

# My last month

My last month was a busy one, and hence went by pretty quickly. It started out with my last trip to the Red Sea. A group of friends and I trekked over there to welcome in the new year. While we were there we also did a day trip to Sinai to climb the mountain and watch the sunset.

When we got back to the city it was 'all systems go' to fit in all the last-minute things that had to be done before I left. I spent a lot of time at the orphanage, as the boys all had exams on and wanted help



studying. The kids

put on an evening of skits one night to celebrate Christmas, plus a group of my friends and I cooked them Christmas dinner (local style!).

One of my local friends was starting his compulsory year in the army, so as a last hurrah we took him to a fancy restaurant, which is on the 41st floor of a building, with amazing views of the city. It really showed us what a contrast exists in this country, as it has both the very rich and the very poor.

I was also able to spend a bit of time with my friend Ghada, who I used to work with at Refuge. She got married at the end of September, so I was able to visit her new apartment

as well as get to know her new husband a bit better. It was an action packed, but excellent last month.

# A trip to the Zoo

We managed to squeeze in a trip to the zoo before my last month was up. The zoo is a very unique place. As you may expect the cages are quite small, and the animals aren't kept in the best of conditions. However, the biggest difference between the local zoo and zoos back in Australia is that if you pay a bit of backsheesh (tips) you can do pretty much anything you like! You can hold a lion cub, crocodile, snake or monkey. You can hug an elephant or kiss a black bear... the sky's the limit!

We spent a lovely day there, though I think the local zoo visitors were just as in

terested in our group of foreigners as they were in the zoo animals!



# Trip to the Delta



Local Christmas is held on the 7th of January. Orthodox Christians break their fast on the eve of the 6th, but other than that Christmas is not much of an event. No presents, no Christmas lights, no carols, just food! The lack of commercialism over the Christmas period was actually quite refreshing!

This Christmas I went with two of my local friends to their Grandma's house, up in the north. We had to catch the Metro, then 3 minibuses, but finally we reached the little village where she lives. It was lovely to spend time with a local family and get a taste of what life there is like. It was also really eye-opening, seeing how little they have. On the way there my friend said to me "remember, you're going to a place where 25 P (~5c AUS) is a lot of money".

I really enjoyed seeing another part of this country, and getting to see the place where my two friends grew up.

## Farewells

My month before leaving was packed FULL of coffee dates, meals out and farewells. My first one was at ETC (where I taught English). It was lovely, and a good chance to see my students one last time.

I then had a farewell at my local church. I had to speak up the front (in Arabic!!) and tell them something I'd learnt while here. I'm sure I made a thousand mistakes, but I got my point across!

My last visit to the orphanage was pretty hard. We went on a sailboat before hand, then just hung out. I will miss the kids there a lot!

One my last night some of my friends put on a dinner for me. There was about 10 people there. We ate together, then they said some really encouraging words to me, and prayed for me. It was a lovely and memorable evening. I then spend my last day in the city hanging out with a few close friends. We went ice-skating! My friends then took me out to the airport that night. It was a lovely end to a fantastic year!



## Meet Sally



Sally is a girl I met and got to know by going to a local church out in H. She works at a university in the city teaching English. She is also heavily involved in her church.

I really admire Sally for the relationship she has with nearly all the teenagers and young adults in the church, particularly the girls. She continually encourages, teaches and mentors them.

Sally has a real heart for this country and its people.