

My Week: Jacinto Zarabata

A visiting Colombian tribesman confesses himself to be bemused by our size and our lifestyle

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Jacinto Zarabata loves the sights in London but is missing his wife and four children

First Kogi in Britain

I didn't come to Britain for a holiday: we Kogi people don't just up and leave our mud huts willy-nilly. I came to finish a documentary about our way of life in the hope that it might inspire the western world to adopt a similar style of living. If things don't change soon, there's no hope for future generations. You should take some tips from us indigenous people, who have a proper respect for nature. Our way of life in the Colombian mountains is sustainable. Let's face it — yours is not. I am thrilled to be the first member of the Kogi to visit Britain. I had heard that London is an important place, full of extraordinary people, so when I was told I would be staying here I was excited. I wanted to get a taste of British culture: the food, the drink, the sights. I was really looking forward to seeing Buckingham Palace. I hear the Queen lives in there with lots of gold. Although nobody has explained what it is she does.

You're so tall

What struck me when I landed in London last Monday was how tall the people are. We're all the same size back home so I don't feel small, but I only reached the waists of most people

here. They're like monsters. What is nice is that there are so many odd-looking people in London, you don't feel out of place.

There were a few people who took a look at my white robes and asked if I was a kung fu master. Some were careful about the way they approached me because they thought I could kill them with a single blow. But my clothes weren't odd compared with some of the things that caught my eye. I saw a young lady with holes all over her tights. Then a person covered from head to toe in clothing: all I could see were eyes.

Rats underground

My friend Alan, who is producing the documentary on the Kogi, looked after me and was kind enough to let me stay in his home. His house looked like the one glued to it, and the one glued to that one looked the same, too.

He told me about the many places he would take me — I had heard about the underground train and wanted to take a trip. He failed to mention it was where all the rats live. He did tell me that if I were to jump onto the train tracks I would be electrocuted. Thank goodness he told me because I might have given it a go otherwise.

I love shandy

I love the sights in London. On Wednesday I saw the big clock near the Houses of Parliament and the London Eye, which didn't appeal to me because I wasn't too keen on the idea of being locked in a capsule with other people and elevated. I'm not used to being around so many people.

The British Museum was interesting. I looked at the South American collection there and saw some Colombian artefacts. What on earth are they doing in the British Museum? Then I saw they'd done it to the Egyptians, too! And the Greeks! Let me tell you something for nothing: if it had been in my nature to get angry, this would have been the moment I really hit the roof.

I had some pitta and hummus at Alan's house. Many of the foods I was introduced to took me aback. Olives: truly disgusting. I'm not used to eating anything with much flavour in it; our diet is simple and we eat only vegetables most of the time.

We don't drink alcohol either so I gave that a go while I was here. I didn't want to go to mad, though, because Alan warned me that I might feel sick if I had too much, because my body wasn't used to it. He suggested a mix of beer and lemonade, just half a glass, and it was wonderful. I've never tasted anything like it in my life. The pub was quite full. Many people were holding glasses double the size of mine and drinking their drinks quickly. Alan said this was normal for a Friday. I'd learnt about another tradition.

I'm in a time warp

I missed my wife and my four children very much. I used Alan's mobile phone to make a call to them a few times. What dazzled me was why I had to wait for them to wake up in Colombia. They were doing everything six hours after us, apparently, which is odd because we usually do everything together. We're all under the same sun so it took me a while to get my head around it. How can you have night and day at the same time? I find that very strange.

As told to Kiki Loizou.

For more information about the Kogis' film see alunathemovie.com