

## United States Changes Girls' Future

For a girl that spent the first nine years of her life in the very small town of Lowestoft, England, moving to the United States changed everything, from her palette to her dreams.

Nikita Patel loved living in the chilly, industrial town on the water. Her weekdays were spent in collared shirts and plaid, knee-length skirts, as she had always attended a strict private school. Every weekend her family would travel to London to visit extended family and spend time in the grand city.

“I just remember every chance we got, we went to London,” Nikita said. “There was always so much to see and do in the city and I loved it.”

Nikita's parents always tried to instill a love and passion for traveling in both her and her older brother. Both born in India, her parents met in England while studying at a university. They traveled and worked all throughout Europe and Africa. As they settled down and started a family, traveling was still a frequent activity they shared with the children. Nikita learned to love all the different languages and cultures.

“I think the amount of traveling I did as a child had a huge impact on my interest and love for different cultures,” Nikita said. “I am very open to different ways of life and I am glad my parents took us to India, Portugal and all over Europe.”

But one day came when her father pitched the idea of moving to the United States. While her father loved England, he knew that Lowestoft was not going anywhere and there would be more opportunities for his family in the United States. And so the Patel family was off to America.

Soon after arriving, Nikita was not so convinced she was going to like living in hot Florida. Television was cluttered with commercials and football did not have the same meaning.

Nikita always had the same friends and family surrounding her, so making friends was a challenge. She had to learn the Pledge and get used to cold grocery stores and the sugar enriched processed foods.

“I had to adapt to packaged food and bread,” Nikita said. “In England we just go to markets and pick up fresh bread from a bakery and everything is made right there.”

After living in America for years and acclimating to the culture in every aspect, Nikita loves the food and the freedom. Since graduating high school and starting college at the University of South Florida, so many opportunities have come her way. Nikita has been able to go back to England, as well as visit France, India, Portugal and other countries in Europe. She did a study abroad program hosted at Cambridge in England her sophomore year. She even got a great job opportunity with a travel agency, Contiki, where she gets incredible deals to travel the world and follow her dreams.

Nikita keeps in touch with her good friends and family still living in England. She listens to the hardships her friends in college are facing as they are about to enter the corporate world in England. Nikita now finds herself convincing them to move to America and experience the many opportunities she has been blessed to have.

“Professionally, it is so easy to move up the ladder in America,” Nikita said.

When the time came to move and leave the only life she knew, Nikita was hesitant. Everything fell into place, as Nikita finds herself “too Americanized” to return to England and the small town of Lowestoft. Nikita thinks of the United States as home and would not rather be anywhere else. Her love for traveling will take her to many exotic and historic places but for the time being, Nikita is comfortable in Florida.