

NUMBER

CHRONICLES

OUR Christmas cards have been to the neighbours, my Christmas gift for Yani is waiting for her to unwrap, and I'm listening to some Christmas carols from a radio station in the US. Indy is sleeping nearby – exhausted by happy after our walk around the neighbourhood. Outside, the crickets are merrily chirping away. It's summer here in Australia after all.

2017 has been a year full of opportunities, challenges, and lessons. I spent more than a quarter of the year away from home, mostly in London, UK from February until the end of April. I am grateful for the opportunities at the Institute where I work – the *Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science*. I don't know if I can find any other organisations in Adelaide that would allow me to be stationed in other parts of the world, and yet keep my feet planted firmly in Adelaide. While I was away in London, I worked on my own at the apartment rented by the Institute – centrally located in Covent Garden.

MY routine was that I would wake up in the morning, and then saunter to the living room, still in my sarong and

nightshirt, and do some work – catching the last few hours of the working hours in Adelaide, so at least I could discuss matters 'live' with my colleagues at the office. Afterwards, I would have yoghurt and coffee for breakfast, before I took a shower. I would then explore the neighbourhood – to still be connected to humanity and catch some sunshine.

AS I was there at the end of winter and early spring, the days were still short. It was a lovely time in London, though. I had no complaints. I love being dressed in my beanies, scarf, and jacket. London is a marvellous city to be in – photogenically extravagant and yet gentlemanly dignified. I joined a couple of walking tours to see different parts of London – so I had my share of exercise while also learning more about the history and culture of the city. In just a couple of steps, I would take a lot of photos with my

iPhone, capturing different streets, buildings, spots and corners.



AFTER lunch, I would return to do my work, accompanied by day-time TV on BBC. Dinner on most occasions were

microwaved TV dinners from M&S or Tesco. You may think that this is a woe-is-me whinge – but no! I had calorie-counted meals that were very convenient. It's quite a challenge to be living single again. *Haha!* Besides, I had also gotten to know the neighbourhood

pizzerias and Japanese curry stores. I

was not hungry or famished. 😊 I would then continue working again until late, catching my colleagues as they started their day in Adelaide – in case there were things that I needed to do.

WHEN I was not working alone, I could also be scheduled to have meetings or seminars at the headquarters to some of the world's largest companies. Cool, eh? There were also times when I had to fly off to Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland, or Spain to do these meetings. It was a tad surreal to think that this boy from Kiaracandong would be inside the global office of a humongous corporation, that produce brands that I grew up with! I also got to meet well-known researchers around, and received their advice and wisdom. Henry Ford reportedly said, *"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young."* Amen!

NATURALLY, being in London gave me opportunities to see plays and performances – especially with the apartment being at the doorstep of London's West End. I saw *'This House'*, *'The*

Curious Incident of the Dog in

the Night-Times', and *'The Book of Mormon'* – and I

also got to join the audience for the taping of an episode of *'Tonight at the London Palladium'*, and an episode of *Graham Norton* – with Goldie Hawn, Amy Schumer, Orlando Bloom, and John Boyega as his guests. By then, Yani had also joined

me in London, so we went to see it together.

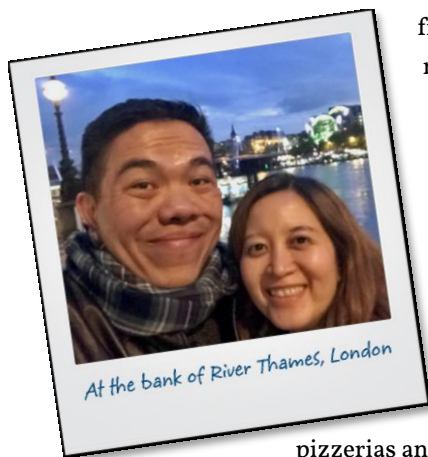
Although I was very used to living independently as a single person before I got married, it was great to be reunited with Yani at the end of my pop-up office so we could travel together. We didn't get to have a proper honeymoon after we got married, so it was great that we got to travel together to some wonderful spots in Europe afterwards.

WE started our trip by taking the Eurostar from London to Paris. This trip was Yani's first time to Europe, and despite having travelled to different parts of Europe, I deliberately picked places that I had not visited beforehand so we both could enjoy the experiences together. In Paris, we based ourselves in the wonderful arrondissement of *Saint-Germain-des-Prés*. We spent three nights there and obviously it was far too short to explore the city. We did

some of the touristy things, like visiting the Notre-Dame Cathedral, the Eiffel Tower, and joining the walking tour around

Montmartre. We fell in love with Paris, and I hope we'll have the chance to visit the city again sometime.

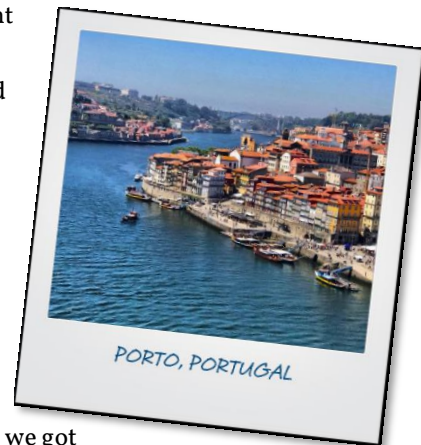
FROM Paris, we flew to Porto, Portugal – staying in an Airbnb apartment that is within a short stroll from the Douro River. After spending a couple of days in beautiful Porto, we continued our journey by train to Lisbon. We had three days of exploring Lisbon before we flew to Madrid, Spain – steadily making our way westwards. Madrid was also wonderful – the buildings, the streets, the cuisines. Our next city was San Sebastián – also known as



At the bank of River Thames, London



*Palacio Real de Madrid
MADRID, SPAIN*



PORTO, PORTUGAL



Ahhh ... San Sebastián. So charming.



The Eiffel Tower ... naturally.



*Feast for the eyes
(and exercise for the legs too!)
LISBON, PORTUGAL*

Donostia – in the north of Spain. San Sebastián is really beautiful – the beach, the sea, the atmosphere, the food, the people, the culture. The

mix is just right! We only stayed for two nights there before we continued on to Bilbao – if San Sebastián can be likened to a suave and cultured handsome guy, Bilbao is like his older brother: brooding, moody, and a beautiful character underneath the

gruff exterior. Yani and I walked through the alleyways of the old town, had our shares of pintxos, and took the customary photos of the Guggenheim Museum. We only spent a night there, and I didn't expect that I would also fall in love in Bilbao. Admittedly, the reason that I picked San Sebastián and Bilbao was because I was intrigued by the Basque language and culture. Basque language is an oddity in Europe – as it is unrelated to the Romance or the Germanic languages. Whilst in San Sebastián, we visited the local music store and I asked for a recommendation for a good CD to bring home. The attendant suggested that I should buy an album that was originally released in 1977 by a Basque artist, called *Benito Lertxundi*. Have a listen to this wonderful evocative song called – [Orhiko txoria](#). I would love to return here and learn further!



Bitterballen with mustard
A must whenever in the Netherlands!

AMSTERDAM was next, after Bilbao. Leaving Spain behind, we spent some time in Amsterdam to soak up some Dutch culture. This was our last city before we returned to Adelaide. I had been to Amsterdam many times, but as it was

Yani's first trip, we did the canal tour and visited the attractions in the city. Amsterdam is another city that I can't get tired of – the city has a cheeky mix of art, culture, history, and debauchery.

RETURNING home at the end of May after three weeks of holiday (*well, more than three+ months away for me!*), we collected our sooky wet-nosed cowdog – Indy – from the dog minder. Life quickly returned to normal for both of us – with Yani returning to work, and with research, teaching, and work occupying my energy and time. Our church family in Adelaide had also missed us a lot – so we returned

to our activities there also. It was a massive blur from June onwards – before we suddenly found ourselves in December. Christmastime.

THERE were many things that we didn't get this year – either to do, achieve, or receive. 2017 was also full of days when our faith was challenged – like when Yani had her three-month-old car got pranged from behind, so she has to find another one. We also had a scare when the vet found a lump



Indy – our Cowdog
(feeling sorry for himself, a month after his surgery)

on Indy's belly – she suggested that we removed it as a precaution. Then, she found a mole near his genitals – she also suggested that we removed it, in case it was melanoma. Indy is getting on with age – he will be 10 years old in 2018 (or 70 years on in human terms). Thankfully, the lump was not cancerous, and the mole was also nothing serious. On a global scale, we also saw worrying things that happened in many parts of the world, including in Indonesia, or here in Australia. However, we hold on to my faith that, "*The name of the Lord is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe.*" (Proverbs 18:10 NLT). No doubt 2018 will be full of its challenges and issues as well – but we have faith that it will be full of blessings, breakthroughs, and brightness!

SO, we're ready to say goodbye to 2017 – we have been blessed immeasurably this year. I personally have been stretched, challenged, grown, and blessed as well. I am also thankful that a week before we close this year, I received a notification that a journal paper that I co-authored with my PhD supervisors had been accepted for publication. The paper is based on one of the studies from my PhD. It's a reputable journal with a good ranking – and it was quite nerve-wracking to wait whether it would be ultimately accepted or not. It's my sixth journal papers, and I hope there will be many more in the new year.

BY the time you read this, it is Christmas already. I hope you get what you need (and what you want) from your loved ones. I hope that the family lunches and dinners have been pleasant and memorable for all the right reasons. I also hope that you will have:

A WONDEFUL, JOYOUS CHRISTMAS,
+

A SAFE, FULFILLING 2018!

God bless!