

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

Paul Slade – People and Places Placement Report

Placement dates and project

Good Work Foundation, Hazyview, South Africa from 27th April 2018 to 29th June 2018.

Pre-departure preparation

We received information about the project from People and Places including placement reports from three previous volunteers. We also had a helpful meeting with Dianne Ashman (**note – Dianne is volunteer programme advisor at 'people and places'**) who gave us written, photographic and verbal information about GWF, Hazyview and the surrounding area. I was in touch by email with Ray, a previous volunteer who provided me with a lot of helpful information and advice about both the project and South Africa.

Orientation and preparation at the start of the placement

I flew to Nelspruit where I picked up a car and drove to Hazyview. Kate Groch (CEO) had provided me with directions to the accommodation. (They live in the same compound.) She and Mo (her mother) were there to meet me and, after an hour's rest, we went for lunch. It turned out that the centre was not open until the following Wednesday (I arrived on a Friday) because of public holidays. I might have left a couple of days later had I known this (but I had booked the flights well in advance). Kate and Mo were very welcoming and supportive, inviting me round to their house for meals and chats during the holiday period.

Note: we always do our best to find out about school holidays and closures before finalising any volunteer's placement, and will continue to work closely with our local partners to improve – we rely on their providing accurate information – it's good to hear that our local partners at GWF stepped up for Paul.

I joined the morning circle on my first day, had a tour of the centre at Hazyview and met (many) staff and arranged private chats with those I would mainly be working with. During the first week I mainly observed and participated in what was happening at the centres whilst sorting out my programme of work. I went to the satellite centres on Tuesdays and Thursdays and was at Hazyview the rest of the week. I went with Mo on my first visit to Justicia and Abna came with me as a passenger on my first visit to Huntington. Thereafter I gave staff lifts if they needed to go to the satellite centres, but I was OK travelling alone (until my wife Jacky arrived). Maria was formally my main contact in GWF. I met her during my first week and was in regular, but not very frequent, contact with her throughout.

Generally speaking the preparation was fine. There were no surprises and the information I received prior to departure was very helpful. Some of the volunteer reports had a strong emphasis on security issues. Although there are obviously some issues even in Hazyview, I never felt threatened or insecure during my time there (see later comments).

Experience and Work

I was at Hazyview for a total of nine weeks. My main programmed activities were:

Classroom support in English sessions in the Bridging Year Academy (the sessions for older students) across the three campuses

Development sessions for facilitators in BYA and to a lesser extent in the Open Learning Academy (the service for school age learners)

Management development sessions for coordinators and Heads of Campus across the three sites

A review of BYA English Year Programme

I also did some 'ad hoc' work:

Involvement in some of the Career Interest Profile sessions which took place whilst I was at Hazyview, assisting students with the completion of questionnaires and acting as a facilitator at Prof Maree's presentations (two of which took place during my period with GWF).

I assisted slightly with Jacky's review of the GWF mentoring scheme.

I was involved in some of the reading groups at Hazyview and also gave individual support to improve one staff member's reading skills.

I tried to support staff who were involved in distance learning from Antioch University.

I assisted with shortlisting for a new Operations Manager post.

Jacky and I did a couple of slideshow presentations to the BYA students at Huntington and Justicia on what it's like living in England.

Are there any significant changes needed in the information we sent to you during your preparation for this placement?

No.

Recommendations for the input of future volunteers

Training on teaching and facilitation skills – particularly (though not only) as regards English teaching

Mentoring support for new managers within the organisation and staff development more generally.

Supporting facilitators in working with less advanced and less motivated learners

Teaching English to young learners (primary level teaching)

Successes and Disappointments of your placement

What I did was I think reasonably successful and I was very happy with the placement and I think the people I worked with were happy too. I had no disappointments. If I had known what I know now about GWF at the beginning of the placement, I would have done things slightly differently but that is in the nature of things.

What was the highlight of your volunteer experience?

Mainly it was wonderful to be accepted as (almost) part of the furniture by the brilliant staff of the centres and to feel part of the GWF family.

One highlight was when, during my last week, following some preparatory work I had done with BYA facilitators at Huntington, the students put on wonderfully lively performances of a 'playlet' which formed part of the English programme. This seemed to complete a transition on the facilitators' part from 'teaching from the front of the class' to getting the students to use their own skills and creativity.

My shot at singing in Tsonga in the morning circle was also a sort of highlight.

Would you recommend volunteering to other people or not?

Of course. Volunteering gives the opportunity to test your abilities and knowledge in a new environment, to support work being done by committed and talented staff in sometimes difficult circumstances and to learn as you contribute what you can to their endeavours.

How did you spend your leisure time?

We travelled in Mpumalanga and Limpopo at weekends and at the end of the placement. We spent quite a lot of time in Kruger which is fantastic if a bit expensive to stay overnight. There's not much to do in Hazyview in the evening (shops/restaurants). In June/July the sun sets at about 6pm and it often gets quite chilly once it's dark. Restaurant food is great, and cheap to a person from the UK, as is beer and wine. Portions are copious. We ate a lot. Vegetarianism is a bit of a challenge but not impossible. We compromised a bit.

No one (white) walks in the street at night (or during the day for that matter) and there are no public open spaces you can use to walk or run, so you can feel as if you are under house arrest at times. On the other hand, Kate and Mo are extraordinarily hospitable and we had an almost embarrassing number of meals with them. We met other volunteers who were around during the placement. There is a Hazyview Parkrun which is fun and takes place in beautiful surroundings. I was first in my age category three times (but then there were only four people max in my age category!)

It would be hard to spend an extended period at Hazyview as a singleton volunteer, I think, just because of the limited opportunities for social activity outside work. I was surprisingly glad when Jacky finally arrived.

If you are staying for more than a week or two, you definitely need a car. Watch out for the 'Stops'. You can be fined R2000 if you fail to come to a complete halt at them, whatever the traffic conditions. Driving is fairly straightforward, but you need to be ready for the unpredictable at all times. Minibus taxis have particularly strange driving conventions.

How was your accommodation?

Fine. The volunteer bungalow is in a gated compound. It has two bedrooms (one double, one twin), a lounge/kitchen and a bathroom. There's washing machine. You can sit on the balcony which is equipped with a barbecue (or rather a 'braai'). You need a key card for entry and exit. I was a bit surprised early on when I went for a run to find that I couldn't get out. Guards patrol during the night. The flashlights they use are a bit surprising at 3am, if you don't know they are going to be there.

There must be some security issues I guess but I never felt insecure in Hazyview. I didn't go out on foot much after dark and I didn't go off the beaten track at night in the car. There are lots of big houses with walls, razor wire and armed-response security which makes you feel a bit strange. Huge and obvious disparities in wealth breed fear in the wealthy, some of which is no doubt justified. I'd say just be sensible and don't worry.

Please note – this report is supplied by a former volunteer and the contents are intended solely for your information and personal use. *people and places* has permission to publish this information to you as a future volunteer. Please check with us if you would like to publish it beyond your own circle of friends and family. Thank you.