

Java

Twenty-six hours. Who on earth travels for twenty-six hours to a far-off land and only stays there for two days? Me, that's who.

Actually, if you count the time travelling to the airport it probably totalled twenty-eight hours, but it would be worth it. I could only stay one night, had to keep the cost as low as possible.

I was eighteen at the time, June 1983. I had saved every penny that I could lay my hands on to take that trip. My parents thought I was losing the plot. 'It isn't normal for a girl of your age to stay home every night, get a life.' But astronomy was my life, and passion. I worked to get the money to fulfil my dream and babysat to earn extra.

I was determined to take that flight to Indonesia. The total eclipse of the sun was due to take place on 11th June, and I would be there to see it.

My determination paid off. My Dad (still complaining) was good enough to drive me to the airport. I was nervous when checking in, but I had some idea of what to do as we had flown to Majorca the year before.

I eventually boarded. I did plan on having a sleep on the plane, but that didn't work out. Somehow, I got sat next to a woman with a crying baby. Making polite conversation I told her that I regularly babysat for the neighbour's children. Big mistake, within five minutes of that chat, she had passed the baby to me whilst she took 'a little nap'.

By the time we reached Indonesia I was extremely tired, but the excitement kept me going. I managed to negotiate the transfer bus.

What an absolutely beautiful place Java was. The mountains were colours I had never seen before, purples and greens of every tone, blending together beautifully. There were statues and waterfalls, ramshackle houses and palaces.

Checking into my hotel, I was shown where the restaurant was and guided to my room.

The room was beautiful in its simplicity. Whitewashed walls and a large rainforest type shower. But the best part of the room was the welcoming bed. I was used to a standard single, this was Queen sized. I lay down to test it out. It was 1am so I had a couple of hours. I set the alarm for 3am just in case. The eclipse would begin at 4:40am.

The alarm buzzing, I dragged myself off the bed and into the shower. The excitement for what I was about to experience was almost overwhelming me. I grabbed my camera and headed to the restaurant.

‘Coffee and croissant please’.

‘Sorry miss, we only serve those in the mornings. We have our afternoon tea on the menu now, then dinner from 6pm.’

So, to go back to the beginning, who travels for twenty-six hours to see an eclipse, but falls asleep for fourteen hours and misses it? The answer, sadly, is ME.