

# Martha's Suitcase

## WHO IS MARTHA?

Martha Myles is an award-winning writer, avid reader and travel blogger. At just 18 years old, she has visited over twenty countries so far and won the young travel journalist of the year for her blog. Inspired by her love of books, Martha uses travel and journalism to highlight the work of some amazing charities around the world. She has been praised for her sensitive and humorous style.

Martha loves wildlife of all kinds (except scorpions – she was once stung and it really, really hurt!), mountains, anything with marshmallows in and travelling on trains and aeroplanes but, unfortunately, not boats.



*"Martha's blog will amaze, teach, inspire you and make you laugh. Anyone who is curious about the world should read it."*

*Lewis, Chester*

Take a road trip round the USA with Martha following the footsteps of 'The Diary of a Wimpy Kid'

[Click here](#) to join Martha on a virtual trip to the forests of Finland and Norway on the trail of the Moomins and Phillip Pullman's 'Northern Lights'.

# A Postcard from India



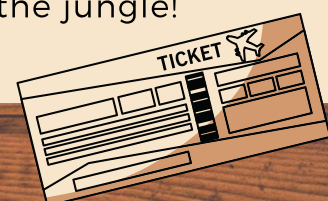
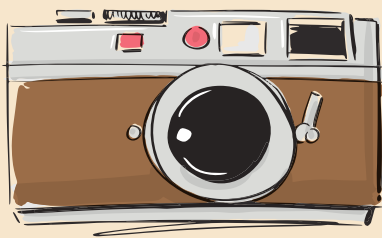
My latest trip saw me jetting away from the chilly November weather to the heat and excitement of India, where I got to know the places, people and wildlife of one of my favourite stories, Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. It was given to me for my twelfth birthday by a family friend and my hero, Jane Goodall, and I read it in less than a week. I imagined I was Mowgli and I knew India was a destination not to be missed. When I was offered the chance to visit one of Jane's wildlife sanctuaries in the misty region of Shimla, at the foot of the Himalayas, I'm sure you'll agree: I couldn't refuse.



When Rudyard Kipling wrote his book in 1894, he was telling stories that he remembered from when he was a little boy growing up in India. Before the book was released, the separate stories, about a child raised by wolves, were published in magazines and it seemed everyone loved them. Every tale has a message for young readers about friendship or belonging and even looking after nature. There were lots of facts about Indian life and the animals that could be found there. The book is still popular today with many films being made about the story. I've seen most of them at least ten times!

From the minute I stepped off the plane, India did not disappoint. Everywhere, there was the scent of spices, noise and bustle. It's a hot and colourful place where everything is new and different, especially the food. If you go, try everything at least once. You won't regret it because the flavours are amazing. Soon we took a train, winding through the stunning countryside scenery into the cooler air of the mountains. Lots of luggage was needed as I had clothes and equipment for every sort of weather. Apparently, it can get hot and cold in the same day! The sanctuary gave me a warm welcome; they are always keen for visitors and volunteers to see their work. I was given a small cabin which was to be my home for the next week.

I think it was probably the characters in '*The Jungle Book*' that inspired my love of animals. It's the sad case however, that many of them are now threatened with extinction. I was looking forward to seeing two of my favourites: the Indian Wolf and the Indian Black Leopard in the animal sanctuary and finding out how the charity was helping to save these precious creatures. So, fasten your bootlaces tightly and hang onto your binoculars while we head off into the jungle!



# Indian Wolves - The Ideal Parents?

In the Jungle Book, Akela and Raksha are the wolves who bring up Mowgli. Wolves live in family groups but there's no actual evidence to show that they have ever brought up a human baby! I was very much looking forward to seeing the wolves as dogs are my favourite animals.



These smaller Indian wolves are very dog-like. In fact, their Latin name is *Canis Lupus* - dog wolf. They have short fox-red pale fur, pointed ears, slanted eyes that are full of expression and extremely sharp teeth. They are one of the 38 different types of grey wolves.

The ones at the sanctuary were mostly rescued when they were brought in injured, by local people. I helped to feed and care for some of the wolves and their cubs. I discovered that wolves are indeed the ideal parents but probably not for humans. Here's my picture of one of the adult males, his name is Lalit which means handsome and I certainly think he is.

In India, wolves are now only found in the northern open grasslands where there aren't too many people. They hunt as a pack from dusk until dawn, working in pairs or small groups. With lots of cunning strategies to catch antelope, hares, raccoons and small rodents, they can reach up to an impressive 70 miles per hour.



The sanctuary releases their injured animals back into the wild once they are well. They encourage visitors to come to see them and they also send information packs to the villages near the wolves' habitats. They hope that, if the local people know how special and interesting wolves are, they won't hunt them or destroy their homes. I hope so too: these really are extraordinary creatures and they go to the top of my list.



# Indian Leopard – Or Is It?

Panther, jaguar or leopard? This is a great 'Jungle Book' quiz question. In the story, Bagheera is described as black with the leopard-spot pattern showing through. Although called black panthers, these are actually just a different coloured leopard. In South America, their cousins are known as jaguars and are a little bigger and braver, with longer tails than the Asian and African type. Jaguars also love to swim but Indian leopards don't much care for it.



Leopards are one of the strongest of the big cats: able to catch deer and even fearsome wild pigs. They adore climbing the trees in their specially-built enclosure at the sanctuary where they snooze away the hot days on a shady branch.

The character in the story who cares for Mowgli is clever and wise; the two in my picture are magnificent but cheeky and argumentative teenagers, found abandoned as young cubs. Their names are Krishna, meaning black in Sanskrit, and Indra, after the God of rain and thunder (which tells you all you need to know about these brothers). I took fabulous pictures of them although I was always a bit nervous when they came too close.

Bagheera is one of the protectors of Mowgli the 'man-cub' in the story. In the real world, Indian leopards need protection from us. Although leopards like Krishna and Indra are adaptable and can live almost anywhere, sometimes even on the edges of cities, they are very rare and in danger of becoming extinct. Secretive and nocturnal, they are not often seen but are still hunted and their cubs taken from the wild.



The Goodall sanctuary works hard on educational programmes to help people to understand these precious wild animals. They have specially trained inspectors who find leopards that have been cruelly taken away from their mothers for pets and bring them back to the centre to be looked after.

