

Volunteering abroad – Do I need an organization?

Year:

Project:

Work:

No,

- if you easily get in contact with people,
- speak the language in your destination country,
- are flexible and have some time to research first,
- just want a hands on experience opposite be a part of long-term development.

Yes,

- if you just travel for a short period,
- have no in-country contacts,
- do not speak the language,
- want to contribute to long-term development
- want someone who guides you through cultural differences and helps you with adjusting.

Certainly everyone could organize his / her own travel and volunteer experience abroad – and some do. Most choose to let someone do the organization for them and arrive at their placement knowing there is volunteer work waiting for them and they will have company from staff and other volunteers to share all new impressions and experiences with. This is especially helpful if you choose to volunteer in a cultural setting that is completely different from your own. You will feel much more comfortable if you have someone at your site who can explain and help with understanding the differences.

If you are active in an organization at home, start asking around if they have partner organizations abroad and can help you with contacts. Some volunteer organizations like the Red Cross operate in many countries.

If you never volunteered before, ask yourself how much support you need.

Did you travel before?

Do you have experience with living in a group?

Do you need a room on your own or are you comfortable with simple, shared accommodations?

What kind of volunteer work do you have in mind?

What kind of experience (everyone has some!) can you offer?

There are many different kind of organizations and projects around that take volunteers. Most charge a fee or ask a donation to cover their expenses.

Even if it seems unfair to you that you offer your time and energy and they ask you for money to do it, keep in mind that they have to pay the staff that takes care of you, your housing etc.

There are also companies who organize volunteer trips like they organize sightseeing tours. They usually charge much more, but will accept you for very short stay like a few days only.

About the Author

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