

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](mailto:kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

## Stephanie Foster - July 21 to Sept 16 at Treak Community Centre in Siem Reap

- *Pre-departure preparation, what did we do well?*

I believe that good communication throughout the placement process was well provided as a potential volunteer. The timeline matched what was mentioned on the website- no less than two to three months to match a volunteer- and my placement started shortly after that! I believe my skills and personality were matched well with my project. Honestly, I did not spend too much time looking into pre-project preparation information as most my 'feel' of a placement comes from orientation in person. Looking back on it again, it was good information and would be useful for volunteers who have not completely an international volunteer placement before.

**NOTE: we recommend reading the info we send as well as contacting previous volunteers – all of which forms part of every volunteer's preparation**

- *What could we do better? – and PLEASE don't hold back: surely there's something we can improve on*  
I think People & Places could improve the visual layout of the steps of securing a placement. I believe the information was great, but overall readability could be improved in a more visually pleasing format! i.e. handout with check boxes or something similar? ☺

**NOTE: we shall certainly consider your ideas, Stephanie**

- *your experience and work – including what resources you may have left behind and with whom – please attach copies of any written resources you may have left behind, and let us know of any others*

I had an incredibly wonderful experience with Treak Community Centre and ConCERT Cambodia. I enjoyed my time immensely and was able to quickly integrate into their work in the community! The staff members at ConCERT and Treak Community Centre were very supportive, kind and welcoming. During my time there, I assisted the head teacher with English classes, completed interviews regarding housing and education in the local community, and developed the framework for a nutrition program. I felt I could openly express my thoughts to local project staff members. ☺

**NOTE: the documents that Stephanie prepared will be available to future volunteers**

- *in your opinion, are there any significant changes needed in the information we sent to you during your preparation for this placement?*

There are no significant changes I can think of regarding placement preparation information.

- *your recommendations for the input of future volunteers – a particular area of your work which could be continued by others and how would you suggest this could be done?*

I believe the nutrition education program could continue to be developed and implemented within the school. The work I completed merely provided a beginning framework. On my last day, I completed a workshop with all of the staff members to teach about adequate nutrition. I provided classroom ideas, however future volunteers could expand by developing lessons for each level of class (nursery through advanced) that the teachers could use to teach the subject. The teachers at the school were interested in the subject, however they are extremely busy and may not have time to develop the program much beyond my initial framework.



*Stephanie with local staff, Dara & Pechey*

- *successes and disappointments of your placement*

There are many successes I feel occurred during my placement. I quickly learned that being a native English speaker was extremely useful for the students' pronunciation of words in the classroom. Developing relationships with local staff and community members is also a wonderful success— I enjoyed participating in a variety of activities at the community centre with them. Although the time I was in Siem Reap was limited, I was able to provide a basic framework for the research areas I came to work on. I have few disappointments to mention when it comes to my experience at my placement. Occasionally communication between staff members seemed to be lacking, so volunteers were left to wonder about their activities of the day or week, but these instances were resolved quickly - a practice in flexibility!

- *what was the highlight of your volunteer experience?*

The absolute best moments of my volunteer experience took place when I went into the local community with the head teacher to complete interviews regarding adequate housing and education. It was through those interviews that communication between Treak Community Centre and the students' parents improved and we were able to learn more about the needs of the students in their homes and community. The parents were very welcoming and eager to discuss their desires for their children—and provide insight into why education is important in their families. I believe this experience provided a strong cultural context for the students I was working with in the classroom and enhanced my overall experience greatly.

- *would you recommend volunteering to other people or not? please tell us why.*

I would absolutely recommend volunteering, but only for those that have the ability to be flexible and open-minded in their work. I practiced flexibility daily and cannot stress that enough when volunteering. I believe international volunteering expands your understanding of different cultures in ways that simply reading or discussing alone cannot do. It also allows for personal growth in many different ways. Most importantly, sharing skills to improve a community program can benefit many for years to come.

- *how did you spend your leisure time?*

I spent time with other volunteers exploring areas of the city of Siem Reap. During my time in Cambodia, I visited Angkor Wat Temple, a floating village, waterfalls and the island of Koh Rong Sanloem. I also took a ceramics class and went to a boxing restaurant! There are plenty of activities in the area, as well as an abundance of cafes, pools and massages for those who prefer to have a relaxing afternoon or weekend.

- *how was your accommodation?*

My accommodation was wonderful. I believe staying in Victory Guesthouse improved my experience and allowed me to interact with other volunteers and locals daily. Breakfast was provided and was always served timely. The guesthouse staff members were also always readily available and provided any information about tours or local surroundings.

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