

Name: Emily Smith
Age: 22 (21 on the trip)
Trip: Hockey coaching in Ghana
Currently studying: Sports Science at Loughborough University

Between my second and third year of university, I went to Ghana for five weeks. There were about 40 Gap Sports volunteers there, ranging from 18 years old to 23, and we all lived together.

Two in-country co-ordinators met me at the airport and went through everything. I was the only hockey coach there—everyone else was doing different sports. There's only one hockey pitch in Ghana, but it has a good Astro surface.

From Monday to Friday, I taught two sessions each day. In the morning, I taught 40 children, aged 7–11, and the afternoon group was 20 boys aged 19–24, which was definitely an experience, because they were towering over me! Although they were probably more skilled than me (a lot were going on to play for Ghana), they hadn't learned match play or tactics. The Ghanaian children were much more enthusiastic than their English counterparts.

In our house, the water was in tanks, so if it ran out, that was it until someone



Teaching tactics and match play to some of the Ghanaian hockey students

brought more, which could be days later. Also, we had 48 hours with electricity, and 24 hours without it. It was an absolute culture shock at first, but, by the end of it, it was something that made the trip even better. It's corny, but it's life-changing how much you appreciate things when you come home.

- Emily went on a five-week hockey coaching placement in Accra, Ghana, which costs £1,295 (£100 per additional week)
- There are departures all year round for 5–12 week placements. Hockey coaching is also available in South Africa. For further information, telephone 0871 221 2929 or visit www.gapsports.com



The Art History Abroad group get some expert tuition in Florence

Name: Laura Freeman
Age: 20 (19 on the trip)
Trip: Art History in Italy
Currently studying: History of Art, Magdalene College, Cambridge University

I didn't want to go straight to university after my A-levels, so I worked for a time, and then Art History Abroad (AHA), in Italy, was my big, blowout trip.

We usually met at 9.30am, and were taught and guided around the sites by a tutor. It's not just a trip for art historians; several of the people there had never studied the subject. I had done art for A level, and I think I learned more in a week there than I had done in two years of studying art at school.

On our first day, we were taken on a Shakespearian tour of Verona, during

which the brilliant tutor Richard Stemp, an actor as well as an art historian, delivered the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*.

The most memorable feature of the AHA trip is the private tour of the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel. We arrived at the Vatican at 6.30pm, and watched everybody file out before we walked in. The Sistine Chapel was completely empty, whereas, minutes before, it had been a sweaty crush. We were incredibly fortunate to see it in such a way, especially as so few people are privileged to be able to do so. We could even lie down on the floor of the Sistine Chapel and gaze up at the ceiling, and not be trampled by tourists. It was simply extraordinary.

Some people may balk at the cost, but at the end of the trip, all of us felt like we'd got so much out of the experience. A truly amazing opportunity.

- Laura travelled with Art History Abroad, which runs six-week courses to Italy four times a year. The courses cost from £6,100, which includes flights, B&B in guesthouses with shared rooms, tuition throughout and special visits to St Mark's in Venice, the Vasari Corridor in Florence and the Sistine Chapel in Rome
- For further information, telephone 01284 774772, or visit www.arthistoryabroad.com