

FISHERIES THROUGH  
THE EYES OF YOUTH

40TH UN INTER-AGENCY  
GAMES - MARINA D'OR, SPAIN

IL MIO SNOOPY È AFRICANO

IL VADEMECUM DEL  
PENSIONATO FELICE .....

THE THOUSAND FACES OF  
SOUTHERN INDIA

## THE 2013 INTERNATIONAL DRAWING COMPETITION PROTECTING OUR FISHERIES: INHERITING A HEALTHIER WORLD





## Un dono

di Laura Guerrini

L'amore per un bambino, per un uccellino  
L'amore per un progetto, per l'altrui difetto  
L'amore vero è profondo, quello passionale è viscerale,  
L'amore assoluto è una ricchezza...  
non si compra, non si vende  
ma si dona...

# fao CASA gazette

The "FAO CASA GAZETTE" is the registered title of the journal of the FAO STAFF COOP

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Typewritten electronic contributions for the FAO CASA Gazette are welcome. These can be in English, French, Italian or Spanish - articles, poems, drawings, photographs, etc. in fact anything interesting that staff members and/or their families in Rome or the field may like to contribute. No anonymous material will be accepted, and the Editor reserves the right to choose and/or reject material that is not in keeping with the ethics of the Organization. Send contributions electronically to the Editor at FAO-STAFF-Coop@fao.org or leave signed copies with the COOP Office on the ground floor of Building E. The deadline for editorial material is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month preceding the date of issue. The Editor may schedule articles according to the priorities and editorial requirements of the FAO Staff COOP. The FAO CASA Gazette is published every month.

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**All activities are  
for Staff Coop  
Members only**



## FISHERIES THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUTH EXHIBITION IN THE CASA BAR 8-23 MARCH



Lord Azhnin D. Bacalla, 12 years old.  
PHILIPPINES

How do young people imagine the world of fisheries? What do they know of the challenges facing the future of fisheries? Come to the Casa Bar where you will discover an amazing collection of drawings and paintings from the international competition: *'Protecting Our Fisheries - inheriting a healthier world'*. Aimed at teaching children and young people about the importance of fisheries for food and nutrition security and poverty alleviation, this contest invited them to depict the fishery issues found in their own countries.

Over 600 entries were received for this competition which was launched in July 2012 by the FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, in collaboration with the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA) team in the Natural Resources Management and Environment Department.

These drawings reflect both the vital contributions from fisheries and aquaculture to food security and economic growth and some of the main problems that these young artists see in their own country. These include: poor governance, weak fisheries management, conflicts over the use of natural resources, poor fishery and aquaculture practices, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, a failure to incorporate the priorities and rights of small-scale fishing communities, and injustices relating to gender discrimination and child labour. Associated educational activities have also increased participants' awareness of fishery issues and encouraged practical actions to help promote responsible fisheries.



Andi Terribali Hikman Napacce, 11 years old.  
INDONESIA



Carol Jasmin Castillo, 12 years old.  
PERU'

## Raising awareness for youth is key

The number of young people (15-24 years) is growing quickly in developing countries – making up nearly 20% of the population. Children and young people are important drivers of change in local communities so it is vital to educate, empower and recognize the positive impact they can make. Aquatic resources and their habitats are vital for nutritious food, for jobs and for prosperity for millions of people. Over 140 million people in the world depend on fisheries and aquaculture for their livelihoods - fishing, unloading, processing and distribution, building

and maintaining fishing boats and farms.

Support to rural youth has been part of FAO's work for the last four decades. Activities have included strengthening and expanding young people's capacities, knowledge, and skills through education and training. A sound understanding of the environmentally sustainable use of aquatic resources can turn the younger generation into responsible resource stewards and dynamic drivers of local development.

**We are pleased to share these fabulous artworks and our initiative within FAO and to outside visitors.**

**The exhibition will be on view at the Casa Bar (FAO, ground floor, Buidline B) from 8-23 March. Please stop by and have a look at these brilliant drawings by children and youth from around the world.**

**This International Drawing Competition is linked to *The Stop IUU Fishing Award*** ([stopiuufishingaward@imcsnet.org](mailto:stopiuufishingaward@imcsnet.org)), which will recognize creative, successful, and tangible solutions in Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) being used in both small and large-scale fisheries which deter Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. Illegal fishing is estimated to cause losses in the range of US\$10-23 billion annually. As well, there are also unquantified, indirect negative consequences for marine resources,



ONG Chai Thing, 16 years old.  
MALAYSIA.



fishers and food security. In the short-term, IUU fishing results in the unsustainable harvest of fish stocks and destruction of aquatic habitats, loss of fish for future harvest, loss of nutrition, and loss of income and employment for legitimate fishers. IUU fishing also undermines labor standards, distorts markets of legally-harvested fish, and contributes to the loss of economic stability in developing coastal nations. In the long term, IUU fishing can deplete local, and potentially global, fish stocks to the point where they become commercially

unviable or even push them to the brink of extinction.

Prizes for the *The Stop IUU Fishing Award* include (i) a trip to the Fourth Global Fisheries Enforcement Training Workshop in Costa Rica in November 2013 where winners will be honoured with monetary prizes; (ii) promotion of the winner's new ideas to further inspire MCS work through winner's participation on a panel during the Costa Rica workshop ; and (iii) an opportunity to expand the winning entries' potential for replication across fishing communities/regions/nations, facilitating the implementation of pilot projects and immediate help to MCS efforts (the extent of the capacity development programme will be dependent on the successful solicitation of funds).

If you are interested in the competition or the exhibition and would like further information please contact:

[Olga.Navarro@fao.org](mailto:Olga.Navarro@fao.org) or [Daniela.kalikoski@fao.org](mailto:Daniela.kalikoski@fao.org) or visit our website:

[www.fao.org/climatechange/youth/78616/en/](http://www.fao.org/climatechange/youth/78616/en/)

**Olga Navarro Gallego** is working with the Fishing Operations and Technology Service (FIRO) and the Youth and United Nations Global Alliance (YUNGA) and is supporting the management of this children-youth initiative ■



## ***Newsletter*** ***Inter-Agency Games 2013***

The FAO Staff Coop would like to inform all FAO Staff that the 40<sup>th</sup> UN Inter-Agency Games will be hosted this year by the UN Geneva and will be held in Marina d'Or, Spain **from 24 to 28 April 2013**. The event will start on **Wednesday (day of arrival) and end Sunday (day of departure)**, the competitions will commence on Thursday, and the closing and prize-giving ceremonies will therefore be held on Saturday evening.

**The disciplines for the IAG are:**

- Athletics Men** (minimum 4 – maximum 6);
- Athletics Women** (minimum 3 – maximum 5);
- Badminton** (minimum 3 men and 1 woman – maximum 5 men and 3 women);
- Basketball** (maximum 12 players);
- Bridge** (minimum of 4 – maximum 6 players);
- Chess** (minimum 5 – maximum 6 players);
- Darts** (minimum 6 – maximum 8 players);
- Football Men** (minimum 7 – maximum 12 players);
- Football Women** (minimum 7- maximum 12 players);
- Golf** (minimum 4 – maximum 6);
- Pétanque** (3 per triplet plus maximum 2 reserves, max.3 triplets per organization);
- Squash** (minimum 3 men and a maximum of 4 men and 1 woman, plus one optional reserve);
- Swimming Men** (minimum 4 - maximum 5);
- Swimming Women** (minimum 4 - maximum 5);
- Table Tennis Men** (minimum 3 - maximum 5);
- Table Tennis Women** (minimum 2 – maximum 3);
- Tennis** (10 per team (5 men and 5 women);
- Volleyball Men** (minimum 6 players without a libero, max 10 players with a libero);
- Volleyball Women** (minimum 6 players without a libero, max 10 players with a libero);

(continued on page 10)





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(continued from page 8)

**Additional disciplines:**

**Cricket** ( 6 players maximum 12 players)

**Volleyball mixed** (minimum 6 players without libero (4men and 2 women), max 10 players with libero. A minimum of 2 ladies must be present at all times on the court.

Complete rules for each discipline are available on the IAG web site:  
[www.interagencygames/iag2013/disciplines](http://www.interagencygames/iag2013/disciplines)

In accordance with the IAG General Rule 14, any person of a participating organization or agency who has served under contract, including supernumeraries, for at least three months or who holds a contract of at least three months duration and, in either case, holds a contract effective at least one month before the IAG opens and during their entire duration, is eligible for selection as a member of a team and to participate in the UNIAG.

This year, there is a price difference for players and supporters. The package includes four nights in the hotel with breakfast, lunch, dinner, opening ceremony and gala dinner at closing ceremony. Alcohols will be sold separately. Tickets will be available at the IAG centre or Hotel desk. Kindly be informed that participation in the Games is subject to the package deal. Private accommodation arrangements will not be accepted.

**Players:**

**The package is €455.00 per person for a shared double/twin room and € 555.00 in single room, all inclusive (except alcohols) for four nights**

**Supporters: (non playing staff members or relatives)**

**The package is €415.00 per person for a shared double/twin room, and €515.00 in single room, all inclusive (except alcohols) for four nights**

Children 0-2 Free; 3-14 yrs €216.00 above 14 yrs will be considered as an adult  
Additional nights: €76.00 in double/twin, €100 for single per night

Transfers will be made from the airport of Valencia or railway stations of Valencia or Castellon. During the event, free transportation will be available to and from the hotels and discipline sites. Transport for arrivals prior to 24 and after 28 April can be organized free, but must be indicated in the registration tool with the additional nights.

**Medical Certificates:**

Although medical certificates are not mandatory in Spain it is recommended that, participants have a valid medical certificate. Participants and supporters are responsible for their own medical insurance. The host organisation will not be held liable.

Participants should ensure that their leave is approved prior to registering.

**If you wish to participate in any of the disciplines listed above  
please contact the FAO Staff Coop Office E.016, Ext 53142**

***The deadline for registration is Friday 22 March  
Last day for payment Friday 29 March 2013***



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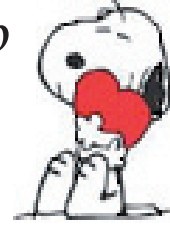



E.H.



## Il mio Snoopy è Africano

di Flavia Carbonetti

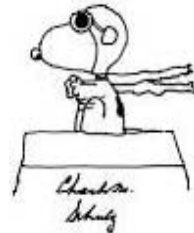


Ci incontrammo all'uscita del ristorante vietnamita dove avevo appena pranzato. Fui attratta da un piccolo tartufo nero che faceva capolino da una delle ruote del camioncino parcheggiato di fianco al locale. Immobile, attenta, cercavo di capire di che tipo di animale si trattasse. Timidamente, lui venne allo scoperto; prima il naso, poi un orecchio, un occhio, tutto il musetto e alla fine un corpo cicciottello; era un buffo cucciolo di cane di una razza non ben definita. Mi guardava, attentamente, pensieroso, curvando la testa da destra a sinistra, corrugando la fronte come per valutare se valesse la pena prendermi in considerazione. Poi, improvvisamente, come illuminato da una felice intuizione, si mise a saltellare intorno al camioncino con tanta allegria, come se avesse delle molle sotto le zampette!. Sembrava fosse uscito da un fumetto e mi fece



pensare subito a Snoopy. Poco dopo si fermò di botto, prese la rincorsa e mi si buttò addosso. Era forte quel cagnolino perché mi ritrovai per terra, il cucciolo sul petto mi leccava il viso e quegli occhi intelligenti mi guardavano supplicanti cercando di convincermi ad adottarlo, sembrava proprio pensasse ed io avevo come l'impressione di sentirli i suoi pensieri... "prendimi, prendimi, ti prego, sarò buono, affettuoso e poi sarò il tuo cane, per sempre, portami con te, già ti voglio tanto bene, prendimi, prendimi, prendimi". Mi aveva scelto. Lo guardai negli

occhi, gli presi il muso fra le mani, lo accarezzai con tenerezza ed anche per me fu subito amore. Quando domandai al ristoratore notizie del cucciolo mi disse che lo aveva da poco e che in effetti si era reso conto di non poterlo tenere "la madre è troppo grande" si giustificò "e poi è un cane da caccia, che cosa ne facciamo noi di un cane da caccia visto che siamo tutti vegetariani in famiglia? Perché non lo prende lei?". Ci misi due minuti a decidere, pagai i vaccini già fatti e da quel momento lui divenne per molti anni il mio amico più fedele. Lo portai dall'Africa in Italia sottoponendolo ad un lungo volo e quando uscì dalla grande gabbia nella quale era



giunto nella sua nuova patria, sbandava, come se fosse brillo. Crebbe, velocemente come tutti i cuccioli e divenne un bellissimo cane da caccia fuori "luogo" però perché lui era un Rhodesian Ridgeback, un cacciatore di leoni; fiero e forte. Non avrebbe mai conosciuto la savana, né gli odori, né i suoni, né gli spazi immensi nei quali i suoi fratelli vivevano ma seppe adattarsi molto bene alla sua nuova vita dimostrando di essere dotato di un senso filosofico sorprendente ed infatti il giardino di casa divenne la sua oasi personale. Quando poi il suo DNA cominciò ad esprimersi in tutta la sua pienezza, non potendo cacciare i leoni, furono i gatti dei vicini di casa a diventare suoi arcinemici. Ma lui era troppo sensibile per fargli del male e così

tutto si risolveva con delle grandi rincorse e molto rumore. In giardino aveva anche molte altre attività; certo come tutti gli altri canidi abbaia, scavava enormi buche, creava solchi nel prato di dicenda, bruciava le siepi e le aiuole con ripetuti annaffiamenti corporali ma c'era qualche cosa di più in lui, lui era diverso; forse era stato il volo, a quelle altitudini chissà cosa era successo ai suoi neuroni, o forse tutte le attenzioni e le coccole riservategli, o forse era solo questione di genetica.....ma lui era proprio un cane sorprendente. Per esempio, apprezzava il profumo dei fiori. In primavera lo ritrovavo ad annusare i boccioli delle rose, i suoi fiori preferiti; tuffava il suo grande naso nel cuore del fiore, aspirava e poi socchiudendo gli occhi alzava il muso verso il cielo come per inebriarsi ancora di più di quelle essenze delicate. Ogni tanto mi faceva anche omaggio di un fiore, uno qualsiasi, uno di stagione che ritrovavo appoggiato sulla mia poltrona preferita, sulle sedie della cucina o nell'ingresso; un vero romanticone. Anche le farfalle intuivano il suo nobile animo e gli giravano intorno senza paura. Lui spesso le osservava e a volte cercava di imitarle non rendendosi conto della sua mole, 58 kilogrammi ben portati. Le seguiva, piano piano, di fiore in fiore, quasi in punta "di zampa" e poi provava a librarsi nell'aria per poi, evidentemente, posarsi con risultati poco edificanti sui cespugli fioriti del giardino. Era simpatico ed anche bellissimo così un anno decisi di



portarlo ad una mostra canina organizzata allo Zoo Safari di Fiumicino; un cacciatore di leoni allo Zoo Safari mi sembrò una buona idea, forse avrei risvegliato in lui qualche ricordo ancestrale ma malgrado le mie aspettative non ci furono reazioni significative. Per di più la sua razza all'epoca era poco conosciuta, poco competitiva, poco apprezzata e così un vero cacciatore di leoni ricevette solo un premio di consolazione, quello per la simpatia, adottando con disinvoltura la filosofica affermazione "l'importante non è vincere, ma partecipare".

Tanti anni vissuti insieme, intensi e indimenticabili. Quando penso a lui lo rivedo, correre fino allo sfinimento sulle lunghissime, bianche spiagge africane per poi dopo dormire per 24 ore, senza voler mangiare né bere e facendosi la pipì addosso perché troppo stanco per alzarsi oppure a giocare curioso con i grandi granchi marini, testardo e caparbio nel volerli snidare o in Europa, in montagna con addosso un maglione rosso ad annusare titubante e pensieroso la sua prima neve "ma cosa sarà mai; ma come fa freddo; ma cosa ci faccio io qui, io amo



il caldo, il sole, io sono un cane africano" ma poi subito dopo lo rivedo rotolarsi felice nella neve su e giù per i pendii innevati a divertirsi come un matto come faceva sulle spiagge della sua terra. Nella mia mente la sua immagine, meditabondo in giardino ad osservare gli uccelli posati sul tiglio e poi nostalgicamente seguire con lo sguardo il loro volo; lo ritrovo nel vento di scirocco che mi porta lontano, nella sua Africa. Ciao Patience, mio per sempre indimenticabile Snoopy Africano ■

## IL VADEMECUM DEL PENSIONATO FELICE (Parte Prima)

*Il Buen Retiro in Salento, la terra del sorriso*

**Tutto il valore della vacanza sta nella dose di speranza che le affidiamo.  
(Il tempo nuovo per eccellenza è il tempo della speranza..)**

di Enrica Romanazzo

### RIEMPIRE IL VUOTO

Presto andrò in pensione. L'ansia ed il senso di **vuoto** che assalgono chi si appresta ad uscire dal mondo del lavoro non mi toccano. So già che non avrò nostalgia dei ritmi pieni e forsennati della mie estati romane in cui soltanto i tempi dilatati ed assolati di agosto svelavano il cuore segreto della **vacanza**: il **“vacuum”** parola latina da cui deriva e che vuol dire **“vuoto”**. Penso al mio futuro con sollievo e piacere perché mi alletta la prospettiva di poter finalmente godere del tempo libero. So che lo vivrò come fosse una lunghissima vacanza. Tutto il valore della vacanza sta nella carica di speranza che le affidiamo... Il tempo nuovo per eccellenza è il tempo della speranza. Soprattutto se l'andare in pensione costituisce un'occasione per ricostruire la propria vita. E per me il Salento rappresenta un progetto di allegria. E' in questa fertile terra che ho deciso di far fruttare il prossimo incanto delle ore estive, al riparo dai forzati delle vacanze, in una casa circondata dagli ulivi, a pochi chilometri da spiagge bellissime, in cui potrò finalmente godere di una nuova vita più creativa, rilassata e costruttiva.



### PERCHE' HO SCELTO IL SALENTO

Perché durante una vacanza balneare mi sono innamorata del volto multiforme di questa terra placida e solare che sprigiona il fascino del Levante. Qui potrò esplorare la bellezza delle antiche masserie, dei santuari, delle cattedrali, dei castelli aragonesi, dei palazzi barocchi, dei muretti a secco che delimitano vigneti ed oliveti, delle torri che campeggiano su chilometri di coste e mare cristallino. Questa terra mi offre la possibilità di un programma di pieno recupero energetico, fisico e spirituale.



Tratto da **VIAGGIO IN ITALIA** (1957 di Guido Piovene)

*“... Ma prima di lasciare questo che è il lembo della nostra penisola, gettiamo sul Salento uno sguardo d'insieme: esiste infatti una fantasia del Salento, uno spirito di questa terra. E' una terra quasi tutta piana, con le capanne dei pastori dette pagliare, a forma di cappello conico, quasi piccolissimi trulli. Le costruzioni coniche orientaleggianti sembrano essere nella Puglia del sud la forma più naturale di architettura. E la pianura su cui sorgono è tutta marina, spazzata dai venti tra mare e mare. I riverberi, i luccichii, i soffi dei due mari sembrano quasi incontrarsi a mezz'aria' così tutto si presenta lucido, come se fosse avvicinato da un effetto ottico, ed insieme ingannevole. Sembra anche d'essere sul mare se si alzano gli occhi, contemplando le nuvole, che galoppo velocemente tra l'Adriatico e lo Ionio. Il Salento è una terra di miraggi, ventosa; è fantastico, pieno di dolcezza, resta nel mio ricordo più come un viaggio immaginario che come un viaggio vero...”*

Guido Piovene descrive il Salento come un miraggio, una terra magica che fa sognare. Da un'attualissima indagine condotta da Italia Turistica alla vigilia dell'apertura della Borsa internazionale del turismo a Milano, emerge il gradimento per il Salento che risulta essere il territorio più amato dagli Italiani. Queste le parole chiave più emblematiche che i partecipanti hanno aggiunto al voto: **“Salento: mare, cordialità, enogastronomia, ospitalità, barocco, olio, musica, uliveti, tradizioni”** come cita la comunicazione (notizia diramata il 13 Feb 2013 dall'agenzia ANSA

[http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/canali/inviaggio/regioni/2013/02/12/Salento-piu-amato-italiani\\_-8235742.html](http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/canali/inviaggio/regioni/2013/02/12/Salento-piu-amato-italiani_-8235742.html)). Subito dopo il Salento, si piazzano le Cinque terre, la Costiera Amalfitana, il Chianti e la Versilia.

(continua a pag. 16)



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Per appuntamento Ext. 53142 - 55753

Assistenza nel calcolo dei contributi per i collaboratori domestici, in linea con le disposizioni di legge (in base alle ore lavorative calcola la 13a e 14a mensilità, le ferie e la liquidazione). Per quanto riguarda la pensione di anzianità, assistenza nel calcolo della contribuzione volontaria, ed alla ricerca dei documenti relativi. Il costo per servizio di consulenza è pagabile direttamente al consulente.

(continua da pag. 14)

## UN PENSIERO PER GLI AMICI



Prima di lasciare la FAO ho pensato di organizzare un viaggio a costi accessibili per tutti coloro che vogliono immergersi per pochi giorni in questo splendido mix di arte, cultura, tradizione, natura, ospitalità, gastronomia. Cinque giorni sono sufficienti per conoscere le bellezze delle coste salentine e di località incantevoli come **Lecce**, **Gallipoli**, **Otranto** e **Santa Maria di Leuca**.

Ho scelto come punto di partenza **Galatina**, splendida località situata nel Salento centrale, e per questo conosciuta come l'OMBELICO DEL SALENTO, da cui è facile raggiungere questi centri. Qui ho scoperto il **B&B Maison Portaluce**, una struttura signorile, che renderà il soggiorno piacevolissimo.

La MAISON PORTALUCE, è curata nei particolari, è pulitissima, ed offre a prezzi accessibilissimi (35 euro pernottamento – 40 con colazione inclusa) la possibilità di pernottare in una magnifica suite che affaccia su un rigoglioso giardino interno privato, ed altre ampie e luminose stanze matrimoniali, elegantemente rifinite. [www.maisonportaluce.com](http://www.maisonportaluce.com).

Ogni camera del B&B è dotata di aria climatizzata, proprio bagno, TV LCD e Internet Wi-Fi.



Nel tour abbiamo previsto anche un percorso didattico che introduce il tema della civiltà contadina e della produzione agricola. Nell'antica Masseria Chicco Rizzo sotto le direttive del mastro fornaio, si potrà imparare a fare il pane in tutte le sue fasi realizzative (preparazione, impasto, cottura, e degustazione). Abbiamo previsto anche una visita alle botteghe artigiane che lavorano ceramica e terracotta.

### VENERDÌ 29 MARZO

Arrivo in treno a **Lecce** ORE 20.30 - Trasporto e sistemazione a Galatina B&B Maison Portaluce

### SABATO 30 MARZO

Mattina: Visita di **Otranto** - Pomeriggio: Visita a **Santa Maria di Leuca**, rientro a **Galatina** in serata.



Otranto

Santa Maria di Leuca

**DOMENICA 31 MARZO (Pasqua)** Mattina: visita di **Galatina** - Rientro a Galatina in serata  
Pomeriggio: visita di **Gallipoli**, e costa ionica (**Porto Selvaggio**, **Santa Caterina**, **Quattro Colonne**).

(continua a pag. 18)





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(continua da pag. 16)



Porto Selvaggio

Santa Caterina

Quattro Colonne

Gallipoli

**LUNEDÌ 1 APRILE (Pasquetta):** Visita città di Lecce.



**MARTEDÌ 2 APRILE**

Mattina: visita a Cutrofiano alle botteghe Colí che lavorano terracotta e ceramiche



Pomeriggio: visita alla masseria Chicco Rizzo una delle più antiche masserie del Salento, situata nei pressi di Sternatia-Martignano



[www.masseriachiccorizzo.it](http://www.masseriachiccorizzo.it)

Visita al Parco Turistico Culturale Palmieri di Martignano a cui far seguire il laboratorio prescelto in Masseria.

VISITA AL PARCO TURISTICO PALMIERI (2 ore circa)

Il percorso prende il via dal centro storico di Martignano con la visita a Palazzo Palmieri ed il suo frantoio semi-ipogeo. Dal Palazzo ci si sposta alla Cappella affrescata di San Giovanni Battista, espressione di arte popolare e da qui si raggiungono le pozzelle, vecchio sistema di raccolta delle acque in Grecia Salentina. Il tour consente di presentare il territorio griko e di introdurre il tema della civiltà contadina e della produzione agricola.



**PROGRAMMA DIDATTICO (A SCELTA):**

**LABORATORIO DELL'OLIO** (2 ore circa) - Concluso il tour a Martignano si va alla Masseria Chicco Rizzo dove viene illustrato in esterna il procedimento di raccolta delle olive e produzione dell'olio biologico Chicco Rizzo.

A seguire si entra nella Masseria per una visita guidata con il racconto della storia produttiva, delle architetture e della destinazione attuale degli ambienti. Il tour termina con la degustazione dell'olio e l'eventuale cena.

**LABORATORIO DEL PANE** (2 ore circa) - Concluso il tour si va alla Masseria Chicco Rizzo dove si potrà imparare a fare il pane in tutte le sue fasi realizzative (preparazione, impasto, cottura) con relativa degustazione. Dopo una breve introduzione sul laboratorio i partecipanti seguiranno le direttive del mastro fornaio e, come nel 1700, faranno il loro pane. Una volta infornato il gruppo si sposterà per la visita guidata in Masseria. A conclusione si sfornerà il pane e si degusterà insieme all'olio biologico della Masseria. A seguire l'eventuale cena.

**LABORATORIO DI MUSICA E DANZA** (2 ore circa) - Concluso il tour a Martignano si va alla Masseria Chicco Rizzo dove si impareranno i primi rudimenti sulla danza popolare e sull'uso del tamburello nella musica salentina. All'arrivo il gruppo scoprirà le architetture della Masseria, la sua storia produttiva e l'impegno attuale. A conclusione, all'interno della sala conferenze della Masseria, potrà misurarsi con la tradizione musicale a tema contadino del Salento e della Grecia Salentina, imparando i canti di lavoro e danzando sulle note dal vivo dei formatori. In più per chi vorrà cimentarsi con il tamburello sarà possibile impararne alcune tecniche. Al termine tutto il gruppo canterà, ballerà e danzerà insieme in un clima di festa popolare. A seguire degustazione dell'olio biologico della masseria ed eventuale cena.

**EVENTUALE CENA CON MENU TIPICO COMPLETO DI BEVANDE: 25,00 a persona**

Rientro in serata a Galatina.

**MERCOLEDÌ 3 APRILE** - Rientro a Roma.

#### COME ARRIVARE

Chi non vuole viaggiare in macchina potrà raggiungere Lecce in treno ed essere prelevato dalla stazione di Lecce per il per il trasferimento in pulman a Galatina.



#### Orari Treni Roma-Lecce /Lecce-Roma

Partenza da Roma 14.50 arrivo Lecce 20.12

Per il ritorno:

Partenza da Lecce ore 11:53 arrivo a Roma 17.20

Oppure ore 16:50 arrivo a Roma 22.20

Per tutti gli spostamenti che si effettueranno in pulman verso le località che visiteremo, saremo assistiti da una guida locale che ciaccompagnerà nel tour e ci consiglierà cosa e dove mangiare. In Salento esiste la possibilità di mangiare bene a costi ragionevoli, nelle trattorie, nelle masserie e persino nei bar che offrono squisiti spuntini a base di focacce, pitte e rustici preparati con ottimi prodotti locali.

Il costo noleggiato del pulman è calcolato nel prezzo per persona che varierà a seconda del numero dei partecipanti. Il costo per persona del tour è riportato nella newsletter che seguirà o reperibili presso la FAO STAFF COOP (55753 - 56771) Le prenotazioni per il viaggio si potranno effettuare presso la nostra sede, nella quale sarà possibile iscriversi e pagare nei **giorni 7-8 marzo**. Il viaggio si farà se si raggiungerà un numero minimo di 10 partecipanti. Nel caso il quorum non fosse raggiunto, gli iscritti verranno rimborsati. I costi del Tour sono indicati nella newsletter che segue.

#### Pernottamento B&B Maison Portaluce

Il B&B dispone di 5 camere doppie e 1 singola, con possibilità di aggiunta di lettini, per un totale massimo di 15/16 persone. \* Il prezzo pattuito è di 40 euro a persona colazione inclusa (se gli ospiti non vogliono o non hanno tempo di fare colazione nel B&B, possono farla al bar convenzionato con il B&B a spese del B&B). Nel caso si voglia solo pernottare, quindi colazione esclusa, il prezzo è di 35 euro a persona. \* Se le persone dovessero essere di numero superiore, si provvederà a sistemare gli ospiti in eccesso in un altro B&B simile per tipologia e prezzo, sempre a Galatina.

# Beautiful EASTER Salento ENO GASTRO TOUR

organized to open a window on our beautiful country

A FOUR-DAY TOUR TO EXPLORE THE BEAUTY OF ITS COASTS, THE MOST INTERESTING CITIES, WITH A VISIT TO ONE OF THE MOST ANCIENT FARMHOUSES OF THE SALENTO REGION: THE MASSERIA CHICCO RIZZO WHERE YOU CAN LEARN TO MAKE BREAD



We invite you to visit the magical province of Salento (in the Apulia region), a land of scents, flavours, colours, incredible sounds and ancient traditions to be discovered.... This tour in Salento has been conceived to allow you



to visit its small towns with white houses and baroque palaces, to get to know its simple crafts and traditions and its beautiful coasts. We are ready to welcome you with the gems of culture enclosed in a rectangular structure whose



corner points are made up of **Lecce**, the Baroque Florence in Southern Italy, and the prestigious poles of **Gallipoli**, **Otranto** and the beautiful Santa **Maria Di Leuca**, the town between two seas, named *De Finibus Terrae* (“*End of the Land*”) as it sits on the southernmost tip of the Salento peninsula where the waters of the Adriatic Sea mingle and merge with those of the Ionian.

Open to the sea from every corner, the Salento coast attracts visitors from all over the world. Salento is a hospitable and friendly land, which does not deny any one its smile. The traditions and history of these places are closely tied to their local dishes. Small herds of cattle keep together the culture of home-made dairy products, olive trees are the setting to this enchanting landscape and are critical for the production of extra virgin olive oil which is known all around the world. Wine, vegetables, spices, flours, meats and fish products complete the gastronomic dishes of Salento.

## PROGRAMME (Arrival in Galatina on FRIDAY 29 March – Departure on WEDNESDAY 3 April)



### FRIDAY 29 MARCH

Arrival in Lecce hrs 20.30 hrs (railway station) - Accommodation in B&B Maison Portaluce in GALATINA, a pleasant town near Lecce, which is considered a strategic location to reach the most important centres of Salento. The B&B is an elegant structure, in the centre of Galatina. It is surrounded by a beautiful garden. Each room has a bathroom, air conditioning, TV LCE and Internet Wi-Fi. Accommodation fees per person 35 € – 40 € per day with breakfast.



[www.maisonportaluze.com](http://www.maisonportaluze.com)



**SATURDAY 30 MARCH**

A.M. Visit to **Otranto**

P.M. Visit to **Santa Maria di Leuca**,

**SUNDAY 31 MARCH (Easter)**

A.M. Visit to **Galatina**

P.M. Visit to **Gallipoli** and Ionian coast (**Porto Selvaggio, Santa Caterina, Quattro Colonne**).

**MONDAY 1 APRIL (Easter Monday)**

Visit to Lecce



**TUESDAY 2 APRIL**

A.M. Visit to Cutrofiano (**terracotta and ceramics COLI' laboratory**)



P.M. Visit of the ancient farmhouse **Masseria Chicco Rizzo**, near Sternatia-Martignano,

Visit of the touristic cultural Park Palmieri



[www.masseriachiccorizzo.it](http://www.masseriachiccorizzo.it)



**OPTIONAL LESSONS AVAILABLE IN THE FARMHOUSE :** OIL MILL – BREAD PREPARATION (BAKERY) – MUSIC AND DANCE CLASS (Pizzica: popular Italian folk music and dance, which is part of the larger family of *tarantella*)

YOUTUBE: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEVB\\_QAtgwI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEVB_QAtgwI)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2iCxxvVA2c>  
Lesson of pizzica <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQgun184NIY>  
DINNER In the farmhouse : traditional menu- 24 euro per person

### **WEDNESDAY 3 April – Departure (Galatina – Lecce – Rome)**

**HOW TO ARRIVE in Lecce.** By car or by train – A bus will pick up participants at Lecce railway station for transfer to GALATINA

#### **TRAIN TIMETABLE Roma-Lecce /Lecce-Roma**

Roma 14.50 - Lecce 20.12  
Lecce 11:53 - Rome 17.20  
Lecce 16:50 - Rome 22.20

All transfers to the towns to be visited will be made by bus. A local guide will assist us to illustrate the peculiarities of the region and to suggest where to eat. In Salento food is excellent and cheap. Also finger food is excellent as it is made of genuine local products

Bus transportation cost is included in the final cost per person which depends on the number of participants as indicated in the following table.

B&B with Breakfast

40 € x 5 nights per person B&B only accommodation 35€ x 5 nights per person. Bus with guide **TOTALE per person** OPTIONAL Visit to Touristic Park Palmieri 3,00 € x person Bread Laboratory 10,00 € x person **FULL TOTALE**

X person 200 € \* 175 € \*\* 10 persons **338,00 € \***

**313,00 € \*\*** OPTIONAL 3,00 € 10,00 € **351,00 € \***

**326,00 € \*\*** 200 € \* 175 € \*\* 15 persons **308,67 € \***

**283,67 € \*\*** OPTIONAL 3,00 € 10,00 € **321,67 € \***

**296,67 € \*\*** 200 € \* 175 € \*\* 19 persons **296,32 € \***

**271,32 € \*\*** OPTIONAL 3,00 € 10,00 € **309,32 € \***

**284,32 € \*\*** Accommodation in B&B Maison Portaluce

The B&B has 5 double and one single room with possibile additional beds for children – for a total of 15/16 persons. The cost per day per person is 40 euro breakfast included. Guests can also have breakfast in a Bar that has a special agreement with the B&B. If the group exceeds 16 persons, the guests will be accommodated in another similar structure in Galatina.

To reserve a place, kindly contact **FAO Staff Coop (56771 – 55753).**

*If we do not reach the minimum required of 10 persons, the advanced payments will be refunded*

# The thousand faces of southern India

by Rita Ford



New Delhi was shrouded with dense fog as we landed, but an occasional clearing revealed a power plant belching white smoke, a long highway with heavy traffic, and here and there clusters of white, high-rise flats mushrooming up out of the red dusty earth. The newly structured airport had several terminals with large transit halls, and once through the immigration barriers we wandered around walking on vast expanses of sand coloured carpeting - a well known English store sported drab, grey clothes, comparing dismally with the beautiful colours of Indian saris worn by both tourists and local airport staff. We managed to grab a coffee after the long haul, before taking another internal flight south. The heat and humidity outside only hit us when we landed in Chennai and boarded the bus which was to take us from east to west. Chennai appeared to be a large industrial city, with electric pylons, factories, and high rise buildings, but as dusk was approaching, and we drove through the dimly lit crowded streets of the suburbs, we passed smaller thatched dwellings, with small workshops, and food stalls, some of them stacked with oranges, papaya, pineapples, water melon and bananas reminding us that we had now entered a tropical zone. On our way out of the city

our driver had to cope with the mass of motorcycles scurrying here, there and everywhere - some with women in saris, others with mother and baby riding sidesaddle on the back, while her husband negotiated a horn-blowing mass of vehicles, made worse by wandering cows and garbage-seeking goats. Our ranch-like hotel was on the outskirts of the city - so large and spread out that we had to take an electric buggy to go to and from our rooms. We were greeted with 'Namaste' and a seashell necklace and later enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner - an introduction to what would be from then on our daily lunch and dinner. The hot silver urns were all labelled in English for those not familiar with Indian cuisine. Next day when I opened my balcony doors I had the pleasant surprise of seeing green lawns and coconut palms, and the rolling waves of the Bay of Bengal tinged by a smouldering red sun on the horizon. On the beach lay a motionless turtle. It was hot - it was humid - it was India! An early rise and a visit to our first temple dedicated to Shiva, one of the oldest in India and built with grey stone elaborately carved pillars. Already waiting for us were the ever present street sellers offering handmade sandals, bags and necklaces of every description, and at the entrance to the temple, squatted old men and women, some selling black locks of hair



- Indian hair being of the highest quality in the western world for the creation of hair pieces etc. As a mark of respect, we left our shoes at the entrance and walked into the darkness of the temple. To the left, a giant shrine with a sacred cow in white plaster adorned by garlands of flowers - to



the right a cloud of incense and the incessant beat of drums, as pilgrims climbed the several high steps of the shrine and paid homage to the god Shiva - the destroyer of evil. Unfortunately a painful stubbed toe was the reason why the next day I decided to remain outside the Temple of Kanchipuram, one of the seven sacred cities of Hinduism, so while my companions walked again barefoot amongst the visiting pilgrims, I remained outside sitting on a makeshift wooden stool, surrounded by shoes and sandals left on racks. It was a great opportunity to just sit and absorb the atmosphere of an ordinary day in the life of the town. Obviously with the increase in tourism, small three storey buildings were being renovated, and the sign 'rooms to let' slung across some doorways, small stall holders sold souvenir plaques of Shiva, and long lines of motorcycles took up most of the space along the unpaved street. Occasionally a yellow 'tuk tuk' arrived, this small, three wheeled form of public transport, can often be seen waiting outside any public building or institution - looking like a swarm of bees, they offer a quick and cheap way of getting around.

Adding to the scene were odd groups of goats gobbling up the remains of garlands thrown on the ground and a few cows rummaged in the bins. Quite a good way of sorting rubbish in one respect, but the remaining plastic bags and bottles were the common problem, as in all parts of the world. In a thousand years time, if this planet still exists, maybe archeologists examining our present layer of civilization, will name it the Plastic Age. At one point a tall, thin man, looking like the pied piper of Hamelin, suddenly appeared with a lamp belching out grey clouds of smoke, a deterrent to the flies and mosquitoes harbouring amongst the fruit stalls and the wooden floors of small workshops. Occasionally, groups of school children came marching out of the temple, the girls with their sleek black hair in plaits entwined with bunches of white jasmin - such a beautiful custom. Strings of these colourful garlands of jasmin and other flowers, expertly prepared by women and children, can be seen outside every temple, and on every market stall, along with sweetmeats and bunches of fresh organic vegetables. An early start next day took us to the World Heritage Site of Mamallapuram, a vast archeological site which in the VII century was a large seaport. There were postcard sellers and a few shops selling straw hats and bags in the main square when we arrived, but mass tourism was taking its toll as buses came and went - the "depechez vous" of a French tourist guide confirmed this, as he herded his group on to a waiting bus. Here we visited the Five Brothers and Shore temples, which had formed part of a series of buildings that were constructed along this coastline under the Palava Kings. Fortunately, the tsunami of 2004, did not create much damage to this sacred site. The Shore temple, now very eroded, houses two shrines dedicated to Shiva, whilst the Five Brothers are a series of shrines meant to resemble chariots outside of which are animal carvings - one of them a life sized elephant, as well as scenes of the descent of the Ganges. Just north of this is Krishna's



Butter Ball, so named after the butter balls which worshippers throw as offerings in the temples, - this huge boulder balances precariously on a hill above the main highway, looking as if it is ready to roll down on people passing below. A short ride further on took us to the Sri Ekambarana Temple, dominated by a 59metre high sandstone gateway tower, and where we wandered around admiring the beautiful sandstone carvings of this temple complex contrasting with the green lawns and well laid out flower beds. On leaving, we came across the inevitable elephant at the entrance, ready to bless anyone who had the courage to bow their head!

Once more on the move next day, we prepared ourselves for Pondichery, once French territory, and now a modern town with many hotels and an imposing French Consulate building along the long sea front. We walked down its wide avenues flanked by the remains of ocre colored colonial style buildings and visited a temple site overlooking a wide dried-up river bed - here in an open space, groups of Brahmins sat on garland strewn mats, and mothers and children squatted on the dusty ground - some mothers had opened large silver urns and were distributing rice and curried vegetables on large banana leaves spread out in front of small, hungry children - no problem of washing up! Walking away, we suddenly heard above the noise of heavy traffic, the beat of drums and loud music and venturing closer we saw a picture of an older woman posted on the back of a bus, and a nearby makeshift wooden pyre being prepared, ready to take her remains to the river to be cremated. She had lived a long life, and her death appeared to be more of a celebration rather than a loss, hence the loud music and garlands of flowers which brightened up the scene.

The silence of a nearby Asram, with its occupants lost in deep meditation, was a complete contrast.

An early rise next day, this time to Tanjore,

once ancient capital of the great Chola Empire, and where the Royal Palace and Museums house a large collection of giant sculptures of gods, some of which stand majestically in the cool shade of the forecourt. A long wall of colourful tiles lead into the interior Durbar Hall where we were able to admire the vast collection of artefacts, as well many prints of Indian flora and fauna, some cleverly enlarged by magnifying lens. A delicious lunch in the garden of a nearby hotel, then once more on the road, this time to Trichy. This appeared to be a large industrial town, made evident by our first motorway complete with toll-gate - the skyline was filled with tall chimney stacks, electric pylons and high rise modern factories, some housing car factories and others pharmaceutical companies. Along with these were large modern technical schools and engineering colleges. It was also interesting to note the large number of buildings under construction, where the top floor of the wooden scaffolding revealed the stuffed effigy of a man - was this a deterrent to possible misfortunes which might occur on site? Once inside the city, our eyes were immediately drawn to the Rock Fortress, which towers eighty three metres high above the sprawling city. Originally made up of small temples dedicated to Vishnu, the 'Preserver and Restorer', it later became a natural fortified position used for strategic purposes. To get to the top one has to climb 437 steps, again barefoot, to



get a breathtaking view over the city together and another temple complex, almost like an enclosed city, where one has to pass through seven elaborately carved colourful gateways, before getting to the actual chamber dedicated to this same god - Vishnu. That evening we arrived at Chettinad. This appeared at first as a ghost town. Once the scene of rich bankers, jewellers and artisans right up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of the railway and a change in commercial trade routes meant that this important merchant stronghold fell into disrepair - now an abandoned town, many once beautiful buildings stand overgrown with weeds, the post office now in ruins, and the old telegraphic system replaced by a well known international mobile phone company. Our hotel had once been the home of an opulent merchant, magnificent red pilasters lead into a marble hall, where business transactions had taken place, and beyond this the opulent banqueting hall, illuminated by red and green acorn shaped Belgium light fittings. To the side, in a heavily curtained annex with stained glass windows and long red carpets, was the space allotted to the ladies of the house, sitting on couches of tapestry and surrounded by velvet cushions, one imagines they would sit and pass the time of day, while the men were involved with business deals in the front hall. English royalty had stayed here - a picture of three generations, including Edward VII, appeared in a large photograph mounted in



a frame, under which appeared the name of a well known English biscuit company. Apparently electric generators were brought in from England to power the ceiling fans and electric lighting - the light switches in bell shape form in the bedrooms and the familiar triangular three-pin plugs, still in use today in England, were a confirmation of this! Later, we discovered to our surprise there was still life in what had appeared to be this ghost village! A charming young Indian lady, part of the hotel staff, offered to accompany us around, and as we walked down the dusty lanes, we met some of the local women who smiled at us shyly from half-open doorways, and a few workshops showed signs of metal and wood workings. At one point a bus packed with young schoolchildren came rattling into the main dusty square, their smiling faces and waving hands behind the bars of the windowless bus - some of them, perhaps, would eventually go to the local high school further along the road, once visited by Mahatma Gandhi, and now drawing many students from the surrounding areas. A delicious meal followed in the banqueting hall, where we were introduced to the local cuisine, including delicious okra and other organically grown local vegetables. We retired early to our various rooms that night as we had another early start the next day, which would be taking us to Madurai. This appeared to be a large sprawling town, teeming with the usual crowds of people on the streets and very heavy traffic in the centre. Our hotel, however, was an oasis of peace overlooking this busy town, and our rooms were scattered around beautiful, shaded woodlands, where wild birds flew from tree to tree and proud peacocks strutted around the lawns. We unloaded our cases, which by this time were getting heavier with all the shopping we had done so far, and then went downtown again to visit the Thirumalai Nayak Palace. Built in indo-saraceno style, this is now an archeological museum, housing thousands of sculptures and prints of the old city, along with the water colours and drawings

of a well known English artist - the beautifully decorated grand hall was filled with visitors busy taking photographs and listening at the same to the many tourist guides who attempted to explain the long history of this museum complex. Long rows of seats were lined up for the Festival of Sound and Light that evening, but which we were not attending, as later we would join the celebrations of a well-known Hindu festival, when the statues of Shiva and consort Parvati are hoisted around on floats, accompanied by giant brass drums and loud music, while chanting high priests bless the milling crowds of pilgrims intoxicated by the thick scent of incense. At dawn next day, we were awakened by birdsong and mewing peacocks calling from the rooftops and we left rather reluctantly with the thought of another day of heat and dust. This was only relieved by the idea of a visit to Periyar - a national park in the state of Kerala, 1100 metres high and home to tigers and elephants, as well as wild flora and fauna. On our way we passed paddy fields and sugar cane stopping at one point at one of the many brickfields lining the route,

This simple object - representing the four elements - earth, water, air and fire, plays an important role in the thriving Indian building industry vital to the development of towns and villages across India. We watched with interest a woman in colourful saree, mixing the red earth and water with her bare hands, the water having been pumped from a nearby rice field, and while she was doing this her partner scooped up the clay and packed it into wooden forms. These brick forms, all with the monogram of the owner, were then stacked in piles to dry for a few weeks before being transferred to a large thatched hangar, where branches of trees would be set alight above the pile and create a giant kiln which would then smoulder for several days.

In contrast to this rural scene, we passed a railway station with its parking area packed with cars and motorcycles,



obviously belonging to local commuters who made their way each day into town to take up their positions in offices, factories and the increasing number of hotels and tourist establishments.

As we climbed, the landscape changed from low lying land and rice fields to dense forests, torrents of water charged down to the valley below, and rock pools and creepers formed a lush green background as we swerved around the dangerous curves of the mountain road. Soon a large wooden billboard advertising the 'Cardamom Growers' High school' was a reminder that we were now approaching a large spice growing area, a fact confirmed by rows and rows of small shops stacked with glass jars and packets of spices of every description. Our hotel consisted of a number of large pavilions with wooden terraces overlooking tropical forest land, which we later explored, coming across families of roaming black wild boar and monkeys leaping from tree to tree.

At a busy Eco-centre we queued for tickets and boarded a double decked boat, and in the fresh mountain air we enjoyed a trip around an artificial lake, formed in the nineteenth century and now forming a natural habitat for elephants and local wildlife who come down to drinking at the end of the day. A large number of tigers also roam the dense undergrowth but are seldom seen by tourists, their presence

being strictly controlled by an army of forest rangers, out to protect this beautiful national park from would-be unofficial trekkers.

At the end of the afternoon, we were invited to visit a local spice plantation and took photographs of the many species found in this tropical region - cardamom pods, clusters of red and black pepper, nutmeg and cloves grew in profusion among the coconut and banana palms, and as dusk was falling we managed to buy many of these spices, along with exotic oil extracts and sweet smelling soap in a local shop. Leaving this spice paradise next morning, the vast green quilt of tea plantations on the surrounding hillsides were a delight to see, the colourful sarees of women, like butterflies in a sea of green, lighting up the scene, as they plucked the tender tips with their hands and placed them in large straw baskets, which they then carried to the top of each row, ready to be picked up by their male counterparts. Further on were the endless rows of cashew nut plants, their silver leaves looking as though Nutmeg tree they had been sprayed with white paint, and we stopped for a while at a wayside café for refreshments where we bought bunches of fat, pink bananas, which tasted so delicious compared with the smaller variety we had been used to.

As we reached sea level we came across a busy scene of women washing in a fast flowing river, and where dazzling white sheets and shirts had been slapped against



the stones of the river bed, before being hung up to dry on long lines in the hot sun. A similar scene we later came across in Cochin, where piles of washing were being sorted and slapped against stones in small water vats and then hung up to dry in a nearby field. Here in a large concrete building we spotted one woman still ironing with burning coals - something which only our great grandmothers would know about. We knew we were approaching our destination Alleppey, when we began to see baskets of fish displayed along a canal carpeted with mauve flowers, upon which long necked white egrettes seemed to be walking, busy probing for fish. At this point, we left our packed cases on the bus and carried some bare essentials on to a group of houseboats, waiting on the tow path. On a faded wall was written in blue paint "If you stay in silence, you can hear your heart sing", an invitation to the peace and quiet of these backwaters, where we were to spend the night. Each houseboat had three rooms with private bathroom and shower. On board a cook and his assistants offered us a cool drink in green coconut shells, complete with pink straw, and we sat and relaxed on the rattan chairs of the veranda, ready for our first meal on board. One particular dish I enjoyed was a mixture of cabbage, coconut and crushed mustard seeds, something to try back home in the cold winter months. It was bliss sailing down the wide canals, passing the many white washed churches and schools, some of them taking in boarders, while others served the children of families in the small communities along the canal banks. At one point we clambered down on to a smaller boat with outboard motor and enjoyed chugging down the side canals, something like the klongs of Thailand, where pink, mauve and blue dwellings reflected in the water along with coconut and banana palms, beyond which were vast stretches of rice fields.

Outside some of these were women busy washing clothes, their slap-slap filling the air as they hit a stone slab placed at the top

of steps leading into the water. As dusk fell our houseboats made their way to a quiet stretch of backwater, flanked by a narrow tow path lined with bananas and coconut palms. It soon became pitch dark, lit up occasionally by sheet lightning in the surrounding sky, and the glow of a smouldering mosquito repellent and we sat quietly on our respective verandas in the dim light of a lantern, enjoying our first taste of Indian wine, accompanied by a meal of basmati rice, spiced fish and okra. At a certain moment, however, down came torrential rain perturbing this enjoyable evening and forcing us to retire to our respective rooms, as tarpaulin blinds were pulled down all round to protect us from the storm.

By morning, however, the sky was clear, and the pale pink of dawn welcomed a fresh new day. One of our crew hoisted up coconuts that had fallen into the water, and what looked like a red and green kingfisher flew in and out of the nearby palms. A solitary boatman on a small wooden raft occasionally passed busy getting his first catch of the day, while the slap-slap of the washing ritual was beginning all over again.

Cochin was last on our list of places to visit, and as we entered this large city port, we realized how important it had become with large container ships and heavy lorries transporting merchandise to all points of the world. Along with this came increased wealth, and garages advertised wash and wax service for cars, and even solar heating water plants, whilst giant billboards vied with each other advertising eye-care hospitals and dental implants, luxury homes and home loans. Most prominent, however, were the constant advertisements of 'bridal destinations' and jewellery, beautifully dressed women smiled down at us from giant boards, their dark eyes aglow with the thought of romance and weddings, the constant theme of so many Bollywood films. There was another side to this picture, however, with a prominent female judge voicing her opinion in a national



newspaper against recent cases of violence against women and demanding more respect and a change to the common stereotype image of women in the home, as well as in the workplace.

The noise and chaos of the heavy traffic on the major road leading into town brought with it signs saying 'Don't drink and drive' and 'An accident could be a one way ticket to disability retirement' - we were entering a common urban scene.

On our first trip into the historic centre we learned that Cochin owed its importance to the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama who was responsible for the opening up of trade routes between east and west when he sailed into port in 1498, and after which the Maharajah of Cochin had allowed local merchants to engage in trade, authorizing the building of a fort for strategic purposes at the mouth of the local river. It was at this fort that a Christian church was built, changing denomination under the Dutch and then the English, finally becoming St. Francis as it is known today, and run under the auspices of the Church of South India. In contrast, another well known tourist attraction is the small synagogue in a quiet corner of Mandacherry, with its pretty blue and white floor tiles imported from China and beautiful Belgian glass chandeliers hanging from the ceiling.

Another building of great importance is the

Dutch house, home to a series of Maharaja who took up their residence there and where their full length portraits hang on the wall of the coronation room along with cases of postage stamps issued under British rule. Elaborate murals in muted colours lined another room, portraying the mythical stories of the past, and one of them, 'Narakasuravadham and the slaughter of the female demon Naraka' was re-enacted at the Kathakali dancing theatre later that evening. This ancient form of dance with religious links is performed by men only and was explained by a well known actor whilst the two protagonists prepared themselves with elaborate makeup accompanied by the beating of drums and the monophonic sound of a string instrument. On one of the walls the colorful masks of the nine emotions - laughter, fury, compassion, disgust, horror, heroic, wonder and tranquility, illustrated the main human emotions which were later portrayed by rapid eye movements and facial expressions emphasized by thick makeup.

On our last day we visited the old Portuguese church founded by Vasco da Gama, the surrounding square shaded by giant rain trees, so called by their ability to retain rainwater due to the featherlike shape of their leaves which curl up and close during the night and in the dry season, eventually providing moisture to the ground below. The importance of rainwater was also brought home to us by the label on one of the many bottles of water handed out to us on the tourist bus - supplied by a well-known soft drinks manufacturer, the label cites the importance of 'Positive water balance' through rainwater harvesting, community watersheds and water conservation in agriculture, through which 13.5 billion litres have been saved since 2009.

Walking down to the seashore away from this historic site, our eyes were immediately drawn to the skyline, where an elaborate but ancient form of fishing was in

operation, using shore-operated lifts large horizontal nets were hoisted out over the sea, and the weight of one man brought down the main beam causing the nets to plunge into the sea, only to be hoisted a few moments later full of small fish. This method is said to have been introduced by the Chinese many centuries ago, but with modern methods of fishing it has now become part of the tourist attractions in Cochin and the small catches are often cooked on small stoves for sale to passersby.

It was at this point that some of us decided that all we wanted to do was to sit down and relax in a quiet corner and enjoy a soothing cup of tea. After all, we had journeyed hundreds of miles, bargained over artefacts, walked barefoot with the throngs of pilgrims at the temples, and dodged the chaotic horn-blowing traffic of the cities. The much advertised ayurveda massage would have been welcome, but one has to book early for such treatment. The alternative, therefore, was to look around and find a small café in a quiet corner of Mandacherry where we could spend the rest of the afternoon. This we did - sitting on a blue painted veranda and listening to the lilting sound of traditional Indian music we relaxed sipping delicious spiced tea and watched dusk approach as the sky turned from duck-egg blue to pale pink - another warm Indian evening had arrived - our last! ■





