

Crossing Borders – Bali, Indonesia

As part of my Psychology programme I participated in the minor Crossing Borders and stayed abroad for three and a half months. My fellow student and I went to the small village Tianyar in Bali and worked there voluntarily as English teachers for the WINS foundation Bali. Our accommodation was much better than initially expected and was located directly at the beach wherefore we always ate breakfast with an amazing and unforgettable view. We lived there with many other volunteers from all over the world. At some point we were only 8 volunteers but mostly we were a lot more than that. From Friday to Sunday we had time to travel and to discover the beautiful island.

From Monday to Thursday we had to teach 3 hours in the afternoon and spent approximately 1 hour to prepare classes. My fellow student and I got two classes each, with 16 children per class that were six to twelve years old. The first time I stood in front of the class I was really overwhelmed and afraid about the teaching because I did not have any teaching experience. I remember that after my first day I was ready to quit and to change to a different programme that would not include teaching. However, after a few days I got more and more ideas about the teaching and I started to develop a close relationship with the children. I started to enjoy preparing classes every morning and saw satisfactory results only after a few weeks. To see the kids happy and excited when I walked into the classroom was a very nice and fulfilling feeling for me and I will never forget how happy they made me. The teaching itself helped me to discover a creative side that I did not know about myself and I am grateful about that experience.

Although the overall experience was great and I would always do it again, the beginning was rather difficult. My friend and I both needed some time to adjust to the culture and the people and were quite shocked when many Balinese people were unfriendly and only seemed to care about money. This was mainly the case because we started our trip in Kuta, the south of Bali, which is a part that is very touristic. The culture and friendliness we expected to encounter has disappeared in that area, which gave us a negative first impression. However, once we arrived in Tianyar we realized that it takes some time and effort until the people open up and invite you to learn about their lives and beliefs. Once, we established rapport with the people, we developed close relationships with the people and the children.

Thus, the overall crossing borders experience was very unforgettable and full of different experiences. Although we also encountered challenges throughout our stay, I gained a lot for myself as well as insights into the Balinese culture that I will never forget.

