

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

Volunteers: Catriona Duncan and Ray Jones

Placement dates: 25.4.16 to 4.6.16

Project: Hazyview Digital Learning Centre – Good Work Foundation

Pre departure Preparation

Our placements at GWF were confirmed on 2nd February and from that moment on we had many more questions. The You Tube [TED talks given by GWF's Chief Executive, Kate Groch](#) and [Boyd Varty](#) were all helpful, as was reading the book 'Cathedrals of the Wild' by Boyd Varty.

Having never visited South Africa we decided to spend some time on holiday prior to our placements. This really helped us understand some of the South African culture, political background and practical issues, such as driving on the hard shoulder and tipping people to guard the car, before we settled in to work. We drove, stopping along the Garden Route, from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth and then flew to Johannesburg and on to Nailspruit where a driver was waiting for us. ... the driver managed to take us to our accommodation where we were met, once through the security gates, by Gogo Mo (Kate Groch's Mother) and Angie Clifton (Kate's sister) who invited us to share their pizza and wine. A lovely start.

The accommodation is in a gated community, a few houses away from Kate's. (Unfortunately she was away fund raising abroad for the whole of our time in SA so we didn't get to meet) The bungalow has two bedrooms and a bathroom. There is good internet connection but no TV. A welcome pack of food awaited us and when we had problems connecting to the internet Abna was quickly sent round to resolve the situation. We had a number of mornings without water and a couple of days with no electricity. Unfortunately the house is not within walking distance of anywhere, other than a small shop and restaurant, but we were advised that it was better not to walk ... In any event, no one walks anywhere at night.

GWF had arranged for Abna to pick us up and drop us at work and Angie kindly took us to do our first supermarket shop, but having spent our first few days without a car we quickly decided both for flexibility and the ability to make the best of our time off we would hire a car. (approx 11000R £400 for 5 weeks) Driving was fine once we got used to the Stop signs and using the hard shoulder, taking care to avoid pedestrians who use the hard shoulder to walk on. The normal precaution of keeping the car doors locked is wise not only for reasons of theft but for the baboons who apparently can get into a car.

Ray and I were both nervous on our first day at Hazyview Digital Learning Centre (HDLC) but these nerves were soon put aside when we were invited to join the morning circle of meditation, course updates, song and dance and a "Happy Birthday" to one of the staff. All the facilitators made us feel very welcome. We then spent some time with Ryan, MD of GWF who could not have been more helpful. For the rest of the day we immersed ourselves in watching and where we could, helping the young children who were bussed in from local schools in swift rotation, to learn Maths and English on tablets and computers.

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Ryan met with us again and after talking further scoped out specific roles for each of us to undertake. This was reassuring and we certainly felt part of the team and were clear where we could best contribute.

We spent time both in HDLC and at the learning centre in rural Justicia (JDLC) Travelling to Justicia is an experience to see how rural communities live. The centre is smaller than the one in Hazyview and has a completely different feel. It is about an hour away, reached by dirt tracks. Whilst we often drove there we were always accompanied by a member of the team.

The mornings start at 7.45am with 'circle time', five minutes mediation, a quote, a song and exchange of information. A lovely way to start each day.

Ray spent the majority of his time working closely with two facilitators and a number of students. He mentored the facilitators and assisted with delivery of lessons in English and Conservation.



Ray & Catriona with the conservation team



one of Ray's training sessions

He also gave a couple of presentations about his role as a fire fighter and marked students' essays. Together with Mo we ran a training and team building session on Professionalism and Communication which was great fun.

I spent a lot of time supporting the media team, helping to write curriculum and editing blogs. I also started and ran a Women's circle where we discussed subjects such as abusive relationships, *labola* (bride price) and marriage and the impact and challenges of being an educated woman in South Africa. Following these meetings a number of the women came to share their personal stories with me.



the women's circle

I also mentored a number of staff and students. I worked with a number of facilitators in English lessons to help them with their teaching skills, worked with Teaman to help him write a business plan for his coffee shop and ran feedback sessions for all facilitators to find out how they viewed their roles and what support they needed. With one of the GWF trustees I reviewed job titles and roles and responsibilities across both centres so that a structure could be clarified and succession planning put in place.

Ray and I both visited a couple of rural schools to speak to students about our country, the importance of education and our careers. We also had an amazing visit to a Rhino sanctuary to visit students working there. (Note from 'people and places': GWF students working on the conservation programme)

If our experience is anything to go by, future volunteers will be matched to specific areas where they can help, depending on their skills. Having said this, there is every opportunity to assist anywhere across both centres. (Note: specific placement outlines are discussed and agreed before any placement, though adaptability and flexibility of approach allow for detailed additions or amendments to volunteer roles)

There have been no disappointments in our placements - although at times we had to be flexible if arrangements changed at short notice.

We had some great experiences at the weekends, visiting the whole of the Mpumalanga and Limpopo regions. To make the best of the time and to get out of town we usually stayed in a bed and breakfast or self-catering accommodation for the Saturday night. Of course the Kruger Park is right on the door step for a day or overnight visit. The surrounding areas are beautiful, easy to get to and make it worth hiring a car.

Ray and I were welcomed with open arms by everyone at GWF and given a sendoff party that brought all sorts of emotions to the surface. We have made friends and will miss the people we have worked with for the past six weeks.



I am sure it won't be until we return home that the full impact of what we have done, heard and seen will hit us.

Some general notes for volunteers:

Note: and if you have any questions about any of this – before or during your placements – please ask us and/or our local partners. You will have regular meetings with members of the GWF team while you are there, as well as emergency contact details, phone numbers, etc.

The house is in a secure, gated community. We also saw from the outside the bed and breakfast accommodation that is sometimes used to house volunteers. It looks lovely and has a pool.

There was often no water in the mornings but as long as you store water when it is available it is not too much of a problem.

The electricity went off a couple of times, and we established that there was a meter about twenty metres to the right of the bungalow on the road. The electricity needs topping up using a card at the local shop or Shell filling station. The key for the metre cupboard is on the bunch with the door keys.

Clothing: we were here in April and May when it was chilly in the mornings and hot in the day time. Wear lots of layers. No-one wears shorts to work, whether male or female.

It is customary in restaurants to ask to take any food you have left home.

A lap top or tablet will be useful.

Hiring a car will give much greater flexibility for food shopping and for time off.

If driving you might be stopped by traffic police who may want a bribe. This didn't happen to us but it is worth getting a brief from the tourist office who will give you a card with a telephone number to call. You need to have your driving licence with you and a photocopy of your passport is a good idea as you are often asked for the number at tourist sites.

Tipping. Apart from normal tipping in restaurants, staff at filling stations will clean your windscreen and fill up your car. They expect between 10 and 20R tip. In car parks someone will offer to look after your car and direct you when leaving. You don't have to tip but if you do 10R is good.

We didn't have to use it but there is apparently a good medical centre a few minutes away, although the nearest hospital is in Nelspruit.

Water - initially we drank the tap water and were fine but latterly it has turned brown so we have changed to bottled water.

Post - do not have anything sent via post whilst you are here, it is highly unlikely that you will receive it.

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