

Award winning ethical, responsible, sustainable volunteer travel



Spring newsletter 2015

Editorial



As it`s a new year we thought we would have a new format and layout for the newsletter, so yours truly has had to get his head around working with a new template, apparently you can teach an old dog new tricks! Hope you enjoy it.

Nigel Pegler

Any comments and volunteer experiences welcome at newsletter@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

You want to volunteer – but think we're ignoring you ???



Have you sent a volunteering enquiry and (seem to have) heard nothing us? Please believe us – we've DEFINITELY sent you an email or two!

If your email address is one of these: @gmail ... @hotmail ... @yahoo ... you are more than likely to find our emails in the 'spam' 'trash' or 'junk' folder !

While we're delighted to know that your service provider is avoiding your being spammed, this has recently presented recurrent problems ... but the projects need you and don't want to lose you!

We've posted the following message on our own website - both the [contact us](#) & [register](#) pages ...

"Important: In order to ensure you receive emails from people & places please add kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk to your safe sender or contact list on mail providers such as GMail, Yahoo and Hotmail/Live"

So - please check your 'spam' or 'junk' folder.

And if you email kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk she will reply to your email and the link will be made :)

Volunteer social



"Come and meet other volunteers and local partners at our Head Office"

OK well head office is Kate's home but please do come. Put the date in your diary

Saturday - November 7th 2015 Faversham Kent.

We will send out email invitations and more details in April - but we know what busy lives our volunteers lead.

This is an opportunity to meet lots of previous volunteers , some of our local partners and of course the people and places team.

If you have never been to one of these socials - please do try to make it - everyone always tells us what an inspiring time they have and how much they value being able to talk to people who have already volunteered - and we serve great snacks!

Places are always limited (Kate's home remember!).

So drop kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk a note as soon as you can.

Latest news from our volunteer projects

This time we have news updates from our projects in Kenya, Swaziland, India, South Africa, Cambodia and Saint Lucia. (these updates comes from Dianne, Volunteer Programme Advisor)

Remember – if you have news from the projects abroad where you've worked, please share your news with us – we would love to share it with other volunteers.

KENYA



Our project in Kenya is at [Gede Special School](#). The head-teacher of the school has sent us the following report:

GEDE SPECIAL SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT

Government report on education

One of the good news that has been received of late is the recent release of education report that hopes to reduce the cost of taking a child with disability to school. The report contains a clause that aims to tremendously reduce the cost of educating children with disability. Currently the cost of educating a child with special need is over 76,000 a year. This price could not be met by the large number of poor families with needy children. Once adopted, the fee charged in schools taking care of disabled children could come down to Kes 38,000, half of what is currently paid.

Campaign against discriminating children with disability

Good media coverage has of late fallen on the people living with disability. Of interest to most journalists is how the children with such conditions are looked after. Different conditions have been highlighted with parents to such children encouraged to look after them like any other child. Such actions have encouraged most parents to take their children to school, a complete reverse as most of them used to hide them from public. The result of this has been noted with Gede Special School receiving a number of pupils at the beginning of the year.

Better Performance posting from last year's exams

This time round, good performance was posted by the school in regard to the students that were admitted into secondary school. Nearly 50% of the students who sat their Kenya certificate for Primary education exams were admitted into high school with three hearing impaired students from the school joining national school.

This performance was a reflection of improvements noted from March of last year. Attribution was given to new teaching technical and adoption of storytelling as a way of reaching to the students. This method was introduced by people and places volunteer Mrs. Coulson .

SWAZILAND

Our local partners in Swaziland, All Out Africa, have sent us their annual report for 2014, which includes information about the Neighbourhood Care Points where some of our volunteers have worked. This year they have focused on improving the infrastructure of the care points through their 'Build a Future' programme, and on sports development for the children. The following is an extract from their report:

Sports Development



. . our sports development programs continue to impact the children of Swaziland in a positive and meaningful way. Through play and games at our local Neighbourhood Care points, more than 300 children are exposed to basic fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping throwing while learning valuable life skills at the same time.

Our passionate coaches and international volunteers play a critical role in facilitating these daily morning activities with the children. Concepts such as teamwork, communication and increased self-confidence have all been identified as a result of our programs with the pre-schools. Moreover, in 2014, we continued to expose our children to a variety of sporting codes including swimming lessons, cycling, and horseback vaulting with nearby facilities and support from our community partners.

Build a Future Program

Through immense collaboration between our international volunteers, local staff and local community members, 2014 has proven to be a productive year in our building program. New buildings were constructed, classrooms and kitchens restored, gardens cultivated and much more. Working primarily out of six Neighbourhood Care Points our Foundation team seeks the need for building improvements, whether they are classrooms or homes to support our sponsored children and families. As a result of this year's build-a-future program we can attest to safer, cleaner learning environments, healthier and sustainable livelihoods through our food security and gardening initiatives. We have sourced funding support from the Swaziland Charitable Trust and can give immense gratitude to our volunteers for their hands-on and financial support.

INDIA

We give our congratulations to two teachers from Chitardai School, Mr Mukesh Paliya and Mrs Laxmi Tanwer, who have been promoted to secondary school level. All our volunteers at Chitardai have worked with these teachers, especially Mukesh who taught English. In a personal email to me Mukesh expressed his thanks to all these volunteers for helping him improve his English and for showing him different ways of teaching; he tells us he is using all these methods in his new school and is very popular among the students.

SOUTH AFRICA

Bad news from Emmanuel Care Centre, where many of our volunteers have worked in the past:

"Some bad news - our office was broken into last night and lots of things are missing. The cash for the crèche children's food and for buying the compost for our kitchen garden, the laminator, computer, coffee, salt and all sorts. We are all very sad. We have contacted the newspaper. Whoever is doing this needs to know what damage they cause us and this community."

We give our best wishes to everyone who does such amazing work at Emmanuel, and to Calabash our local partners there.

CAMBODIA

In Cambodia our volunteers work at Grace House Community Centre, and they have also sent us their latest newsletter. The extracts below tell us some of their latest news:

"As part of our commitment to ensuring Grace House Community Centre is locally lead Bridget stepped down from the role of Project Manager on 1st January and Rith took over this position. Rith has been studying a MA in Project Management and will be mentored by Bridget over the next few months. Bridget continues at GH in the role of Technical Adviser committed to building the disability services, fundraising, donor reporting and assisting the local staff.

We said sad farewells to 2 staff members teacher Preyrom and social worker Sarann, both left for family reasons and we wish them all the best. We are still looking for a new social worker to assist Dani but welcome teacher Rongla to the GH team. We also welcome Curriculum Developer - Devona from USA who will develop the older students curriculum and support the volunteers across the education programme. With Rith's promotion the position of head teacher has been given to Loung.

Well Done

We are very proud to announce that Samnang and Srey Lis have been accepted to study medicine at the University of Health Science in Phnom Penh.

All the students who completed their studies at Grace House in November have now found work. Most are working in the hospitality trade. Two have gone to university in Siem Reap, one is learning to repair mobile phones and one is learning air conditioning."

SAINT LUCIA

One of our projects in Saint Lucia is to work with the Saint Lucia National Trust.

The report below is taken from one of the local papers:



"The Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT) successfully excavated 4 cannons at the Apostles Battery located at the Morne Fortuné Historic Area on Friday, March 6, 2015.

The Apostles Battery, along with the batteries at La Toc and Vigie, was an important part of the defences of the Castries Harbour and Saint Lucia generally during the battles between the British and French.

The cannons which are 9" rifled muzzle loading guns, were commissioned in 1892 and decommissioned in 1905 after hostilities between the British and French ended.

This particular site is one of notoriety and the re-mounting of the guns is part of the overall development plans for the Morne Historic Area. Mr. Godfrey Weir, a British civil engineer, seconded to SLNT as a Volunteer from 'People and Places' developed and executed the restoration plan.

With the help of a 50 ton crane supplied by Philgence Transport the four guns, each 4 meters long and weighing 12.2 tonnes were lifted from their buried locations and placed onto the emplacements originally constructed to accommodate them.

The guns will next be de-rusted and protective coatings applied to preserve them.

This site will be further developed and public access created to allow for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Remember – if you have news from the projects you have worked with that you haven't yet shared with us, please do – we would love to share it with other volunteers.

NEW volunteer programme in Peru

We are very excited to announce a new opportunity for educators, business people and those with practical skills to volunteer with us in Peru.



Students at the institute

This project is located in the town of Salvación, capital of the Manu Province, and is based at the local further education college, the Instituto de Educacion Superior Tecnológico Público Manu. The Institute is the only source of further education in the Manu Province, but teaching staff lack support and training, and resources are limited and out of date.

The aim of the education programme is to transform the Institute into a centre of excellence in Sustainable Land Management and Responsible Tourism by supporting teacher capacity building, practical skill development and school enterprise. Building the capacity of teachers is vital for long-term success and help is needed to improve their skills, techniques, and resources, particularly in English and industry-specific skills.

The Manu Biosphere Reserve encompasses almost the entire watershed of the Manu river, from tributaries that start high in the Andes down to the lowland Amazonian rainforests that stretch to the Atlantic. Its geography, biodiversity and indigenous communities not only make it a compelling destination but also a valuable cultural, scientific and economic resource. The Manu Biosphere Reserve has remained relatively protected because of limited access routes.

[Read more about how you could become involved here](#)

Want to volunteer in adult education or mentor entrepreneurs? Here`s the project for you



Share your education and training skills to help local people build better livelihoods and business opportunities for themselves.

Volunteer with an internationally recognised tourism college in a project to help create local wealth, through trade not aid.

[Check out the volunteer project here](#)

I decided to volunteer with people and places because you are a truly responsible company



This review from a responsible travel expert makes us proud!

I decided to volunteer again with people & places because you are a truly responsible company that delivers to its promises. From the minute I spoke to you about the possibility to go to South Africa until now I felt supported, well advised and appreciated for the skills I could bring to the placement. The fact that you maintain an excellent network of people who share the same values and ethics in regards to responsible tourism makes your company stand out amongst other volunteer companies. You DO care and this gets reflected in every aspect of the experience, before, during and after the placement. Keep up the great work you're doing!

I was not made to feel like a 67– year old retiree looking for something to do

We had to share this lovely piece from previous volunteer Peter.



Peter and co volunteer Mel

LITTLE did I realise what the outcome would be when I responded to an advertisement in the Daily Telegraph inviting would-be volunteers to take the plunge.

I had never heard of people and places let alone the dynamic duo, Kate and Sallie.

It seemed a good way to visit a part of the world I had dreamed about since childhood.

How can I best describe my initial conversation with Kate? It was warm, welcoming and – most important – enthusiastic. I was not made to feel like a 67-year-old retiree looking for something to do with my spare time. She made me feel that I was already a vital cog in the people and places engine. Age did not matter; what I had to give was the important part.

I have always believed that without enthusiasm any plans are dead in the water. Unless the person displays this, there is no chance of it turning into inspiration. There was no danger of this happening. My every idea was listened to and encouraged and in some ways improved upon thanks to Kate's past experiences. Every step of my way to becoming a 'bona fide' volunteer was eased by her. My inane questions were always treated with respect and care. Any annoyances of officialdom were sorted out calmly and with confidence.

The path to my volunteering could not have been smoother.

On my return both Kate and Sallie were eager to learn of my experiences, their enthusiasm being as great as ever. When we met for what might be described as a de-brief, I knew I had made the right decision after reading that notice in the Telegraph.

Now, seven years down the line after my initial volunteering expedition, I am still in touch with Kate who is always ready to help and advise when I prepare to return for another dose of this most wonderful life-lengthening tonic. For example when I decided to turn my English lessons into a newspaper, with the children becoming reporters both Kate and Sallie encouraged me. The children write the stories and I correct the copy – in their presence – and when we have enough we publish a newspaper. Their suggestions were always sound and helped to improve the exercise.

Kate and Sallie have become my friends – inspirational friends. Who could ask for more?

Volunteering can be life - changing - not always a cliché

Yes, it may sound like a cliché, but when volunteers are well-prepared and their placements are well-planned, volunteering can indeed be a life-changing experience ... as volunteer Nicki writes below, following her third placement:



volunteering can be life changing

["Volunteering in Cambodia"](#) was the most amazing experience and SO different to being at the foot of the the Himalayan mountains. I want to return to both AND see more of the world, so what on earth do I do next! I would love to see Marcus, Hari and [Amar Jyoti](#) staff again, and yesterday had an email from Siem Reap asking when I was coming home! It was so touching and a lovely email to wake up to.

"I don't think I did Grace House or Michael ('people and places' local partner) justice in my post-placement report. I heaped praise on dear Deb (owner of guest house) but Michael got rather left out - I hope he knows how much I appreciated his kindness, help and support. I also failed to mention Dianne who was incredibly helpful, and 'always there' to answer questions about the project prior to my departure.

"I had volunteered twice previously with 'people and places' and again Kate and Sallie made sure that I was well prepared. When I had to postpone my planned Cambodia placement, they could not have been more understanding and sympathetic.

I knew from my very first contact with Kate and Sallie that I was in safe hands. Kate builds up close relationships with prospective volunteers, she is careful to match skills and experience to the right project, and is at the end of the phone for support and advice. You will learn about yourself and perhaps be more interested in, and more interesting to others.



"Volunteering with 'people and places' leaves a lasting impression and for me it was a life-changing experience – at 65.

"If in doubt, go for it!"

Ethical volunteering in South Africa - community needs are key



"Our programs are not designed to meet the expectations of volunteers to do 'something new'.

Our programs meet the needs of the communities in which we work."

Paul Miedema, our local partner at Calabash in South Africa, wrote this excellent article about the priorities for ethical volunteering.

<http://www.tourism-watch.de/content/entwicklungsprioritaeten-verteidigen>

The article is in German, but there's a translate button at the top right of the article,

Well said, Paul :)

We wanted to experience an altogether different dimension of South African life

Volunteers Maggie and Bob tell their story of their time [volunteering in Port Elizabeth South Africa-](#)



So, did you have a good holiday? You were away for quite a time weren't you?

- Yes about five weeks, but it wasn't.....

- South Africa. You went to South Africa, didn't you? Garden route? My wife and I did that a couple of years ago. Very beautiful. Did you start at Cape Town or Port Elizabeth?

- We were in Port Elizabeth.

- Yes, worth a brief stopover before you take to the road, I suppose.

- Well, we didn't really leave Port Elizabeth...

- How come? What do you mean? You stayed there for five weeks? What was the problem?

- No problem at all. On the contrary, PE is a fantastic place to stay. I was trying to tell you. We weren't exactly on holiday.... We were working.

- Working? I thought you had retired a long time ago.

- Yes, but we decided to come out of retirement for a special project.

- A special project? Sounds intriguing, tell me more.

- Well, we were teaching in a township school....

- Oh.....

This dialogue, partly imagined, partly real, is the kind of normal post-holiday chit-chat that we have engaged in frequently since our return from South Africa a few weeks ago. It is a conversation that suddenly takes an unusual turn.

It is at about this point in the exchange - reference to the township school - that there is a slight pause while our interlocutor takes a few moments to adjust to this unfamiliar situation, where the superficial aspects of everyday conversation give way to more thoughtful questioning and genuine analysis of this incredible 'holiday' experience.

Actually, holiday it was not.

When you opt for a volunteer experience, you know that you are committing to a different rhythm from that of a relaxing vacation. We spent four weeks as volunteer teachers in the township of Kwadwesi. The leisurely pace of retired life was cast aside for the duration. Early morning commuting, a hectic working day, followed by evening lesson preparation and marking, these were the routines that re-established themselves into the pattern of our lives.

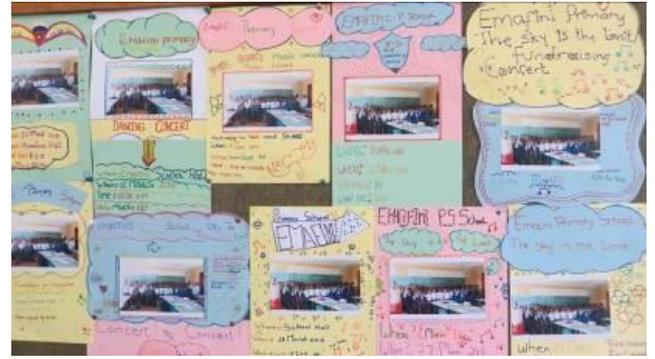
We had spent our working lives in education, beginning in secondary schools then making transitions into further and higher education. This time, however, our teaching had to be geared for a very different setting and for a totally different age-range - primary school children. Fortunately, teaching skills really are transferable and we adapted relatively quickly to the educational needs of the learners of Grade 5 and Grade 6. What was more problematic was coping with the age and ability ranges and the lack of classroom space.

But those issues were nothing compared to the challenges facing many of the children outside school. Emafini Primary School serves several communities. Adjacent to the school are comparatively comfortable bungalows, built during the Apartheid years to house government workers, but just a short distance away begins the sprawl of shacks in the informal settlements where the worst living conditions can mean no running water or electricity.

It was from here that many of the children walked every day to school. At school, at least, they could get a bowl of porridge at seven o'clock and a ladle or two of beans at lunch-time. Some of the children had lost one or both parents through disease and were living with grand-parents or aunts and uncles; some were suffering themselves because of earlier malnutrition or other health problems but all were doing their best to learn their school lessons.



Education is perceived as critically important in Xhosa culture and English as a tool for self-improvement in a society with very high unemployment rates. But there are still many barriers to learning. Class-size is always a significant variable in research into educational achievement. What chance then for children who, at the age of 10-12 are still in classes of over fifty learners? This large audience also affects the ability, and willingness, of educators to try modern methods of teaching in which pair- and group-work are the norm. Movement around the classroom is inhibited by lack of space so rote-learning and choral repetition become standard procedures - accepted with remarkable patience by pupils - and, for teachers, a far safer device for maintaining discipline than potentially noisy active learning. It is true that any large group of children, if allowed too much freedom in the classroom, will become potentially disruptive. However, we found that these children, initially rather reticent and wary, made the switch from passive learning to active engagement and production quite smoothly.



We were able, we think, to convince the teachers with whom we were placed that pupils can respond encouragingly and respectfully to more adventurous activities such as designing posters in groups for display purposes, role-plays and quizzes - not to mention learning games and singing - for vocabulary acquisition of course! It would take much longer than the short month we were in the school for some of our communicative language teaching strategies to become embedded in the repertoire of 'our' educators and much longer again for us to affect in any way the teaching of English across the school. We did run a workshop for English teachers on 'Planning and Practice in English as an Additional language' and, as it turned out, most of the staff were keen to investigate what we had to offer. However, some seeds of change may have been planted and, who knows, there could be a second sowing at some time in the future.

[The main idea behind the Port Elizabeth schools' project is for volunteers to work closely with each assigned teacher](#), sharing lesson-planning and delivery, thus working with rather than instead of the normal teacher. It should be a shared learning experience, ultimately to the benefit of the learners themselves. The local charity that *people and places* works with, Calabash, are particularly keen to improve parental engagement with their children's education. Historically, there appears to have been some reluctance among parents to visit schools let alone to get involved with supporting children's learning through volunteer participation, for example, in supporting reading programmes. As early as our second day at the school, the Principal asked us, along with another volunteer, to talk to parents. This event - a workshop entitled 'English language learning: How can you help?' - was intended to set out a few practical ideas for supporting their children's homework, vocabulary learning, reading and writing, and so on. We expected to present to two or three small groups. How low our expectations proved to be! Over **four hundred** parents turned up at the allotted time and many had to listen and watch by the classroom doors as we demonstrated our ideas to this unprecedented mass audience.



As a result of this initial meeting, some parents came forward offering to take on a small volunteer role either in their community or at the school.

With more *people and places* volunteers going to the school later this year, there is a real hope that some of the enthusiasm demonstrated by the parents at this meeting will be channelled into continuing contacts with the school. Parent volunteers may not be a new concept but the real test will be to ensure the continuity of any programmes that are set up in the future.

So how, you might ask, does the dialogue in the introduction to this article end?

Well, the most difficult question is often the last one: why did you volunteer?

Everyone has personal reasons for volunteering and that applies as much to a husband and wife team as to individuals. We do, however, share similar values and luckily want to explore similar new experiences. When confronted by the 'why' question, no straightforward phrase can capture the complex reasoning behind the decision to volunteer. Neither can a simple adjective describe the daily flood of emotions which we encountered during our time in Port Elizabeth.

If we try to summarise our feelings, we end up speaking in paradoxes.

You know the kind of thing: 'exhausted but invigorated', 'frustrated but rewarded', 'saddened but optimistic', 'helpless but empowered'.

Our friends know that we 'did' the garden route in 2014. If they ask us why we went back to South Africa in 2015, we tell them that we wanted to experience an altogether different dimension of South African life.

We are not just interested in *places* but in the *people* who live in them.

Margaret and Bob

people and places talk at Kings College London - a report from volunteer and KCL alumna Anke



In early March, Sallie, Dianne and I were invited to give a talk to tourism and development students at King's College London. The idea for this shared event developed through a couple of meetings with the Tourism, Environment and Development course Leader Dr. Ruth Craggs, who is very interested and supportive in building bridges between students and practitioners, and creating opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience from King's alumni, such as myself.

Anke on a radio show in The Gambia

What I liked most about the session is that everyone made us feel very welcome and that the students seemed really engaged and asked lots of interesting questions, creating an open and vibrant atmosphere.

The afternoon started with Sallie setting the scene by providing some background on responsible volunteering, which ultimately seeks to 'maximise positive impacts and to minimise negative ones' (Cape Town Declaration 2002).

She then gave [practical tips](#) about how to easily distinguish responsible volunteer organisations from the black sheep in the industry, for example checking if there is full transparency where volunteer and project money is spent or how quick booking functions without requesting background checks or any professional or personal information are a sign of an irresponsible volunteer company.

I know from my own volunteer experience that the thorough skill matching process people and places undertake before they confirm any placement is vital for the success of any volunteer project, for both, local partners and for the volunteer.

Dianne then gave an overview about the several countries where people & places offer volunteer opportunities. She explained some projects in detail, including what skills are needed by local partners in the various destinations.

Her presentation highlighted that creating tailor-made volunteer projects to meet the needs of both, the community and the volunteer are at the heart of what people & places are doing.

I personally found hearing about [the boarding house projects in Morocco](#), where girls from the Berber tribes in the Atlas mountain region receive secondary school education, very inspiring. It's a fantastic achievement that the pass rate in 2014 was 93%, and that eight girls went on to university.

The Gambia's '[Wealth creation through tourism](#)' project is another great example how volunteering can support local education providers, businesses and communities. The Gambian people involved, especially Adama Bah and Lamin Bojang, are very close to my heart after I had the opportunity to collaborate with them for my Master research in 2013.

In the final presentation of the day I reflected on my own experience as a volunteer and researcher, which brought Sallie and Dianne's examples to life, and confirmed that people & places actually do what they say they do.



I gave an insight into how my research topic developed, what the challenges and benefits were in conducting research framed in a volunteer placement in rural Gambia, and finally how this all resulted in [an award winning Masters dissertation](#), and consequently in a rewarding career in Responsible Tourism, plus more recently in a PhD studentship.

The students and Ruth confirmed that they very much enjoyed the talks, and we enjoyed being surrounded by bright, inquisitive and enthusiastic people. The students found the information provided useful for planning future volunteer trips, either as part of their degrees or as skilled volunteers outside university.

I would like to encourage more universities and other organisations to provide the opportunity for events like this, as hearing about how volunteering can be done responsibly, what can be achieved when skilled volunteers support local project needs, and how this can lead to long lasting fruitful relationships, provides the encouragement and factual background many people might be looking for when considering volunteering.

P.S. from Sallie - Anke went on to volunteer with our local partner in South Africa - [read a paper they wrote together here](#)

If you haven't already spotted our YouTube channel it's worth a look. There are video interviews from volunteers and if you have videos of your time volunteering or one of the talks you have done – we know many of you talk to groups on your return from volunteering – please send them to us so we can share them.

click the logo



meet the *people and places* team [here](#)



[Take a look here at slideshare for slide shows from volunteers](#) – if you have a slide show to share please do send it to us, thanks so much to all the volunteers who have contributed to date.

Remember we are on facebook too - [follow us here](#) – in the blog and on facebook are where we tend to post our latest news.

If you like beautiful pictures and funny visuals we are also on [pinterest – follow us here](#)

and finally we are tweeting too – [follow us here](#)