



God did this country justice when it comes to nature. It's rare to drive through and not admire its beauty.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

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moving to West Africa (Nigeria and Sierra Leone both), I have had far more clothes made than I would like to admit. As a person who frequently goes months or even years without thinking of buying clothes, I think I let myself go crazy and bought one too many of these fabrics. But I think the best part about getting these clothes made here is the impeccable tailoring. The tailors in Freetown would put your favourite dorji out of business in Dhaka—and

save you money in the process.

6. Visa access: Pretty much anyone can apply for an E-Visa for tourism through a website called <https://visitsierraleone.org/online-visa/>.

Bonus: It's actually cheaper for Bangladeshis to get a visa compared to those in most other countries.

7. History: Did you know that the city Freetown gets its name because it was a town where "freed" slaves were brought back by the British to be 'repatriated'? These were former slaves who were Afro

Caribbeans, African Americans and African Europeans who were sent back to Freetown once they were 'freed'. However, by that point many of them had lived for generations in the countries they were trafficked to and moved from. Tours of Freetown show you the houses built by those who were brought back and share information on the transatlantic slave trade and its effect on the people of West Africa.

8. Arts and crafts: Like many other West African countries, Sierra Leone boasts beautiful handmade crafts. The big market in town sells everything from fresh shea butter to handicrafts made from wood, coconut shell bags and hand painted batiks. Sierra Leone has beautiful crafts that are not only handmade but locally sourced, sometimes directly from the artists who make them. The markets in town will allow you to choose from beautiful handmade jewellery made from Ankara fabric to beadwork to paintings—you take your pick from the array of colourful arts and crafts.

Sierra Leone has become a home for me in the past eight months that I have been here. It's one of the few places in the world where I have felt rooted enough to not want to sprint in less than a year, which, in my opinion, says a lot about the soul of the place. I think the combination of its beauty, rich culture, history, art and its welcoming people has made my time in Salone all the more precious.

Maliha Fairooz is a 28-year-old Bangladeshi solo traveler, who has travelled to 84 countries, on a Bangladeshi passport. Through her blog www.maliharoundtheworld.com she shares her experience of travelling as a brown, Muslim, Bangladeshi woman while simultaneously encouraging a culture of travel amongst Bangladeshi youth.

Puerto Iguazú, Argentina

It was Chand Raat, the eve of Eid-Ul-Fitr. Despite being travel-worn, I desperately wanted to give my little boy a flavour of Eid, especially as we were so far away from anything remotely like home or the traditions we so dearly cling to. There was nothing in this Argentinian town that would help me acknowledge the festival.

Our celebrations come in the guise of epic feasts. Perhaps I couldn't pull off a proper biriyani or *porota-roast*, but maybe I could knock off a quick *morog polau*? And that's how I found myself scouring the sole grocery shop in a small town in the middle of a South

American rainforest, for ingredients for *morog polau*. Painstaking conversations in my limited Spanish interspersed with mad gesticulation came to fruition as I returned home with *some* of the ingredients. I was still missing a few. When I approached our landlord for help with translating the names of the ingredients, he laughed and said he'd only ever read about these spices in books. He'd definitely never seen them about town. Nevertheless, I persisted. My son would get a taste of Eid, no matter what.

Upon reaching home, I was faced with yet another challenge—cooking

morog polau in the single, modestly sized pot that sat in the mostly bare cupboard. I should have, perhaps, given up at that point, but my maternal instincts made me persevere. What emerged from my kitchen that evening was unlike any *morog polau* we'd had before, but it was still rich and delicious (or at least I like to think it was). My little family savoured both the comforting flavours and the unusual circumstances we found ourselves in.

Samai Haider is a writer, traveller, artist and... economist. If her rather odd



amalgamation of interests isn't eccentric enough, she's taken to travelling around the globe - with her pack and toddler strapped to her back. Read about the fables of her foibles at: <http://samaihaider.com/>

"The History of Mexico" at Palacio Nacional, Mexico

Talat Ahmed

"On the stairwell of Mexico's centre of government, the Palacio Nacional, you'll find one of Mexico's greatest works of arts. Diego Rivera's mural 'The History of Mexico' swallows three whole 70 metre wide walls. Rivera began painting the mural right after the end of the Mexican Revolution in order to celebrate and legitimise the new revolutionary government. Each wall is divided to portray the glory of Aztec culture, history of conflicts that formed Mexico, and a future with progress and equality. The mural depicts Spanish aggression, baptism of natives, and the violence that resulted in the quick conversion of Latin America to Catholicism."



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