

HAKUNA MATATA

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Teaching student from Belgium gains experience while volunteering in a Kenyan school



24-year-old Pieter-Jan Vanlerberghe, a teaching student from Belgium, decided to travel to Kenya to volunteer at the Teaching Project with Projects Abroad in order to gain some practical experience and do something worthwhile over his holiday. Pieter embarked on a 2 month volunteering experience where he taught history at Sure 24, a home for street children, and Crater Primary School, local primary school in Nakuru. "I did not want to travel as a tourist because, besides working, I also wanted to experience the culture."

During his stay, and working at 2 placements, Pieter's presence has been of great help especially to the younger pupils: "I noticed that the method of teaching here is very different, teachers simply read out their material from the book and let the pupils copy, I like letting my class think for itself. I give them a situation and let them relate to it; which according to me is a better way of teaching."

His background in teaching has come in handy during his stay in Kenya; but at the same time Pieter has learnt a lot by working at this two placements: "Being allowed to run a class of 55 kids, aged between 10 and 14 years old, on my own has taught me how to handle a big group of children and also how to keep the students attentive without punishment. Although there have been some challenges; it has been an experience I am grateful for and happy to gain. The experience I have gained here in the Kenyan classroom will definitely be beneficial for me back home in Belgium."

Living with a host family has helped Pieter integrate with the local community easily: "My host mum is calm, laid back and she gives you space and freedom as long as you don't abuse it. I am also very social which has helped me fit in well since Kenyans are very social and caring. In Kenya, strangers say hi on the streets!"

After 2 months in Kenya, Pieter has not only gained practical experience in the classroom, but he has also gained valuable life-skills: "This experience has taught me to know when to put my foot down since at times I am a really nice guy and easygoing."

After his return home, Pieter plans to look for a new job as he continues studying towards a Teaching degree. For future volunteers interested in coming to Kenya to volunteer at the Teaching Project, Pieter has this piece of advice to give: "You should definitely go for it!"

We hope great stories like these inspire others to help Projects Abroad to make a difference, and by doing so, learn something themselves along the way.

KHBO Brugge midwifery graduate gains valuable experience while volunteering in Kenya



Having recently graduated from KHBO Brugge with a Midwifery degree, 22-year-old Ilse Drisse from Belgium sought to add a different experience in her career. Ilse decided to sign up for the Projects Abroad PRO Medical Project in Kenya for 3 months. "I chose Africa since they don't have the same

technology as we do have back in Europe, it is a different experience and at the same time I am able to help the less fortunate as well as meet new people and experience the new culture."

During her 3 months' stay in Kenya, Ilse was placed at Bondeni Maternity and Medical Centre. "I did similar work to other medical volunteers although I was allowed to perform deliveries on my own. This is a very small facility with basic equipment; volunteers get an opportunity to learn how to improvise. We are also able to introduce our western way of working which might improve the facility."

At times it was not easy working under such conditions but Ilse was up for the task: "I performed all kinds of tasks here, examining and admitting expectant women, performing or helping in delivery, referring complicated cases to the main hospital, taking babies' weight, administration work and even cleaning the facility."



For Ilse, this experience has been an opportunity for her to grow and learn: "We don't have doctors here so I have had to make tough, informed decisions and in the shortest time possible it makes your confidence in handling patients grow. We also have to work with basic equipment which is quite an experience." Ilse remarked that she was astonished by the fact that Kenyan women deliver in the absence of their husbands and under harsh conditions which make her admire them yet at the same time feel sympathy for them.

When not at the medical centre, Ilse spent time with her host mum who took time to explain the different ways of living and Kenyan culture: "I love the people here, they are all very kind and always willing to help, they greet you with a smile on the streets." Ilse has also fallen in love with the nature: "It is green and beautiful; the animal parks, mountains and the views are all amazing; I also love Swahili, the local language.

Looking back to the first days when she arrived in Kenya, Ilse is glad that she has gained the trust of her supervisors to the extent of being allowed to deliver on a her own. After 3 months in Kenya, Ilse returns home with valuable experiences under her belt. To future volunteers Ilse has these words of advice: "Just go for it!"

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Saving the Mother Giraffe

It is the mandate of the Kenya Wildlife Service to treat and move wild animals in Kenya, this is because the government owns the land and animals regardless of where the animals reside, even private or community –own land. Projects Abroad Kenya volunteers working and residing at Kigio Wildlife Conservancy had to call the KWS when, during their normal giraffe survey rounds they came across a calving giraffe. On return the following morning, having had complications in the process



the calf had died in the mother's womb. All that was left was to pull it out or leave it and loose the mother too. The KWS medical unit, with the help of volunteers and Kigio Wildlife Conservancy rangers, pulled out the calf while saving the life of the giraffe. This particular species the Rostchild giraffe is an endangered one; and with a place like Kigio acting as safe haven for them and a breeding ground. Despite this loss, other calves are growing up in the conservancy under the watchful eye of the volunteers.

Dirty Day

Dirty day is a day in a month that all Projects Abroad destinations across the globe volunteer their time, expertise and money in an effort to making a change in the respective communities. Being part of the Projects Abroad family, Projects Abroad Kenya, helped repair a wall in Our Home Nakuru Orphanage. The wall was a time bomb in waiting given that it could have fell at any moment and maybe caused damages in the facility, thieves had an easy time since they could easily enter through

the several holes in the wall. The volunteers brought it down and built a new permanent and safe wall; the place is not only more secure but also better looking.

