

ProjectsAbroad

*June's
Newsletter*
Projects Abroad
Morocco

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*Welcome to
Morocco
happy reading!*

FEATURE : Two week special – 2013**THE TWO WEEK SPECIAL**

Every year in July, our Two Week Special programme welcomes 15-18 year old volunteers who are interested in Care projects and prefer to take part in a prepared programme. It is held over two periods, from the 30th of June to the 13th of July, and from the 14th to the 27th of July. The group of volunteers participate in a Care & Community project, and spend their weekend together on an organized trip with Projects Abroad. Some volunteers choose to take Arabic or French classes as well during their stay with us. Stories of this year's project and volunteers' pictures are to be shared with you in the next edition, stay around!

Upcoming event:**RAMADAN – 9th /10th of July**

The most awaited event in July is the advent of Ramadan. The holy month is expected to begin on the 9th or 10th of July, according the moon calendar. We are so looking forward to this month and to sharing its wonders with the volunteers.

We will dedicate July's newsletter to Ramadan, the customs and habits of Moroccans during this precious month, and volunteers' experiences.



Moroccan 'ftour' in Ramadan

Ellie mason – Care and Arabic



My first world education always suggested I would need an official qualification awarded to me after years of supervised study at an ordered establishment in order to undertake anything serious in life. University was to prepare you for the real world and the real world was not intended as a means of education. When I listened to individuals speak of working or volunteering overseas I was always impressed, wishing I could say I had done the same but contenting myself with the idea that they must be in some way more qualified than myself to attempt such an endeavour.

After spending a year working full time in the real world I understood that degrees were just pieces of paper and people were just people. I could complete tasks, acquire skills, overcome challenges, learn and change with just as much ease as someone sitting in a government building. Experience rather than exams served to improve your chances of success and of starting a meaningful life. My goal therefore, became to put myself in situations that I could learn from and that were significant; to just DO the things I wished I could say that I had done.

So 22, a student of music and languages with a distrust of most meals that did not feature chips and an irrational fear of camels I organised to head to Morocco to complete a month of volunteering with an organisation called Amesip and to

study arabic through Projects Abroad. Though i'd not had much experience with children and kids weren't really my thing back in Australia, my placement had me working with 5-18 year olds and was one of the most satisfying, inspiring, heart warming and eye opening experiences of my life. There is something inherently motivating about seeing an organisation that is effective. My supervisor El Aidi had a handle on everything; from 5 year old Hamza's precarious home life to 17 year old Mohammed's apprenticeship details. Amesip had the absolute trust and support of their local community and I found the children there took the opportunities they were provided (and often desperately needed) in a way I had not seen anywhere in Australia. Moroccans on the whole I found far more aware of those things that were good and worth celebrating in life. Little was taken for granted and priorities were refreshing. Though not usually the diary keeping type, I found myself filling journals with all that I saw; not wanting to forget a single story. I did not meet a single person I did not wish to bring home with me.

So, here are my highlights- a month in Morocco!

- Arriving at the airport as perhaps the most conservatively dressed person in Rabat and completing my induction in a whirlwind of different languages
- Finding my own way through an ever changing Rabat Medina

- Watching my host sister cooking dinner and dancing to gangnam style as the fourth prayer call of the day starts up
- Decrypting an arabic recipe with my host mother over mint tea
- Travelling to the Sahara and returning to Rabat with the feeling of coming home after my first weekend away
- Conversing with groups of Moroccans who had never been to school but were comfortable across upwards of four languages
- Sitting on a train from Fes attempting to complete my arabic homework independently (but being corrected by passers-by if ever I made a mistake)
- Thinking I was boss enough to climb Jebel El Kelaa in a morning
- Being escorted to the last grand taxi of my trip by half of Amesip
- Being approached by three kids in Chefchaouen because I 'looked funny' and finding I was able to converse with them in Darija

A big thank you to Projects Abroad and to Amesip! Hope to be back soon!



Colleen Traynor – teaching



Colleen in Chefchaouen

I was lucky enough to do two placements in Arica with Projects Abroad.

Tanzania was my first experience of African life and a very rewarding one at that. I worked at St Gabriel home, an orphanage run by the catholic nuns. The children were delightful and the nuns were so caring. My six week placement in care and teaching will be forever etched in my memory.

After leaving Tanzania, I had no pre-conceived ideas about Morocco, but a new country always seems daunting when you first arrive. The staffs at Projects Abroad were helpful, sensitive to my needs, and fun to be around. Our weekly “get togethers” on a Wednesday night with the staff and other volunteers were most enjoyable and it was at these meetings that we often planned our “weekend getaways” as a group. I would strongly recommend a trip to Chefchaouen.

My host family were very welcoming, always ready for a laugh or joke and full of life. My host sister Sarah spoke English well and was often my voice as the rest of the family spoke Arabic. My host mother Rabia could not do enough for me. She was an amazing woman, worked very hard for her family but always had “room for one more”. Relatives and friends would come and go every day, but Rabia always had a smile!!

The medina was a fascinating place to explore all the Moroccan food, clothing and “nicnacs” and a place to see and meet some amazing characters.

The amali association where I worked was a very friendly place. The students, especially the adults were so eager to learn English and after being with for six weeks, they became my “Moroccan Family”.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here in Morocco and I will leave with fond memories of a country rich in culture and diversity, with so many beautiful people.



City of the month – Chefchaouen

Chefchaouen is small charming city of about 40,000 inhabitants, about 100km from Ceuta in the outskirts of the mountains Tisouka (2050m) and Megou (1616 ms) of the Mountain range of the Rif, that rise over the town like two horns, thus giving the name to the city Chefchaouen (in berebér this means: " watch the horns"). At 660m. altitude and with very little traffic of cars, the clean and fresh air invites you to spend some time to discover the beauty of the place and its surroundings.

The Medina of Chefchaouen - also known as Chaouen - is a small and calm environment. When entering one of the five entrances of this town we find that we are flooded with the most delightful aromas. It is a feast for the senses as the smell of fresh bread being cooked in ovens or on firewood greets.

There are a great variety of colors from different products in the stores and the bazaars contrast with the overwhelming bluish painted houses. The mixture of voices and sounds will guide you through the side streets until you inevitably arrive at the Uta el-Hammam square.

All volunteers who've been to Chaouen had the best feedbacks about their travel there, and it is probably their favourite destination in Morocco.

So if you're planning on travelling around Morocco, Chefchaouen must be among your top destinations of the list.



Shukran B'zzaf for reading!