

people and places: responsible volunteering

“offers a service of integrity to thinking people – people who want to use their skills and experience to make a real difference and know where and how their money is spent”

Our starting point for every project is the local community – their needs and those of the project are paramount. Only with a comprehensive understanding and respect for the community and the project will we match volunteers to placements.

We are committed to ensuring that as much as possible of the volunteer’s hard earned money reaches the host country, and is also used for the benefit of local well being and knowledge.

people and places is not run for the benefit of shareholders. Any annual profit remaining after all justifiable operating costs is covenanted to the Charity Travel Pledge.

We are committed to worthwhile and safe experiences for volunteers and local people.

Having assured ourselves that the projects are well managed and the managers are fully committed, we work closely with them to build careful profiles of their volunteer requirements. We take the same amount of care in learning about each volunteer, so that we can effectively select the most appropriate project, and that the local communities benefit as much as possible from the volunteers time, expertise and money.

We require all volunteers to undergo screening by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) or the international equivalent, to ensure the safety of vulnerable children and adults.

Our role is to enable volunteers and local communities to gain mutual benefits.

The Cape Town Declaration states that tourism should *‘actively involve the local community in planning and decision-making, and provide capacity-building to make this a reality.’*

We believe that this approach should also be applied to volunteering, and it is the way we work. Every one of the projects on our site originates in the local community – NOT with us! Working with our local partners, communities can identify specific projects where they need help – our job is to match individual volunteer skills to those needs.

To work effectively for local people, we work with local people – we work in full and open partnership with responsible and professional teams who have close links to their communities. Local teams know their communities far better than we ever could, can identify appropriate projects and understand their needs. They are also in the very best position to provide ongoing and professional liaison – thus maintaining responsible and sustainable volunteer experiences. They are the people on the front line – the people who care for volunteers during their short placements and work with the projects year after year.

We believe that sustainable development can be greatly advanced through such partnerships

people and places works with local communities in Africa, Asia, South America, The Caribbean and Europe.

"people and places has exercised leadership in a sector bedevilled by poor practice and established a replicable business model. Committed to reporting transparently on the money that volunteers pay, they ensure that the volunteers meet their full costs and are not a burden on the community; and carefully match the skills of volunteers to the needs of that community without replacing local labour. They have taken the ground breaking step of having their work externally audited and publishing it online. These four principles set not only a practicable standard for operators to aspire to, but offer valuable guidelines for tourists seeking legitimate and socially beneficial volunteering experiences."

Judges’ citation for the 2009 Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism awards

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WHO ARE WE?

Harold Goodwin

[Professor Harold Goodwin](#) is an acknowledged expert in responsible and sustainable tourism. He works with communities, governments, international funding agencies, and within the tourism industry to advance responsible tourism. Harold is Professor of Responsible Tourism Management, at the [International Centre for Responsible Tourism](#), Leeds Metropolitan University.

Harold is committed to enabling local communities and economically poor people to conserve their natural and cultural heritage through careful linking with responsible travellers. He firmly believes that economically poor communities and volunteers should be better served than is the case with the majority of existing volunteer recruitment organisations.

Harold is Chair of our non-executive Advisory Committee, the Committee that we report to and that keeps us on our toes in being responsible and accountable in all that we do.

To hear one of Harold's (many) speeches on Responsible Tourism please [click here](#)

Sallie Grayson

Sallie's volunteer experience includes work in The Gambia, coincidentally at the same time as Harold was working there on national tourism guidelines. Their fortunate meeting and subsequent discussions led them to pursue a better way to serve local communities and volunteers.

Sallie ran a niche marketing company for 20 years, and has served as a non-executive director and consultant in industries as varied as retail, finance, health and tourism. She has a proven record in direct marketing and business development. She has worked with communities in Africa to improve their economic welfare.

Sallie's own experiences as a volunteer, as well as the shared experiences of other volunteers and the communities in which they worked, left her frustrated and cynical about the volunteer industry, but also inspired by the potential benefits for volunteers and local communities ... and determined to do something!

Sallie is programme director, liaising with local people to identify appropriate volunteer programmes, and is responsible for the sustainability of these programmes.

Kate Stefanko

Kate has over 20 years' experience in the travel industry, including the development of cultural immersion tours for specialist UK travel companies. Kate has always placed particular emphasis on matching travellers' cultural experience to the need for sustainable and empowering experiences for their hosts.

Kate holds a firm belief in the inherent ability of individual people to achieve great things. She is repeatedly humbled and inspired by what individual volunteers achieve, and gains great rewards through past, present and future volunteers sharing their experiences and knowledge.

Kate is placement director, matching the skills and abilities of individual volunteers to the specific needs of projects.

To our combined academic, strategic, commercial and people skills, we bring a grounded passion for the importance of travelling to make a difference.