

## Volunteer travellers can rest easy

More and more people are choosing to do voluntary work during their time off – whether at home or abroad, during their vacation, retirement or sabbatical.

Volunteer travel has for a long while been the choice for the pre-university middle class gapper and the ‘hippy trail’ traveller, but it has now become a seriously considered alternative for many more. It used to be true that such volunteer travel meant having to ‘rough it’ to a greater or lesser extent – accommodation was often cheap with minimum facilities and few creature comforts. It seemed to be tacitly understood that volunteering had to involve deprivation – of a comfortable bed, hot water, good food ...

NOT SO, says *people and places*

“Where the volunteer rests their head at night is only part of the equation – yes some of our volunteers choose projects where the only available accommodation is a tent, but many more have a range of options, and can choose to live with local families or in a locally owned guesthouse or in a hotel. We believe that effective and responsible volunteering is all about skills transfer – working with local people to help them build the future they want for themselves – and if volunteers are comfortable with their surroundings, they can achieve far more!”

All the hotels and guesthouses *people and places* recommends to volunteers are locally owned, employing local people under equitable conditions. This generates more income for local people – whether income for an individual family or for a hotel, it means real wealth to the wider community.

*people and places* is totally committed to ensuring that as much as possible of the volunteer’s hard earned cash reaches the local community – they say accommodation is just one part of ensuring that.

Comfort is an option:

In Nepal, some *people and places* volunteers work with a rural village community – whilst enjoying the luxury of a 5 star lodge hotel ... the world renowned Tiger Mountain Lodge.



In India, volunteers in Deogarh, Rajasthan, stay with the local royal family in the Mahal!

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Both the Lodge and the Mahal heavily subsidise the volunteer's stay as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Many operators such as Hands Up Holidays and the Ritz Carlton chain offer holidaymakers the opportunity to 'volunteer' for a few days whilst living in comfort – however, with **people and places**, volunteers are placed for at least a month.

“Some volunteers can even take the best of both worlds – staying with a family during the week and then treating themselves to creature comforts at the weekends. Part of our matching process is to encourage volunteers to be honest with themselves about the living conditions they need to function effectively. The homestay families that we work with are wonderful – they open their homes and their hearts to the volunteers, sharing their lives with them. Total privacy, hot water or an inside loo may not be among these gifts, so it's important that volunteers can choose their accommodation as well as their project. In some remote locations, there's no option other than a homestay, and it may not be right for everyone.



“Volunteering done right is emotionally challenging – and often exhausting. If you need a comfy bed, a hot shower and glass of wine at the end of a hard day, why deprive yourself? What does it prove? It certainly doesn't help local people.”

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Link to Nepal project – <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=211>

Link to India project – <http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/ProjectView.aspx?id=205>