

James Pooley testimonial for CART and SISONKE

I spent 2 weeks at the Centre for Alternative Rural Technology and found it an amazing experience that challenged my preconceptions about sustainability and Africa. I had been travelling through Sub Saharan Africa for over 2 months before I arrived in Sicambeni and was coming to the end of my travels, looking forward to my home comforts back in England. I didn't expect that the most thought provoking and inspiring part of my break would come in that fortnight.

I arrived to a warm welcome from Di and the other volunteers and after some superb food, all made from food growing in the gardens, I found my way to my roundavel hut. The volunteering tasks varied from the more physical tasks such as making bricks and digging up a field, to helping out in Sissonke School. This wide variety of tasks meant that you are never stuck in the same job for too long, so don't have a chance to get bored. The food was definitely a highlight, the banana jam being particularly delicious.

This was combined with more thought provoking benefits that have continued to make me think long after leaving Sicambeni. The villagers were incredibly friendly, especially those involved directly with CART. It was clear to see how they were motivated by the centre, seeing the benefits of not being caught in the trap of just living off hand outs from the government. Whilst I was there I saw how they could grow their own food and build their own houses, utilising new found skills and confidence. I learnt a great deal from CART and from the villagers, changing my views about how real people in South Africa do live. I also saw how they could live a sustainable life, not one of poverty, with the opportunity to be responsible for their own future.