



Campfire on the beach with Gambian Girlguides....AMAZING!

We have once more had a wonderful, succesful trip even after disappointingly finding that Apple Tree School had closed for the holidays! Every effort to make contact with school had been made and we had previously received an email stating they were expecting us, however, they omitted to mention that mid term holidays had been changed to the previous week. We did manage to resolve the problems and everyone put in an enormous effort to paint six classrooms in difficult conditions. We also managed to see the children at work in class and enjoy a singing session before leaving for the airport.

Apple Tree asked us four years ago to support them in building a playroom at the nursery and in 2011 we donated £3,000 (D156,000) to get them started. This year we saw no sign of the playroom, however, we have been informed that the money is in safe keeping until they can start the nursery project. Once we realised this we decided, this year, to give a donation of £1,500 (D78,000) which will be added to the funds already donated and used for the nursery project. We also provided a reading scheme, a large volume of paper (crepe, tissue etc) and a large amount of school stationery.

Bijilo Nursery School and Health Centre is another place we have always given donations to. In 2003 they built two playhouses with money that we donated and these are still in use today. As we were unable to work with ATS children we went into Bijilo with no notice to the teachers and did activities with the children. We were made very welcome and had a wonderful time.

The nursery school had a 'dream' room that we have previously seen in action. It is designed as somewhere for the children to go and, in small groups, learn to play, as these children are extremely poor and they do not have access to toys. Sadly the termites had done their worst and destroyed the room, so in true Guiding spirit we offered to help. We cleared out the room, not a pleasant job with dust, dirt, and spiders in 35°c heat. We sorted the toys, checked all puzzles and games, then packed it all away neatly. It was an amazing achievement and everyone worked very hard. Again we donated paper, pencils etc.

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We discussed with the head teacher Baboucarr Jobe and the Chairman of the school how much it would cost to rebuild the 'dream' room and we agreed that we could afford to extend the room by two metres and make it good. We left a donation of £1,000 (D52,000). We are looking forward to seeing the new room next time we go. Baboubacarr has since emailed me to say he has bought sand, cement a wheel barrow and some spades, they are now making the bricks!!

A donation of £100 (D5,200) was also given to the Health Centre. Here minor injuries are treated for a very small contribution from the patient and all babies in the village are now born here in a safe environment. Every Wednesday they hold a baby clinic where the mothers' and babies' health and well being are checked.

We also visited Kubuneh village. It is somewhere up country and quite isolated. Here we did activities with the children sitting in the sand under the baobab tree. The villagers then gave a display of drumming and dancing and we were all encouraged to join in. We were then taken to look at a patch of land that they want to cultivate, but wandering animals destroy everything they try to grow. Our donation of £150 (D7,800) will provide a fence to keep it secure. We also gave a large quantity of childrens clothing.

A special time was spent with the Gambian Guides and their Leader, Rohey, at a campfire on the beach. We sang campfire songs, danced to African drummers, exchanged presents and enjoyed marshmallows on sticks. We also joined them in the parade at the Independence Day celebrations where we paraded before the Gambian president and got ourselves on TV!

We are hoping that now we have made a good contact with the Chief Commissioner Yamu, we will be able to do some small trainings with the leaders and girls. I am in contact with the G.O.L.D. team who are working with the Gambian guides and we hope to compliment what they are doing.

A day at our guide and taxi driver's house is always a special day. We washed our shirts after drawing water from the well, walked to the local market stalls for vegetables before helping to cook dinner and eat it, right hand only! We then went to the beach to enjoy time in the sea with the family. We finished the day off with guide songs led by Nyima, all taught by us over the past twelve years, and there were a few tears all round.

At the moment we sponsor the three eldest children with their school fees. They are of an age where fees are expensive and they would have had to leave school by now if we didn't help. At

present we pay around £350 (D18,200) a year for all three. Did I say expensive?! The two younger children are supported by their father.

Other things we do....

The craft market where the girls barter for wood carvings and fabrics.

Visit Arch 22 and learn a little of the country's history.

Local markets so that the girls can experience real gambian life.. they were not too keen on the fish market!

Spend time with two Fruit ladies, Haddi and Kuta, on the beach at their fruit stall, they prepare wonderful trays of fruit for us, we have known them for 13 years and sponsor two children with school fees.

I have attached some photos I hope that you feel your money was well spent. The group here in Devon had an amazing time, and everyone worked very hard puttng their heart and soul into the project.... And all in a week!

Thank you very much for your support it was greatly appreciated .

Devon group

Sandra Nevard, Shirley Lee, Jessie shere and Shannon Hughes.

G4G Coordinators

Sandra Nevard and Rachel Aston

Guides 4 Gambia report

Thankyou so much for helping to finance my trip to the Gambia. It has been a dream of mine for many years to travel and to help people. You have helped me achieve this dream. I had a brilliant time in the Gambia and will never forget the experience.

My favourite part of the trip was meeting the people out there and helping them. I particularly enjoyed it when we went to Bijilo school and did arts and crafts activities with the children. In my group we made jellyfish out of paper plates and tissue paper. The children really enjoyed themselves as did everybody in my group. The children loved having their photos taken so I have lots of photos of them and some that they took themselves as they used my camera to take some pictures.

The classrooms in Bijilo shocked me as they are very different from our own. I was expecting them to be an old fashioned version of classrooms in the UK. The classrooms where built like huts and where incredibly basic with tin roofs and on the nursery they didn't even have proper windows (the rest of the school had gaps in the wall with steel shutters) just a gap covered in wire. They even had people living on the school grounds!

I also enjoyed meeting some of the local guides on the beach for a bonfire. We sang and danced to the locals drummers music. Then we roasted marshmallows and gave one of the local guides a gift. I gave Adia two bracelets and a pencil. It was very interesting to hear about her life. She was 14 and was lucky enough to be able to go to school. Later we met up with the Guides again to walk in the independence day parade where the president did the Guide salute to us!

While in the Gambia we also went to a small rural village and did activities with the children. Me and Emily made windmills with them, which they loved, and then everyone danced. It was lots of fun dancing with the people in the village and a little girl called Katya got me to dance with her. We donated some money to help them build a fence around the veg patch so animals wont eat all the veg thats grown and they will be able to sell the produce.

One of the experiences that really upset was that on our way to the village we were throwing pencils out of the jeeps for the children. They were desperate for these pencils and one child that really upset me was a 10 year old boy. We had been told to stop throwing the pencils as the children were so desperate for the we were worried that

they'd get run over. This little boy saw us throwing out the pencils but by the time he got to us we'd been told to stop throwing them. He ran alongside the jeep begging us for a pencil saying that he was a school boy but couldn't afford school equipment. He ran alongside our jeep for ages and everybody in my jeep was getting upset but luckily one of the leaders, Rachel took pity on him and gave him a pencil. It really upset how much these children would beg for something and be so pleased about having something that we take for granted.

We also painted classrooms at apple tree school. We managed 2 classrooms per group and in my group the theme was a jungle and space. We included numbers and the alphabet in the paintings to help with their education. On the Wednesday before we caught our flight back to Britain we visited apple tree nursery where we took part in their classes and did some singing.

We also met our taxi driver Alargii's family and went to their house on the Sunday to see how they lived. While there we met some of the local children and we spent a lot of the day singing and playing games with them. They also shared some of their songs with us which was an interesting experience. We also helped Alargii's family cook the meal that later we would all eat. It amazed me how they could cook for over 30 people on a tiny fire but they managed it.

After dinner at their house we were taken to the beach and were allowed to go swimming. It was nice to relax and just spend some time with the friends I made on the trip. While there I met Abraham and he told me about his life. He is a student at college but it's hard for him to stay at school because his Mum and Dad are dead and so it is him and his younger sister who have to look after his family.

In conclusion this trip was an amazing experience that I will never forget. It opened my eyes to how different cultures live and gave me the opportunity to help disadvantaged people which is something I have always wanted to do. Thankyou so much for helping me raise the funds to go. I have made new friends and have some fantastic memories.

Shannon K. Hughes

My Gambian Adventure

On 13th February we boarded our plane from freezing cold Manchester to Gambia, When we stepped off the plane in Banjul the 33 degree heat just hit me and my shorts and sunglasses went straight on! After collecting our luggage we were met by Pamodou, the eldest son of the host family who became a great friend, we got on to our coach to the hotel. The hotel was right on the beach in beautiful surroundings and we got the chance to chill out before going for our first meal.

We travelled in Land rovers, and these were to become a fun mode of transport! At the restaurant Pamodou entertained us with his singing, we went to bed early tired but excited for our big adventure.

After taking our Malaria tablets and dodging all the sleeping Monkeys on the hotel paths we boarded our land rovers and headed for our first stop, the health centre. The land rovers were open air and a great way to see the sites as we travelled, some of the roads were just like home but many were just dust tracks. People selling things from little huts and carrying things on their heads. Small children ran after our land rovers and waved as we passed. We arrived at the health centre and were shown around the maternity unit, it was very basic but for people there it was a life line. We gave them a monitoring machine to test babies hearing. We walked across the road to visit the local school and meet the children, we would be meeting them again in a few days.

We spent some time at the local craft market enjoying the sights and sounds and buying scarves and bracelets

We then visited Arch 22, a monument to the President. We climbed to the top to enjoy the view and then had lunch nearby.

After lunch (4pm) we went to Apple Tree School which was where we were planning to do our painting but there had been a mix up and the school was shut. It was arranged that we would visit another school another day so we went back to the hotel for a swim and some fresh fruit from the beach bar, after a lovely Italian meal we got together and chatted in each other's rooms and played cards and I made friends with the group which was great.

After breakfast the next day we went back to the school near the health centre at Bijilo to play and do activities with the children, we gave them animal masks and helped them to colour them in, they were really friendly and excited that we were there, some of them took my camera and started taking pictures of themselves wearing my sunglasses.

At playtime we took them outside to blow bubbles which they loved, their classrooms are very basic and they don't have many toys or play equipment apart from a broken roundabout and a rusty slide but the children are really happy.

After lunch we sorted out their resource room and tidied up litter from the playground, it was dusty and sneezy but it felt good to helping.

That evening we went to the Chinese restaurant and got together in groups to plan our classroom painting the next day, I had made loads of new friends and had a really fun evening, finishing off with a campfire on the beach singing songs,

Back at the hotel it was Karaoke night and we had so much fun entertaining everyone with our rendition of summer nights.

Breathing the lovely Gambian fresh air we jumped into our land rovers for our bumpy ride to school. We arrived at Apple Tree School with all our painting gear and set to work on cleaning walls and applying base coats. My group designed a jungle theme with a huge apple tree with numbers on it in apples and jungle animals on the walls. I was so proud of my contribution which was the spiders made to look as though they were hanging from the ceiling!

That evening we dressed in our Guides 4 Gambia uniform and went down to the beach to meet up with the local guides. We sang campfire songs and taught them to each other, we had drums and got up dancing to their music. They were great dancers. After toasting marshmallows on the fire we exchanged gifts with the girls and said goodbye, we went out for tea and had another fun night chatting and getting to know one another.

Today was Sunday and this was the day we were going to visit Alagie's family and we would see Pamodou again, he was so funny and we had made great friends with him and his sisters, The journey took about an hour but we got to see so much of the country, we passed through a really rural area which was much poorer than where we were staying, we stopped off to get bread and water then went to the fish market which really stank!

We arrived at Alagies house after a bumpy and dusty journey down a dusty track, Pamodou showed us around and, as we were so dusty we washed out G4G shirts! We then helped the family prepare the meal, sitting on the floor peeling and chopping vegetables, that was okay until we had to de-bone the fish... then I volunteered to play with the children. There are so many people in Pamodou's family it was hard learning their names! We made windmills and aeroplanes with the children, blew bubbles and sang songs which they loved.

When lunch was ready we all sat on the floor around the dishes and helped ourselves with our hands- the right not the left! I'm quite fussy but I really enjoyed the food.

After lunch we took the family down to the beach to play, we played in the sea and made sandcastles it was really sad to say goodbye after such a fun day.

The next day we had been invited to take part in the Independence Parade with the Guides, we dressed in our - now clean - G4G uniforms and jumped into the land rover's again. On the journey we saw some very sad sights, people living in tiny mud huts with sewage running in the roads. It was so hot when we got there we had to keep drinking lots. There were thousands of people there and we got together behind all the other Guides and Scouts. I got to carry the banner and I felt very proud as we parades past the President doing our guides salute. Pamodou took loads of photos for me. It was a huge parade and it was even on their T.V.

That afternoon we went back to Apple Tree School to finish painting out last three classrooms. we did an under the sea theme, we didn't have much time but we got loads done, put 60minute make over to shame!

I told everyone I was rubbish at drawing but they said have a go, although when I had finished they all agreed I was right!

We went to our favourite restaurant for tea and by now we were all really good friends and had a fab night.

I felt sad the next morning as it was our last whole day in Gambia.

We went to catch a boat to visit a local village. It only just fitted all 29 of us on it and all it had to sit on was a load of mattresses'. The only way off was to jump and we had to negotiate some rickety bridges but we arrived safely at the village called Lamin Lodge. We did some shopping for souvenirs and then headed for the main village of Kubuneh, with children chasing our land rovers as we went. When we arrived a huge group of ladies and children were dancing Gambian style and we joined in, setting up our windmill activities which they loved. We got together and decided to give some of our money to the village. That afternoon we went to the beach Pamodou gave everyone a bracelet, we all said goodbye to him which was sad as we would all miss him so much. That evening we went for our last meal and even had cocktails! I felt really bad as I packed my bags ready for leaving next day as I had had such an awesome time.

On our last day we paid a visit to Apple Tree School and sat in on their lessons, we also had a tour of the school.

Then it was time to head to the airport, I breathed in the sights sounds and smells of the Gambia one last time.

As the plane climbed high into the sky I felt really sad but really happy that I had had such an amazing experience, one I will never forget, I made some amazing friends for life. We all hugged each other and cried and made plans to meet up soon.

Gambia is an amazing country, the people are great and made us so welcome. I really hope to go back again one day.

Thank you so much for your support.

Jessie Shere

1st Torrington Senior Section.

Location: Disneyland Paris
Company: 9th Paignton Guides
Date: 9th-12th April 2013
Verdict: AMAZING!

During the second week the Easter holidays, me and 35 other members, parents and leaders from 9th Paignton Guides travelled to Disneyland Paris for a three day trip. The coach journey to Paris was 14 hours long, and involved many stops, breaks and food! On the coach, I got a chance to meet and interact with the other guides (all of whom I had never met before!). Everyone was really friendly and welcoming and for that reason I very much enjoyed the coach ride.

We arrived at our accommodation, the Davy Crockett Ranch, in Paris at 9pm, earlier than anticipated. The Davy Crockett Ranch consists of 595 wooden cabins, all laid out like a normal street in the middle of woodland! We cooked jacket potatoes and baked beans for dinner, followed a young leader meeting and dessert. The rooms we were staying in were really comfortable, warm and there was even a Mickey Mouse ice cube tray! I stayed in my cabin with 3 other girls, who were all really nice and kind.

The following day, we travelled in our coach for 15 minutes to get to the main Disneyland park. In groups of four, we were all given a walkie talkie, a meeting point and a place to meet to eat the lunch we had prepared in the morning. We then set off around the park, radioing in with our leader every hour. The rides in Disneyland were absolutely amazing! I went on every single one, but the biggest roller-coaster 'Space Mountain' was my favourite! There was also a chance to buy some souvenirs at the park, which I did for my family and friends. Towards the end of the day, it started raining and as a result, everyone had soaking wet feet. However, this didn't deter anyone as we all continued to go on all the amazing rides, and even meet some of the Disney characters. For dinner, we had the opportunity to eat in one of the Disney restaurants where I tried a variety of common French foods. In the evening, all the guides watched the famous firework and light display 'Disney Dreams'. This consisted of a variety of characters being projected onto the all famous castle whilst fireworks and water shows shot out at the appropriate times. After watching the show, we drove back to our cabins and instantly fell asleep!

The next day, we repeated the following day, however in the second Disneyland park: 'Walt Disney Studios'. This park was absolutely amazing with the most feared but fantastic ride of the park 'Aerosmith'. Luckily it didn't rain the second day and we headed back to the ranch for a swim. The swimming pool at the ranch was really cool as it was equipped with a hot tub and slide. After swimming, we all ate carbonara pasta and I helped some of the younger guides cook their food. Then we packed our bags, watched the Disney TV, and headed off to bed.

On the final day, we left the ranch after breakfast at 7.15am and travelled home, tired and weary after an amazing trip away. Overall, my trip to Disneyland was amazingly fun and I enjoyed every moment. I made some great friends and it was worth every penny!



I am writing to you with my report from my fantastic GOLD Project to Sri Lanka as you were extremely generous in donating money to make my trip possible. Here we go.....

We all met at Heathrow airport ready to start our mammoth journey to Dubai then connecting to Colombo. Upon arrival we were met by guiding commissioners at HQ where they informed us that most of the training sessions we had planned needed to be changed! Our first session was to teach some guiding volunteers how to run their own Rainbow programme named the 'Butterflies', we taught them some songs, games and an appropriate curriculum which included a 10 week programme.

We then travelled to Matale where we spent the week. On the way we stopped at the elephant orphanage and watched them walk through the streets to the bathing place. We all got to stroke the elephants which was a very new experience. Firstly we worked at a secondary school teaching English, leadership skills, games and songs. This for me by far was the most rewarding time spent on project. The girls we were working with were so keen to learn and benefitted greatly from our time with them and at the end of the two days they all wanted our autograph which was a very surreal experience.

We were invited to take part in a promise ceremony which was very special and we all sang 'this little guiding light'. Back at the house the electricity tended to go off most evenings so we had to prepare and make our evening meal by torchlight!

We then worked at a local preschool teaching English, songs and games. Here we also worked with the mums and women from the village teaching English, jewellery skills and in turn confidence building. We spent time with senior guides teaching leadership skills before painting tables and chairs. One evening we jumped into tuk tuks and headed to a Buddhist procession in the streets, there were elephants galore and bright colours everywhere.

We headed to Kandy on the way to the National Training Centre where we were asked if we could visit a local school to teach the 'little friends' (Brownies) some songs. We were welcomed whole heartedly and the children had made gifts for us.

We spent a week at the national training centre working with the preschool and their mothers. We were teaching English and songs and games to the children, whilst the adults were learning some English and first aid skills. Our sessions were really unpredictable as we had no idea who was going to turn up from one moment to the next.

To end our amazing project we attended and held an afternoon session at the national conference. Here we delivered ideas about how to grow guiding and hold onto those who were leaving guiding to join university. Our sessions had to be translated into 3 different languages although everyone was here to share a common goal, Girl Guiding.

I cannot express my gratitude for your kind donation, we all truly had a life changing trip for both ourselves in the UK and for all those who we worked with over in Sri Lanka. Thank you once again,

Best wishes,

Nichola Giblin