

21st October 2011

ACTS Testimonial:

Grace Academy used ACTS for part of their Zambia trip in 2011. Our goal is to expose students from UK inner city schools to a very different culture and to participate in humanitarian work in a third world country.

Having run these trips each year since 2008, we decided to utilise ACTS to simplify the organisation of the practical aspects of the trip (transport, food, bookings, etc.), and to enable us to concentrate on the programme and student experience.

In Zambia, transport and accommodation are a challenge, so having an all-inclusive vehicle made it possible for us to visit rural sites, where we could set up a base for a few days to work out from. We were put in touch with ACTS through a staff member being part of a similar trip in Zimbabwe in 2010, and after investigation, felt that the Zambia trip could be enhanced by using ACTS.

The ACTS crew were very competent and a great asset to our staff team. Their friendly, but professional approach gave us confidence in all health and safety aspects, and we were able to resolve minor issues quickly. They were soon part of the group, and some students made lasting friendships with crew members, keeping in touch since the trip. The students enjoyed the experience of the overland truck immensely: lengthy journeys were more tolerable because of the long range views and the camaraderie generated by the seating arrangements inside. Tables enabled small groups to play games and others improvised with cool boxes. Set-up and pack-down happened efficiently as people quickly learnt the routines. Evening camp fires were particularly valuable for sharing the day's most significant memories, as well as keeping warm on cold evenings.

ACTS offered basic camping facilities, but we combined this with sleeping in buildings belonging to the partners we worked with, thus giving us access to indoor showers and toilets. The crew were also able to use some kitchen facilities at one site, which helped speed up the cooking times for a large group. All food prepared by ACTS was excellent; the menu was mostly western with interesting variations. No one went hungry and there were often extra servings available. Several students enjoyed dishes they would not have previously tried at home, and we had virtually no sickness. Everyone helped with food preparation and washing up, on a rota basis, and this contributed positively to the overall impact and changes in students' attitudes throughout the trip.

We found ACTS to be good value for money, helping us remain within budget. It is not luxury travel, by any means, but perfectly adequate for school groups travelling in Africa. The partnership between Grace Academy and ACTS was very successful and we would certainly recommend them as travel facilitators for low-cost school trips, especially if you hope to see beyond the major cities of Africa. We successfully achieved all our goals in 2011 and are planning to use them again in 2012.

Yours sincerely,

Lynda James. (Grace Academy Africa Trips Coordinator)