



St. Anne's Homes – Cape Town, South Africa

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St. Anne's Homes

St. Anne's Homes is a women's shelter in Cape Town, South Africa which was founded in 1904 and is funded by the Anglican Church since then. This non-governmental Institution provides shelter to women and their children in need. They live on the property of the shelter and are provided food and accommodation. Furthermore the women attend therapy sessions and skill classes, such as parenting skills, computer or crafting skills, etcetera in order to empower them and help them reaching a state of self-sufficiency again. When being occupied with the mandatory program from 9am to 3pm, their children are taken care of in the crèche within the same house.

Cape Town, South Africa

Cape Town, the provincial capital of the Western Cape, is the second largest city in South Africa, with its 3.75 million inhabitants. It is located on the West coast on Table Bay almost most southern on the African continent, being the closest city to the Cape of Good Hope. Cape Town is characterized by a group of mountains, including Devals Peak, Table Mountain, Lions Head, Signal Hill and the 12 Apostles, which stretches across the whole city. The seasons in South Africa are reverse to the ones in Europe. From June to August, in winter, the temperature reaches 7-19°C on average. From December to February, in summer, the temperature reaches 15-29°C.



Tasks during the internship

I worked in the children's program of St. Anne's Homes. This means my job was to take care of children ranging from 1 month to 5 years. Every week I was placed in a different class, I either helped out in the baby class, with the babies being 1 to 18 months old, changing diapers, feeding and playing with the babies, or I helped out in the toddler class, with the children being 1 ½ to 3 years old, with the same tasks or I was taking care and educating preschoolers, being 3 to 5 years old. My tasks were comparable to the typical tasks of a German Kindergarten teacher.



- Patience
- Flexibility
- Improvisation
- Omnipresence
- Cultural differences
- Adaptation



Impressions

It was tough to arrive at St. Anne's Homes, to be unprepared and not to know how to deal with so many children that do not know any routine or rules. It took me a while to get over the thought that I am not contributing (besides keeping them from hurting each other) to their development. I never knew what the day will bring because the official teacher did not have a set program to follow. After developing a repertoire of activities, with 3 other volunteers that arrived, things went easier. This showed me that you can develop a plan and make things run smoother even in a situation that seems most chaotic and overwhelming at the beginning.

Culture

Cape Town is a very international city. Only few people you meet are actual native Capetonians. Therefore the culture is very vibrant and not to be defined easily.

What I enjoyed most was Cape Towns Cuisine. The City offers never ending options to get international food of high quality for a small price. This is especially seen in the various food markets you can visit almost every day.

The food markets are often mixed with craft markets of local designers using local products. Sustainability is an upcoming theme in consumption in Cape Town.

St. Anne's Homes | Cape Town, South Africa



Although Cape Town is an African city it seems to be very modern and you will not find the 'wild Africa' just inside town. Therefore it is quite easy for Europeans to adapt and adjust.

However, what I found irritating is the lack of security. Every house is equipped with a security system and every window has bars. I took me a while to get over the feeling to be trapped at home, especially because it is fairly unsafe outside after sunset.

Ideas & suggestions for future interns

Take your time to get used to the situation and do not despair of the chaotic and overwhelming environment after the first one or two weeks.

Plan your own activities with the children. Once you see progress, everything feels way easier.

Try to get engaged in working with the women as well. It is nice to see the holistic approach the shelter tries to realize.

If you plan anything and need any supplies or anything signed, let the one in charge know at least a week ahead and remind him/her every day. Otherwise it will be forgotten.

If you work at St. Anne's Homes in winter (our summer) bring warm clothes. They do not have central heating (actually, noone has central heating).



The life after St. Anne's ...

Saying goodbye was quite sad, recognizing that I have grown so close to the children, their mothers and the other staff members and volunteers.

However, I want to apply what I learned at St. Anne's Homes and work in a bilingual Kindergarten in Dortmund. I hope to see the different approaches to early childhood education and understand the way the teachers worked at St. Anne's Homes a little bit better.

Furthermore it shaped me to see how the women and children suffer from their socialization and their cruel experiences. Therefore I plan on engaging in social projects in Dortmund as well.

- Weigh up whether or not to go with an organization. (saving money vs. convenience)
- Be aware of the missing safety, but don't let that spoil your stay.
- Never walk around after sunset by yourself.
- Always take a cap.
 - If you take a cap, only use the ones using a meter.
- But even better: Use Uber.
- Enjoy the various food markets and local breweries and wine farms!
- Try to live with locals (f.e. [airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com)), which gives you more insight than living together with other foreign volunteers or students.
- Observatory or Woodstock are the best places to stay for volunteers and students.

