



MEANINGFUL TRAVEL TIPS AND TALES FIRST TIME VOLUNTEERS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome

- [A Note From GoAbroad & GVI.....](#)3
- [OurContributors.....](#)4
- [Volunteer Abroad Planning Timeline & Packing List.....](#)5

Tips and Tales

- [Do You Have What it Takes to Volunteer?.....](#)7
- [How to Find a Solid Volunteer Program.....](#)10
- [Don't Take Our Word For it: GVI Volunteer Testimonials.....](#)12
- [How to Maximize Impact During a Volunteer Program.....](#)13
- [Best Volunteer Abroad Programs If You.....](#)15
- [Will They Like Me? A Guide to Intercultural Competency.....](#)17
- [7 Volunteer Abroad Scholarships and Funding Options.....](#)19

Get Involved

- [Keep Exploring!.....](#)21
- [Questions & Comments.....](#)22



In partnership to provide comprehensive
volunteer resources.

WHY WE CREATED THIS BOOK FOR FIRST TIME VOLUNTEERS

A NOTE FROM GOABROAD AND GVI



Volunteering abroad for the first time can seem overwhelming and no one knows that better than we do. That's why GoAbroad and [GVI](#) put our heads together to come up with a comprehensive resource for first time volunteers.

Are you ready to volunteer abroad?

This is a critical question, and one our writers' had to ask themselves before their volunteer programs, and one you'll need to spend some time thinking about now. Volunteering abroad isn't your feel-good vacation. It's not "voluntourism." It's work. Hard work. We want to inspire you to embark on this journey and give back to communities around the world, but only if you're ready to put in a little elbow grease and prepare for some growing pains.

As part of GoAbroad's mission to provide the best and most comprehensive resources for meaningful travelers, our writers share their best tips about all things volunteer abroad. They're the experts with real experience and all the best info on how and when to apply, the best possible program options for you, scholarships and grants, and anything you might need to know. So, now you can go out into the world and make an impact!

Interested in joining this initiative? [Partner with us!](#)

OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Jenny Clark has traveled, studied, and lived in various countries around the world. She is passionate about participating in and providing quality intercultural experiences and sustainable international development. She cycles, plays sports (tennis mostly), reads voraciously (most recently Mary Karr's memoir, *Lit*), writes poetry and prose, and enjoys learning about new cultures, concepts, and perspectives.



Charleen Johnson Stoever is an introverted lover of dragon fruit juice. She loves sitting with Nicaraguan children on the side of the street while patiently breaking down North American stereotypes. With a short haircut and watermelon shaped earrings, she is passionate about mental health and the rewards that come with vulnerable travel. Not only does she write for five different blogs, she also teaches art and English classes in the mountains of Nicaragua.

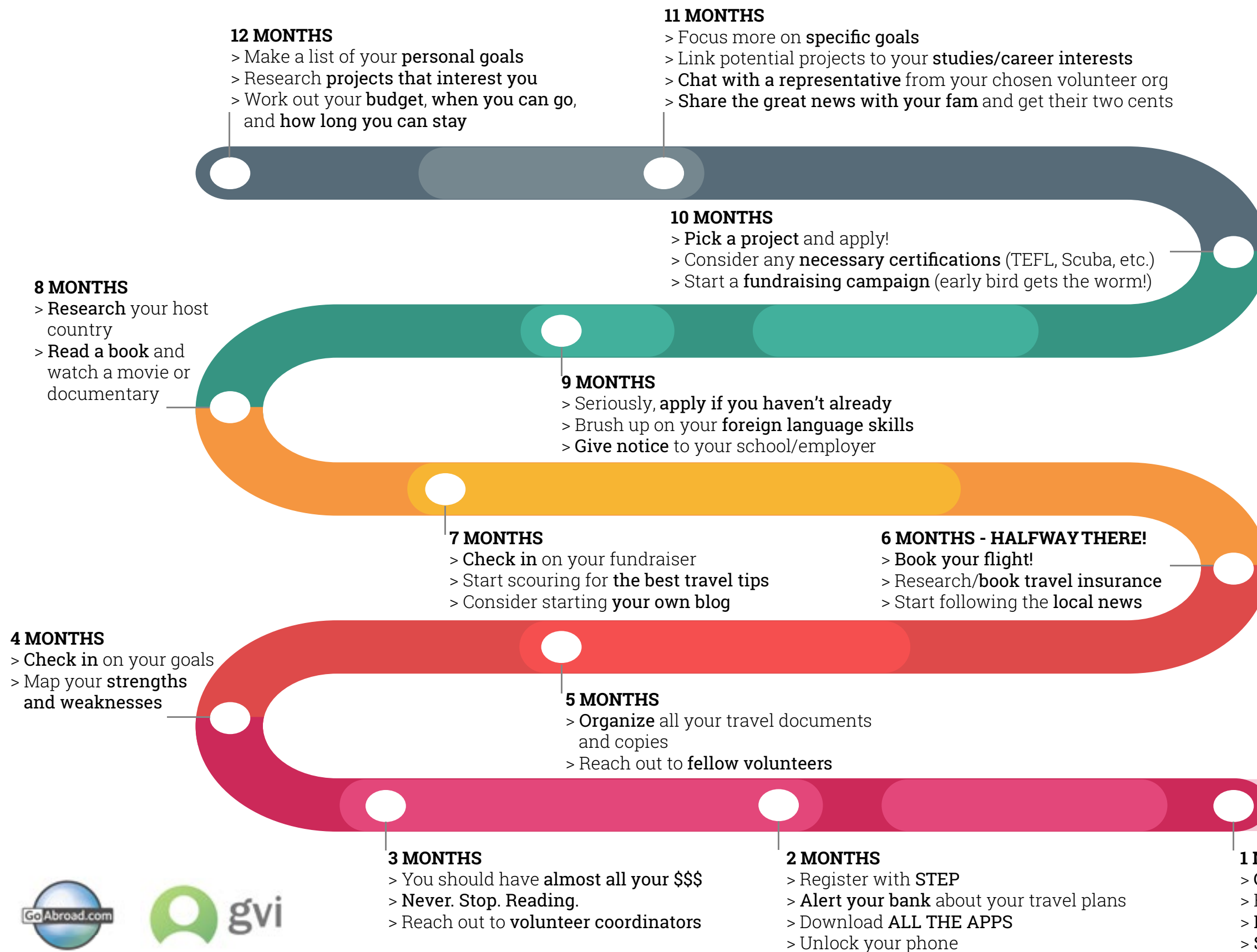


Julia Zarembo is an avid traveler, lifelong artist, theater geek, interior designer, future author, and occasional teacher. Originally from Germany, she was raised and started her university studies in Texas, before moving to Italy for her first formal teaching experience. Since then, she has traveled throughout Europe and the Americas, constantly on the look-out for the next adventure. Julia has a habit of getting stuck in love-and-hate relationships with various countries...but love conquers all.



← This could be you! Want to share your own travel tips and tales? [Give us a shout!](#)

FOR YOUR VOLUNTEER ABROAD TOOLKIT: 12-MONTH PLANNING TIMELINE AND PACKING LIST



WHAT TO PACK

1. **Your Passport!**
2. **Light jacket**
3. **Waterbottle**
4. **Sunglasses**
5. **Hat**
6. **Sunscreen**
7. **Appropriate shoes**
8. **Camera**
9. **Cash on hand & debit card**
10. **Phone or tablet**
11. **Any necessary medications**
12. **Journal**
13. **A good book**
14. **Emergency numbers and contact info**
15. **A durable backpack to pack it all in!**





DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO VOLUNTEER ABROAD?

by Julia Zaremba

So, you want to join the waves of humanitarians making the world a better place? Great! Do you know what volunteering abroad actually requires, though? It might seem like an easy question, but it's definitely not for everyone, and volunteering abroad definitely more than wrapping Christmas presents for a children's home.

Volunteering is not synonymous with saving the world. It doesn't mean going to Guatemala to improve houses nationwide, traveling to Sierra Leone to eradicate disease, or hiking deep into the Amazon to teach locals about the newest technologies. It's not something to check off so your college applications include a "volunteer experience" section, or something you do because your school (or Mom and Dad) require community service, and it's not just a way to show off your altruism and prove you are a "better" person.

In brief, volunteering abroad is NOT be synonymous with being a modern-day savior, but it is **synonymous with giving time and skills for the benefit of a community.** Still, not all volunteering abroad is quite that simple. International volunteer work requires you to have flexibility, patience, respect, and a good dose of humility. It also requires an understanding of why you are doing what, where, and with whom. One of the most important international volunteer requirements is clarity.

If you have an open mind, big heart, and strong hands, it's a good indicator that volunteering abroad is for you. But these traits don't necessarily mean you've met all the volunteer requirements for every program around the world; there are still a couple of other things to consider when you begin forming your volunteer expectations.

Before signing up for a volunteer program abroad, ask yourself the following questions (and be honest with yourself!):

Are you comfortable with yourself?

Many students travel because they are dissatisfied at home; this is NOT the best reason to venture abroad as a volunteer. If you have problems at home (i.e. boyfriend, school, roommates, work), don't expect those problems to disappear once out of your own country. Chances are, those problems will follow you and be more readily apparent with the additional cultural and adjustment issues. It's not bad to cross borders to seek self-betterment, but it's also good to arrive with a basis of self-confidence and acceptance of yourself.

Get your volunteer expectations straight before you leave. Come ready to offer something and with a mindset of focusing on other people's needs and problems (they'll make yours seem less dramatic, anyways).

Are you open-minded?

Volunteering is truly a learning experience; every day, there will be new skills, mentalities, and cultural quirks to learn. There might be aspects of local cultures that confound your sense of logic or challenge your sense of justice. However, remember that you are the visitor.

No solitary volunteer can change centuries of tradition or culture, nor is it their job to do so.

"Right" and "wrong" are subjective terms, and volunteering abroad isn't about imparting Western wisdom.

"No solitary volunteer can change centuries of tradition or culture, nor is it their job to do so."

It's just as much about learning new traditions and perspectives, and admitting that there is a lot out there that you don't know, as it is about sharing your own skills and knowledge.

Are you adaptable socially?

While you will never be alone, you might feel isolated volunteering abroad, particularly when arriving to a new village or wildlife reserve by yourself. Even after you make a new group of friends, your new social life probably won't revolve around bars or dance clubs. Instead, it might consist of chilling with some big cats, playing with kids after school hours, or discussing life with the volunteer coordinator. It might also mean a lot of solo time perfect for reading, contemplation, and taking life down a notch.

Read the volunteer requirements of your program very carefully, because we are pretty sure there isn't anything about partying on there. Get started by finding out how old you have to be to volunteer.

Are you willing to rough it?

We're not talking about the kind of camping that involves drinking beers and roasting s'mores around a fire, country music playing from a truck with its windows rolled down. *How does life without plumbing, hot water, and electricity (that means no WIFI) sound?*

Most volunteer programs operate in developing countries, where amenities are few, but the learning opportunities are many. Once you detach, it's amazing to realize just how little modern comforts people need in order to live and be happy. But you have to set your volunteer expectations ahead of time to fully embrace this.

If the idea of compost toilets, mosquito nets, lack of AC, and no Starbucks in sight inspires an uneasy laugh, it might be worth checking out more comfortable alternatives in more modern cities that have a different set of volunteer requirements.

Are you ready to learn?

Change and exponential growth are a given with the proper volunteer abroad experience. Not only is there the possibility of learning new words in foreign languages or fresh recipes from verbal traditions, but culturally, you will become a richer person. Perspectives are widened, understanding is expanded, and mentalities are enriched. In addition to picking up a few skills, you'll also learn about what roles, environments, and activities you enjoy. This self-clarity can be extremely useful when tackling future projects, both in and out of the volunteering realm.

Are you ready to work?

There are many different types of volunteering organizations: volunteering-focused, voluntourism, global service learning, community organizations, partner agencies, and more. There are also a lot of different fields with differing volunteer requirements, such as: community development (i.e. building schools, planting trees, developing community activities), education (i.e. helping out at schools or teaching English), environmental work (i.e. conservation projects, sustainable development), and social welfare (i.e. orphanages, women's co-ops).

However, all of these types of volunteering require a lot of dedication, both physically and mentally.

If getting dirty, sweaty, emotionally-involved, and sore doesn't sound like fun, reconsider if you have the right volunteer expectations to make it as a volunteer abroad.

Are you flexible?

Flexibility and patience are the keys to having a satisfying volunteer experience, both in regards to program organization and the actual workload. Developing countries are not as obsessed with time as the U.S. or Europe, for example. Often, appointments begin later than arranged and schedules are not followed. NGO's, international nonprofits, and volunteer organizations may be understaffed, and your itinerary will not be as smooth as a Caribbean cruise. It is important to adapt to new roles and situations, and treat each day as its own beneficial adventure.

Proper awareness is essential for a volunteer abroad experience beneficial to both program participants and the local community. Just as important as researching the intentions, impacts, requirements, and reputations of volunteer organizations is reflecting to your own soul, motivations, and volunteer expectations.

If there is a higher calling that goes beyond casting a good light upon yourself and impressing others, and you realize that volunteering is more about learning than teaching, then join the ranks of do-gooders and **prepare yourself for the most transformative experience of your life.** Merge ethics and resources into a winning combination with lasting impacts, both on the world and yourself.

HOW TO FIND A SOLID VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

by Jenny Clark

Doing research on volunteer organizations is no easy task! There are so many to choose from that often first time volunteers don't know where to start. To help you do this, we've got a few guidelines to help you as you weed through the many programs and projects, so you know how to find the best quality volunteer program.

You can use these eight questions as a means of measuring the quality of organizations you are investigating. Remember, it never hurts to ask if something is unclear! Speak with a representative if necessary, to get all the details.

Where does the money go?

This is a big point for responsible volunteering: you want to know where the money goes. How much of the funds are distributed back into the sustainable projects? You want to be sure you are working with an organization that incorporates the needs of the local community, and one that provides a clear breakdown of where the money goes. It is important that the organization is transparent with its funds, and that it puts the majority of proceeds back into the volunteer projects, not back into the organization.



Are the projects sustainable?

Find out how sustainable the projects are (meaning you want to make sure the project you are joining is long-term). This doesn't necessarily mean you need to go for long-term; you can be a short-term volunteer on a long-term project. You just want to be sure the project you join has a sustainable impact and doesn't end when the volunteers leave. The most successful projects have been going long before you join the program, and will continue to flourish after you. You also want to look for organizations that work with local partners. This way, when the volunteers leave the project, the community can continue to build on their contribution for long-term success.

Are the projects making an impact?

Is the project directly responding to the needs of the community? You want to work with volunteer programs that incorporate community members into the projects. As a volunteer, you want to have an impact on empowering a local community to thrive.

Good volunteer projects consult the local community, and projects should be run and directed by in-country personnel, which means the volunteer organization should have partnerships with locally-run organizations that control project specifics. Make sure that the organization accepts feedback from the community and is implementing project changes based on their advice. Ideally, the organization also runs impact (or progress) reports on their projects. These evaluations and realistic outcomes will help you see a clear picture of the organization's involvement with a local community and overall impact.

Do they have proper volunteer policies?

The organization you choose should be mindful about the dynamics of engaging the local community abroad. If you're not sure, or if you want more clarification on this point, ask them about their policies. You are visiting different cultures and seeing sometimes striking, emotional scenes of the disadvantages some communities face. The goal of the project, and of volunteering, is about impacting real people in real communities, and empowering their lives so that they can prosper. A good volunteer organization should provide guidance and mentorship through these complex experiences.

What kind of alumni services do they offer?

Alumni networks are incredibly important. How active is theirs? What kinds of activities or rewards does their network offer you after your experience? Do they make it easy for you to stay involved once you return home? GVI's Alumni Program provides participants with ways to stay involved with our projects even after they return home, including opportunities to win points for discounts off future project participation. The stronger and more active this network is, the better and longer-lasting your connections will be throughout and after your experience.

What do their reviews say?

Skim over reviews and testimonials to see what past volunteers have said. If possible, ask to speak with an alumni of a project or program so you can ask them some insider questions and get a better feel for the company. Go Overseas and Go Abroad are the best places to check for these. Don't be afraid to ask a representative from the organization to speak with an alumni member. This is a great way to get a good idea of what to expect while abroad!

Do they offer volunteers adequate support and mentorship?

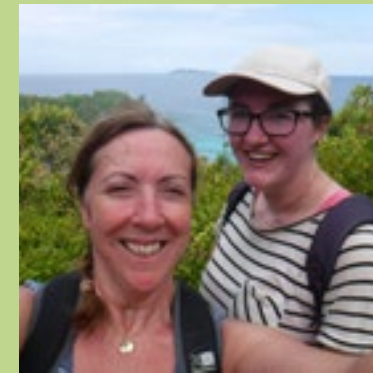
Does the organization provide proper support and guidance through the program duration? If you are participating in an internship, are you getting quality training, complete with mentorship sessions and one-to-ones with knowledgeable staff?

Are there any additional components (e.g. leaderships courses, specific trainings, etc.) to further your professional development?

Some organizations offer the option to take service-learning courses (that you can potentially receive college credit for!). These courses incorporate a service project, intercultural competency training, and academic learning. Be on the lookout for how they structure their curriculum or courses, and how instructors engage with the learning material.

Don't let yourself be paralyzed by choice! With these questions to guide you, you'll be on your first volunteer trip making an impact in no time.

DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT: VOLUNTEER TESTIMONIALS WITH GVI



"My two favorite memories from this awesome volunteer project were releasing my first shark as the sun rose around 6am and going to sleep to the sound of the gentle waves on the shore. Loving the sea and the natural environment as much as I do made this the perfect two weeks volunteering on an island away from heavy tourism."

Sam Kearns, Lemon Shark and Turtle Conservation in the Seychelles, 2016

"I chose this volunteer program because it promised a large variety of habitats and wildlife, all of which it delivered – turtles, jaguars, birds, invertebrates and more, with surveys on the beach, in the rainforest and along the canals. You get close to nature in ways which you never could as a tourist, while also contributing practically to the local wildlife conservation efforts."

Mark Olszowski, Wildlife Expedition in Costa Rica, 2016



"This volunteering trip has been enlightening - getting to know how the new environment around me works and getting to know the culture and religion. It helped me under Nepal. This experience also allowed me to challenge myself by going on a trek, and face my fear of heights by crossing the bridge twice! "

Elissa, Nepal Community Development 2016



HOW TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT DURING YOUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

by Jenny Clark

You're not here to make friends—wait, no, you're definitely here to make friends. BUT you're also here to make an impact on the community you serve. Well, the impact of a volunteer project can have a lot to do with the individual volunteer. We know you're tired of hearing it, but it's true: what you put into your volunteer program, you'll get out of your volunteer program.

So, as you prepare for your upcoming volunteer trip abroad you may also be curious how you can make the most of your experience, and have the most impact as an effective community worker. The following is a list of the easiest things volunteers can do during community engagement projects to maximize the positive difference made!

Prepare Yourself for the Experience

Before you leave, you want to consider your own cultural perspectives and how that may have given you a unique worldview. Incorporate a period of reflection time before, during, and after your experience where you ask yourself what you are doing, why, and what it all means. Think about your role as a volunteer. It is even better if you join an organization that offers service learning courses that incorporate reflection as an integral part of the experience. An organization should also offer you adequate pre-departure orientation and in-country support, so that your questions or concerns can be fully addressed

Integrate into the Local Lifestyle

You are a visitor, and the local community is your host, so you will need to be mindful and respectful about local standards of living. This means living simply, basically, and locally during your project work! You are there primarily to build relationships with the people, to immerse in the culture, and get to know their lifestyles and culture.

Work on Long-Term, Community-Centric Projects

Research the organization with which you are volunteering and make sure the project you are joining is long-term. This doesn't necessarily mean you need to go for months or years at a time; you can be a (successful) short-term volunteer on a long-term project. You just want to be sure the project you join has a sustainable impact and doesn't end when the volunteers leave. The most successful projects have been going long before you join the program, and will continue to flourish after you.

Work with the Local Community

This should be a piece of cake, since you've already chosen a community-centric project! Take cues from community members you are working with. As a volunteer, you want to have an impact on empowering a local community to thrive. Good volunteer projects consult the local community, and projects should be run and directed by in-country personnel. This means that an organization should have partnerships with locally-run organizations that control project specifics. The locals are the experts here, so listen and learn!

Keep in Touch (with the Experience)

Periodic emailing, FaceTiming, Skyping, or Snap-Chatting your friends and family is not a bad thing. It will help you feel connected to them, and supported while traveling/volunteering,

while – of course – updating them on all the awesome stuff you are doing! However, it's important to also keep in mind all of the effort you put into planning and preparing for this time. You owe it to yourself to break free a little, spread your wings, and really connect with where you are and the people you're with at present.

Document Your Time Abroad

Manage a blog, keep a journal, make a scrapbook—whatever floats your boat! This will help you with some critical thinking and reflection (those amazing soft skills you want), but it will also be good for your memory bank. You are experiencing a high density of awesomeness, and the best way of making sure it sinks in is to remember it! Try to keep up with it while not making it a chore. You will naturally have better things to do than worry about constantly updating your blog, but the reward of doing so will be well worth the effort later on.

Stay Connected with Your Organization

The fun (and work) doesn't stop once you cross back through customs. After your program, keep up with the alumni services offered through your organization. This is a good thing to investigate about an organization before joining one, too. The stronger and more active this network is, the better and longer-lasting your connections will be throughout and after your experience.

Now Get Involved at Home!

One of the biggest assets you've gained from your experience abroad is a refreshed mindset. It isn't just for when you're adventuring and volunteering across the globe – it can be applied to your everyday situations or environments. Get involved with local volunteering, meetup groups for travel or community work, etc. Find places in your neighborhood to explore, engage with, and learn from. Take these little mini volunteer trips until you can take your next major one!



BEST VOLUNTEER ABROAD PROGRAMS IF YOU...

by Charleen Johnson Stoeber

You're one of those helpers Mr. Rogers always told us to look out for. But, with so many volunteer opportunities around the world popping up every day, it can be hard to choose between options like community health outreach in Cambodia or hurricane relief in Haiti. As you peruse your choices, you may think that volunteering abroad is all about you giving your time, but you'll quickly learn that volunteers receive more than they give. Adding an international element to volunteering will equip you with new cultural competency and language skills to boot.

Whether you're rethinking your career path or you're a first-timer researching every program under the sun, we've hand-picked a few [reputable volunteer abroad programs](#) based on your interests, so you don't have to.

Here's the breakdown of the best volunteer abroad programs if you...

Dig the Classroom: Volunteer to Teach English Abroad

Don't mind the rollercoaster ride that is teaching? Why not do it in a new country?

GOABROAD.COM | 15

No matter where you teach abroad, you'll learn to navigate work life in a different cultural context and you'll become super flexible handling situations like power outages in the middle of class. You'll help plan and teach lessons, and seeing a new face in the classroom will give your students an energy boost (and you'll spark their curiosity about your country).

Love Animals: Volunteer in Wildlife Conservation

If you prefer "Animal Planet," then look into wildlife conservation volunteer opportunities abroad. While habitat loss and change is the top cause of wildlife declines, you don't have to volunteer in habitat preservation to help out. Volunteers can also work in wildlife sanctuaries or rehabilitation centers, conduct research, promote animal rights, or help educate communities. Watch out for [red flags](#) – public-handling sessions, and animal performances – as you search for an ethical wildlife program (Hint: [Ask yourself these questions before volunteering with animals abroad](#)).

The Next Picasso: Volunteer with Art Projects Abroad

Is Pinterest not giving you enough artistic inspiration? As an arts-based volunteer abroad, you'll have no problem finding inspiration in the new sights, sounds, and smells you'll immerse yourself in. Pick up that paintbrush or those dancing shoes and connect with locals in meaningful ways. Whether you want to practice your shading technique or paint a school mural, you can't go wrong by volunteering in art programs abroad.

Budding Social Worker: Volunteer in Refugee Relief

[According to the UN](#), 33,973 people a DAY are forced to flee from their homes because of conflict or persecution.

You cannot save everyone, but volunteering in refugee relief will give you the chance to help at least one person. From Turkey to Pakistan, [countries that host refugees need volunteers](#) like you to lend a helping hand. It's an incredibly humbling lesson on resiliency to help those who've lost their homes and families, and who must start from scratch to learn new languages and build a new life.

Studying for the MCAT: Medical Volunteer Abroad

Billions of people don't have proper medical care or preventative health education. Whether your passion lies in tropical disease prevention or mental health, there will be a need for you to fill abroad. Fulfilling a need may be as simple as encouraging people to cover their water storage bins to prevent malaria-born mosquitos from breeding, or as complex as giving a week-long HIV prevention workshop to sex workers. You'll return home with a greater understanding of how cultural and financial barriers to healthcare can impact communities (or you'll be more critical of your own healthcare system!).

Decisions, decisions! With so many options, the hardest part of volunteering abroad will probably be choosing the best volunteer abroad programs for you. Before signing up for anything, read volunteer abroad program reviews and reach out to past participants to hear what they have to say and help you find the best placement for you and the community you wish to serve.

Don't forget to have fun! Volunteering abroad is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have. Not only will you gain experience in a field that speaks to you, but you'll also use your skills to help others in a brand new community. After volunteering abroad, you'll be inspired to continue your work back home (or you might discover you're happier working abroad for good!).

[Read the full article with recommendations here!](#)

GOABROAD.COM | 16



WILL THEY LIKE ME? A GUIDE TO INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY

by Jenny Clark

Here are a few tips to help you rock intercultural competency:

Check Yourself

Before you wreck yourself. Even before you enter your host country, you're going to want to do a gut check. Think about your home country, your beliefs, values, and any preconceived notions you might have about your host country. Now throw them all out the window! Well, maybe not your beliefs and values, keep those around, but remember to be open and flexible to new ways of thinking and doing things. Entering your new community with an open heart and mind will make it that much easier to find your place and begin to thrive as an international volunteer.

Find the Community Hot Spots

Scope out the spots where you can't hear English (so... maybe the places where you're the only gringo/gringa in the building).

GOABROAD.COM | 17

Ask what your local counterparts do for fun on the weekends, where do they go? Do they have a favorite bar, restaurant, or food truck? Then do a bit of your own investigation and exploring to find the local hikes, swimming holes, eateries, bars, community hang-out spots, etc. While you're out searching for authentic local hideouts, also wander a bit. Take turns you're not 100% sure of, follow the winding nature paths or gravel trails, and see what you happen upon. Learn from your surroundings and grow from your discoveries, however small they may seem.

Learn from the Locals

Your local community members are full of knowledge! Approach them as your teachers. Learn from everyone in every way possible. This is a good rule of thumb for how you approach people in general, because everyone has their own unique perspective to offer. Especially while traveling abroad, though, talk with the locals and learn from their stories, histories, and ideas to get a better understanding of your new culture.

Depending on how long you're going abroad, or how much free time you will have, learning the language is also a critical component of engaging with the local culture. Speaking the language will give you a richer way of engaging with your host community while traveling, working, or studying abroad. Many places offer a one-to-one version of tutoring, where you provide locals with English lessons and in exchange they help you with their native tongue.

Be Present

Be aware of your surroundings. Pay attention to yourself, and to what's going on around you. Ram Das wrote a book "Be Here Now" and you don't have to read it to know the gist: wherever you are, be there. Forget about work or school, about the many details that may not be precisely aligning. Take the time to appreciate your experience and to hear the lessons it may be offering in the moment.

Try tracing your personal development through journal writing. Put yourself into the experience a little. Test your observational skills. Absorb what is going on around you. If you really don't feel like doing "The Adventure Tour" today, don't. It won't be fun if you force it. There's a difference between giving up on your adventure and your agenda, and giving yourself a much needed rest, or space to process a difficult feeling.

Be Brave and Curious

Approach your new surroundings ready to learn. In general, the more chances you take the more likely you are to have richer discoveries. Don't be afraid to branch out, try new things, and embrace adventure. Understand, too, that when you take risks there are potential consequences, and some are harder to recover from than others. Use this awareness to balance your courageousness with a healthy dose of realism. You will probably end up making a few mistakes, but that's OK. Learn from them!

There is nothing quite like the adrenaline rush of exploring a new place, path, trail, forest, city, jungle...etc. It is the most enjoyable part of traveling, and keeps life vibrant and interesting.

When you volunteer abroad, try to have a genuine attitude of wanting to be there and wanting to learn. If you are grateful for this opportunity to go abroad and to learn from a different culture, and you have a curious and open attitude, you will be planning your next volunteer trip before you even finish this one— you might even become a lifer!

Volunteering abroad is an adventure. It offers you the opportunity to grow in so many meaningful ways. One skill that is critical during international volunteer or study experiences is intercultural competency, which is measured by how well we integrate into another culture. Intercultural competency is being able to effectively communicate and appropriately behave in host countries (aka knowing when it is and isn't appropriate to twerk. Pro-tip: it usually isn't). It is re-positioning your own, individual attitudes within the larger context of the country you are visiting, which as a result, provides you with a wider perspective of the world.

In short, it is a cultural self-awareness that helps you to become a more in-tune global citizen. And who doesn't want that? There are a few different ways you can make sure you're enhancing your intercultural competency during your time as a volunteer, which will deepen your intercultural experiences and add meaning to your travels. Meaning + travel? We're all about it.

7 VOLUNTEER ABROAD SCHOLARSHIPS AND FUNDING OPTIONS TO BOOKMARK

by the GoAbroad Writing Team

Don't let a little thing like money slow you down. PFFT. Easy for you to say, wealthy anonymous benefactor! Most students and volunteers will cite finances as their biggest barrier to travel and international programs. When you think about purchasing flights, paying program fees, getting travel insurance, sorting out any potential visa costs, it all starts to add up— and you're not even there yet!

Your financial concerns are totally valid. Volunteering abroad isn't free and, unfortunately, money doesn't grow on trees. But, before you start google searching high-risk, high-reward schemes and black market prices for your non-essential organs, take a look at these scholarships and funding opportunities for volunteering abroad. It might not be easy, but nothing is impossible. So grab yourself a strong cup of coffee and get ready to write a lot of application essays!

1. GVI Trust Scholar

GVI's [International Scholarship Program](#) awards up to £2,000 (about \$2,500 depending on the exchange rate) annually to eligible applicants looking to pursue an international education experience. This scholarship programs seeks to equip participants with field-based experience to help develop soft-skills by helping them earn a certificate or accreditation that will benefit them in their future careers.

All you need is to be between the ages of 15 and 24, be currently enrolled in school, and be able to demonstrate how this experience will be beneficial to you/your studies/future career. Sounds easy enough, right? So get working on your application!

2. Travel for Good Voluntourism Grant

Travelocity has offered volunteer travelers four \$5,000 grants through their Travel for Good program since 2007. This voluntourism grant allows travelers to serve abroad with one of Travelocity's trusted partners like the American Hiking Society, Cross-Cultural Solutions, the Earthwatch Institute, and GlobeAware, for anywhere from a few days up to a few months. The funds cover project and transportation costs. What a deal!

3. Volunteer Forever Travel Scholarship

Volunteer Forever has been awarding these travel scholarships since 2014. Participants in volunteer abroad, study abroad, intern abroad, teach abroad, and work abroad programs are all invited to apply. Scholarship winners receive the award directly and can then use their scholarship for any number of costs related to international programs: their program fee, airfare, travel insurance, housing, food, etc. This scholarship is open to residents of the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and the European Union.

GOABROAD.COM | 19

4. The Samuel Huntington Public Service Award

[The Samuel Huntington Public Service Award](#) provides a stipend of \$10,000 to \$15,000 for a graduating college senior to volunteer for one year, whether on their own or with an established organization in the location of their choosing (or placement). The group guarantees one award each year, but often give multiple awards. Applicants must submit an application proposal that encompasses any activity that furthers the public good. This award is annual, so check their website and newsletters for the most up-to-date due dates and results.

5. Sarah's Wish Scholarship Fund

Sara's Wish Foundation scholarships are awarded to ambitious, young American women who are leaders in their communities, adventurers, and service-minded. The foundation and this scholarship were created in honor of college student Sara Christie Schewe, who was killed in a bus crash in India during her semester abroad, it helps students meet the costs associated with traveling regardless of volunteer program or location.

All you have to do is want to serve the world. Applications are available online October 1, and typical awards are between \$1,500 and \$2,000. Always double check your due dates so you don't miss the boat on this stellar scholarship opportunity!

6. Omprakash Ambassador Grant

The [Omprakash Ambassador Travel Grant](#) covers travel and living expenses for entrepreneurial adventurers who volunteer abroad within its international network of grassroots health, education, and environmental organizations. Ambassadors also are enrolled in Omprakash EdGE (Education through Global Engagement), an online curriculum that explores ethics, economics, and power dynamics within cross-cultural volunteering and international development/aid. This grant is open to all, regardless of age or nationality.



7. Fundraise with FundMyTravel

Sometimes scholarships don't cover everything. That's where fundraising comes in. Sure, you can have a bake sale or sell lemonade on the corner in your neighborhood, but these days crowdfunding online is the way to go. That way your grandma's bad Yelp review won't foil your plans to volunteer abroad! Create a campaign on FundMyTravel, a platform specifically for meaningful travelers, and start hitting the social media pavement! Now instead of socks for Christmas or a giftcard for your birthday, family and friends can help fund your volunteer abroad adventure.

Keep your kidneys right where they are! And until money actually starts growing on trees, these seven scholarships and funding opportunities are your best bet to going abroad and not breaking the bank. Be the change you want to see in the world and still keep a little change in your pocket.

GOABROAD.COM | 20



KEEP EXPLORING

Your first volunteer trip could turn into a lifetime of meaningful travel:

[Read Elsa's Interview](#)

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Email erin.oppenheim@goabroad.com

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