

Edwina Powell

I volunteered at OCCED orphanage in Naxal which was such a fun and rewarding experience.

The children are all so lovely and always happy to have volunteers teach them new things.

They were on winter vacation so I worked with most of them everyday, although I didn't work much with the older boys as they had 4 nepali volunteers giving extra schooling.

Everything was arranged for me when I arrived. The city tour and also the hike were great fun also allowing me to learn more about the Nepali culture.

Binita from was especially a great help and friend, any questions about anything she would help answer such as how the toilets work.

At the orphanage the children loved the dances I taught them, simple ones such as the chicken dance, hokey pokey and also others that I teach here in Australia. Kaushellia and Reema from the orphanage even loved to join in.

I took over with me a suitcase full of children's books and teddy's which the kids played with every day. Each morning I would read the children a book and then use an alphabet book to allow them to name the objects in English. They enjoyed this very much. Textas, pencils and a huge pile of colouring in pages I took over with me and the kids loved colouring in activities.

I noticed that in the infants room they never had toys out to play with, so Binita, Reema and I sorted through all the toys including some baby rattles I brought and told the Didi's to please keep the basket of toys out permanently for the infants. It was good to see by the end of my stay the babies always had a toy in hand instead of playing with the carpet pieces. I was surprised when the infants sat still long enough for me to read them little stories. I have placed some sturdy books in the infants room too.

With my donation money I got the upstairs toilet repaired including a plastered step made as the children originally couldn't reach the toilet so would use the floor. I also brought a new clean towel for the toilet near the office, 20 nappy pants for the infants to stop leaks and the rest of the money Binita and the administrator Bejaya were buying the children each a new pair of shoes.

Some activities I did with the children were : bubble blowing, creating sunflowers by cutting and gluing paper, puzzles, dancing, story time (with the older girls I would get them each to try and read me a book), simple maths problems such as sorting numbers into order. In the classroom on the shelving there are lots of little games which the children enjoyed such as the Lotto and finger croquet etc.

Beading was a favourite activity among the children aged 3-6 starting out with large wooden beads, then eventually moving to small beading. In Nepali they call the beading 'Mala'.

Lots of music instruments are also in the classroom so we would let the children play with those a lot aswell.

I filled a wooden toy box (from a previous volunteer) with all different kinds of toys, and Kaushellia and I unscrewed the lid (so no children could lock each other inside by accident) and we placed it in the recreation room so that the children always had toys to play with.

It was good to see Kaushellia always making sure the children had toys to play with either building blocks, plastic toys or even the new soft toys I brought.

Overall the orphanage experience was excellent, I could write hundreds of pages about it, but I thought I better keep this a bit short.

I am so glad I chose a homestay, as it really showed me the ways of life in Nepal with power and water cuts, their food (which ended up a bit too spicy for me, but an experience never-the-less) and being able to become part of their family meeting all relations etc. The son's wives even dressed me up in their wedding Sari's for fun.

My homestay family even took me to a Nepali Wedding Engagement and reception which was so amazing to see the difference in cultures!

Thamel has many great food stores if you're needing a bit of western food such as 'Fire and Ice' and even the 'Java Coffee house'. And pretty much all of the money exchange places are reliable. There is also a bank in Thamel and ATM.

Local buses and tempo (little Tuk Tuk's) are cheap ways of getting around Kathmandu... although it's probably safer to have someone with you to translate which bus to get on. I mainly walked as everything is close walking distance.

Overall the organisation of people and places combined with their local partner made my trip so much easier! I always felt safe and with the many activities, Friday night meeting etc I never had a dull moment.

I went there with an open mind and so wasn't disappointed about anything! I even found the orphanage to be of a very good standard with the kids as clean as I was (which wasn't too clean due to no water but clean enough) and in plenty of warm clothing.

Thanks People and Places for allowing me to have this experience ☺
Edwina