

DESTINATION SUMMERHILL



Summerhill festival of childhood (by Maya)

In TLC the children are part of deciding what they want to learn and how they want to learn. With individualised programmes in a community, a lot of work goes into finding ways to make it work between all the different individual needs in balance with the needs of everyone together.

To create a healthy community, TLC has weekly community gatherings that are facilitated by the children. Anyone can bring a topic (child or adult) and it is discussed and decided together. A group of children learn to prepare and facilitate the meetings for a period of time. With guidance from an adult to reflect on the meeting process, the children have really developed their skills and ability to hold the space over the years.

We started doing this after two of our facilitators attended the International Democratic Education Conference (IDEC) in Finland in 2016, and came back full of inspiration and ideas. Since then we have been trying different things to see how to deepen this work and learn how to include children more and more towards self-directed, self-motivated and self-driven learning, based on the three principles of Integral Education: i) *Nothing can be taught*, ii) *The mind must be consulted in its own growth*, iii) *From the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be*.

In 2018 the IDEC was going to be held in Bangalore, and we had about 10 children who wanted to attend. We booked bus tickets and were ready to go... A flu was going around, and suddenly all but two of the children were sick and we had to cancel. Two of the main organisers of IDEC (from democratic schools in New Zealand and Australia) came to Auroville after the event, and we had a long mentoring session in TLC on how to deepen our work with including children in decisions regarding themselves and the community.

In 2020 the IDEC was held online due to covid, hosted by the Sri Aurobindo School in Nepal. Some TLC children and facilitators participated. In 2020 we also watched some films with the children. About sociocracy practiced in many schools in the Netherlands, and democratic meetings at Summerhill school in the UK. The children were very inspired by these films, and started taking charge more and initiating change.

In 2021 Summerhill school was celebrating its 100th anniversary, and decided to host a Festival of Childhood for a week in August 2022. It was decided that the IDEC 2022 was to be held within the Summerhill festival in the UK.

When some of the children in TLC heard about this event, they set their minds on going! That's how this amazing adventure started...

Our crowdfunding video (press play in the black square to watch!)



Made by Jalin, Omid, Clara and Mohini.

Raising the funds to take part in the Festival of Childhood

(by Chandni and Maya)

4 children from TLC decided that we wanted to attend the Festival of Childhood. Many many lakhs were needed to make it possible....

We raised the funds to take part in the festival from lots of different places. We started by making Summerhill gratitude boxes in Fertile with the help of Johnny, and many friends helped us with this. Other friends at White Peacock Pottery made sunflower brooches to also give as thank you.

- We made two crowdfunding campaigns to share with family, friends and others around the world. People donated a lot of money to help us!
- We hosted a crowdfunding dinner, for which many people/units in Auroville donated things to be auctioned, and others came to the event and supported by auctioning for the things and having dinner..
- AVIUSA helped organise an online film-screening of our TLC film documentary to raise funds, and many people joined online to support..
- We held several fundraising events outside Solar Kitchen and at Visitors Centre, where individuals from the community and guests gave us donations.
- Kaeridwyn and Owen hosted us in London.
- My aunt Emma in the UK lent us her car and camping equipment, and hosted us in the days before and after the festival.
- UTS sponsored the taxi to drop us at the airport.
- Summerhill festival gave us free festival tickets and food coupons for a meal a day.
- AVIUK cooked lunch for us on our way to the festival and helped us with a big loan while waiting for our crowdfunding money to be released.
- Maisie's aunts helped take out the funds for us from the crowdfunding in the UK.
- PCG helped us get funds from Foundation of World Education, who helped us with a big sum of money..

We were also gifted in other ways, by so many people.



We made it!!! Now DESTINATION SUMMERHILL! (by Mohini)

After a year and a half of fundraising we got the money together and bought the flight tickets!

Suddenly it was real. We were going to fly to the UK to attend the Summerhill Festival of Childhood from 5-10 August 2022.

We were so happy and excited!

In TLC we are used to travelling around India, as we do that every year. But that we would be able to travel to the other side of the world was really going to be a huge adventure.



Visiting London (by Mohini)



We also saw some of the classic British monuments like Big Ben.

We enjoyed riding the underground, red double-decker busses and just walking around.

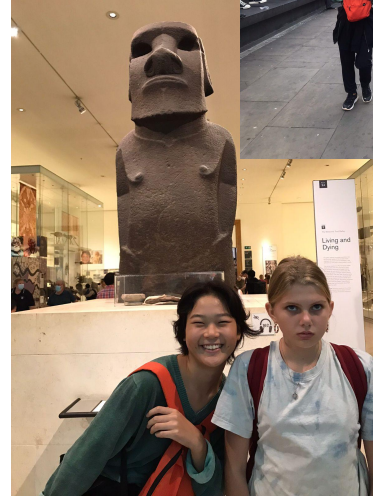
We saw the Rosetta stone, which was really cool.



We arrived in Heathrow in the night after our 24 hour journey from Auroville. We stayed with a wonderful lady whose name is Kaeridwyn who used to live in Auroville and her husband Owen.

The next day we went to the British museum, looking at historical artifacts from across the world. The last day we went sightseeing.

We had a really great time in London.



In the museum there were so many things from so many places. It made us think a lot about the history of the world.

Coming to the UK was a new experience for some of us, it was really nice to see a bit of the city. For Lea it was her first time in Europe, and it was really different for her.

Experiencing the English countryside (by Chandni)

We were lucky to arrive at blackberry season so we were able to supplement our meals with blackberries picked from the from the hedgerows.

Although we didn't swim when we were at Summerhill we were able to swim in the sea the day before we drove to Summerhill and this was a welcome relief from the unusual intense heat wave that England was experiencing then.



Arriving at the festival (by Lea)

On the 4th of August we got ready to go to the festival. We were borrowing Chandni's aunts car. It was a big car. We put all our stuff in the car. There were food, cloths, sleeping bags... there were so many stuff so we putted our stuff under our seats it was very squeezing inside the car...

We were in the car like 7 hours? Or more. We were driving so long that my bum was hurting..

When we arrived at the festival there were many tents and there was a huge field! And there was a stage and a theater and more.. We put up 2 big tents and 1 little tent and then we had dinner. And then we looked around the festival area and then we went to bed... I was very excited for the next day!!!



Participatory and consensus based decision making workshops

(by Mohini)

Sociocracy is a method created by Kees Boeke. It is an alternative decision making strategy, based on consensus. Hope Wilder hosted a series of workshops that some of us attended. What we learned from the workshops we will bring back and train the TLC community gathering facilitation team in this. To try change from democracy to sociocracy.

Democracy is a process where you vote and majority wins meaning the difference between what you are voting on could be one vote, which would mean almost half the participants may be unhappy with the outcome. While in sociocracy it is based on consensus and making everyone share their feelings and feel heard and included in their opinions. The steps to come to a decision may be longer, but in the end everyone can feel good or at least ok with the final outcome.

This way of making decisions seems like a decision making process that could work well to improve our meetings and decisions in Auroville. I think it could be very useful if children learn this.



Youth group (by Mohini)

During the festival there was a meeting dedicated to they youth of the next generation.

During the meeting we shared our names, gender, where we are from, and our educational background. We also playing team games. Playing together is a good way to connect because it is fun and you get to know people faster.

We are still in contact through a WhatsApp group. I hope we can stay connected and that it can become like a network of young people from around the world who care about changing the world and sharing about different ways of education.



We do not have a photo of the youth gathering, so here is one of us instead

Talks and presentations (by Mohini)



There were tons of talks and presentations on different topics.

Everyone could pick the ones that interested them. There were some people sharing their experiences, or presenting different learning techniques, and also learning about all kinds of alternative schools from around the world.

People sharing their stories of there education. I wish I could have been a part of all things presented, but sadly that was not possible because many things were happening in different tents at the same time.

It was an incredible the range of different people who gathered during this event. And there were so many interesting questions asked.

Meeting new people (by Maisie)

I met a whole bunch of new friends at the festival. We got to know each other because I was wearing my new Percy Jackson T-shirt that I got for my birthday, and they were all Percy Jackson fans too. They all came from Germany, and their names were Lily, Lucy and Mary. Lily and Lucy are identical twins and they all go to the same school together. Another thing we have in common is we all love playing Dungeons and Dragons (D&D). A lot of people think that D&D is a nerdy game but it's actually really cool. We all swapped our contact details so we can keep in touch and hopefully I can go to Germany and meet up with them too.



Visiting summerhill school (by Maisie)

We were shown around the school and told how everything works. Summerhill is a democratic school so the kids get to have a say about if they want to go to classes or not and what rules to have. But the classes they have are regular subjects or projects if the kids have their own ideas.

The buildings and classrooms at Summerhill are really good. It's a boarding school so many of the older students live in the school.

They have a law book with over 500 rules that are made in their school meetings. Everyone has to follow the rules, and it's the children who are in charge of seeing that everyone follows them.

So it's different to TLC because in TLC there are no really detailed rules. At TLC it's also different because you make your own plan of what you want to learn, and then you are expected to follow it and get told what to do a lot of the time if you are not. But in TLC if you really don't want to do something then you don't have to.

A student showed us around and many people asked questions about what it was like to be a student there and to try to understand how it works.



Offering to the festival - TLC film documentary (by Maya)

AUROVILLE 2022
7TH FILM FESTIVAL



WINNER

LEARNING FROM
THE INTANGIBLE



Alessandra Silver

One of our offerings at the festival was to screen our TLC documentary that won the awards at the Auroville film festival this year, and has since been shown at several film festivals in Europe.

The film shows the need and beauty of free progress education, but also the challenges.

After the film we had a Q&A session, and people wanted to hear our experiences.

We got very positive feedback on the film, and several schools wanted to take it back to view in their teams, and to get back to us for further reflection. There was also curiosity and interest in Auroville from some people, who had not heard about it before, or who wanted to know more.

LINE-UP SUMMERHILL FESTIVAL of CHILDHOOD
with IDEC2022 & Freedom to Learn Forum
5-10 AUG 2022, PEAKHILL FARM, LEISTON, SUFFOLK

Peter Gray, Sugata Mitra, Yuli Tamir, Naomi Fisher, Kate Robinson, Zoë Readhead, Yaacov Hecht, Pat Montgomery

UNESCO, AERO, Phoenix Education Trust, PARS, Oropaidio, NDI, Oasis Movement, States of Mind, Freinet Kooperative, Project DEFY, Little Bealings, Clonlara

Films: *How Summerhill Works*, *Learning From The Intangible*, *Persuing my Dreams*, *School Circles*
'Unschooling: A Heuristic study' by Bekkie Graham

Bands, solo artists, flash mobs, music workshops, jam sessions, and singing circles

Junk Playground, STEM Bus, makers and artisan fair, arts and crafts workshops, speakers' corners, living library, and much more...

Full programme and tickets on www.summerhillfestival.com

Offering to the festival - Henna

(by Lea)

We had brought a lot of henna cones from Auroville, India to offer body tattoo for the participants in the festival.

Henna is all natural it's from a plant. It can be used to make patterns on your skin, and is often used for wedding ceremonies, the brides has a beautiful henna on their hands and leg.

We brought almost 150 cones of hennas. We made our own designs and drew on people. It was very fun but also difficult because you have to squeeze the henna cone while drawing... But I was so happy when people liked my henna. We did henna almost everyday at the festival. And I enjoyed offering beauty from India. And people appreciated a lot. So the last day of the festival we gave out all the henna that was left to friends and participants we had met at the festival.

Oh! And my henna skills had improved a LOT!!!



Offering to the festival - Theatre Games (by Mohini)

At the festival there was a big board where anyone could put up if they were offering an activity, talk or something else.

We decided to host an activity we do a lot in Auroville with Johnny and Jesse: Theatre Games. Theater games are good to develop many things, improving skills and just having fun.

We gathered a group of people from many diverse places and played some games in the forest.



Offering to the festival - Aurogames (by Maya)

We offered an arts and crafts activity where festival participants could paint and create their own kaleidoscope puzzle. They are made by Aurogames, and are an educational material developed in Auroville. It was nice to share something that has been made in Auroville with people in so many different educational contexts, cultures.

Both children and adults joined in the activity, and although the wind made it slightly difficult to play outdoors, it was fun and creative.

Teachers from schools from different countries were interested to see how to use the materials in their work, and there were some deep conversations with some maths teachers around this.

Many of the children who joined did not speak english, and it was nice to see how it was possible to engage fully in these activities despite the language barrier.



Fun at the festival (by Maisie)

Every night on the stage there was music and it was different every time. During the day we were doing Henna for anyone who wanted, also for all of the kids they could go into the junk playground and do whatever they wanted, also in there was some old things like pillows a closet bed frame and more!



Our friends Ameya and Jalin and their parents Malvika and Guy who used to be in TLC joined the festival for a few days. They had helped us make the Summerhill gratitude boxes in Fertile, and to make the crowdfunding video. It was really nice that they could join us and we had lots of fun together.



Festival life (by Lea)

It was the first time in my life to visit UK, I was really looking forward to this event. We were at the summerhill festival for 5 days. We were supposed to cook all our food on a campstove during the stay but using the fire was not allowed due to the extreme dry whether in England. So we shopped a lot of canned food and some cup noodles and more instant food. We had breakfast and supper from what we bought and for lunch we had free lunch coupons from the festival organisers. I was really grateful for the meal that was cooked! The first few days were okay but I got tired of canned food for the last few days... haha



Reflections from the Destination Summerhill project (by Lea)

Usually we did henna in the mornings and after lunch we went to a class that we wanted to learn and at night there were live music so we were dancing and playing. It was really fun, I still think of it sometimes. And I made lots of new friends all over the world.

There were many activities like dancing, singing, making interesting things. There was a flash mob so I joined. We practiced the dance and the song. They made the dance movement easy so everyone could follow it. We sang "this is me" and we had a sticker on our t-shirt. The sticker was like asian, black, mentally ill, drug addict something like this. As an asian girl, most of time living in my country, south korea, I didn't realize that I belong to one of these stickers but I didn't mind it, people are all equal! The flash mob was really new and fun! We were dancing and singing in front of many people.

And I learned sociocracy from Hope Wilder's class. And I want to share this sociocracy for decision making with my school, TLC, for our community gathering. Then we can make decision quick and simple so that the little kids under 8-9 years old could concentrate and understand better during the gathering time.

I really enjoyed the summerhill festival I wish I could go again!



And I learnt a lot from other people at the festival!



I didn't know there were so many democratic education schools all around the world!



I've met so many new people and learned a lot and also I had nice opportunity to visit many wonderful places in London.



Reflections from the Destination Summerhill project (by Chandni)

I spent just under a week at Summerhill and it was it was packed with lots of things to do, lectures and stalls and different people to meet. I had lots of interesting conversations with people from all over the world. It was very, very hot. We camped in tents borrowed from my aunt. Our journey there was definitely an adventure. Because of the drought in England we weren't able to cook on camp fires and so every day we tried to get together some good food from what we had brought with us and we were gifted tokens from Summerhill for one meal a day. We all missed our idly and Dosa.

My favourite part of the camp was the evenings. The sky is darker at Summerhill than it is in Auroville. I saw lots of stars and I made friends with people from lots of different schools. It was interesting to hear about their school experiences and to share with them how we learn in Auroville. It was wonderful to bump into other people from Auroville and to share some of the warm clothes that we had been gifted for the cold nights.



Reflections from the Destination Summerhill project (by Mohini)

Through all the efforts we made to make this trip happen, the outcome was not to disappoint! I enjoyed myself a lot and wish it would have lasted longer.

I attended all Hope Wilders talks and workshops on sociocracy and I will share what I learnt there with the community gathering facilitators in TLC. The community gathering facilitators in TLC are a group of children, and I have already been in touch with them to see how to share the processes and methods I learnt so that they can integrate them into their decision making meetings.

I also attended the living library sharings, that were really interesting, hearing people's stories and learning. One topic that especially interested me was a sharing on climate change.

I learnt so many things, not just from attending the festival itself, but from the whole project, from when we got the idea to go to actually making it happen. I wrote a lot of texts and project proposals, and learnt how to present a project, to reach out to people to share about it, to write proposals and integrate feedback to improve it. I think I learnt many skills through this project that are useful for other things I want to do too.

I would really like to thank all whom made this possible it is an unforgettable experience that I will cherish.



I made new friends that I will keep in contact with.

Reflections from the Destination Summerhill project (by Maisie)



The hardest thing about getting to Summerhill Festival was fundraising. We had to raise a lot of money and for a long time we were not sure if we would get enough money. We did loads of things to raise enough money to go, like making wooden boxes and doing a fundraising dinner. When I found out we had booked the tickets I was really happy, because it took such a long time and we worked really hard.

I don't know how I will share about what I have learnt with others in Auroville yet, but I am really happy that I went to Summerhill Festival.

One thing that I learned at the festival was something called sociocracy, which is where you give a proposition, and you vote on it and if someone disagrees with the proposition you will try to change it until you get to a point where everyone agrees. There is a bit more on it but if I go to in-depth it would take over the whole page!

Flash mob at the Summerhill ending ceremony (by Mohini)

We took part in the Flash Mob event at the closing ceremony. We had several rehearsals before in the secret group preparing this. Both the rehearsals - singing together in the evenings - and the event itself at the closing ceremony were super cool and made it feel like we were really part of this event. The topic of the flash mob was giving the message to accept differences and to appreciate diversity. Not to judge by outer things but to let everyone be who they are.



Thank you for supporting us to make this trip possible!

Some helped by sharing our crowdfunding campaigns.

Some helped to feed us, transport us, and house us.

Some helped practically with your time and skills.

Some helped to organise our fundraising events.

Some helped by offering your services.

Some of you helped by believing in us.

Some helped keep the motivation up.

Some helped financially.

Some helped with ideas.

We now know that we can dream big, follow our dreams, and with the help of others anything and everything is possible.

