



A HYDERABADI'S REPORTING TRAVELS

Sarah Khan is based in New York, and a quintessential Hyderabadi at heart. She's reported from six continents for top magazines. She grew up moving all over the world, but Hyderabad has been the only consistent factor in her life, the one place she has been going back to ever since I was born, so it's the closest place to a 'childhood home.'

HP: How did travel reporting come to you.

SK: I've always wanted to be a journalist - my mother had been a gold medalist in journalism at Osmania, and I was always inspired by her. I've been working as a journalist for 15 years now, first as an editor at different magazines in New York, and now as a freelance travel journalist for the last six years.

HP: Has travel and reporting been extensive.

SK: I've reported from six continents, for magazines and newspapers around the world—the New York Times, Condé Nast Traveler, Wall Street Journal, Vogue India, and many, many others.

HP: The toughest and the memorable assignments.

SK: My story on road-tripping through Namibia with a group of girlfriends was one of the most grueling—the terrain is unforgiving and bumpy and our schedule was very hectic, as we were on the move driving long distances nearly every day. But it was also one of the most rewarding, since it's such a unique and jaw-dropping landscape and I was very happy with the feature that I wrote about it for the

PAWS
TRAVEL

New York Times. I also loved my trip to Bosnia last summer; it's one of the most beautiful and under-explored regions I've been to. But the story that's closest to my heart is actually a personal journey I wrote about Hyderabad for the New York Times during one of my many visits back, when I visited older buildings throughout the city in search of vestiges of the city's glorious past. It meant so much to me when it was recognized with awards as well.

HP: What's the research necessary before hand.

SK: I do a tonne of research before every trip—while some spontaneity is always nice when traveling, when you're on assignment you can't really afford to wing it and you need to have a good idea of the kinds of places you need to see and people you need to interview. So I read a lot of local magazines and blogs from the places, canvas social media to see if any friends or followers have tips, then I compile all my notes into a huge Google Doc, and I plot the main points on a Google Map.

HP: Your trick to connect with locals

SK: I always use social media to get connected to locals wherever I'm going—whether it's asking my friends to introduce me to people they may know there (that's how I got invited to a friend's friend's sister's home for biryani in Kochi, and made new friends to go line-dancing with in Nashville), or if it's meeting up with followers in various cities—for example, when I was in Colombo by myself last year, I was so happy when a girl who follows me messaged me to ask if I'd like some company. I said of course and we hit the town!

HP: Language, travel, logistics..how do you handle.

SK: Like I said, I do a lot of research beforehand, so I often have major logistics sorted out—where I'm staying, how I'll get there, how much time I need for each place, etc. When I'm traveling on my own I'll be extra cautious about flying in during daylight, staying in safe neighborhoods, and hiring cars and drivers through trusted travel agents if necessary. For language barriers, Google Translate is a blessing! I once even conducted several interviews in Istanbul with people entirely by typing a question into Google Translate, passing my phone to the person, and letting them type their answer back.

HP: Travel reporting - cool job, eh!!

SK: Yes! I'm fortunate that it's a pretty interesting, fun job, and most people are excited to hear more about it. And of course more often than not people keep trying to invite themselves along on a trip!

HP: Your Hyderabad visits- how often are they?

SK: I usually return to Hyderabad at least once a year, though it varies. I was here three times in 2018, for instance. I grew up moving all over the world—living in Canada, Saudi Arabia, Hyderabad, Boston, New York, and South Africa—so Hyderabad has been the only consistent factor in my life, the one place I've been going to ever since I was born, so it's the closest place I have to a 'childhood home.'

HP: Your routine while in Hyderabad.

SK: My routine when I'm in Hyderabad is usually pretty relaxing, get delicious ghar ka khana, see family, and run errands and do lots of shopping. On this last trip, for instance, I visited Badshahi Ashurkhana, which was absolutely stunning. Running into Hyderabadis is always a treat—but the best part is when, after just a few minutes of conversation, you're able to find a connection to a mutual friend or relation. I speak proper Hyderabad Urdu (though with a very heavy American accent).

