



Adam's Journey to Timor-Leste



It is hard to believe that I have reached the three month mark of my trip. The last four weeks have gone incredibly fast, jammed packed with teaching and trips around the beautiful nation of Timor Leste.

Roughly four weeks ago, as a result of illness, I had to return to Dili for a consultation with a doctor. I travelled from Zumalai to Dili with Fr Roque, a newly ordained priest who was sent to Zumalai to assist with services over the weekend. We stopped overnight in the beautiful town of Luana, staying with Fr Roque's family. Luana is located in the mountains and has a fantastic view of the surrounding countryside. The night started with a mass at 6pm. Nearly the entire village attended to hear Fr Roque preach. Following this it was a very enjoyable and happy night filled with karaoke, singing and dancing! The locals enjoyed hearing a 'malai' (westerner) embarrassing them self in song!

Once I arrived in Dili time seemed to pass very quickly. After my visit with a doctor at the Stamford Medical Clinic, I spent my time helping Mrs Kate Swinfield teaching english to the novices in Hera. I specifically enjoyed helping some of the students with their essays on education, the very thing I am studying at university.

I returned to Zumalai a week later with Br Antonio. I knew this was going to be the last time I headed to the small town! My last few weeks in Zumalai sped by in the blink of an eye. Br Antonio was kind enough to take me on several day trips to surrounding areas. We traveled to Maliana, a three hour drive from Zumalai. It was a beautiful town located in a basin near the mountains. Our mission was to visit some local school students the Carmelites were sponsoring. They were very nice boys who were grateful of the support they were receiving. I particularly enjoyed the drive as it gave me an opportunity to see how the locals live in rural villages. Some of the houses were made of mud walls and straw roofs! Other day trips included visits to Suai City and Ainero.



It was very sad when it finally came time to finish up my lessons and leave Zumalai to head back to Dili. Br Antonio and the boys gave me a goodbye feast the night before my departure. It was a very enjoyable night filled with laughter and chatter. Br Antonio had invited the Sisters from Portugal and the Philippines. It was an international affair that night attended by Australians, Indonesians, Philippinos, East Timorese and Portuguese people. The next day it was time to say my final goodbye. These boys have been my friends and family for the last 3 months and I will definitely miss them.



When I had finally said my last goodbyes to the boys and Zumalai, Br Antonio, Fr Ansul and myself headed to Hautibillico. We had pre arranged to meet Fr Bruce and 20 of the seminary students to climb Mt Rameliau, East Timor's highest mountain. The original plan was to sleep at a guest house/hotel on the Saturday night and begin the climb to the summit at 3am to arrive by 7am for Sunrise.

However Br Antonio changed the plan. According to him it would be better to climb at 6pm on the Saturday and then stay at a house near the peak of the mountain. This is what we did.

We arrived at the house by 9pm. What followed was one of the coldest nights of my life. The wind was icy! The house was not fully enclosed and the wind tore through the house and up through the cracks in the floor boards.

There was only enough blankets for 1 between 2 people, and these blankets were skin thin and insufficient to keep us warm. We lit a fire inside the house and huddled two to a blanket around the fire! No one slept a wink of sleep that night as it was too cold and uncomfortable! I have never been in a situation where so many people were so cold and miserable in one place at one time! It was like a scene from a survival movie in the snow.

Eventually it came to 5.30am and we slowly shuffled outside to hold mass as the sun rose. It was a beautiful site. After this we proceeded up to the summit of the mountain to see the country from its highest point and to pray at the statue of Mary which is placed at the peak of the mountain. Mt. Rameliau is a very holy place for the East Timorese and it was a surreal experience to pray in the presence of Mary and East Timor. After completing the Rosary we headed back down the mountain.



I returned to Dili after the mountain climb. My last few days in Dili consisted of visiting some of the local sites such as Chenka prison, the Tais Market and the Taibuisse Market.

My time in East Timor has been enjoyable and unforgettable. The community in Zumalai welcomed me with open arms, and the students accepted me like one of their own friends. All of them display a strong desire to learn and study english. All of them show a deep appreciation for their education. I would like to thank all of the Carmelites in East Timor who have welcomed me with open and loving arms. Special mention must be given to Fr. Bruce and Brother Antonio who went out of their way to look after me. I would also like to thank Whitefriars College and Brother Sean for giving me this fantastic experience, it is one I will never forget. In a few days time I travel to Bali to have a holiday with some family. I do admit I'm looking forward to a hot shower! I am very excited to return home and share my stories with my friends, family and the Whitefriars community. East Timor and the Carmelites will be in my heart forever, and I can't wait to return one day. Thank You.