

Clare's Diary

6th April 2011

Wednesday

Wow, our last day in India, I can't believe how quickly the time has flown nor how much we have seen and learned. This morning the crew and I wander around the city again taking some gv's (documentary speak for general views don't you know) before we say goodbye to Dad who is returning to Hyderabad for a couple of days. Mum and I visit one of the most luxurious shopping centres I have ever seen. M&S and the Body Shop lie alongside Prada and Luis Vuitton; it is quite evident that there is no recession here and again the disparity between rich and poor is hard to avoid. We have our last meal in India together before the short journey to the airport. I have been in this country only a handful of times but I feel such a strong connection to it that it makes me sad to leave. I'm not sure if this feeling is because I am leaving my family behind or because India, as a country touches my spirit in a way most other places cannot. Perhaps it's a combination of both, one thing's for sure though, in the immortal words of Arnie, "I'll be back".

Thursday

We touch down in Dublin and surprisingly I feel quite refreshed having slept most of the journey home. We collect my trusty Renault from the Carlton Dublin Airport Hotel, popping into Avoca for some lunch on the way. When Mum and I arrive we are greeted to a rapturous welcome from our animals, who seem to have missed us very much! I unpack quickly before repacking and driving to Galway. Donal, who was my Escort in Tralee in August once offered me a place to stay, I think that he may be regretting this now that I have a house key and a 'Rose Room' sign on the door! Too late now Donal!

Friday

I manage to sleep quite well for the first few hours before jet lag catches hold and I wake up at 5am. I take myself off for a run to help me relax before I do a little bit of last minute revision. This morning I have a first round PhD interview in NUIG. I have been dreaming about returning to Galway since the minute I left it and the course here would suit me down to the ground. I am a bag of nerves before the interview and even after it's over I find it difficult to think about. Donal and I drive to Westport where we are attending the launch of the Cystic Fibrosis Association of Ireland's Annual Conference. It is a pleasure to hear about the continued growth of this organization, as well as to see some of those who contribute to it, honoured. I pin a '65 Roses' pin (available in shops now) to Taoiseach, Enda Kenny's lapel as they are launching this campaign today too. '65 Roses' is often what young children call Cystic Fibrosis when they are first diagnosed with it, as the actual term is so hard to pronounce. I check my emails as we are leaving the hotel and am delighted when I see that I have been offered a second round interview in Galway!

Saturday

I experience a host of mixed emotions today as I am attending my very first selection night in Navan. There are sixteen wonderful women who have entered the Meath Rose selection this year and it brings me back in time to my first heat in London last year, wow how much life has changed since then. I am sad as this obviously signals the beginning of the end for my year as the Rose of Tralee, but I am also excited that somebody here tonight will represent Meath at the Portlaoise regionals in June and I know they will have the time of their lives. I also know that some of the girls here will remain friends for life, having shared this experience and that is such a wonderful thing to feel I am a part of. At the end of the evening, a very worthy winner, Dearbhla Toal is chosen.

Sunday

Ahhhhhhhh it is so lovely to be back in my own bedroom tonight for the first time in almost 5 weeks. I get to catch up with my brother, who has just been given a fantastic new job which couldn't suit him more than it does.

Monday

Study, study, study and then drive to Galway

Tuesday

This morning I am visiting the staff and pupils in Salerno Secondary School in Galway. I meet some of the classes who put me through my paces before doing an interview with the schools Magazine group. Afterwards I catch up over lunch with one of my best friends Miriam who is getting married this Saturday! Cue very excited wedding chat!