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Volunteer Report Elsa Nevarro **Education for All June**

I looked for an organisation like people and places because I wanted to travel for some time while getting involved with the community and if possible giving something back. We discussed the placement and it seemed that the best placement for me would be Morocco considering my experience and interest in teaching and languages. I was happy to get involved with the Education for All project as I would work with young girls in rural Atlas. My placement was from the 8th of May until the 3rd of June, at the Dar Tinmel House in Talaat N'Yaakoub, Morocco.

I planned my backpack for a warm country while keeping in mind the cultural expectations (no tank tops or shorts). I wasn't sure what to expect and didn't have a lot of time to prepare as I was travelling beforehand, but it all went well. I packed clothes for about a week and was able to do my laundry there.

The explanations before the project were quite thorough but it was still a bit hard for me to know what to expect as it was my first journey outside of Europe. I planned in my travels for a few days before the project to explore the country but I wish I went straight to the project and explored afterwards, as I got to know the country and cultural aspects a lot more. I believe it could have helped me plan my solo travelling in a better way.

The discussions with the project organisation beforehand helped me feel comfortable with the local association. I arrived with Dianne to Talaat N'Yaakoub and it was nice to have that link with someone I had met online and the new place. I had a tour around the village and got to know some people. I had height difficulties for the first few days (headaches, tiredness) which made it a bit difficult to connect with the girls. I had a really nice room for myself with my own shower and toilet. It was all really nice and brand new, it felt like a luxury ! the tap water was drinkable in the building and we had really good food. (Note from people and places – Else volunteered in one of the remoter girls houses – so she stayed in the girls house)

I felt a bit shy at first, and unsure what my role was. I wasn't sure how to connect with the girls and what was expected of me. I then had a timetable for my time with some groups of girls and I started planning the different activities I could do with them. It was nice but I was a bit busy at the beginning and got a bit overwhelmed. The schedule changed depending on what we thought was good with Fatima, the Housemother. I spent a lot of time talking in English or French with the Assistant Housemother and we shared our cultural specificities and differences, it was really nice. I started to feel comfortable after 3 weeks and only stayed 4 weeks in total which was a shame. I think that for me the cultural shock was quite strong, especially starting in the city. It was also very hot and I preferred staying inside even though I wish I enjoyed the surroundings better. For two weekends, I stayed at the house because the girls stayed to study for the BAC exams. The first weekend I had a rest most of the weekend as I was a bit tired with the beginning of the project and the altitude. We went for a walk with the girls and I got to know

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them better. The second weekend, we went with the girls from the 1st year of BAC to the historical mosque and then had lunch on the side of the river, it was really nice. I really enjoyed that day. The third weekend I went to stay in Morocco for the weekend. It was nice but still a bit hard to navigate for me as a solo traveller. On my spare time in the week I prepared the activities for the girls, went to the souk and read.

I would recommend people to do such a project because I learned a lot of thing from it and I really enjoyed my time with the girls. I got to know them well, especially the girls from the lycée with who I could talk quite well and that was really nice. I felt like I could be useful to them most as they were preparing an exam and I knew how to help them. I would possibly recommend people have travelled to a similar country or address their expectations and knowledge of other countries to help with the adaptation.



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