

LAS ZIMBABWE TRIP 2023





ABOUT THE TRIP

At LAS, we teach our students to become innovative, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world. Wherever possible, we encourage a spirit of philanthropy in our community and teach the importance of giving. Every year, staff and students organize a trip to the Sethule Orphans Trust in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. This partnership between LAS and Sethule has been strong for over a decade and has allowed students year after year to serve others, make friendships, and learn about different cultures.



When speaking about Global Family at LAS, we usually refer to our worldwide alumni community. But partners like Sethule remind us that we have more connections than we realize. This year, our students played a significant role in the organizing and fundraising element of the program. Leading up to the trip, students helped with the auction and raffle, which raised a record-breaking CHF 25,000, 80% of which went towards Sethule projects. Being involved in the run-up to the trip and learning more about Sethule allowed the whole LAS community to be involved in this project, not just the group traveling.



SERVICE

The students were in Zimbabwe for two weeks, and the first week was dedicated to service. At the beginning of the week, the group visited several schools to work on building projects, including designing and painting artwork on the external walls of the buildings. LAS students saw the school's lack of furniture and books and reflected on the importance of the money raised during the auction to support these initiatives. Our LAS students worked alongside local Zimbabweans who worked for Sethule and were guided by their skills and craftsmanship. Our students were definitely put to work and can now proudly say they can make the perfect concrete mix!





CULTURAL EXCHANGE



Before the trip, students also planned and developed the cultural exchange element for their meeting with the community. A cultural exchange is an event where people from different backgrounds trade ideas, feelings, stories, or customs. Song and dance are significant elements of Zimbabwean culture, so Sethule suggested that each party prepare something to share their cultures and get to know one another. This was a really successful activity and broke the ice between the communities! Our students learned a lot about Zimbabwean customs and cultures and enjoyed getting to know the community better. The two groups also shared a meal and taught each other words and phrases from their languages. This cultural immersion from both sides broke down barriers and allowed them to connect on a deeper level and develop friendships.



ACTIVITIES



For the second half of the trip, our students enjoyed exploring Zimbabwe and participating in a range of culturally immersive activities. The group took part in a sunrise and sunset hike, where they witnessed the country's beautiful landscape and learned about the naturally occurring Matopos rocks, which are native to the area. Students also went on game drives and a safari in Hwange National Park, horseback riding and rafting, and visited Victoria Falls, a train museum, and an ethical elephant sanctuary, where they enjoyed interactions with the animals and learned about the threats that they experience due to climate change and poaching. Every evening, students had group dinners, bonding with people in the local community, and even got to attend a drum show. The students had an incredible time learning about the beautiful, diverse, and culturally rich country they had the privilege of visiting.



THE PARTNERSHIP

This decade-long partnership between LAS and the Sethule Orphans Trust goes both ways. Our students and staff embark on the trip with a willingness to help the local community and offer their time and enthusiasm, and they return to Leysin with so much new knowledge and many new friendships. This year our students really grew by stepping out of their comfort zones, trying new things, and adjusting to a new way of life for the two weeks they were there. Thank you to the staff members and students that attended this trip, as well as everyone who made it possible by participating in the auction and raffle—it has made a really big difference in the lives of people in the Bulawayo community.

If you would like to take part in the trip next year, the application process will take place in the first quarter of the year.

