

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 dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Volunteer placement report Treak Cambodia

Volunteer: Aimee White

- what was your motivation for volunteering?

Having previously taught English as a foreign language, I was interested in returning to teaching and wanted to gain new experience. I wanted to share my experience with pupils in a 'disadvantaged' position – compared to those with full education access – so that they had the same/similar access to learning opportunities as others.

- placement dates and project

I was placed at TREAK Community Centre for four weeks in April 2023. The project involved attending lessons and observing classes, as a way to see how the teachers and students interacted and learned. I also had the opportunity to introduce new games and activities and lead part or full lessons.

My main project consisted of organising a Reading Fair Day. First, the pupils formed groups and chose books from the library to create a poster about. Then, during the class, I taught new vocabulary: author, illustrator, genre, setting, publisher. The students had the chance to practice the new vocabulary through board games and writing exercises. On the day of the Reading Fair, they presented their posters for other pupils and their parents to view. We played games on-stage – Taboo, Hangman, Pictionary, Slap the Board – before awarding prizes to the 'best' poster.



1 Naboth's Nursery, Canterbury Road, Faversham, Kent ME13 8AX
tel +44 (0) 8700 460 479 | email info@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

- pre departure preparation - were you happy with the information we shared with you during your preparation for this placement? what information did you consider most useful?

I was very well-prepared for my placement as I received helpful documentation about what to expect, both in and outside of the classroom. I also had a number of video calls to talk about the project as well as be introduced to Dara, the headteacher at TREAK. This helped me settle into my placement with ease.

- orientation and preparation at the start of the placement

I was introduced to the teachers at TREAK before giving a quick introduction to the pupils at a morning assembly. I was provided with a print-out of the different classes and what topics they were covering. I sat in on the different classes and had opportunities to introduce new games and activities.

- your experience and work – including what resources you may have left behind and with whom – please attach copies of any written resources you may have left behind, and let us know of any others

From the second week onwards, I mostly worked with Viphou's classes. The majority of my time was spent working towards the Reading Fair Day (see above), where I also delivered a presentation about the importance of reading. This included practical tips and advice about how to set aside time for reading, what types of books to find and how to overcome reading challenges. I have provided TREAK with a copy of the PowerPoint Presentation. I also provided a list of the new games we played along with instructions on how to play them.



We also created reading pointers, a reading tool I had mentioned in my presentation. This involved the pupils creating their own reading pointers, before we practiced reading together both on the board and in their own books of choice. This would help them break down the pronunciation of new/difficult words and independent reading.



- successes, disappointments and challenges of your placement

I loved seeing how the student's confidence developed in such a short space of time, especially those who were quiet or slightly less confident when I first met them. I made sure that every student had the opportunity to ask and answer questions and practice their English in ways that suited them; whether it was through one-on-one, group or entire classroom activities.



It wasn't a disappointment as such, but the youngest classroom was more of a struggle than others, because I couldn't always figure out how to explain or play new games with them, either due to the language barrier or class size.

One of the challenges was explaining new words, instructions or games to the students. Depending on their English level, in order to set up a game I sometimes struggled to explain how to play or what to do, particularly when I went around the classroom to monitor how they were getting on. However, the teacher was often able to explain it to them in Khmer.

- what was the highlight of your volunteer experience?

The highlight was towards the end of my placement, when the pupils would request (/demand!) to play certain games. This showed that they found learning English fun, and were keen to practice and learn new words because it could be entertaining, not just educational.

- would you recommend volunteering to other people or not? please tell us why

I would certainly recommend this project to other people, particularly for first-time teachers or people thinking about entering the teaching profession.

- how did you spend your leisure time?

In my spare time I visited Angkor Wat; I went with the other teachers on a cycling around the national park on my first weekend which was a great introduction to Siem Reap as well as getting to know everyone better. I visited the local markets, museums, Phnom Penh and sampling as much Cambodian cuisine as I could! I also had the opportunity to visit a nearby temple to celebrate Buddha's birthday.



- how was your accommodation?

The guesthouse was very comfortable and welcoming; Penny and Mouy were great hosts as they were always friendly, helpful and entertaining! The room was a good size and I made good use of the swimming pool. I had a bicycle for the duration of my placement and, as the guesthouse was part of a gated community, it always felt safe and secure. The guesthouse was also in a good location for getting around by foot, bicycle or tuk-tuk.

- anything else you would like to share with future volunteers about your placement

Go into the placement with an open mind and you'll be rewarded with kindness, new experiences and unforgettable memories. In terms of the actual project, observe how the teachers and pupils interact, such as what types of games and activities they enjoy playing and how they enjoy learning. Don't be afraid to introduce new ideas and if something doesn't work the way you thought, have a backup activity planned!



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