

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

Tina Meadows – 08.September to 06.October 2017 – Treak Community Centre, Siem Reap

Pre departure preparation: *It was very helpful to have email contacts and phone numbers of previous volunteers. I spoke to several people who had worked in Siem Reap or at Treak, although none of them had actually worked in a classroom environment there. In that respect, I had a particularly useful conversation with Dianne (note – people and places' programme advisor). I also had a very helpful Skype conversation with Michael Horton (note – local partner at ConCERT Cambodia) that clarified exactly what he had in mind for me to do in relation to the basic geography for the general studies programme. He did also stress that things would be very flexible, as indeed they were, before we established a suitable subject for the basic geography. As I expected, the reality of the students' houses made my initial plans most unsuitable. He also clarified how he wanted me to help the new nursery teacher.*

Orientation and preparation at the start of the placement: *Dianne advised me to arrive on a Friday and it was excellent advice. Michael came to meet me at the guest house just after I had arrived. He arranged that one of the staff would meet myself and another new volunteer that evening to take us to the regular weekly get together of volunteers at the Ivy restaurant. This was a brilliant way to spend my first evening and enabled me to meet up with my fellow volunteers and to arrange some trips to temples etc. that same weekend. On the first Monday, I attended an excellent induction workshop run by Michael that introduced not only the projects supported by ConCERT, but also the best potted history of the region since 1945 that I have heard. After the workshop, I was taken to visit Treak on the back of a "moto" driven very carefully by one of the ladies from the office. It was a brilliant introduction to the local traffic!! Michael and Salin also took me out for the welcome dinner. They are very kind people who support their volunteers very well. On the first Saturday, they gave a 'goodbye' pizza party at their home for a volunteer. I had decided to have tuktuk to take me to work every day. I had been in Siem Reap before and knew what the traffic and side roads were like. I also thought it would be too hot / wet to ride. From my point of view this was a good decision. The other younger volunteers used bikes very happily. Treak provided their tuktuk and Bishet, the driver/ builder/caretaker arrived punctually every day. When the tuktuk broke on the potholed roads, he came for me on the motorbike with a helmet for me – that was an adventure that I hadn't anticipated but I loved it!!*

What did we do well? *I was impressed by the clear communication from Travel-people and places. Instructions are very well set out.*

I found you to be very supportive when things didn't go quite right such as when I had difficulty with the insurance people. It was very helpful to be able to contact previous volunteers. Your website is very good.

What did I do? *My work was divided into 3 areas. In the mornings, I worked in the Nursery K1 with 3 and 4 year olds, some of whom were in their first week at "school". The children do not start state school until they are 6 so Treak Community Centre is their training ground for school. My remit was to support and encourage their new teacher, Chenda, in her use of English. The 3 hour session with the children involved learning the routine of school and how to sit still and be involved with others in the lesson. It started with learning to answer the question "What is your name?" It was very satisfying that at the end of week one, most of the children could do this.*

1 Naboth's Nursery, Canterbury Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8AX
tel +44 (0) 8700 460 479 | email info@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

The common practice is to say everything together out loud and it is very difficult to differentiate who is saying what. I helped with group activities following simple English instructions such as simple exercises, many versions of "heads, shoulders, knees and toes" which led on to other body parts. We used flash cards of body parts and animals and "Find The ..." games for pairs of children to develop matching of words to pictures. We used YouTube videos of other songs with actions and introduced a new song each week. There is a syllabus that the teacher can follow that leads on the work that will be done in K2 and K3. Mid-morning, there was a free play session with the toys and puzzles that were in the classroom. I sat among the children and was involved in the play which generated all sorts of English learning possibilities from colours to numbers and shapes. Then after outside play, we finished with recapping the earlier words and pictures and songs. The morning session ended with the traditional lining up and farewell to the teacher and each child was given a vitamin sweet on leaving.



K1 playing "Find the ..." among the pictures on the floor.

In the afternoon, from 1pm until 4pm, I worked in a class of 7- 8 year olds (K3) who were learning English using phonics. They had reached the fifth group of phonics, having covered groups 1 – 4 the previous year in K2. I was more of a classroom assistant here. The initial learning style was group "shouting" of answers but the children really loved this and the teacher made it competitive by creating teams and awarding points and stickers. We did test individual understanding through games and by the use of individual whiteboards. Our lessons made use of a set of flashcards that I had with me. These enabled us to build and write sentences.

I had taken with me as a gift for the teachers a set of Jolly phonics flashcards, work books and activity books. I shared these between the teachers of K2 and K3. I had anticipated that they would be able to photocopy these as a resource. I was sure that I had read that they had printing facilities. However, this was printing from the computer and photocopying!! The teachers found most of their resources online and printed off worksheets. So the books were of limited use, but the flashcards were helpful. I had also taken lots of other easy reading books as well as the Jolly Phonics story book. There were welcomed by the librarian. The library is very well stocked, well ordered and used frequently by the children.



K3 with teacher Chhlat. This classroom was equipped with a projector and screen as well as the whiteboard. The room could just hold the 30 regular students.

The centre also runs evening English lessons for older children from 5 pm – 6 pm. These classes were regularly attended by 25 or more students. Initially, the students found my English accent and pronunciation difficult to follow as they are used to hearing either Cambodians speaking English or Australians, new Zealanders or Americans. I worked with the teacher to introduce different ways of using English. We read newspaper advert a job as a teacher for Chhlat who kindly also provided his CV. The students in groups had to discuss whether they thought he matched the job requirements to apply for the post. Then we created an advert for a waiter / waitress position and the students had to write their own CV. I photocopied some menus from the guesthouse where I was staying and this enabled role plays in small groups as the customers and the waiter or waitress. I also arranged with one of the other volunteers to come to the class one evening. The students divided into 2 groups to interview us, having discussed as a group the kind of questions to ask us. They then had to write a brief report on us. To work a full day from 8 am to 6 pm even with the 2 hour lunch break and the 1 hour tea break, was too tiring so in the last week, I dropped the evening class.

Note: the evening classes are an optional extra for appropriate volunteers – no-one is expected to work such a long day on a regular basis !

The other job that I had been asked to do was to create some basic geography lessons that could be used by the teachers as part of the emerging General Studies programme. My Skype conversation with Michael had been about some basic mapwork. Initially, my thoughts had been about doing some simple mapping of a room in a house, or a room at school or an area of the village. However, once I was in situ, I could see that this would be too complex. Michael had said that many of the teachers could not make sense of a paper map although they were very proficient with Google Maps on their phones!! After discussion, we decided to focus on 3 lessons.

1. Why we have day and night, and why we have winter and summer – using a globe and a large orange space hopper for the sun and moving the globe around the sun. The UK and Cambodia were marked with playdough on the globe. I created 2 worksheets which could be used in full or which could have labels with missing words for the students to fill in.
2. Latitude and Longitude. The world maps used in Cambodia are pacific centred with Australia in the middle – very weird to us!! I created a pacific centred world map with the key lines of latitude and longitude. Again, this could be used for the students in full or with parts of words missing. The lesson also briefly touched on why latitude and longitude were “invented”. I also created a word search of key words connected with latitude and longitude, and explained how I had done it and which website I had to create free printable word search puzzles. That was a very popular resource.
3. Lesson 3 introduced different sizes and scales of maps and asked the teachers to find places on them. Map 1 was a road map of Cambodia. Map 2 was a tourist map of Siem Reap. I asked the teachers to find various places from a single starting point of the Hard Rock Café in the centre of Siem Reap. Some found this easier than others and some used Google Maps!!

Map 3 was a map that I had drawn of the route from the hard rock Café to Treak Village with various local landmarks shown that they had to identify. This map could be used with the smaller children to locate places in the village and with the older evening class students to map read their route from town to their homes.

All these resources are stored on the office computer at Treak in Communal files, Education, Geography. Anyone wishing to add to this basic geography could move on to looking at the map of the school once the building has been finished and maybe creating a more detailed map of the village so that the children and staff could identify their homes.

Successes and disappointments: This is hard to answer. I felt that my work in K1 was very helpful. I also thought that my input into the evening class was valuable. My afternoon work with K3 was fun but I don't think I added anything new.

Highlights: There were many highlights – the new K1 children becoming more confident with being at school, the evening class students interviewing Susanne, going to work on the back of the motorbike, impromptu reading lessons in the staffroom at lunch time (see photo below)



Accommodation: I stayed at the Mother Home Inn guest house. It was more expensive than the Victory but I had air con and a buffet breakfast and free wifi included. There was a pool and a bar and a reasonably priced restaurant for night when I didn't want to go out for food. The corner shop did laundry for \$1 per kilo. The excellent "Brown Coffee" coffee bar was just along the road. There were plenty tuktuks available outside (\$2 to town) and Lucky Mall supermarket was just a short walk away. The guest house was very popular with Chinese tourists but I found that added to the adventure of being in another culture. The staff were helpful and spoke English to varying degrees. They were keen to teach me Khmer.

Leisure time: I was fortunate to meet other volunteers who were working at Treak or at other projects serviced by ConCERT. I was able to go on many trips with others, or out to eat with people.



The temple explorers with Toto, our regular tuktuk driver.

We bought 1 month temple passes, we went to the Phare circus, to an Apsara dance show, to the Floating Villages, to Battambang by boat (highly recommended) and back by bus, to Kulen Mountain and also explored Siem Reap.

I can thoroughly recommend being a volunteer at Treak Community centre.

Please note – this report is supplied by a former volunteer and the contents are intended solely for your information and personal use. *people and places* has permission to publish this information to you as a future volunteer. Please check with us if you would like to publish it beyond your own circle of friends and family. Thank you.