



help...  
learn...  
explore!

## › American high school student investigates the people and places of Cape Town, South Africa

Fifteen-year-old Haley Vincent's interest in human rights combined with her longstanding desire to visit Africa made the Projects Abroad Human Rights Project in South Africa a perfect experience for her.

Interested in one day pursuing a career in journalism, Haley felt it pertinent to experience first-hand the obstacles faced in developing countries and to share those with the rest of the world. "It's so important to get the word out," she shared.

Haley's particular area of focus whilst in Cape Town was the issue of gang violence that plagues the city's poor communities. "I learnt a lot about gangs," she shared. "I knew what townships were but I didn't know much about the specifics, which include huge gang violence problems in certain areas," she continued. "I was particularly interested in the issue of gangs in South African prisons, and disconcerted by the ways in which adult gang members entice school children into lives of crime."

Aside from conducting research and assisting communities in local townships, Haley spent her time in Cape Town visiting sites of historical significance such as the District Six Museum, the Slave Lodge and Robben Island.

During her free time, Haley's stereotypical view of Africa as playing host to the Big Five and not much else was dispelled as she explored the Cape Peninsula, discovering the area's natural coastal wonders. "Before visiting Cape Town I had only seen penguins in an aquarium, so seeing them on the beach was a particular highlight for me," she smiled.

Haley lived with a host family during her time in Cape Town. "Staying with a local host family gave me more insight into the culture than I would have gained anywhere else," she noted. "I enjoyed living the everyday life of the average South African and learning about my host parents' personal experiences of apartheid. Like that of many of the South Africans with whom I interacted,

their warm friendliness and hospitality really struck a chord with me," she explained. "The food was great too!"

Haley lived with a group of other volunteers participating in the same project. "It was great to have such a multicultural experience – not only did I learn about South Africa, but about Britain, Australia and France too!"

Haley's advice to future volunteers is to be prepared to learn a lot in a short period of time. "Establish exactly where your interest lies from the start," she advised. "Then get to the front of the group, listen well and soak up as much as you possibly can," she concluded.

