



TALES FROM THE TRIP

A Stationary Adventure

“Oy! You need to open the door!” I could hardly hear the man who came to jump our truck. But as I wiped the foggy window with my sleeve so I could actually see him, I could tell by his expression that he was very annoyed with me.

For the previous couple of hours, my friend and I, along with four girls we were nannying, had been stuck inside the truck we had driven to Thorpe Park—England’s “Thrill Capital.” Inside the amusement park, we had spent an entire day being whipped back and forth on rides and making ourselves sick with concession-stand food. But we didn’t realize that the real thrill would begin as soon as we got in the truck to leave.

Except we couldn’t leave. The truck wouldn’t start. The battery had died. Its electronic lock system had also died—after we shut ourselves inside—so we couldn’t even get out of the truck.

“It won’t open,” I yelled through the window.

“Well, unlock it then!” the man yelled back.

I could only imagine what was going through the man’s mind—probably something about how only dumb American girls could manage to lock themselves inside a truck.

As I tried communicating with the man using my best sign language and enunciation skills, I couldn’t help but wonder what had happened that had put us in this situation. Before this summer excursion with my friend, I had pictured Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, rolling green fields, and exotic accents whenever I thought of England. Instead, I had a blue truck, four panicking preteens threatening to break open the windows, and an unhealthy amount of underarm sweat. Some exotic excursion—no one told me to be prepared for this.

But then I realized something: isn’t that the point of traveling?

I have been lucky enough to experience fun, exotic, beautiful,

educational places. However, the experiences I remember most vividly from any trip are usually the unplanned but laughably memorable ones.

Plan for the usual touristy attractions? Sure. Have an itinerary? Yes. But when the unplanned happens, just embrace it.

As I stared at the man through the truck window, my sheepish expression turned into suppressed giggles. Before I knew it, the whole truck was full of uncontrolled snorts and laughs, which continued as the man eventually got us enough power to unlock the doors. In no time, it seemed, we were out of the truck and taking deep gulps of cold, fresh English air. Through the tow truck windows and my tears of laughter, I enjoyed the green countryside the whole way home.

—*Kate Sullivan*
Santa Rosa, California

How Did I Get Here?

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”—*St. Augustine*

Adjusting the height of my microphone, I cleared my throat nervously, running through my harmonies in my head. I looked out at the audience, squinting in the bright lights that shone directly at us. The small Paris nightclub was full, and all eyes were on my brother and me. My heart raced as my brother struck the first chord on his guitar. We started singing. At that moment I suddenly realized that I was actually singing at a nightclub in Paris. This was definitely an experience I never thought I would have. I asked myself, How did I get here?

Another one of these moments came on a warm summer night in Cinque Terre, Italy. My brother, sister, and I explored the twisting, narrow roads and somehow found ourselves on top of a building that overlooked the housetops of the quaint Italian

village. Suddenly we heard a commotion in the street below us. As we peered over the edge of the building, we saw a big gathering of people holding candles. Music started playing from inside a church, and the people began walking. Some of the people down below saw us and beckoned for us to join them. We eagerly did so. It was surreal to be walking in a thronging but reverent processional that weaved through the cobblestone streets. We soon stopped and gathered in a little square that overlooked the ocean. I never would have imagined myself in this situation.

Two years later, I had this same sensation as I stood in a cramped kitchen in a small town in the mountains of Sicily where I was living. My friend, Vito, and his family had invited me over for dinner, so I offered to help as they were preparing

the pasta. Vito assigned me the pasta-stirring job. I stirred and he talked. Being in his home with his family made me miss my family. Vito decided to teach me an old Italian song about the mothers of the world. His rich voice filled the room; the steam and the aroma of the simmering sauce reached my nostrils; and suddenly, I felt at peace. This moment was perfect. Again I asked myself, How did I get here?

The world is full of experiences that cause us to stop and marvel. It doesn’t matter where your travels take you: as long as you venture out, you’ll have the chance to read from the world’s pages and learn things you never thought you’d learn.

—*Hillary Olsen*
Alpine, Utah

El Flamenco

In my high school Spanish class, our teacher taught us folk dances from Spanish-speaking countries. When she taught us the flamenco, she flicked her wrist high in the air and said, “The gypsies stole fruit from the orchards in Spain. Raise your hand and pick a fruit, move your hand in front of your face, and take a bite out of the fruit. Now throw it on the ground! Stomp on it with defiance! No one can tell you how to live!”

Years later at the Museum of Flamenco in Seville, Spain, I sat with my peers in a circle as our guide sang to us with sounds reminiscent of the Middle East. “Soy gitano” (“I am a gypsy”), he sang. The song was sad and was sung with an Arabic wail that danced among quarter tones; it was the song of flamenco. The winding notes and the loud wailing of the singer’s voice evoked such emotion in me that, for the briefest moment, I

felt sorrow.

The guide pulled out a hollow, wooden box and asked me to sit on it. “Serás el ritmo” (“You’ll be the rhythm”), he announced to the group. He showed me a syncopated rhythm that was difficult to comprehend and afterwards taught the entire group a rhythm that they could clap with their hands. When we had mastered the rhythms, the guide began to wail again. The sound, which had surrounded us before, now beat within us.

Finally, we crammed ourselves into a room to witness the full power of flamenco. The guitar began to play a sad song with quick-moving notes. The singer began to wail but not with his full voice. Then a woman wearing a red dress walked into the center of the room. Her face was intense, and deep within her eyes was a look of defiance. Suddenly, she stomped her

foot on the ground, and the audience sat up in surprise. Soon she stomped faster, the guitar burst a string, and the singer wailed at full voice and beat his hands on a box. In that moment, I realized that they weren’t just stomping on apples. They were stomping against the injustice that surrounded them, the government of medieval Spain that had tried to control them, and the discrimination they experienced just because they were called gypsies. Through it all, they never gave in to these struggles. To this day, they remain courageously defiant.

—*Kathryn Driggs*
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