



# WORK EXPERIENCE: CARE WITH CHILDREN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### South Africa has everything ...

- ◆ Sun, sparkling warm and clear oceans, and the most beautiful golden beaches you will ever see ... stretching for miles.
- ◆ Mountain climbing, biking and hiking
- ◆ The *Garden Route*, world famous and sheer paradise!
- ◆ Outstanding Game Reserves where you can see wild animals in their natural habitat, and by contrast symmetric vineyards stretching to infinity
- ◆ Sharks, whales and dolphins, and the amusing Cape Fur Seals.
- ◆ Elegant restaurants, barbecues and beach parties
- ◆ And FRUIT everywhere!



But most of all, South Africans are the friendliest and most hospitable people in the world - without a doubt! If you're invited to dinner ... don't eat for a week beforehand because you'll be overfed, especially if it's a barbecue. Wine is cheap and good. The salads are to die for.

And - of course - the fruit! From the exotic to the commonplace, it's everywhere.

## CARE WITH CHILDREN PLACEMENTS

We have many care placements in South Africa, all based in the beautiful and lively tourist destination of Cape Town. The centres in need of your voluntary time are all for local children, in need of extra special care and attention due to physical, mental or social disadvantages.

You can work at one particular centre or spread your time out between different institutes as you wish.

All of these projects are very worthwhile and will offer you a wealth of experience and a lifetime of memories.

**These projects are utterly rewarding as well as highly enjoyable, and you *will* fall completely in love with the children, the schools, and the country – you have been warned!**

### VERA SCHOOL: FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Autism is a severe, lifelong development disability and children affected by this suffer from a number of conditions. They have severe communication and language problems, they are unable to relate to other people and they display unusual and problematic behaviour. The extent to which a child is affected will vary from individual to individual.



Autistic children need predictability in their lives. They cannot express their needs effectively and often have extreme reactions to changes in routine and unfamiliar events.

The Vera School is a school for autistic children. There are 85 students here and 35 of these children are live-in learners, staying at the school hostel overnight. The rest are bought each day by their parents. The children range from 3 to 18 years old and are educated according to their ability, with some moving on to other schools later on.

The Vera school has three hostels with children housed in age groups: the under 8's, 8-12's and 12-18's. There is a very happy atmosphere at the school and the teachers are extremely conscientious and kind people. There is a lot of love here! For some, The Vera Schools provides the only opportunity of education for these children. The dedicated care received at Vera School gives these children a platform from which they can enter society with a secure place, despite the limitations of their autism.

The language of tuition is English, but Afrikaans is also used frequently in interpersonal conversation. A minority of the children speak Xhosa or Afrikaans at home, but all of them can understand English.

Without the help of the volunteers the school would not be able to give the children the full attention and care that they deserve and need.

### YOUR WORK AT VERA SCHOOL

- On your arrival you will have a short Orientation during which you will learn about autism. This will include watching a video as well as meeting the teachers and pupils of the school. You will then be allocated to a teacher for the day. After this initial induction you may spend time in any of the classes for your first week, getting to understand the centre. One of the teaching coordinators will then chat to you about how you are getting on and ask you to decide which of the classes you would like to assist in. You will be working along side the teacher, not alone.
- The majority of your work will be as a classroom and hostel assistant where you will be helping out in a variety of ways. Volunteers might be asked to help where children need special attention or to work with a small group while the teacher works with another group. Schoolwork varies with different age groups but is based on the normal school activities – a great deal of one-to-one attention is needed and children learn basic skills.
- Help is also very much appreciated at supervised activities like swimming which is part of the daily summer curriculum.
- After school hours, volunteers will be allocated a “play time” duty at the different hostels while the children play outdoors under supervision. You will also be involved in indoor hostel duties after this, which involve the supervision of children. Autistic children have to be watched closely at all times, as they may react suddenly and unexpectedly. The supervisor needs to be very vigilant.
- The help and support given by volunteers is especially needed during preparations for the school concert – and on the actual night. This usually takes place in October and is the highlight of the children’s school year.
- If there are any outings, the volunteers will accompany the teacher and pupils. These can be many things even including a camping trip for a few days. The school loves arranging special events that the students will enjoy. The parents are also included in events like barbecues or concerts for what the school calls – “The Vera Family”.
- There will also be a certain amount of Admin work involve in your volunteering, such as photocopying for the teacher and also duties at the switchboard if the receptionist is absent - answering the phone etc.



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### VISTA NOVA SCHOOL: FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Vista Nova School is a school for children with a variety of disabilities or special needs. Volunteers will be placed within the Primary School only. This is set in a beautiful location, overlooking the Rondebosch Common and facing the impressive side of Table Mountain.

The Primary School has 250 pupils ranging from 3 years old to about 13, from pre-primary to year 7. The school buildings are spacious and brightly decorated with art works done by the children and the grounds are immaculate and well-kept. There is a heated indoor swimming pool used largely for therapy.

Part of the school day is allocated to sport and pupils take part in school leagues as well as sport for the disabled. On Mondays a group goes to a farm for Riding for the Disabled.

Some of today's pupils have cerebral palsy, which refers to a group of permanent but non-progressive disorders of posture and movement. It is due to a dysfunction of the brain, which can occur during birth or as a result of accident or illness in childhood. Some children have other syndromes or conditions such as muscular dystrophy, multiple physical impairment, ADHD and specific learning disabilities.

A lack of concentration, dyslexia or hyperactivity are often linked to these conditions and the children can get over excited by changes in routine, which means that teachers and assistants need to have endless patience in dealing with small upsets. The teachers are grateful for the help of volunteers – just the presence of another adult in the classroom makes the activities run more smoothly.

A Volunteer Placement at Vista Nova would be an unforgettable experience, as is shown by the return of some volunteers after completing their degrees.



### YOUR WORK AT VISTA NOVA SCHOOL

- When you arrive you will spend some time with the teacher in charge who will talk about the Special Needs of the children and about your role in the school, as a volunteer. You will then be allocated to a teacher who will introduce you to the work. You may spend time in all different areas of work in the school before settling into a particular job. Volunteers should make requests if there is anything that you are particularly interested in – for example you may prefer working in the Nursery, or with the older children, or helping in the Physiotherapy or OT departments.
- The work falls into 5 categories: Admin (receptionist, switchboard - if there is someone absent ); Library (mending books, cataloguing, etc); Class Aides (helping children in the nursery section, or helping the teacher with various class activities, or listening to children reading); being a “Scribe” or amanuensis (this means you will go with a pupil who is disabled and cannot write, sit with him/her in class and take notes, and then write for him/her while he/she tells the scribe the answers in tests or examinations). The fifth category is basically filling in where needed – perhaps in charge of collecting children who need physiotherapy or helping with Sport and physical education such as swimming, soccer, cricket as well as sport for the disabled.
- Different age groups end their school day at different times. After the pupils have left, volunteers may be given preparation tasks for the next day by the teacher, or there might be admin work in the office or the school library. This will be until 3.00 pm. Sometimes there might be extra duties after this, like preparing for school Sports Day or School Concert. We urge volunteers to get involved with extra functions taking place at the school as you can have a lot of fun and get to know the children far better by getting involved in the after school activities. Your weekends are entirely free (for sightseeing, travel and fun)!

### BEL PORTO SCHOOL: FOR CHILDREN WITH MENTAL AND PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT

Bel Porto School has just over 200 children with physical and intellectual impairments. The pupils are aged from 3 years old to 18. There are four sections covering nursery, junior, middle and senior pupils. A fleet of school buses travel from all over the suburbs to collect these children in the mornings from about 6am and the school bus returns the children back home for the afternoons at around 2.30pm.



State subsidies are not adequate to run a school such as Bel Porto and there is an endless need for funding. The Bel Porto Foundation has been set up with a special fund raiser in charge of this essential aspect of the school. Fund raising events occur during the year, and at the re-cycling centre in one of the school buildings, donations from people's homes, as well as newspapers, books and plastic containers are received at any time.

As the pupils at Bel Porto are low functioning academically, Bel Porto's curriculum aims at fostering maximum independence and productivity in each pupil. It covers the development of self-sufficiency and socialism. Lessons are designed to improve motor and perceptual skills as well as functional academic skills. There is a strong emphasis on communication, household and vocational skills. Pupils are also encouraged to be aware of the environment and nature, and a visit to the school Farmyard is a daily occurrence.

Bel Porto School also serves as a training centre for students from local universities and colleges. Students in training at Bel Porto include speech therapists, medical students, physiotherapists, nurses, occupational therapists, care givers and teachers.

The school itself consists of a number of spread out, pleasant buildings all opening onto the garden. The school buildings are like a solid built local state school, and the parents and staff keep them looking neat and painted. The gardens are well-kept and spacious, and the children love visiting the small farmyard in the school grounds to see the sheep, goats, rabbits, ducks and chickens – and even a donkey or two sometimes. There are two heated indoor swimming pools which are used for class swimming and physiotherapy.

Volunteers here have loved every minute of their placements here and keep up contact with the school after they move on to study at University or return to work at home.

### **YOUR WORK AT BEL PORTO SCHOOL**

- When you arrive you will be allocated to a teacher who will introduce you to the work. You might be sent to different areas of work in the school before settling in to a particular job. Volunteers should make requests if there is anything you are particularly interested in such as working with a particular age group or helping in the Physiotherapy or OT departments.
- Volunteers will be classroom assistants or class aides (helping children in and out of wheelchairs for different activities, or helping the teacher with various class activities, like painting, doing puzzles – and with the older children cooking, simple maths and reading etc). Other tasks include reading stories to children, helping children to simple tasks on the computer and supervising the outdoor activities. Tricycle riding forms part of the curriculum - as exercise and mastering the skills associated with the physical action are very important. The children also learn simple rules of the road on marked out areas of the playground. Swimming lessons are a favourite and the school has two heated indoor pools. Your help in and out of the pools will be appreciated as children need individual help in the water. One pool is specifically for physiotherapy treatment.
- Volunteers working in the Nursery section usually move over to the older children after the nursery children have finished for the day. Volunteers may be given preparation tasks for the next day by the teacher or Admin work like helping out in the front office if someone is absent. The school day ends at 3.00 pm. Sometimes there might be help needed, like preparing for Sports Day or School Fete or School Concert. We urge volunteers to get involved with extra functions taking place at the school as you can have a lot of fun and you will get to know the children much better out of hours.

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### **CHRISTEL HOUSE SCHOOL: FOR CHILDREN FROM DISADVANTAGED AREAS**

Christel House is one of a group of International Schools founded in order to help children around the world to break the cycle of poverty and become self-sufficient, contributing members of society. Christel House children learn the key values of respect, responsibility, independence and integrity and are encouraged to develop a passion for learning.

Christel House in South Africa opened its doors in January 2001, and it is certainly making a difference in the lives of its pupils. Some of these grow up in the patchwork of tiny dwellings made from salvaged materials which stretch for miles around Cape Town. These children live in neighbourhoods rife with gangs, violence, disease and drugs. Other students are orphaned or abandoned, living in orphanages or shelters.



These kids are eager to learn and the school feels that in these children lies the glimmer of a new social order, where they will have opportunities, which their parents did not have. The children cannot afford good schooling and might be lost in a life of gangsterism and dysfunctional adulthood unless given the chance of an education. With the opportunity for the children to develop pride in doing their best, they feel a sense of achievement and a realisation of their own ability and importance.

The students look forward to coming to school each day and their proficiency in everything from schoolwork to sport improves steadily as they progress throughout the school. The eager faces and willingness to learn demonstrate that the children are really on a new path to success.

Parents are drawn into the school family as the school believes they should be a part of the transformation taking place in their children through education. The school has parents' workshops where parents learn how to support their children's academic efforts and news of the school's success has spread throughout the community.

Parents are proud of the achievements of their children for whom the future might have been very bleak without the experience of educational opportunities. The school's attitude is a very progressive one, attacking a serious problem within South Africa's social strata with intelligence and sensitivity and reaping real results. Volunteers will find this an incredible experience that they will never forget.

### **YOUR WORK AT CHRISTEL HOUSE**

- As a volunteer you will be a classroom assistant and aide to the teacher, helping in various roles depending on the requirements of each day.
- When volunteers arrive they will be allocated to a teacher who will introduce them to the work and discuss with them where the needs for volunteers are. They might be sent to different classes in the school before settling in to a particular job. Volunteers should make requests if there is anything they are particularly interested in – e.g working with the younger age groups, or with older children.
- Volunteers will be classroom assistants or class aides helping the teacher with various class activities. They might be asked to teach a class under supervision or to fill in for someone who is absent. They could assist with reading or extra coaching.
- School begins at 8.00 am and you'll be on duty in the classroom or in the playground until the end of the school day. As the school has an extra long day, you need not stay for the extra time unless you'd like to.
- You will assist teachers – but might teach a lesson under supervision. If a teacher is absent, volunteers in the past have coped well filling in for the day.
- Some children need help with certain subjects such as maths, reading or IT. In this case the volunteers assistance in a small group or with one-on-one instruction is valuable. The school does have a special teacher who takes small groups for extra coaching, and volunteers could assist with this. Sometimes such a group works within a class, and at other times the teacher may remove the group for special work.
- It would be useful for volunteers to get involved with other subjects also such as Art, Drama and Music. The children do life-skills sessions in the afternoons, and there would be opportunities here for this input.
- There are OT and Speech Therapists who would be grateful of help if a volunteer is qualified. Otherwise simple classroom work would also encompass these skills.
- Access to video and music systems are available.
- Each classroom has a computer with Internet access. Volunteers could help pupils also with computer work.
- There are other special events throughout the year that the volunteers could assist in:
  - **Founder's Day in October**
  - **Sports Day in March**
  - **Educational Outings – all year – three per term.**
  - **Workshops for parents – all year**

Volunteer involvement in all of these would be appreciated – for supervision of children and to share in workshops with parents. One gains a great insight into the children and their lives if taking part in all these activities.

### **ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD**

In a bohemian part of Cape Town, along the east coast of the city near Woodstock, is a set of very lovely lodges! The Lodge Observatory is a series of 5 houses in Observatory, a famous Alternative Suburb in Cape Town.

Apart from other Travellers volunteers, this hostel mainly attracts many intern students. The Lodge is managed by Nelly and her daughter Charmaine. They are very friendly and will always help you where needed. They can answer any questions or can even help when you need some TLC because you feel a bit homesick!

The Main Lodge is the centre of all the lodges and is a meeting point for everyone. You can discuss your day in the living room, have a nice chat out on the terrace, go for a swim, watch a movie, etc. There are two 4-person dorms, one 3-person dorm and one double room.

This lodge has a living room, two bathrooms and a well-equipped kitchen. The back of the house has a nice covered terrace, as well as a braai area (South African barbecue) and a swimming pool.

In the back of the garden there is a little place called the Garden Lodge. This is basically the chill-out room with several comfortable sofas, satellite television, VCR and HiFi system. Great for relaxing or for parties.

The Main Lodge also has storage facilities for surfboards etc. and space to store your luggage if you wish to travel around the country and leave your things somewhere safe.

**Food:** You will be given a food allowance to buy your own food from the big supermarket up the road. Each house is equipped with a kitchen with a fridge, stove, oven and microwave, and all the necessities to cook a good meal.

#### ON ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA:

You will be met at the airport by our Cape Town Manager or one of our staff, who will take you to your accommodation and introduce you to everyone. They will also take you to your place of work and introduce you there. Our SA team is on call 24/7 if necessary, and are always there to help you in many different ways. Of course, they are in regular contact with you.

## The next step...

If you would like to join us on one of our exciting projects then please fill in either an online application form at our website ([www.travellersworldwide.com](http://www.travellersworldwide.com)) or one that is attached to our brochure. Once you have booked and confirmed your place we will send you detailed pack information regarding your placement and country.

**I do hope you join us and please do call or email if you have any questions at all about this or any of our other projects – 01903 502595 or email [info@travellersworldwide.com](mailto:info@travellersworldwide.com)**

**If you would like to know more about Travellers in general, or about any of our other projects we run in over 18 countries worldwide, please visit our website at [www.travellersworldwide.com](http://www.travellersworldwide.com)**

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