



Wild About Earth

is a wildly enthusiastic travel architect that helps designing exclusive, adventurous & tailor-made trips for families with conscious parents. By setting an intention before departure, strive for more connection between yourself, partner and child(ren). And always looking out on how we can leave our destination better than when we arrived.

Dear Tanner and/or Jake,

This is the Capstone Project of Valerie Van de Peer AKA Wild About Earth.

First I'd like to say, Thanks!

Thanks for creating the TTC, with a great purpose, guiding people the good way. Love it!

This course was the perfect match for me, at the perfect moment.

To be honest, I didn't have an idea yet of 'what I was going to do' when I applied in January... By the time we started in March, I had my exact idea written down in 1 sentence. During the course I did everything to prepare the foundation. My business + financial plan are now ready to apply*. All the basics we learned during the course were already part of what I wanted to do, so the course gave me such a detailed insight on how I can realize these ideas. So thanks for the loads of information, details and time&energy. It was truly amazing!

*Next week I will be sending in my application to get allowed to startup as a travel agent (laws in Belgium). If all goes well, I'll be online- and launched by September (in Dutch and English).

I wanted to hand in my 'foundation' by sending in my website. But sadly I didn't make it, it's not finished. The design is ready and I have a full draft in Dutch, but couldn't get it translated in time, before the 9th June. Instead I've made a **rough framework**, that sums up what I have learned in the course and I will use to integrate in the rest of my foundation. There's not a lot of new things, but it's what I find valuable to use.

This is my landing-page anyways (although, for now, there's nothing on): www.wildaboutearth.be.

Before I continue with the project: forgive me for my 'English' it's not my mother tongue.

A rough framework of how I will try to be different to a classic high-end Travel designer:

1. Prepare the client

We shall organize a digital 'match call' to get to know each other. If we both agree we are a good match, we continue. I will send them a small questionnaire to fill in in preparation.

First we go over general things as family members, ages, length of travel, possibility to disconnect and how long, budget, interests, ... All trips are 100% tailor-made, no trip is ever exactly the same. I will particularly check what 'adventure' means for the client. Some families will do anything, others will need to be taken more care of during the adventure, or at least still need a comfortable hotel to sleep.

Questionnaire to give along, to prepare before we meet in person (or digital if international):

What is a meaningful trip to you:

- Why do you want to travel?
- What do I seek in this trip?
- What do you want to gain out of this trip?
- Who do I want to become through travel?
- What parent are you for your kid (and want to be)?
- What can this trip mean to the rest of family?
- What do you want to teach your kids?
- What do you want to learn as a parent?
- How can I use this trip to mean something for the other family members?
- What could change?
- What (experience/challenge) would help you to become this person? What can guide you through this inner journey?
- What do I want to have at the end of this trip, that I don't have now?

After that we meet again. And we discuss extra questions together, and dive deeper. Here we decide where they shall go, what the intention is and how they will travel (to everyone's needs).

I could ask questions, like these:

- What would help you create a more meaningful trip? Meeting peoples from the other side of the world or a deep dive into nature, far away from peoples?
- If you are keen on meeting peoples, do we look for
 - o a complete different culture, something new, far away from 'civilization'
 - o or rather someone with an equal status, working branch and same interests?
- What does 'out of your comfort zone' mean to you?
- What is luxury for you, what is the minimum comfort you expect?
- What is your budget? What should it include to make it worth the amount spending?
- Do you want to contribute to the visited local family? What do you have to offer? If this financially, or would you be able to offer something else: a service (dentist, carpenter, ...), products (towels, cloths, ...), ...?
- When you complete this trip, what do you want to have that you don't have now? (examples: I want to have learned something new; I want to have gained increased clarity about something; I want to have a deeper connection with someone....)

- How do you want BE during this trip, and why? (examples: present, curious, open....)
- Is there anything that you are concerned about when thinking about this Experience? If so, what can you do to mitigate your concern in advance?
- Declare a “mantra” for your trip, using as few words as possible. This will serve as your touchstone throughout your trip. Examples: “Stay Curious”, “Be in the Moment”, “Notice what’s in front of me” or “Be open to the unexpected.”

I will specially listen to the difficulties within the family-dynamics: when do most of the conflicts happen: during ‘eating’, in the rat race-rush, when the parent/kid comes back from work/school, ... It happens too often, parents don’t even realize that. Thinking about that, will help them defining where they could look at while traveling to get to know each other (and yourself) better. And maybe even use it as the base for the intention.

I also believe a strong relationship within a family, always starts with the parents. If they are prepared to dare look in the mirror that their kids show them with their own ‘reactions’. So my questions will mostly be asked to the parents.

Based on this info, we create a tailored trip and intention as a family, to strive for during travel + each family member can come with a small separate intention too BUT I focus on the parents as this eventually benefits the kids’ quality-family-time spend together (examples: leaving phones off, no socials/emails, talking 1 hour a day as a family, going on 2hour hikes everyday as a family, not making a fuzz over food, checking everyone’s needs during the day and acting accordingly, ...).

2. Design the trip:

Although, highly tailor-made, all my trips will have a 'similar' flow/structure, other locations can always be added, according to family's wishes, length of travel, destination, ...

- START with few days 'arriving in the country': time to let go of their own tempo/life and spending time together as a family, sleeping comfortably, a very good guide to accompany them on activities (selected based on families interests), and in the meantime do activities that help the family meet the local culture: meet local peoples, eat locally, visit a city, museum, family, ... but as short half or full day activities. The purpose is to introduce local life, history, gastronomy, language, school, ... but they still spend time alone as a family too (in a private hotel room/house).

- HIGHLIGHT: a full week of where the family will go on their tailor-made 'challenge'. This will be the absolute highlight and will evolve around a real adventure/immersing in nature or culture, deeply, thoroughly. The adventure here is more important than comfort/luxury, although we need to provide basics like private room/bathroom. It could be a real adventure, outdoors or living in a community, live like a local and really immerse in their day-to-day life (school / farmlife / fishing / hunting / ...). Maybe with a 'buddy system' where we connect my family with a family in a local community, (based on same interests/way of living or/and ages of kids) for them to spend a full week together and really learning from each other.
Examples I already have:
 - Working on a huskyfarm in Greenland, responsible to take care for the dogs
 - A week's time with local community in Colombian Amazon or in the Mongolian mountains
 - Following a wildlife conservation team, to count/tag/take care of animals in the wild in Zambia, Malawi and South Africa
 - Walk from school to school, during a multiple day hike in Ladakh to bring down books and learn from each other along the way.
 - ...

- THE END: is to wind down, in a very high-end hotel or lodge, in nature / at the coast, to absorb what they have learned and experienced. Focus = on spending time together as a family, actively or relaxed, tailored to their wishes.

All trips need to be regenerative tourism. What this means to me is both low impact on destination's nature, as well as on the community. I've created a questionnaire I want to ask the communities that will host my clients, to make sure my clients are not just coming to GET, but can also GIVE. It should always be an 'exchange', not a one way transfer. I'm not specifically talking about money, I assume/will make sure all hosts will be paid correctly by my local DMC anyways, but what else can my clients contribute to. I hope I can offer a tailor-made helping hand, according to the client's profile, is it an architect/constructor, they could built something together (a playgarden, or shed for animals or a bed, ...), is it a dentist, she/he could bring a small box with tools to give a free checkup, is it a teacher, they could organize a learning day together,

And this questionnaire will also help my clients understand their host's way of living, so to make it easier to involve.

Co-Design together with local partner

Questionnaire for local partner and community/village:

Full community engagement in determining the scale and type of tourism is essential before tourists are invited. The process can be messy and complex but so essential. It requires time and space for the community to think together to find the best solutions through the emergence of collective wisdom rather than through hiring outside.

1. What is the name of the community or village that will host my family?
2. What language do they speak and can you pass on some frequently used words incl meaning?
3. Can some people speak English?
4. Is the community very open and welcoming or rather closed but welcoming?
5. Do all children go to school? When and what is the school system like?
6. What kind of clothing do they wear? Could this be something our guests buy before they arrive in the village?
7. How do families live (nomads, housing, ...?)
8. Can you tell a little more about religion and the customs that happen around it?
9. How does the community view other religions, LGBTQ?
10. What is the position and relationship between men and women?
11. Can you tell me more about everyday customs:
 - How and how frequently do they greet and say thank you?
 - What is the standard of politeness before, during and after eating: how?
 - What is the main dish?
 - Is hunting/fishing done frequently and if so how? Any politeness-habits around that
12. What is the community's purpose in welcoming us? What do they expect from us?
What does the community want to get out of this visit on the long term?
What can we do for them in return?
 - Do they WANT to see pictures of how we live?
 - Do they want to know what we eat?
 - Do they want to learn English (or Dutch)?
 - Do they want us to help build something (a playground or bed or ...)?
 - Can we bring something? Do they want medical / school / clothing - resources?
 - How do they prefer us to contribute?

But also, general (to local DMC):

- How are the national politics?
- What is the position of this community within those politics?
- Is there national discrimination?
- Is this community part of a national minority?
- How does this community feel within the national political landscape?

3. Travel documents

Before the trip, my clients will receive information on the destination, including the usuals such as history, food, ... and including the info gathered from my local partner on how the community that my client will visit, lives/expects/is. To better prepare each other.

If we have a trip with a host family, we will ask both families to send pictures to each other (up front) through me and my local partner. This will help the kids look forward to meeting them. Also I will ask my families to bring something to give the family: They can choose themselves (based on local traditions in the destination, or based on their own traditions, like a specialty from home).

Travelers use their own digital camera's or phones to TAKE pictures. I will also hand them a polaroid camera, with purpose to hand over the pictures they make together to their hosts along the way (instead of only taking pictures). Every trip with me they will receive empty photo papers to use up while travelling.

They will also receive a journal, tailored to the family members.

- An empty journal (personalized) for the parent(s)
- A tailored kids-journals, with questions that could help them reflect.

Example questions if the kids need help in journalling:

- "What would you like your new journal to be about?"
- "What was your favorite moment of the day?"
- What did you not like today?
- Why is the sky blue?
- Think about someone we met along the way that helped you with a problem.
- If you could invent something, what would it be?
- What can you do to combat climate change?
- What was the most beautiful thing/person you saw/met today?
- Why?
- What was the nicest meal you had since we left home?
- If you could do anything all day tomorrow, what would you do?
- What do you love about your family?
- Which room in your house (or hotel) is your favorite, and why?
- What do you miss about school?
- What do you like the most about yourself?
- What is your special talent?
- If you could have any special talent, what would it be, and why?
- What do you think, makes people happy?
- Who do you miss most? What makes a good friend?
- What's your favorite travel outfit? How does it make you feel?
- Is there ever a time or situation where it could be OK to tell a lie?
- What makes you smile?
- What is one thing you would like to get better at?
- How would you like to spend the perfect day?
- Describe yourself in 10 words.
- What age are you most excited to turn, and why?
- Who is your hero? Why?

4. Returning home – feedback

In my feedback chat, I want to ask about

- Did you manage to achieve the set goal/intention?
- How did it feel to contribute?
- What was sustainable for you?
- What was the highlight?
- How did this trip match your kids' ages and needs?
- Was it too adventurous?
- What did you notice in the family dynamics?
- Was there a clear 'tipping point' during the trip?
- What has changed?
- How did that feel for you?
- How could you try to get and keep that feeling in everyday life as it is for you?
- What was the best memory?
- Did the kids journal? How was that for them?

Dear Tanner and Jake,

I hope this is more or less what the project should have been around.
It sure will help me in the future, more so even, when I know one of you both has gone through it.

Very much looking forward to that valuable feedback.

A warm thank you for hosting Tanner, for creating this platform Jake.
I'll be looking out to meeting you both in person.

Friendly regards,
Valerie Van de Peer
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