



2013 RIO REFLECTIONS

Power, Possibility.... and Proof that Everyone Can Learn to Samba

Blasé Grovers and Taras who've traveled the world, started out doubting Rio's allure
It takes hours to get there, the shopping's not great, and Portuguese language obscure
"Should we go to Brazil?" "Is it safe, is it fun?" for months many couldn't decide
But then we remembered the Grove's ALWAYS great...so why not come along for the ride?

And much to our delight, Rio blew us away, boy that Carnival spirit's contagious
From the very first minute our feet touched the ground, we let out our inner outrageous
The rhythms of samba infected our souls, we couldn't stop tapping our feet
From the opening moments each one of us knew this would be our best ever retreat

The program committee were "All Stars" this year, Brava Mary, Suzana, Elaine
Though our meetings were all held inside the hotel, there was never a need to complain
The time just flew by, we were all so engaged, that we couldn't be dragged from our seats
And were late for our lunches (despite great buffets just teaming with yum Brazil treats)

We had panels on healthcare and new super drugs, Lore shared new research on the brain
And we talked about wellness and "spa-spital" trends, and yoga for managing pain
Margot tried to explain computational math...lucky us that great teaching's her gig
And food service scares grossed the lot of us out....calamari from anus of pig?

How can women help women? Will "meaning" best money? What of happiness, can we achieve it?
Is Latin America headed for growth? Science borderless? (dare we believe it?)
Are cosmetics from coffee a new global trend? And are "people" the new biggest thing?
Is trickle up development the future for all, and what radical change may it bring?

We went deep very fast, pondering hard and soft power, and global security scares
Whose policy's right, whose tradition respected, and who thinks that America cares?
Inequality leads to destabilized lands, and disruptive world powers keep growing
And young men without women & work...just make war, oh where is this world of ours going?

The discussions were heated, unique insights shared, and lucky for all of our group
We had record attendance from foreign service pros...a real Grove "ambassadors soup!"
Ambassadors Mary Ann, Mari Carmen, Linda, Donna and Deborah shed light

On the fact that the women who're diplomats by day...are party-aholics at night!

And speaking of parties, that was this retreat's vibe...after all "when in Rio" ...oh mama!
When they pass caprihanas you've got to say yes, just one sip and your feet start to samba
At our opening party, we samba'd all night, while a pro tried to teach us the beat
Was that Susan up there swinging hips with the chef? (shhh.... this wild stuff stays at the retreat)

And we welcomed new Taras and Grovers with boas...(and yes caprihanas for all)
But Tara and Grove leapt far forward this year as we torn down the Grove-Tara wall
We shared same color name tags, and blended events, and no one cared who belonged where
"Which group are you?" just never got asked...we were too busy dancing to care

We Grove-Tara Sisters, we GTS women, know how to go fast and go deep
But none holds a candle to our marvelous Edie, our wizard "Key Noter-in Chief"
Edie's power with insights and ideas astounds, and this year she blew us away
In a room full of Grovers, you could hear a pin drop...we hung on each word she might say

Power and Potential, and Possibility...Edie brought our retreat theme alive
From personal power to the power of light, she took us on a deep thinking dive
3D printing's potential and alien intelligence (are there smarts in the sky up above?)
And the fact the multiverse's greatest potential...might be the possibility for LOVE

And Mary and Avanti brought down the house, when they previewed our Grove-Tara app
The notion of searching by faces not names, just one look and we started to clap
And we laughed ourselves silly at table topic time, when the neat sign up lists looked like train
wrecks

Because so many "anonymous" signatures appeared for the table to talk about...sex

But the best laugh of all was when dear Dr. Mary, most patiently tried to explain,
That toilet paper doesn't belong in the bowl, and must NEVER be flushed down the drain
Her brief lecture demo was ever so clear...but we just couldn't get with the plan
And remember that even when going "number 2" ... the paper stays out of the can!

Brazil's great cuisine we embraced right away, our churrascaria dinner to wit
We scarfed down mass quantities of sword-skewered meat (overwhelming the waiters a bit)
Complimentary caprihanas seemed to be extra strong, the result: run amok "girl group" singing
I dare not name names, but a few rowdy tables had everyone else's ears ringing

In afternoons some of us lounged by the pool, and others toured Rio's famed sights
Ipanema's great beach, the Cristo on high, or Copacabana's delights
And our favela visit inspired us all, seeing locals turn garbage to art
Everyone giving back, so their teens could have hope...we salute Coke for doing their part

Giving back's in our blood, it's the Grove-Tara way, Rio's auction was one of the best
Tough our "Melanie" seemed somewhat different this year (Kleenex kept falling out of her breast)
She was ever so glam, pushing bids to the top, in true auctioneer Melanie style,
(But we couldn't help thinking 'neath that main of blonde hair we detected...a wry Betty smile?)

And our "inner Brazilians" just sprang into life, at our closing night Carnival blow out
Though in the hotel, Sambadrome came to life (and none of us needed to go out)
We dressed to the nines (where did we find those masks?) in improvised Carnival glam
And lo and behold there was not one of us who did let out her inner ham

An outrageous flamingo, in head to toe pink, embarrassed herself with much glee
(We suspect, it was Theo. our larger than life mega-party-enabler MC)
And Halla and Sylvia co-hosted in style, while befeathered Rio celebs amazed us
But even those siliconed Amazonian dancers, with their size D-cup butts never phased us

We had much wilder acts, led by Erin and crew, whose moves those Brazilians admired
Especially when Erin's heel broke off....and she seemed just to get more inspired
And the Bhutanese swim team dropped by for a bit, thought retired they have found a new gig
They're Ambassadors all, claiming it's easy work (do you think that was meant as a dig?)

The Belizean Ambassador (a Marilyn clone), appeared in a hotel robe white
And climbed onto a chair, with a towel on her head...instant Cristo! (a memorable sight)
And the whole Bhutan group, with lyrics on screen, led us all in original song
Underwear on their heads, they threw panties aloft as they warbled the hit "Fling a Thong"

We never stopped laughing, so much that it hurt, until some of us started to weep
At Reverend Sylvia's concluding prayer "and I pray the Lord my *shape* to keep."
We bequeathed Tara hot pants and the Madonna skirt, sharing tales of their rich history
And caprihana or not, we all played just like kids...four fab days of just unending glee

How lucky are we, to share such great joy, with sisters of choice and not birth
To spend time with women who are smart and accomplished, and still know the value of mirth
When we think back on Rio (you had to be there) every one of us will have a grin
For this most precious Grove-Tara-GTS group, is a privilege for us to be in

Thank you Mary, Suzanna, Joanne, and Elaine and Camille for planning our Rio
And Susan, you turn each retreat into gold, you inspire us wherever we go
Poems like this are just silly rhymes and so cannot begin to address
The thank you's and gratitude all of us feel, but mere language can never express.

Panama's next...and if history repeats, things can only become much more magic
To miss even one Grove, is to miss sisterhood...and nothing could be much more tragic
So start planning now, and clearing the dates, so that schedules won't will get in the way
It's only nine months 'til the next retreat's here...and we all get together to PLAY!