

Travels that make souls wiser

When I watched the Bollywood flick, "Zindagi na milegi dobara" for the first time, I like a lot of others, fell in love with Spain and with the idea of travel changing my life.

The poetry, the adrenaline and the majestic views opened up some unknown floodgates in my heart, and I was galvanised into action.

Within a year, I acted upon broken promises, reunited with my best friend living a thousand miles away, and was camped right outside Bunol for the Tomatina festival.

A feat unthinkable for me at the time I was watching the movie.

We all have our little triggers that make us live it up!

If we are fortunate enough to have the opportunity, if our responsibilities allow that tiny little window to escape, I believe we should all breathe in and expand like an inflatable balloon to float away to our imagination's horizons.

The reason I begin our exciting conversation about travelling with this rhetoric is because the appeal of tourism is palpable on most grounds, the sight being the strongest, but there is another evasive change that we tend not to always identify straight-away.

A change that makes the wheels turn as soon as we step outside the doors of our comfort zones; a change more permanent, more of an awakening; the change to unconsciously become a better version of ourselves – something completely dependent on the nature of our travels.

A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES

The concept of selfie sticks and front cameras on phones may have tweaked the meaning of sight for a lot of us in recent times, but so has our ability to tell a story.

Sharing is a little too easy and the competition to get somewhere unknown and famous first – intense. But despite my own personal passion for taking photos and

over-sharing on social media, I find the fondest experiences are of those places where either photography was not allowed, or I found myself too mesmerised to bother.

This happened on my first trip to the inside of the Sistine chapel. They did not have to remind me then that taking photos was not allowed. Just being alive, and being able to be present inside history itself, to stand beneath Michelangelo's famous ceiling and feasting my eyes on walls that



recounted untold stories, defined the moment for me.

I captured these images with the lenses of my own eyes. And they have remained perhaps more permanently etched than any on my phone's photo library.

I experienced something similar and yet absolutely in contrast with the tapestries created by men inside the Vatican. This time it was a spot in a remote area in the Southern island of New Zealand, and it was

a tapestry, no man could have painted. It was painted by the hands of Mother Nature herself.

I remember standing at the precipice of a cliff, where the view before me suddenly cleared to reveal several waterfalls tumbling down to be intertwined with blocks of ice of the glacier land.

I was so stunned that I cried! It was a strange melting pot of emotions, and sights I am not likely to forget in this lifetime.



WAKE UP AND SMELL THE ROSES

I am sure this happens to a lot of us, when linking random everyday objects bring in a flood of nostalgia for childhoods long past. Are you surprised when certain scents bring back memories? Like the smell of roasted coffee beans for me defines my favourite city of Melbourne. The smell of that Bangali caramelised onions where the 'paanch foron' seeds have only been released – my

mum and home.

Or that fresh after-rain smell that can only spell Dhaka! We often downplay this particular power of our senses. But it can conjure up images from the remotest nooks of our brain.

GUILTY OF GLUTTONY

Travelling is almost synonymous with this particular human sense and sensibility. Something that is overtly overplayed by the tourism industry. A little over indulgence with food is perhaps common when you are on your holidays, and important as well. It is one of the most common measures on which to draw parallels between your experiences. But what is most special, what remains with you long after your trip is over, are the surprises local delicacies can introduce to your palate. To be adventurous in life often means being adventurous with that palate!

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

It could start with the exciting blare of your car's honking as you battle through the traffic of Dhaka, on your way to the escape. Or the pleasant chirping of the birds as you open your eyes on the first morning of your trip, to realise you have woken up someplace different. What stays with you are the background score of the cities and towns you visit!

A TOUCH OF SOUL

I still remember that winter evening in London, when I stepped out of the train station to take the dingy alleyway back to my apartment. I stopped on track in front of one of the street lights and stared in amazement when I realised it had just started to snow.

I ran upstairs to grab my startled housemate and forced to join me in the middle of the street, as I danced to the smell, sight, sound, taste and touch of my merry soul!

By Naaz Fahmida

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