help the trees to take in oxygen as the roots are always under the swamp. Some of the famous spot in the Sundarbans are — the Hiron point (Nilkamal) for tigers,

The climate in the Sundarbans is moderate and the air is humid. The annual rainfall during full monsoon season (June to September) is between 65 inches to 70 inches. The entire territory of the "forest" floats on water at high tide become bare by six to seven feet during ebb (low) tide.

Boat is the only means of transportation inside the forest. There is no road or trail of any path anywhere. Temporary dwellings at the edge of the forest of eight to ten feet high are made by the woodcutters for fear of wild animals. They catch fish by trained otters which is really something to see. One of the most exciting activities in the Sundarbans is the honey collection. It is fascinating to see how the different groups of honey-collectors locate a beehive and then collect honey. The best time to visit the



Shat Gambuz Mosque at Bagerhat

—Parjatan



Spotted deer at Sundarban

—Parjatan

deer, monkeys, crocodiles, birds and natural beauty, and the Dublar Char, an island for fishermen. These fishermen come from Chittagong four months (mid-October to mid-February) to catch and dry fish. This is a beautiful island where spotted deer are often seen to graze.

Sundarbans is from November to March. Exciting honey-collection season is during March-April. For the preservation of wildlife, hunting is prohibited by law, however, certain species of birds can be shot with prior permission of the Divisional Forest Officer, Khulna.

## Garbage Becoming New Tourist Sight in Nepal

by Jan Sharma

**W**ITH tourism already in the doldrums in recent months, the industry is expected to suffer a further blow as the problem of waste management and disposal worsens. A major headache for authorities is finding a dump site to replace Gokarna, the current disposal area, where residents now refuse to take the waste. Uncollected garbage may soon join the sights of the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal will offer foreign visitors.

It recommended Maudole village of Setidevi Village Development Committee as an interim site while the search for a long-term dump ground continues. An environmental study is underway at Okha Pauwa in the Nuwakot District, northwest of Kathmandu, the Nepali capital.

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cure, or so runs the wisdom. Why invite the disease and then seek the cure? It is better to prevent the disease by preventing our village turned into a dumping site," said Tirtha Bahadur Magar, a member of Ward No 7 of the village development committee.

Local residents anticipate that the situation would be specially miserable during the monsoon when the entire area would be flooded. Major disease outbreaks can even occur.

The amount is less than the estimated Rs 300 million (US \$6.07 million) needed annually to keep the capital city clean. However, the available resource is far too small. The Solid Waste Management and Resource Mobilization Centre (SWMRMC) spends Rs 38 million (US\$ 0.77 million) and the Kathmandu municipality Rs 36 million (US\$ 0.06 million)

offered the lame excuse that the waste was being used to make an embankment and a road along the riverbank.

New Prime Minister, Mr Manmohan Adhikari scathingly dismisses these efforts saying: "First make Kathmandu clean, green and healthy. Only then will we give a sympathetic hearing to your demand for proclaiming Kathmandu as the metropolis."

The mayor's slogan of "clean, green and healthy Kathmandu" was rephrased by "The Independent" weekly newspaper as "Mayor's dirty, obnoxious and unhealthy Kathmandu".

Mr Adhikari added that the city was fast turning into a "desert with the gradual drying up of Bishnumati, Bagmati and Manohara rivers."

The waste dumped into the rivers include rotting vegetables, dead animals, plastic bags, tin cans, batteries, pharmaceuticals, bottles, pa-

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Supposedly good about for two and a half years, the choice of Maudole Kholsha is being questioned as fears have been raised that the proposed dump site represents a major pollution threat to the Bogmati river.

The river is the main source of water supply not just for the houses along its banks but also for neighbouring villages. Villagers also refuted claims by the task force that only one crop is grown by the farmers in the proposed site. Local farmers say they get as many as three crops a year. They also complain that they were not consulted on the idea which came from influential people in Kathmandu.

To make the villagers more receptive to the proposed dump site in their neighbourhood, they were promised a health centre, ambulance service, picnic park, and swimming pool. But the villagers are unmoved.

"Prevention is better than

annually for waste disposal. On their own, residents may also be spending another Rs 36 million. It is estimated that Kathmandu has a deficit of Rs 180 million (US\$ 3.65 million) for keeping herself clean.

Meanwhile, while the search for a dumping site continues, the waste management and disposal problem worsens particularly in Kathmandu. The Nepali capital generates about 600 cubic metres of solid waste daily. Only 300 cubic metres are collected.

In an apparently desperate bid to dispose of waste, municipal authorities started to dump garbage along the banks of the Bishnumati river as a temporary measure. However, the action polluted the river and posed a health hazard to the local residents.

Belatedly, the authorities

pers, and construction materials like bricks and mud. From biodegradable waste in the past, the rivers now get non-organic materials and toxic chemicals and Kathmandu does not separate biodegradable and non-degradable materials. In concept, a management system for hazardous waste from hospital has been developed but this has yet to be implemented as there is a need for incinerators and trained staff.

Concerned about the waste problem's effects on tourism, Yogendra Shakya, president of the Hotel Association of Nepal, has proposed that a Garbage Management Authority be formed with an investment of Rs 150 million (US\$ 3.04 million). Tourism-related establishments could shoulder 41 per cent of the cost, 20 per cent from the three municipalities in the Kathmandu Valley, 20 per cent from national and international donors, and 19 per cent from the government. Mr Shakya believes the authority will be financially self-sustaining in 10 years.

—Depthnews Asia

## Foy's Lake, Chittagong: A National Heritage Site

by Shamsul Arifin

**F**OY'S Lake in Chittagong city was a pristine body of water (lake) surrounded by beautiful green hills when it was established in 1927. Primarily it was created as a source for drinking water and a natural recreation spot. Consisting of 336 acres of rolling hills and a magnificent lake of free flowing shape, it is only of its kind in the country.

Since its establishment, Foy's Lake has attracted visitors who come to appreciate its beauty and relax and enjoy in the calm and pleasant natural surroundings. It is known from early visitors and naturalists that "Foy's Lake was a cherished retreat for all nature lover. It was truly a natural recreation area. No commer-

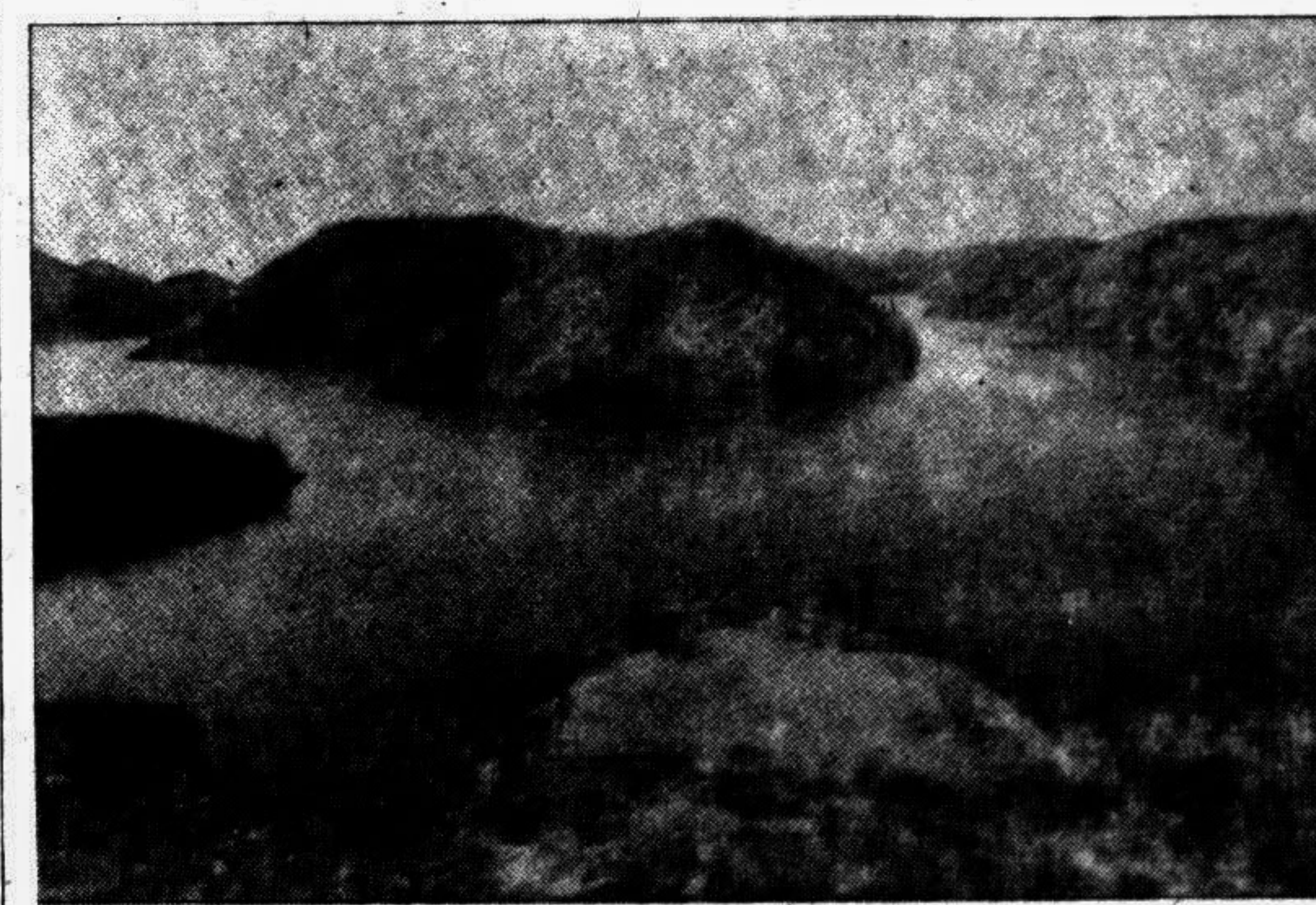
cialism. No hoi choi, nothing. The Forest in the hills surrounding the lake was dense and branches of trees drooped on the lake touching the water. If a boat was available, we would go looking for deer, wild boar, rabbits, wild fowl, civets etc. Even panthers were known to be around. The forest was so dense at some places that we were afraid to step out on banks except at regular spots. Those beautiful trees, shrubs, bamboo and cane grooves and the serenity, are all gone as fire wood. If this lake was located elsewhere, it would have been worshipped."

In the mid sixties, when I visited Foy's Lake for the first time it was indeed a very

charming place, a place of natural wonder for a ten year old. And what do I find now? On a recent visit, I found the entire area totally degraded. The entry is through a so called zoo gate, vendors lining the roadway, and there was no trace of that fine forest our naturalist friend told us about. No sign of those beautiful trees and shrubs with branches drooping on the lake water. Only denuded, damaged barren hills devoid of any charm stood still. Even shrub roots have been dug up and taken away for fire wood by some locals, herds of "Engineers Ltd" cows munched away on whatever green was left. Litters, garbage and debris was scattered all over the place

can be made in Forestry, Wild Life and Recreation facilities in a natural surrounding. However, any commercial or artificial development like construction of amusement park or crowded assembly will only destroy the place for ever.

Foy's Lake is a perfect place for a Botanical Garden or a small National Park protecting the flora and fauna as well as the fragile eco-world of the vicinity containing biodiversity. It can be easily converted into an ecological refuge which can go along with a commercial forestry (Teak) programme. For the development of Foy's Lake properly, a fencing is the first priority which can be done gradually. Without a fencing



Foy's Lake at Chittagong

—Parjatan

any programme will be difficult to achieve and the land may be lost to gradual encroachment.

Considering all the facts, Foy's Lake area should be declared a National Heritage Site of Bangladesh. There is no such place as beautiful within a metropolitan city having a green land of 336 acres in one chunk and never will there be another.

Think of rolling hills, breezy atmosphere, murmur of placid lake waters, whispering of branches and bird calls at dawn. Think of your children frolicking around in green grass near waterline. That's what Foy's Lake is in store for you and let's try to keep it that way

Today we talk a lot and spend a lot of money on environmental aspects, ecology, forestry and preservation of natural places. Development

## Travel Briefs

**TSA to raise rates:** Trans-Pacific stabilization Agreement (TSA) members have decided to raise freight rates next year. The members have agreed on a general increase of US\$ 325 per 40 foot container for cargo from Asia — except Japan to the US.

The TSA, which comprises 13 carriers serving the trade, from Asia to the US, provides members with a forum to adopt broad rate and service policy, guidelines.

—BD shipping times.

**THAI opens new crew centre:** Mr. Thannoon Wanglee, president of Thai Airways International public Company Ltd., presided over the opening ceremony of the new crew centre, located at Lakki, Don Muang, which was followed by the opening of Building 5 at the Head Office on Vibhavadi Rangsit Road.

Other than this the airline has constructed a parking lot to accommodate up to 420 vehicles in an area of approximately 20,300 square metres.

THAI is confident that these additional buildings will serve as modern work places and fully facilitate the needs of its rapidly growing company striving in the aviation industry.

—THAI

**Further expansion plan of Dubai Airport:** Dubai International Airport's plan to construct a 50,000 sq. ft courier facility has been given the green light by the Dubai Department of Civil Aviation.

The new development comes at a strategic time for the busy gateway airport after another year of dramatic growth.

In another cargo village development, DHL worldwide Express has already submitted proposals for a distribution centre.

—BD Shipping Times.

**PIA committed to Travel Industry:** Pakistan International Airlines is deeply committed to play its due role in the socio-economic sphere in the country and shall in the same spirit extend all assistance to promote travel industry. This was observed by PIA's General manager (Sindh) at a certificate awarding ceremony at Karachi.

The certificates were being awarded to successful candidates of the standard and advanced courses jointly organised by IATA and UFTHA (universal Federation of Travel Agents Association).

—Top Flight.

**More Swissair flights:** In its new summer schedule, Swissair has increased frequency to Osaka Kansai from four to five a week. With the five flights to Tokyo, it offers a total of ten weekly flights to Japan.

Belgrade has daily flight from Zurich, and there are daily flights between Geneva and Athens. Los Angeles and Toronto have daily flights, which is in cooperation with Air Canada.

—BD Shipping Times.

**Cargo at ZIA not safe:** Organized crime gangs are increasingly targeting the air-freight shipments at the Zia International Airport. Items of high value are being pilfered from the cargo shed, despite the airports good reputation for efficiency and security.

Of particular concern is the theft of the accompanied luggage, passengers kits are found unlocked, spare parts and accessories are stolen.

The airport authorities should look at the situation because there is need for improved supervision of handling procedures.

—BD Shipping Times.

**Rustom put into operation:** Rustom, one of the salvage ships of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has been put into service after remaining inoperative for the last four years.

The crane of Rustom was badly damaged in 1991 while salvaging one sunken oil tanker near Hatiya Island.

—BD Shipping Times.

## Around the World on a Tight Budget

by Fehmin Shoma Farashuddin

We reached Rome in the afternoon, hot, tired and dusty. After the gloomy rain in France and the pleasant weather of Spain, we found Italy to be glaringly hot and extremely humid. We took ourselves out to the uneven, cobblestoned roads of Rome and followed the hotel touter who had successfully conned us into staying at her hotel. The hotel turned out to be an ancient decrepit building with an elevator that was at least a 100 years old. But its location was excellent. After having recovered from our long journey, we went off for a look at the city. We soon found ourselves in the famous Piazza di Spagna (Spanish Steps), named after the nearby building housing the Spanish Embassy to the Vatican. A little way further was the Trevi Fountain dedicated to Neptune, God of the Sea, where if you throw coins, according to an old myth, you will one day find yourself back in Rome.

There was no way we would be able to take in all the sights of the vast, ancient city of Rome, so we decided to go on a couple of tours that would at least give us a glimpse of some of the more well-known sights. Our first tour, dubbed "Rome of the Caesars" by our extra energetic guide, took us to the remains of the Circus Maximus, famous during the time of the ruthless emperor Nero, the Colosseum, and the Forum, where Julius Caesar was stabbed. At the Piazza de Popolo (Place of the People), we saw statues of Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, as well as other statues depicting important figures of ancient mythology. We also saw the Pantheon, which is said to be the best preserved building of ancient times.

A trip to Rome would not be complete without a tour of the Vatican and so the next day, we found ourselves being led there by our over-enthusiastic guide of the previous day. On our way to the Sistine Chapel, we first stopped in various galleries that made up the Vatican Museum. Our first stop was the Sculpture Museum, where we learned the interesting fact that Roman statues were dated according to which Pope or emperor had been in power at the time. Next, we went through the Tapestry gallery, filled with beautiful, large tapestries, the eyes of which seemed to follow us as we walked by them. Finally, we found ourselves in the Sistine Chapel, and a hush fell over our otherwise very talkative tour group. We craned our necks upwards to behold magnificent paintings depicting scenes from the Bible. It is said that Michaelangelo spent well over six years lying on his back in order to create these masterpieces. Next we were off to St. Peter's Basilica, which was done all in mosaic, again by Michaelangelo. Even the guards that stand at attention outside the church wear uniforms originally designed by Michaelangelo. The Vatican in fact serves as a showcase of his greatest works.

Our two tours done, we realized that we had come to the end of our whirlwind tour and it was already time to return home to London. We boarded our flight, taking with us all the sights, sounds and memories of the past two activity filled weeks.

(The author is a Masters student in Gender and Development at the London School of Economics)