

Turkey 2008 special



Background to organising the trip to Turkey



I met with Greenwich Volunteer Centre in January 2006 for lunch as we were sharing information on bids. At that meeting GVC told me about their new programme on International Volunteering, they had gone to Cyprus in 2005 with Staff, Volunteers and Trustees and had worked on a pony sanctuary in Cyprus and how well this had been received by all.

I was in Turkey in May 06 and met via a friend the Leader of Beldibi Council, Celik Kinay, who on finding out my profession, asked me if I could organise a trip for volunteers to come and teach conversational English in a local school in Marmaris. I agreed. The trip to Turkey in October 2006 was a huge success and we managed to teach English, Russian, Music, Football Coaching and Arts.

The school, Nurettin Gençalioglu Anadolu Lisesi in Beldibi were so impressed with our work; they invited us back

in 2007. As we were so busy working on the matrix Award in 2007, we did not visit until October 2008.

The group was larger than in 2006, so 28 adults and a baby left a cold London to go and teach in the warmer climes of Marmaris and İçmeler in October. We were invited to teach at the Nurettin Gençalioglu secondary and the Attaturk primary schools. We agreed to teach conversational English, French, Arabic, Poetry, Arts, Football Coaching and Music. The Primary school had 2000 pupils with 85 teachers and the secondary school had 850 pupils with 35 teachers.

We have never seen such well behaved children!! They were a treat to teach. One of our staff, Ember Hibbert, was taken for an African American basketball player or an African-British footballer. Each day, at either of the schools, he was mobbed by children wanting his autograph. And ember loved this, he was given so much attention, you would have thought he was a Pop Star, or a famous footballer! It was a joy to see and really amusing!

The children loved the attention given to them by us the visitors, it made them feel special and important, and we made many new friends, feeling wanted and knowing we were doing a good job out there.

It is our intention to continue to volunteer in these 2 schools, on an annual basis, and we have been asked to work in other schools in the Mughla region.

We provided the schools with books and toys donated by the Walt Disney Corporation, Harper Collins and clothes from Coca-Cola. A new laptop from fish4.

The children and teachers were impressed with the gifts. We videoed the speeches and the donating of the gifts to the two schools. All the books and clothes went to the Primary school and I fundraised for a complete Interactive Whiteboard equipment, worth £2000 donated to the secondary school. The schools were indeed impressed, so impressed they put on an amazing dinner for all of us on our last teaching day at a luxurious hotel. A good time was had by all.

Whilst on this trip we also celebrated many birthdays, namely, Leah, Dominik, Sandra and mine. We certainly enjoyed ourselves. We also had time to site see and learn about the history of the area and visited many interesting tourist attractions and learnt how Turkish Delight is made.

We were a multi-racial, multi-cultural group, comprising of British, African, Irish, Indian, Arabic, Caribbean, Polish, and Russian volunteers.

We are still in contact with many of the children via facebook and emails, and it is our intention to continue fundraising for these 2 schools and hope to go out there to volunteer again, in 2009, and here's to 2009, in Turkey.

Marion Schumann
Director, HFVC

Teaching and horse riding



When we first discussed going to Turkey to do a week of international volunteering my first thoughts were that while it would be a thrilling thing to do, everyone else would have to go and I would get on with my work "back at the ranch". However, as time demanded the date and numbers be firmed up I overcame my stress levels and decided that actually it might just enhance my own skills. We had been invited to Turkey to teach English, sport, music at a primary and a secondary school, and to paint a mural on the primary school wall.

We arrived in Turkey in the middle of the night and after overcoming some language difficulties in determining male and female names and who was rooming with who, we finally settled down to ten days of sheer pleasure, excitement, hard work, kindness, friendliness, artistic creativity and a little tourism.

I was one of the lucky ones selected to teach English to primary school children. Monday morning arrived and there we were, all squeaky clean, ready for something

new. The primary school has 2000 students so the school is split into two parts, with half the students attending in the morning and half attending in the afternoon; the children get to have a good break every 40 minutes so they can go out and play.

Under the guidance of Fatma who looked after us for the week and ensured we were taken to the right room with the right class at the right time, we began our amazing volunteering journey.

I was taken to meet my first class and was given the most enormous welcome I have ever had anywhere from 36 children between 6-8 years old and after being introduced to each other individually, we settled down to just getting used to me being there and helping their teacher, Cemile.

We took an immediate liking to each other and between Cemile and myself we got the children to understand the alphabet and the differences between the Turkish alphabet and the English one. We worked together for two days and Leena joined us on the second day, playing games and it was interesting to see they were taught the same games but in Turkish: "heads, knees, eyes and toes"!

Each day brought new experiences and new students who were the most friendly, inquiring, interested, and well behaved young children I had come across. I couldn't wait to get to the school every day. The students were

overwhelmingly friendly and charming, wanting to talk to us, play with us, take our autographs and most beguiling of all, take our hands in theirs and walk with us. And for those of us with a mind for fashion the older children's uniforms were tartan, very fashionable.

While we taught, the mural progressed on the wall in the playground, an amazing tribute to the friendships that were being built up, and which was dedicated to the 2012 Olympics. The fabulous mural told a story about sport but most of all it reflected all of us volunteers.

The week ended with a lovely farewell dinner given by both schools and with both Directors and their wives present. We were very grateful to have met such a lovely group of people led by the fantastic Heads of both schools.

On the weekends we did some touristy things, like the mud baths, and I spent a fantastic day horse riding through fields, forest, and rivers, with the mountains as a backdrop. How much more perfect could that be.

To volunteer in this way was a learning experience both about culture, about education (and how similar the Turkish syllabus is), and most of all about people.

There is a little group of photos that will keep me going until the next visit.

Jenny Melrose
Deputy Director

Turkey: Volunteering at its Best!!!

By Doreen Grant-Oppan

This was my second trip to Turkey, the first being in 2006 with HFVC, so I was fully prepared and aware of what to expect. Or so I thought...

Turkey in 2008 really did exceed my expectations and brought to light many things about myself, about Turkey and about people in general that pleasantly surprised me! Let me break it down:

About myself

Travelling to Turkey this time around really made me realise that CVs do not do enough justice for people. There really is more to a person than what they write on their CV!!! When I went to Turkey I had planned to teach English to teenage school kids, like I did 2 years ago. However, this time around I made sure that I was fully prepared and ready to teach an English class. Along with my colleague Helen we devised a series of lesson plans and activities for the students to participate in. Once class had started I was amazed how time flew by! Many of the lesson plans I had prepared could not be done due to time running out!

Teaching English is one thing, but teaching SALSA was something completely different and one that I did not expect. However, it turned out brilliantly!!! Myself and my colleagues Nnenna, Ember and Belinda (our Head Dance Tutor!) spent hours practicing a dance routine which we taught to the students. The students absolutely loved the Salsa classes! Towards the end of the week the whole

school was coming out to watch us teach Salsa, and it was such a joy to see the students continuing to practice their dance moves in the corridors and common rooms!

So what did I learn about myself during this trip? That I may have some hidden teaching abilities that I didn't think I had, and that teaching IS a rewarding experience (no matter how unruly the students may be!).

About Turkey

Turkey really is a beautiful country and it is a shame that there was not enough time on our trip to really explore the entire country. However, what I was able to explore, I loved! The people, the food, the music, the weather, the shops, the fragrances, the fashion, the great outdoors, the history, the well-behaved students at the school, the dance moves I learnt. It was wonderful!

About People

It really is amazing to see what can be accomplished when you take almost 30 people out of their usual environment (including a 6 month old baby!) and cause them to work in different, unfamiliar surroundings using skills they do not use everyday. I really did think that this could lead to a 'team destroying' end as opposed to 'team building', but as I write I am corrected. We came back to London as a more united HFVC, a more confident HFVC, a more global HFVC, a HFVC that really does believe in volunteering, community development and the power it has for change.



The most amazing ten days of my life so far

By Leena Gopinathan



As I only decided to go to Turkey four days before the plane departed for Dalaman I had no time to worry about my first flight on a plane in nearly ten years. Despite the rushed nature of me tagging along on this trip my preconceptions did have time to surface. Turkey was never on the list of countries that I wanted to visit. I thought it was a Muslim state, wrongly. Knowing friends who have been to other Middle-Eastern/ Arab states I thought it would be all long sleeves. How wrong.

İçmeler and Marmaris were both amazingly beautiful places. Twenty-eight staff and volunteers from HFVC and Brent went to Turkey to teach Art, Drama, English, Music and Sport to Primary and Secondary school students based in Marmaris. The first stop was the Secondary School, the children were all prepared for our arrival,

hanging out of windows to glimpse a view of this motley crew of people.

Whilst half the group stayed with the Secondary School pupils, the rest of us went to the primary school. Fear set in me when I heard there were two thousand students and only eighty teachers. I felt slightly calmer when told the day is split into two, a thousand pupils attend the morning session and the other half in the afternoon. However what scared me most was the thought of standing in front of a class of forty children trying to teach them English. I am not a trained teacher and my only qualification to teach English is the fact that I was born here.

Entering a classroom has never been so rewarding. Having forty children clap and cheer for you is such an

amazing ego boost, a must for everyone. I met children of all ages, some did not speak a word of English. Despite the communication barrier, the children found a way to communicate with us whether it was finding words in their English books or through their facial expressions. I can safely say on behalf of everyone that every child that we encountered touched every single one of us.

My first experience at teaching was to sing “Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes” to a group of 8 year olds. The memory should be embarrassing but all I can recall are the smiling faces absorbing these new English words and being so happy and excited.

We spent a week at our respective schools. My final day was spent with a group of nursery children, the most adorable group of children I have ever had the fortune to meet. I spent half of the week with the older children who had been learning English for sometime. Their proficiency in the language was commendable as their pronunciation put me to shame. The children in the primary school were all excitable, polite and disciplined, but most of all they seemed to enjoy life and had an appetite for learning.

We also experienced traditional Turkish activities. The Turkish Baths were the most cleansing and relaxing experience. On Sunday we went on a boat trip where we got to see the most stunning views.

The shopping in Turkey is most definitely an experience. You often read posters with 'cheaper than Primark' or my favourite 'cheaper than

shoplifting!' I was also lucky enough to travel to Rhodes and experience history of another civilisation.

We left the best till last going to the 'Cotton Castle' or in Turkish Pamukkale, witnessing the calcification of the rocks first hands, treading in warm mineral filled water, viewing ancient theatres and visiting the tombs of over two thousand corpses, while be-

ing followed being followed by a puppy. As we left we saw a couple get married.

Vaguely knowing only a couple of people when we departed from Gatwick I have returned with something much more precious: the memories of those ten days and the foundations of a beautiful relationship and some wonderful and life long friendships.



Volunteering in Turkey: My Testimonial

By Nnenna Ohuonu



Prior to arriving in Turkey I was not sure as to what to expect but upon our arrival there I was mesmerised by the beautiful landscape. You could not help but take it all in and be in awe of it. So much could be said about this however, I will focus on my teaching experience as this is what made a lasting impression on me.

When we arrived at Nurettin Gençalioglu Anadolu Lisesi School, I was without preliminary thought or expectations. However I was first struck by the beauty of the location of the school. The school is centrally located in the town of İçmeler, picturesquely placed within a backdrop of scenic mountain slopes covered by a green blanket of trees. As well as being taken in by the scenery before me, what I did not realise at the time was that, that was the beginning of a lasting impression and new friendships.

Having decided I wanted to teach the secondary school kids, I was nervous about meeting them all. On my first day of teaching I was not sure what to expect or what the students expected of me. It's hard to describe the feeling going through me when I first stood in front of a classroom full of students. You could call it a combination of nerves and excitement. Adding to my nerves was the fact that I could only speak a couple of words of Turkish and was not sure as to how I would go about engaging with the students, especially as I was not sure as to how well the kids spoke or even understood English.

It was not long before I learnt that their English was amazingly good and their understanding comprehensive for a second language. This made it easier in terms of our engagement with the young people. We taught several

classes and with each class I could not help but be taken in by the student's enthusiasm and willingness to learn. As part of our curriculum, we taught the young people a combination of English using various activities and basic salsa classes. I was not sure how they would respond to the activities we chose for them and our teaching methods (considering we were not professional teachers) and was glad to see the interest they took in all we taught them. I was even more impressed by their willingness to participate and at how quickly they learnt.

Our regular presence in the school, over the course of the week meant that we built a good relationship with the students. So much so that they did not hesitate to tell us what they thought about our activities. So if it was too easy they would not hesitate to point that out. But I think what was more humbling for me was the respect and kindness they showed and their willingness to participate and enthusiasm to learn all the tasks we set them.

What I enjoyed most was teaching the students basic salsa moves. The classes were an instant success and soon news spread through out the school about the dance classes. Before we knew it we had ignited a dance fever in the school, with teachers wanting to take part and students approaching us and asking when the next salsa classes were as they missed the last. In return, we were treated to Turkish dance routines by the students and teachers who

were keen to teach us the traditional Turkish dances. Looking around me and seeing how everyone got involved gave a sense of unification. Teachers, students and volunteers became one big family for a moment. I suddenly realised that although I came here to teach them about English culture, I ended up being the one to learn a lot more from the students and teachers about Turkish culture.

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The biggest difference I noticed from volunteering in Turkey was not external but was the difference inside of myself. I may not have been able to teach them English well but I was able to share my friendship with the young people we taught. Most importantly, it enhanced my understanding of yet another culture. It challenged my

personal limits, and I developed lifelong friendships as a result. I will never forget this wonderful experience. It has added to my book of experiences and further shaped me. The irony was that I was supposed to be there to "make a difference", yet it was the kids that made the difference

I have to say a big thank you to the teachers who made it easy for us. They are the people we never hear about. They were very willing to accommodate our needs, easy to talk to, very welcoming, knowledgeable and always willing to any answer questions we had. 'The people that make a real difference in other people's lives, yet never rise to fame or fortune'. I also have to say thank you to everyone volunteered. They were all inspirational in their dedication to the betterment and progress of the students we worked with.





Turkey 2008

We all went to Turkey in 2008

Hammersmith and Fulham Volunteers don't underestimate!
To take up a challenge of international standing
In two Turkish schools and far from demanding
Nurettin Gençalioglu Anadolu Lisesi the secondary
Attarturk İlkogretim Okulu the primary!



Twenty eight volunteers we looked like the United Nations
Received warmly by all in both schools and scored the
highest ratings!

With a varied program that took into account
Their needs, aspirations and what we are about!

Sent artists, singers, poets, dancers, child carers, educators!
An open ended timetable that was clearly communicated
Played football, led classes in English, singing, dancing, a
playground mural and much more!
Involved pupils and teachers, ancillary staff to share the floor!
Conversational English to improve Turkish people's
language skills
Signed autographs like famous people to satisfy and fill!



The hearts and minds that embraced us so warm!
Like the sun, whether in the school environment or
playground Hammersmith & Fulham Volunteers held their
form!

Took pictures that embodied the spirit of humanity!
Two countries came together entwined like one family
Sharing a vision that transcended nationality
Everyone important socially included, devoid of vanity!



Hammersmith and Fulham's troop of volunteers
Performed their duties with love and a smile
Everyone knowing we were only in Turkey for a while
Five days working and five days play!
Seventeenth to the twenty seventh of October, just a 10 day
stay!

Invited by our hosts to return next year!
To consolidate our relationship and build on the cheer!
The trip to Turkey we shall never forget!
Its beautiful landscape, all our new friends, and the Turkish
people that we met!



Turkey 2008

Written by Raoul Dero

Resident Poet Laureate

Communities Empowerment Network (CEN)

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