

Note from *people and places*: this volunteer's placement was designed specifically for them – they went through our full matching process, as we've been doing with you. The placement report indicates their particular skills and experience – yours may be similar or completely different – your own placement will make best use of **your** experience and skills. Every volunteer is different – in what they give and what they gain. Reports from previous volunteers serve to give you as good a picture as possible about the project. If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Date: May 11th- June 14th 2016
Project: W.B. Tshume Primary School

People and Places was so helpful in preparing for my departure, even before I decided to go Kate was quick and helpful to reply to my questions. We set up a few Skype calls which was a great way to gain a better feeling for those working for/with People and Places. Kate is extremely passionate about what she does and wants all volunteers to have the most rewarding experience they can.

I first found People and Places when I was researching Voluntourism companies. I am doing my Master's in Social Anthropology and I am focusing on this sector of tourism—which is how I ended up working with People and Places and Calabash. I am sure if you are reading this you have done your research on the MANY options available to volunteer abroad. This is why I find this industry so fascinating yet also so terrifying sometimes. How does one know what company is the 'best' fit for them? Not only that—but this experience you choose to embark on is not only about you, it is about those you are going to be working alongside and meeting. It can be very overwhelming to choose the right fit and the right company.

I can honestly say that People and Places lay it out for you and tease out the sticky questions that are inevitably a part of the volunteerism industry. What does it mean to be ethical as a tourism operator? How can volunteering not only abroad but also in an unfamiliar cultural context be ethical? People and Places works with organizations that have been locally established and continue to be locally run. This I think is what many voluntourism operators are lacking and I can certainly say People and Places and Calabash are striving to be the best in the business by recognizing that they cannot be perfect. For me, this was what I found most important.

I found People and Places to be extremely efficient (as my placement had to be organized quite quickly- Thank you Paul and Kate).

The orientation provided by Paul was wonderful and I was pleasantly surprised with how much thought has gone into preparing volunteers. You are provided with cultural information, local contacts, a local cell phone, some language guidance, an agenda for your placement, and local resources. It is clear that Calabash certainly does not just want volunteers arriving at the school and taking over a class in their own way. You are a guest and you are not able to simply go into a space in which you have never been and change things the way you feel are 'best'. The orientation helps volunteers arrive at this mindset if they are not already and I could see how passionate staff members of Calabash are about the work they do and their connections in the communities. Calabash has a child protection policy, which is extremely important and is something that I would say very few (or no other) volunteer companies seriously put into place.

Note from 'people and places' – all of the projects and local partners we work with have both a code of volunteer conduct and child protection policy – provided to all volunteers before their placements begin.

My experience at W.B. Tshume was great all of the staff are so very friendly and welcoming. I miss them very much!

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I worked mainly in the gr. R class with Ntombie and in the grade 6 and 7 English with Rita. These women are amazing and I grew close with them quite quickly. I wish I could have stayed longer because I really found myself gaining a strong connection with the grade 6 and 7 learners. We would spend time in the library together and I would help with small groups of about eight learners. I mainly did creative writing and poem performances with them, which they seemed to really enjoy. I found when the learners were given space to write or talk about what they found interesting we would have some amazing discussions/writing. Although, there are a few learners who struggle with English very much, this was tough at first, I had some frustration for them and I felt like I wanted to 'blame' something. I couldn't though, and this was a tension I had to work through myself. Again, I tried my best, but I think the hardest part for me was not being able to just help those few learners that really needed that extra attention every day for English.

It is tough, the schools are understaffed and the teachers are under a lot of pressure with large class sizes. Generally the mornings I would spend with Ntombie in the grade R class. I was nervous at first about the language barrier, but I actually had a blast in the grade R class. I still found it possible to communicate with the grade R's, especially with the help of Ntombie. It was a little stressful when sometimes a teacher would have to step out for a minute and I would be left with the grade R's, in the beginning this seemed to happen more often but I began to ask Ntombie for help and her opinion on activities etc. and from that point we began to work more as a team in the classroom together.

Note: a teacher leaving their class is sometimes unavoidable, but Lisa worked well through this in partnership with her assigned local educator. We encourage all volunteers to question and challenge being left alone in classes – you're there to share skills and work with local staff, not instead of them.

It really was amazing and I think the learners enjoyed our combined teaching methods. Ntombie and I would work together or take turns on books, songs, and lessons and I think we actually brought the energy up in the room when we were together and the learners really seemed to enjoy this.

I have been to South Africa before and was introduced to what it meant to be on 'South African time'. I will say that you must be open and to go with the flow, things may not always be on time or finish when they should. Just be aware of this sometimes and mainly just be open to how schedules move and be aware that they may not move how you may like or may be used to.

I would definitely recommend volunteering with Calabash or going through People and Places for one of their other placements. I had an amazing time and I really do think it is an unforgettable experience where you will meet unforgettable people and learn so much about yourself. I believe it makes you a more understanding and well rounded person. To and from my placement I was either driven by Xolani or Nelson (**regular drivers and very much part of the Calabash team!**), both very friendly and open people. They would always check in to see how I was doing and would always be willing to answer any questions I had. The main thing Nelson would always tell me is that we just want to make sure you are comfortable and that you are enjoying yourself.

My accommodation was amazing and more importantly my host Mickey was the BEST! I did not think going into this experience that I would gain a second family but I sure did. This woman is wonderful and is such a welcoming, easy going and funny person. Mickey has a great read of people and I think she adjusts well with whoever is in her home. We got along great, we had very similar personalities and I was often told I was her long lost daughter! I felt extremely comfortable, she is an amazing cook, and Mickey knows so many people, which was a great way to get to know people. I miss her very much and it was emotional leaving my second home. I loved spending my evenings with Mickey cooking, having tea, talking and watching shows together.

I spent one weekend at Summerstrand at 5th avenue (**Fifth Avenue Beach House – another of our vetted accommodation options for volunteers**) and spent the rest of my weekends in New Brighton. I was only there for a short period of time so I really wanted to try and get a feel for the place. Mickey is a busy woman so I found I was always up to something. One of her friends took me to a rugby match one weekend and Mickey took me to bay west mall and to visit her family another.



Mickey and I

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Thank you.