

MS and Grief



MS and grief often go together, hand-in-hand. Your past life, how you have lived and memories you will cherish. At 18 (in 1999), I went on a lad's club-style holiday to Gran Canaria. At the time, the show Ibiza Uncovered was playing on Sky One - I was mesmerized, and this light sparked into a fire in my belly regarding living abroad. I knew living abroad was something I could and would do.

Despite a high school teacher once telling me in front of the whole class that I would never be a holiday rep after asking each pupil what their career choice would be for the future, it made me more determined to achieve one of my dreams.

First night of the holiday, I was approached and offered a job as a PR for a nightclub - basically someone who stands on the street, encouraging people to come and have a drink in the place you're promoting. Dream come true! I worked few nights of my holiday and instead of returning from my holiday, I stayed and lived the dream during my 2 and a half years living there. I worked a range of jobs, from bar staff, waiter, transfer representative, booze cruises, foam parties, bar crawls, hotel visits and shopping trips.

It was hard and physical work. I worked as a PR six nights a week, and my night off as a transfer rep dropping tourists at departures and welcoming new arrivals, giving them the welcome speech onboard a 55-seater bus before dropping them off at their hotels. Sometimes you would have up to 14 stops at high season across more than 4 resorts on the island. Flight delays, cancellations, no shows, tourists still out partying at times of pick-up for departure - you never knew what was going to happen. Memorable for sure, and always giving you a belly laugh regardless.

I met so many new people from Ireland, Scotland, English and the Canaries. They say friends are the family we choose for ourselves. Such a true statement to this day. I am still in contact with many of these very important people. This is where I was taught the phrase "your suntans will fade, however, the memories will last forever." I still live by this after nearly 20 years of leaving the island.

I am proud to have made so many memories of when I was young in the sun in my first destination. Being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis is not the end of the world. Suffering from brain fog makes it difficult for me to remember things in the present. I might ask you the same question or tell you the same story numerous times. I honestly will have no reconciliation. I understand it can be very frustrating for family and friends.

I am thankful it doesn't affect my long-term memory. A song, fragrance or food take me straight back and can open so many wonderful memories of the friends, excursions, living it up, etc. Not all good, but they say either you learn a lesson or two! Certainly, some not to repeat but I can say honestly I am glad I got to experience living abroad before camera phones and social media started!