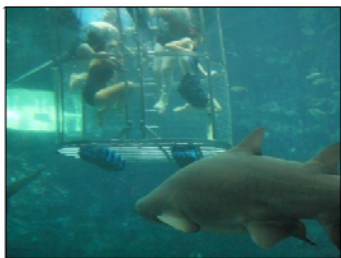


LaSER International Opportunities- My Trip to God's Golden Acre, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa 2011

Last year, I was selected to take part in an international trip to South Africa for three weeks in the summer with fifteen other girls, aged 14-18 from London and the South East and four adult leaders. We had four training weekends to prepare for our trip where we got to know each other and planned our trip and we also had to raise £2225 each to cover the costs of the trip.



The main aim of our trip was to do a service project at a HIV/ AIDS orphanage and outreach centre called God's Golden Acre. However before arriving there we had three days in Durban where we went and bought clothes and toys for the children at the orphanage. We even went shark cage diving at Ushaka marine world- a terrifying but amazing experience!

The day before we got to GGA we went to meet some South African Brownies and Guides. We were staying at Fairfell Brownie house and in the evening we had a campfire with 2nd Queensburgh Guides, Brownies, Teddies (the South African equivalent of Rainbows) and their leaders. It was really nice meeting all of them, teaching each other campfire songs and swapping badges.



We then moved on to God's Golden Acre, which is based in Cato Ridge and overlooking the stunning scenery of the Valley of A Thousand Hills, where we were to be spending two weeks of our trip. We were greeted at GGA by some extremely lovely and excited children who immediately wanted to play with us. I think the highlight of the trip for the majority of people in our group was the children, constantly running around, singing, dancing, wanting to take pictures on our cameras and play with our hair, I don't think you could find happier children.



However one of the main aims of our trip was to help with one of God's Golden Acre's outreach projects where it builds houses for people in the local community in need of a new home. We travelled to the building site everyday in the back of a truck, a fun but very bumpy way to travel! Whilst at the building site we all worked extremely hard helping the local builders by shovelling sand and gravel, mixing cement, digging and laying bricks. When we left, the house was nearly complete, only the roof and the windows and



doors had to be put in. We went and met the lady who would be moving in her old house, which was an incredibly humbling experience and made all of our hard work worthwhile.

Other work we found ourselves doing included gardening for a lady in the valley and cleaning and painting around the GGA site. We also got to accompany the volunteers from GGA delivering



monthly food parcels to people in the community who really needed it. And we also had the opportunity to visit a preschool and primary school, which was really great.



During our stay at GGA we also got to go on a couple of weekends away, one was to St Lucia where we went on a river tour to see

crocodiles and hippos and also went on safari. And the other was to the Drakensburg Mountains where we got up one day at a ridiculous hour to see the sunrise over the mountains and then we got to go up the Sani Pass into Lesotho, where there was actually snow!



Without a doubt my trip to South Africa was the best experience of my life, I feel so privileged to have been able to experience the things I did this summer, every day was both rewarding and incredible. It has completely opened up my eyes to the world; I have learnt so many new skills and have gained so much more confidence in myself. I have also made 15 incredible friends who I hope to stay in contact with. I would recommend anyone to do an international trip, you will not regret it!

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