

What it's like to live on an island during lockdown.

It was just a regular Friday afternoon at Dili International School. Or so we thought.

At roughly 2:35 pm we were told that the High school principal (Ms.Cheryl) would be coming to inform us of some very shocking and unexpected news.

She said that starting from this very day the school would be Shut Down.

We were shocked and confused. We thought that school was ending next week for Easter. We thought that she was joking but it turns out that this was no joke.

She then said that the reason she was shutting down the school early was because of the Covid 19 pandemic. I Was shocked. I always thought that the virus had no possible way of coming over to Timor hence why I thought this was a joke.

Ms Cheryl informed us that the virus was not in Timor, but that it was spreading very quickly across the globe and that we must be cautious if the virus ever does arrive in Timor.

After her Covid 19 briefing, she said that everyone must pack up all of their belongings and go home.

At first I thought it was a win-win situation. We would be school free, and the teachers could relax. I was, you know, pretty happy about this. Until Ms Cheryl said that we were going to take online classes, after that I was just bummed out. My dream of a carefree lockdown was totally obliterated.

Then I thought about my friends. I was probably never going to see them again until this whole virus thing blows over. Then I was even more bummed out.

I wouldn't be able to see my friends anymore. Like what's the point of going on a break without any contact with your friends?

Then Ms Cheryl said that the online classes were also going to be held on an app that would allow us to talk to each other as if we were on a call. I thought to myself "hey that's not too bad, at least I'll be able to see their faces during the classes."

Ms Cheryl said that there was more information that had not been delivered yet and that she would send us all an email. Everyone Marched out of the classroom with grave expressions on their faces. No one was really satisfied with this. At all.

I packed up my stuff and waited for my dad to pick my twin brother and I up.

I said goodbye to my friends that were leaving for home, and then sat down under a tree and thought.

I thought about all the cool things we were going to miss at school.

Being able to freely roam about the school, being able to go outdoors and play footie with the boys. But I mostly thought about my friends and the times we hung out with each other at lunch and break time. This would all change very abruptly.

I wasn't genuinely that sad at the time. I have lots of stuff at home to entertain myself with, but then again, I didn't really know what quarantine or lockdown was going to be like.

Oh well, let the isolation begin. As we live on an island we had to catch the next ferry before they too would be completely stopped because of the lockdown.

When we arrived on the island, and back home, we felt relaxed and we felt safe. We know this is simpler living than city life. We know it is quieter and there is no daytime electricity and often no water. We know that there are not many choices of activities or food. But this is home and what I love to come back to. Back home, back to the ocean, back to simple living and back to our pet dog Monty.

One week later Easter came. But no tourists came. Tourism was officially dead. Zero. Then at Easter our pet dog Monty had puppies. I was so happy that every single afternoon I would just lie down next to the puppies while they were asleep and doze off with them. I was so happy being with the puppies I kinda forgot about the pandemic wiping out thousands and thousands of people day after day slowly becoming the end of the world!

In the end we sadly had to give away the puppies because even if we loved them we just couldn't keep them long term. So after the puppies departure, we brainstormed a couple of things we could do to keep ourselves entertained and fit. We did Juggling, basketball, snorkelling, canoeing, homeschooling with our dad and a beach clean up everyday. We did this "schedule" for a while but even that got boring, so then we came up with another idea.

Dream chasing! Diving. You see, I snorkel often and I've been diving 3 times now, but I still don't have my open water certificate, so we decided to do just that. Study for our open water dive certificate on our own.

One of the dive instructors that stayed on our island, Marti, left us a dive manual so we could learn the basics and hopefully get our certificate.

But the book was pretty long, tedious and very technical, so we just read a couple pages every now and then so as to not rush anything and forget it 2 months later. I didn't really like doing all this study because it was a touch boring. It was however a nice change to learn something new from a book and not online. It will be even better when we get to do the theory face to face with Marti too! Can't wait for all these lockdowns to finish!

I still think of my friends a lot, like if they are doing homeschool or if they are healthy, just little things like that. I loathed that the lockdown would go on any longer but it was surprisingly not that bad the first couple of weeks we were here for. It was, really, refreshing. Just a nice peaceful afternoon, no blaring noises of cars honking their horn angrily, no kids screaming and playing around loudly on the streets, no howling dogs at night either. It was just nice and quiet.

Buuuut, I still hated it though, mostly because it was only me, my brother and my dad here on the island. When we left our mom had to stay in Dili to keep the bakery running. But then Dili got shut down, and our mum wasn't allowed to visit us here. But she does occasionally send some food and drinks over to us though. Because the borders were closed. Even our grandfather was stuck on the island with us. But he still enjoyed it here and we enjoyed our time with him learning some Indonesian language and hearing his stories.

And now, even though I am still a bit sad about being in lockdown for the 4th month, I look forward to the future where I once again can hang out with my friends.....

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