

Being a Tourist Just Isn't Enough!



Question:

I need a holiday, but being a tourist just isn't enough! I want to *really* get to know the country and the people – I'd love to spend part of my holiday doing some community work ('voluntourism' I think they call it) but I hear so many stories about short trips being of no use to anyone. I can only spare a week or so as part of my holiday. Any ideas?

Answer:

EXPLORE! – the leading UK adventure tour operator – is offering a series of new community engagement trips for 2011, in partnership with award-winning volunteer organisation *people and places*. These great trips offer you opportunities to give something back to the places you visit and *really* get to know local people at the same time!

This is an exciting and innovative partnership – EXPLORE! has 30 years' experience of creating small-group travel experiences, with a powerful commitment to ensuring that you have close up and personal experiences throughout your trip. *people and places* is a campaigning volunteer recruitment organisation that seems to relish taking on the status quo and shouting "we're not putting up with this, and neither should you!"

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They started the 'questions you should ask' campaign for potential volunteers and recently underwent an independent audit of their claims – all part of an ongoing campaign for better experiences for local people and volunteers.

The new trips, of 2 to 3 weeks, include about a week of involvement with community work. So you get your holiday and some hands-on time in a local community. The groups work in projects that are supported year round by *people and places* – they're in it for the long haul, so there are no worries about sustainability.

EXPLORE! has added "tourism experiences that are appropriate". In South Africa, for example, the community work is with pre schools and after school clubs in the townships. The tourist element includes trips to Soweto, Robben Island and District 6, presenting travellers with the country's recent history as a context for their community work in the project.

You can choose from trips to India, Nepal or South Africa – take a look at <http://www.explore.co.uk/activities-experiences/discovery-culture/experiential-tours> for more info.

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