

## Luxury Voluntourism Trips – can they be responsible?

‘Luxury Travel’ and ‘giving back’ may be considered a contradiction.

The pioneering responsible volunteer organisation **people and places** disagrees.

“Our answer is absolutely not. What is this perception that only the poor can help the poor - where did it come from? Surely it’s irrelevant where travellers come from or how they choose to travel. First class or economy class; luxurious accommodation or a simple homestay; servants or self-service – these are all matters of personal choice. What matters most, to both hosts and guests, is that they share their time and experiences together for their mutual benefit”, says Sallie Grayson, director at **people and places**

**people and places** have joined forces with Luxury Tour Operator **International Travel Connections (ITC)**

“**ITC** was keen to develop a programme where we and our clients could engage more closely with and give back to the places we visit. We wanted to ensure that the **ITC Giving Programme** would be meaningful and of real benefit - that’s why we chose to work with **people and places**” says Donna Okell, **ITC** director



The next conundrum - what on earth can be achieved in a week?

“We have spent 3 years working with our partners to identify how ‘voluntourists’ can make meaningful contributions in very short stays. Skills transfer, as such, is practically impossible - all too often short term volunteering to date has involved building something of questionable value or standing in a classroom. The ITC Giving programme is very different. It supports the ongoing work of the projects we work with and the long term volunteer programme” replies Sallie.

This is ‘voluntourism’ at its most responsible.

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**ITC Giving** travellers will -

- be informed and inspired - engage with the projects' decision makers - learn about the realities and context of their work - engage with beneficiaries - be immersed in the work of the project.

The projects will be able to -

- promote their work to engaged visitors - inform and inspire visitors - explain the context and realities of their work - engage with knowledgeable visitors - share the skills of the visitors - gain economic benefit

The programme will operate in South Africa, India, Morocco, Peru, The Caribbean and Thailand.

Sallie adds "The **ITC Giving** programme is not simply about 'volunteering'. It's about learning from the local experts and decision-makers about the everyday realities and challenges these projects face. This programme has been designed by local people, not by us. They have identified how they want to engage with the travelers, their visitors. The programme will run alongside the traditional volunteer programme - it is part of a sustainable whole. There is a great expression in Xhosa – 'Ubuntu', which roughly translates as 'I am, because you are' - a shared humanity - that is what this programme is about"

See <http://www.itcclassics.co.uk/itcgiving/default.aspx> for more information

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