

To Khartoum or Not to Khartoum: That is the Question...



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Some volunteers choose to teach in Khartoum while others request a placement outside the capital. Below is a brief comparison of the advantages of living and working in Khartoum or elsewhere in Sudan.

The advantages of a placement in Khartoum.

In Sudan, Khartoum is a world onto its own. Rapidly modernizing, its residents seek the wonders of capitalism, while simultaneously keeping their feet firmly planted in egalitarian Islamic traditions. While it suffers from overcrowding and major infrastructure issues, it is overall a safe and friendly place.

The benefits of a placement in Khartoum are:

- Greater variety of things to see and activities to do (e.g. museums, restaurants, cafes, shops, excursions, social events & lifestyle).
- Regular contact with other volunteers and foreigners.
- Better services and facilities (e.g. water, health, electricity, internet speeds).
- Universities tend to be better equipped and to have more resources.
- More immediate SVP support.
- Comparatively less socially restrictive for females.
- More diverse local connections.
- The city's location in the centre of Sudan means that it is a great departure point to visit different states.

The advantages of a placement outside Khartoum.

Out of Khartoum, the influence and cultural standardisations of global capitalism are less invasive and Sudan can be seen in much the same way as it has been for the last 50 to 100 years.

A placement outside of Khartoum is certainly more demanding. However, volunteers report far more satisfying, rewarding and immersive experiences than those with placements in Khartoum. SVP has had successful university placements in Kassala, Dongola, El Obeid, Port Sudan, Wad Medani, Atbara and Shendi (placements periodically hibernate and are not an option).

The benefits of a placement out of Khartoum are:

- People are less busy than in Khartoum allowing for greater integration and sustained exposure to the culture.
- Comparatively rapid development of Arabic language skills as English is rarely spoken outside the classroom.
- A far richer appreciation and understanding of traditional Sudanese life and customs.
- People are generally even more welcoming and accommodating.
- The teaching stipend will be enough to cover all expenses, perhaps with some money remaining at the end of the month. Khartoum volunteers will typically have to do extra teaching work to make ends meet.
- Can travel to Khartoum for a break or timeout.
- Gaining a sense of confidence, autonomy, and resilience.
- Everyday life is far more relaxed and peaceful in comparison to Khartoum.

SVP encourages volunteers to consider taking on a placement outside of Khartoum because we believe that the need is greater and the cultural exchange stronger there. At the same time, we realise that placements outside of Khartoum may not be suitable for everyone. Placements outside of Khartoum are generally better suited to people who have:

- Experience working and living in basic conditions for an extended period away from the capital city of a developing country.
- Independent and sustained travel experience in cultures significantly different to their own.
- A desire to fully immerse themselves within the culture.
- Anthropological interests.
- A strong sense of independence, autonomy and self-reliance.
- An ability to keep themselves entertained.
- A desire to learn conversational Arabic to a high degree of fluency.
- An informed understanding of (and interest in) Islamic cultural norms and traditions.

The above are merely pointers from our previous placement experiences. You will know best about your interests, competencies and motivations. We ask that you make an honest assessment about whether or not you can sustain the necessary determination, good humour and self-reliance for the duration of an out of town placement when considering wishing to be placed out of Khartoum. It can be hard work. You will be without the comforts of home and without ready access to people with similar cultural groundings to yourself. Feel free to discuss any questions you have as you prepare to come to Sudan.

Whichever you choose you will have the experience of a lifetime.