

IT'S COOL TO BE A GIRL BECAUSE...

Helping others is second nature! Volunteering will make you feel good and you'll make loads of new friends. For more It's Cool To Be A Girl Because... reasons visit 17.co.za

"Every South African teen should try this! It's the most amazing, eye-opening experience. I was the only SA student there in 2009, so the programme definitely needs more willing SA teens to participate."
- LISA

“ the holiday that changed my life! ”

While most teens were chilling at the beach these hols, Lisa de Waal, 17, had an adventure of a different kind – a voluntourism experience right here in SA.

AS TOLD TO Zainab Slemang



WRITE IN!

Want to share your story? Then email us at mylife@seventeen.co.za or write to us (details on p92).

At the beginning of my matric year, I told my mom that I was interested in doing something that could help my community; she suggested we do some research on the Net and we came across the Global Leadership Adventures (GLA) site. The GLA is a high school community service programme that offers young people between the ages of 15 and 18 the opportunity to volunteer at grassroots community organisations for periods ranging from one to three weeks. The best bit was that they had programmes in both Cape Town and Jo'burg! I ended up in the Cape Town programme and this gave me the opportunity to explore my home city and really appreciate its beauty and various cultures.

As my first day at GLA grew nearer I felt so nervous because I had no idea what to expect. At the same time, I was also really excited because I would be meeting new people who came from different countries. The GLA Cape Town programme was based at Bishops High School in Rondebosch with 37 students taking part from all across the globe, including myself. I immediately felt at home amongst the group because everyone was really eager to open up about who they were and their cultures. Most of them were Americans and one girl from New York, Lungile, and I bonded immediately, as she was originally from Jo'burg and we were the only South Africans on the trip.

LOCAL ADVENTURES


On the first day the group was split into different smaller groups and each was allocated a different community centre. I was allocated to Hector Peterson High School in Kraaifontein, which meant that I'd be spending time with students my own age. Every day for a week for about four hours a day, our group would go to the high school to paint classrooms. And even though only 20 learners from the school were around since it was school holidays, we forged a really strong connection with them. One girl, Vuvu, showed me pictures of her parents who

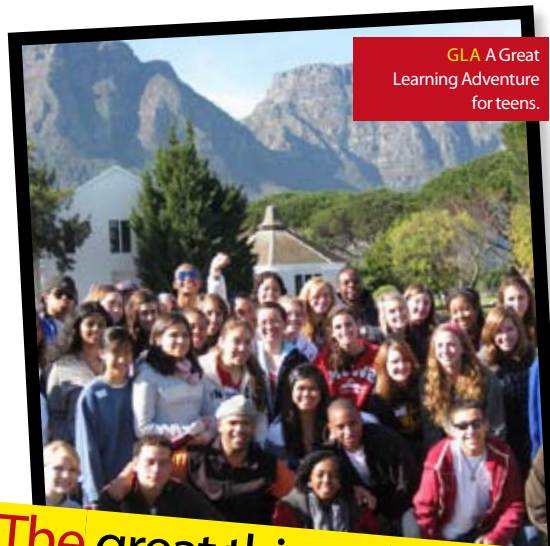
live in the Eastern Cape and I could tell it made her happy to be able to share this with me.

The great thing about the GLA is that the programme not only encourages young people to help others, it also empowers the communities to help themselves. By the end of the programme, together we had managed

eyes to the diverse cultures of the Mother City. We also visited Mitchell's Plain where we helped paint the house of an inspiring woman who had taken in 25 HIV-infected children. And in Langa, we got to experience a township tour and ate at a local restaurant.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Even though I'm from Cape Town, the international students somehow managed to introduce me to things that I took for granted. It was amazing to be able to relate to each other and the communities we were helping without the barriers of race, nationality, culture and age. By being a part of the programme I've definitely found something I am passionate about. This year, I've enrolled at UCT to study human rights law so that I can better prepare myself to help those less fortunate than I am. 



GLA A Great Learning Adventure for teens.

"The great thing about GLA is it empowers communities to help themselves."

to paint these beautiful murals themed around 2010 in three different classrooms! And the cool thing is that the whole time we were helping out, not once did I feel like what I was doing was charity work – for me what I was providing was more like a service to other teens just like me.

BROADENING HORIZONS

The programme also included other activities besides community work. In the evenings we would meet to have cultural discussions and debates. Different speakers were invited to speak to us about topics ranging from racism and apartheid to HIV and Aids. This was really helpful especially because HIV is not really a reality for many of the teens that participated in the programme. On weekends the GLA also organised outings like going to Table Mountain and cycling to Cape Point. These really opened up my

VOLUNTOURISM IN YOUR OWNCOUNTRY!

If you're interested in helping your community and making new friends, there are loads of great programmes you can get involved in – right here at home!

1. To find out more info on GLA, go to www.experiencegla.com where you will find different programmes for countries all over the world.
2. Learn to build a home with Habitat for Humanity SA. Visit www.habitat.org.za to learn how you can spend your holidays doing something that will not only build on your teamwork skills, but also do something special by helping a family find a home.
3. Share and gain knowledge by volunteering with Cross-Cultural Solutions. For more info, visit www.crossculturalsolutions.org for details about volunteer programmes around the world, including South Africa, where you can teach and learn more about the cultures of the country.