



Volunteer Now delivers a service across Northern Ireland. We have offices in Belfast, Broughshane, Enniskillen and Newry.

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Preparing for your Trip! Advice on International Volunteering

Are you interested in travelling, seeing the world, broadening your horizons, meeting new people, gaining new personal experiences and enhancing your work experience?

Sounds good – but have no idea where to begin? Then read on because this guide is for you!

You should think about building your skills locally before you go away to volunteer internationally. This will prepare you and help you develop a range of skills before you go.

To find an opportunity in your area check out www.volunteernow.co.uk for a vast range of opportunities to help you get started.

The [Comhlámh Code of Good Practice \(CoGP\)](http://www.comhlamh.org) for volunteer sending agencies is a set of standards for organisations involved in facilitating international volunteer placements in the global south. The CoGP is based on a vision of volunteers working in solidarity for a just, equitable and sustainable world, ensuring that overseas volunteering has a positive impact for the local project and community, the volunteer and the sending agency. Look out for their logo when searching for a volunteering opportunity overseas.

www.comhlamh.org



Aged 14-25 Years? Get more for your volunteering with Millennium Volunteers



Millennium Volunteers is a programme which provides you with recognition for your sustained commitment to volunteering. The recognition comes from your volunteer involving organisation, Volunteer Now and the Department of Education, Northern Ireland.

You will receive a certificate for your hours, that is, for 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering. This recognition is valuable for your UCAS forms, CVs, application forms but also for your own personal development.

You can also gain great skills and experiences that can help you achieve your dreams!

To find out more talk to your volunteer involving organisation, go to www.volunteernow.co.uk or email youth@volunteernow.co.uk

Disclaimers

Volunteer Now cannot be held responsible for the content of any website mentioned in this guidebook.

All information contained in this booklet is correct to the best of our knowledge at time of research.

Volunteer Now cannot be held responsible for the change of programme information, charges, addresses etc.... made by any organisation.

Never send money or confidential information before having direct contact with an organisation.

It is the nature of this information that it can go out of date quite rapidly. We therefore advise checking out websites to make sure the programme is still operational before making any decisions!

Preparing for your Trip! Advice on International Volunteering

Ask yourself the following questions to help narrow things down:

- How much time do I have to spend in a different country?
- How much money can I afford to spend on my time out?
- What country would I really like to travel to?
- Do I have any skills I would like to develop through an international volunteer placement?
- Do I want to learn new skills for a future career or gain work experience?
- Is there anything I really don't want to do, or a place I don't want to go?
- Do I want to travel alone, in a group or with one or two friends?
- What skills do I have that would add value to an international opportunity?

Our Experiences!

Patrick Fox

Youth volunteering is something that isn't seen much these days. With consumer culture and the current recession trying to find volunteers below the age of 25 can be a miracle at times with so many having to take low paid jobs.

So I was given some strange looks from my peers when I told them I was leaving full-time work for six months to be an international volunteer. When they asked why, I sometimes found it hard to explain and simply settled for, "Look this is something I have to do."

And do it I did with Global Xchange (GX)! Global Xchange is a programme run by Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and the British Council. For six months I worked with a team of sixteen volunteers from Ireland, the UK and China as part of an international exchange programme that saw us working in Glasgow for three months and then in Xi'an, China for a further three months.

GX is unique in its ability to empower young people to not only feel that they can make a difference in a community but also let them see the difference they make. Cross Cultural teams from all over the world work together in host communities to make a difference and learn about global citizenship and social issues. GX is very big on Global Citizenship and social issues.

And didn't I get an education in it!

International Volunteering Opportunities

UNIPAL– Universities Trust for Educational Exchange with Palestinians

Website: www.unipal.org.uk

UNIPAL seeks to facilitate a two-way process of education, providing English language teaching in Palestinian refugee camps and introducing students to a knowledge and understanding of the situation and daily lives of refugees.

Voluntary Service International (VSI)

Website: www.vsi.ie

Voluntary Service International (VSI) is the Irish branch of Service Civil International and undertakes a wide variety of voluntary and community work throughout Ireland and has sent volunteers to many projects in over 60 countries worldwide.

WEast Chernobyl

Website: weastchernobyl.weebly.com

WEast Chernobyl is a non-governmental voluntary humanitarian and development aid organisation, based in Northern Ireland and working in various regions in Belarus. Throughout the year WEast Chernobyl need volunteers to participate in different types of activities.

World Challenge

Website: www.world-challenge.co.uk

World Challenge Expeditions organise individual and group expeditions to some of the most remote and exciting places on earth, offering adventure for those taking a year out.

International Volunteering Opportunities

SERVE

Website: <http://www.serve.ie/>

SERVE is a development and volunteering organisation committed to tackling poverty in the majority world. Volunteer Programmes are planned on a year-to-year basis. There are options open to individuals, community groups and schools.

Service Civil International (SCI)

Website: www.sci.ngo/

Service Civil International (SCI) is a volunteer organisation dedicated to promoting a culture of peace by organising international voluntary projects for people of all ages and backgrounds. The organisation consists of 42 branches and an ever growing number of partner organisations.

Sudan Volunteer Programme

Website: www.svp-uk.org/

SVP recruits volunteers to teach English in Sudan. This is a wonderful chance to help young people, to learn about a society that is both sophisticated and unique and to live and travel in a country among the friendliest in the world.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

Website: <http://www.tcv.org.uk/>

TCV provide working holidays on conservation and environmental projects worldwide that offer practical understanding and application of conservation techniques.



Our Experiences!

In Glasgow I worked with Refugees and Asylum Seekers from all corners of the world. These were people living on or below the poverty line with the threat of detention and deportation hanging over them. In China I worked with children and young adults with learning disabilities and their families.

Some people start volunteering because they want something to do, others because they need the experience for education or work. Some, like me, do it because they are not sure what they want to do in life. Did GX help me? It did. I found out that the reason I applied was to be able to help people and to broaden my horizons as well as learn about the world.



Our Experiences!

Paul Fegan

I recently volunteered with an organisation called Platform 2. Basically it is a global volunteering scheme for 18-25 year olds. The programme offers a chance to get involved with global issues of justice and poverty and volunteers have the choice to visit either Ghana, Peru, Kenya, India, South Africa or Nepal. I got chosen to go to Kenya. It is completely funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID). I actually only had to pay for my flight from Belfast to Heathrow and everything from food, accommodation and flights from Heathrow onwards were covered; I even got £12 a week pocket money, which isn't a lot but is twice the average Kenyan weekly wage.

At the time there were two groups in Kenya, one group were based up in Meru; they were helping with deforestation and I was based in Thigio just outside Kikuyu. Initially I was helping to paint schools but the company who supplied the paint refused to release any more funds while we were there, so we only got painting half of the school. We then got involved in producing learning aids instead, such as posters and paintings to help with maths, science and other subjects. We also spent some time gardening and creating flower beds and on a Saturday we did a lot of interaction with the Community. Everyone was dedicated. We also spent time getting involved with our host family and their everyday activities such as feeding the animals, cooking and chopping maize etc. This was an excellent way of getting to know the African culture.

International Volunteering Opportunities

Project Trust

Website: www.projecttrust.org.uk

Project Trust is an Educational Gap Year Charity, sending roughly 300 school-leavers overseas every year to volunteer in mainly teaching, Social Care and Outward Bound projects across Africa, Asia and The Americas.

Raleigh International

Website: www.raleighinternational.org

Raleigh International aims to develop young people through challenging community and environmental projects in developing countries around the world.

Restless Development (International Citizen Service)

Website: <http://restlessdevelopment.org/ics>

ICS with Restless Development offers to 18-25 year olds a 10-12 week experience to learn new skills and develop skills they already have. Via ICS, volunteers can have a real, lasting impact in developing communities and can take their first steps on a life-long journey of tackling those issues in society that they deem need tackling.



International Volunteering Opportunities

Lattitude Global Volunteering

Website: www.lattitude.org.uk

Lattitude Global Volunteering is an international youth development charity. Our mission is to educate and develop young people worldwide by providing opportunities for them to make a positive difference to the lives of others through a distinctive, challenging, structured and supported overseas volunteering experience in a culture and community different from their own.

International Citizen Service (VSO)

Website: <https://www.vsointernational.org/volunteering/ICS-youth-volunteering>

ICS is a volunteering programme for 18-35 year olds, led by VSO and funded by the UK Government. You don't need cash, skills or qualifications – just the ambition to make a difference. You will live and work in local communities with other volunteers. You will receive comprehensive training before you go. All travel, vaccinations, expenses, insurance and accommodation organised and paid for.

ProjectAbroad

Website: <http://www.projects-abroad.co.uk>

At Projects Abroad, we are proud to offer volunteer projects, work experience placements and language courses of the highest quality. In every community overseas we employ full time local staff to ensure that our volunteers work on worthwhile local programmes and that they are well supported and safe.

Our Experiences!

As well as that we got involved with other community based activities such as going to the Special Olympics and playing sports activities with them. On a Wednesday, we worked with the local community. At that time Kenya was facing the biggest drought it had ever had so the locals were in the middle of building a big dam to try and collect the water to use it. We took the opportunity to get involved with that initiative also.

It's stories like this that will always stick in my mind and make it a worthwhile experience for me.



Preparing for your trip!

What to do once you decide to go

- **Passport**

Check you have one, and that it's valid for at least six months after you intend to return.

- **Vaccinations**

See your GP, preferably at least two months before you go. Obtain certificates for your inoculations, you may be denied access to some countries without them. If you are going to a tropical region you may need to start taking anti-malaria pills before you go.

- **Existing Medication**

If you are taking medication check that it can be taken into your country of destination and if you will need a letter from your GP to confirm your medication.

- **Visit your dentist**

This will minimise the risk of having dental problems while you are away as it may be difficult, expensive, and in countries with high HIV risk, dangerous to get dental treatment abroad.

- **Find out your blood group**

If you are travelling in a group find out everyone else's too. If someone does need a transfusion abroad, it may be safer to donate to each other than risk unscreened blood in a developing country.

International Volunteering Opportunities

European Voluntary Service (EVS)

Website: www.brysongroup.org/careers-volunteering

EVS is an individual international volunteering programme open to anyone aged 18-30. Placements last between two to twelve months and the volunteer supports a project with a host organisation in Europe. Accommodation and living expenses are covered (no financial contribution needed) and the programme provides training and support before departure and during the project. EVS in Northern Ireland is part of the Erasmus+ programme.

Frontier

Website: <https://www.frontier.ac.uk/>

Frontier offers over 300 projects in 57 countries globally. Volunteers that take part in a Frontier project make an invaluable contribution to a global community and make a positive impact during their time on the project. Frontier's large range of capacity building projects are varied and flexible, and run by knowledgeable and committed staff.

Habitat For Humanity (Habitat NI)

Website: www.habitatni.co.uk

International volunteering with Habitat NI is an amazing opportunity to work alongside families in need of a decent place to call home. Every year, volunteers from across Northern Ireland travel to support partner programmes around the world and they experience firsthand the impact of poverty housing and help make a lasting difference to families in need.

International Volunteering Opportunities

AFS International

Website: www.afs.org

AFS prepares and activates future leaders, global citizens and changemakers with essential 21st century intercultural skills to engage, lead and collaborate effectively in different cultural settings. International exchange, study abroad and volunteer programs are supported by research-based intercultural learning journeys facilitated by trained AFS volunteers and staff.

Concern Worldwide

Website: www.concern.net/en

Concern Worldwide is a non-denominational voluntary organisation devoted to the relief, assistance and advancement of people in need in the less developed countries of the world.

Concordia (YSV) International Volunteer Project

Website: www.concordia-iye.org.uk

Concordia is a registered charity that promotes international volunteering abroad and in the UK, as a means to promote intercultural understanding and peace. The movement supports more than 1500 communities and projects in over 60 countries around the world.

European Solidarity Corps

Website: https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

The European Solidarity Corps gives 18-30 year olds the opportunity to do volunteer work helping the community and wider society, while at the same time gaining invaluable life experience and job skills.

Preparing for your trip!

What to do once you decide to go

- **Get to know where you're going**

Will you need to speak the language? What are the local laws and customs? Are there specific dress codes? What will the climate be like? Find a good guidebook, this will also give information on accommodation if that isn't provided by the project. Also find out as much as possible from your organisation about the work you will be doing. Are there any resources that would be useful to take with you?

- **Driving**

If you intend to drive make sure your licence is current and valid for the period you will be away. Some countries will require an international driving permit.

- **Travel Insurance**

Look around and get the best cover for your needs e.g. comprehensive medical and repatriation cover, make sure it covers your whole trip, and remember you may need hazardous sports cover! You can get free or low-cost health cover in the European Economic Area with a European Health Insurance Card (available from your GP, most Post Offices or online at <http://www.nhs.uk/ehic>).



Preparing for your trip!

What to do once you decide to go

- **Flights**

If you need to arrange your own flights give yourself plenty of time to shop around. Enquire about student/young person discounts.

- **STA Travel** www.statravel.co.uk (0333 321 0099)

- **Trailfinders** www.trailfinders.com
(Belfast 028 9027 1888, Dublin +353 1 6777888)

These are two particularly good travel agents, but you may find special deals elsewhere if you are prepared to look.

- **Visas and work permits**

Contact the Foreign Office to find out what papers you will need and how to apply for them.

- **British passport holders contact**

The UK Government's website (Foreign & Commonwealth Office) at www.fco.gov.uk/travel or contact via e-mail at TravelAdvicePublicEnquiries@fco.gov.uk or call 020 7008 0232/0233 or 020 7238 4503

- **Irish passport holders contact**

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade at <https://www.dfa.ie/travel/> or call +353 (0)1 671 1633 and 0345 8504321(if calling from Northern Ireland).

Additional Help

Here are a few more websites you might find useful if you are planning time away:

- Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) www.vso.org.uk
- Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Ireland www.vso.ie
- GoAbroad.com <http://www.goabroad.com>
- Year Out Group www.yearoutgroup.org
- Projects Abroad www.projects-abroad.co.uk/our-volunteers
- Raleigh International www.raleighinternational.org
- Travellers Worldwide www.travellersworldwide.com
- Challenges Worldwide www.challengesworldwide.com
- Working Abroad www.workingabroad.com

For more information about specific projects, check the Information on the following pages or visit our website: <http://youngcitizens.volunteernow.co.uk/why-volunteer/overseas-volunteering>

While You Are Away

Keeping Healthy

Detailed health advice for travellers is available from your GP and the websites listed below:

- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
(for British passport holders)
- <https://www.dfa.ie/travel/>
(for Irish passport holders)
- www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk
- <http://www.healthy-travel.co.uk>
- www.travelhealth.co.uk
- www.cdc.gov/travel/blusheet.htm (for information on specific countries and vaccinations)



Getting Ready to Go!

Money

Work out how much you are likely to need and avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Traveller's cheques are good for most places but find out for sure if they are likely to be accepted at your destination (your organisation or a guide book should be able to tell you). Stick to a well-known issuer like Thomas Cook, VISA or American Express.

Find out what currency is most likely to be accepted – in Eastern Europe, Pounds Sterling or Euros should be fine but many other countries prefer US Dollars. Make sure you order your cheques in time.

If you are going to a major town or city you may be able to use your bank or credit card, although you may be charged each time you use it. Contact your bank for advice. It is probably a good idea to have a credit card in case of emergencies.

Getting Ready to Go!

Documents

It is vital that you have all these documents in preparation for your travel.

- Passport
- Visa / work permit
- Vaccination / medication certificates
- Insurance documents
- Driver's license
- Credit cards / traveller's cheques
- Tickets
- Itinerary
- 24 Hour emergency telephone number
- Contact details of your destination

While You Are Away

Keeping Healthy

Sun exposure

We all know the risks. Be sensible. Use an effective sun block (look for four star UVA protection) and remember to reapply often. Make sure you are drinking enough water.

Don't fall asleep in the sun

This is particularly relevant if you've had a few too many of the local brew in the afternoon!

HIV/ AIDS infection

This is a high risk in many parts of the world. Keep yourself safe by always using contraception and allow to be injected only with clean, never-used needle. Take a sterile medical kit with you.

Wear a seat belt or bike helmet when travelling!

Stress and Culture Shock

It's likely that volunteering overseas will be worlds apart from anything you've ever experienced before and many aspects of it may be difficult to deal with.

If you are finding things difficult, emotionally or physically, take a break and relax for a while. Bring some comfort food, a good book and some music with you. If you can, talk to someone about how you're feeling or write it down.

While You Are Away

Keeping Healthy

If you do get diarrhoea, (sorry but 50% of travellers do!) you must rehydrate as your body has lost valuable fluid and salts. Bring rehydration sachets with you (if you are stuck you can make your own rehydration solution from six teaspoons sugar, one teaspoon of salt and one litre of water. Flat coke can also help.) Reduce your food intake and rest. Medicines like Imodium will stop you passing but that means the bacteria will stay inside you. Only take them if you are desperate, or need to travel. If the symptoms are very intense or persistent or if you pass blood, seek medical advice.

Avoiding malaria and insect bites - Use insect repellent on your skin and in sleeping environments. Remember to reapply it frequently. The most effective repellents contain diethyltoluamide (DEET) and are available in sprays, roll-ons, sticks and creams— see your Pharmacist for details. Cover your arms and legs in the evenings, when malaria mosquitoes are most active.

If your accommodation doesn't have screens on the windows and doors, sleep under a mosquito net. You may need to bring your own.

Take your anti-malaria pills. Follow your Doctor's advice about taking them before you go and after you return.

Getting Ready to Go!

Useful Tips

- If you are abroad and need urgent help eg. if you have lost your passport, been arrested or a victim of crime, or involved in an accident, then contact the relevant embassy, high commission or consulate in the country where you are located.
- Photocopy all documents twice! Leave a copy with someone at home and keep a second copy separate from the originals!
- Take the address and telephone number of the nearest British or Irish Embassy or High Commission.
- Check out www.fco.gov.uk/travel or <https://www.dfa.ie/travel/>
- Buy a good rucksack or travel bag – make it light!
- Find out the dialling codes for you to phone home and for home to phone you.

Getting Ready to Go!

List of essential items

- Toilet roll
- Medication
- Wet / antiseptic wipes
- Guide book / phrase book
- A good fleece
- Good shoes / boots
- Water bottle
- Torch
- Wrist watch with alarm
- Toiletries
- First aid pack
- Music
- Something from home: postcards, photos etc.
- Sun cream
- Mosquito repellent
- Water purifying tablets
- Swiss army knife
- Mosquito net
- Sterile needles
- Rehydration tablets
- Imodium
- Black bin bags
- Travel wash and nailbrush
- Camera and diary!
- Good book

It's a good idea to have essential items in your hand luggage in case your bags don't arrive when you do. This includes medicines, contact details, important documents and a change of underwear!

While You Are Away

Keeping Healthy

Stomach Bugs

Travellers are often afflicted with diarrhoea, salmonella and many other 'nasties' which can be avoided by being careful about what you eat and drink

Water

ONLY drink sterilised or bottled water that the top hasn't been tampered with! DO NOT have ice in your drinks as this will usually be tap water and may be months old.

Food

Avoid food which has been reheated, kept warm or exposed to flies. Keep away from uncooked food (such as that innocent-looking salad) unless you have prepared it yourself. Shellfish, even cooked, is particularly risky.

Don't swim in inland waters

Unless you know for sure that the water is safe.

Avoid contact with animals

Rabies is not cute!



While You Are Away

Travelling Around

If you are taking a long flight (eight hours or more) see your doctor about medical tips for reducing the risk of deep vein thrombosis e.g. taking a low dose *aspirin just before the flight (* do not take any medication without first consulting your doctor!). Move around during the flight, wear loose clothing and avoid caffeine and alcohol. Special flight socks are also available to help reduce this risk.

NEVER carry ANYTHING for anyone else through customs!!

Don't be tempted to hitch hike or take unnecessary risks.

Be aware of how you dress. You don't want to offend the local people by dressing inappropriately for their culture.

Public transport systems work differently all over the world and some can seem ridiculously complicated! Make sure you know how and where to buy tickets, when and where you can use them and if you need to get them stamped or validated when you use them.

A guide book, your organisation, or friendly locals can help you.

Getting Ready to Go!

Useful Tips

Mobile Phones

Speak to your mobile phone company about "international roaming". You can also rent a mobile phone for the duration of your stay from most mobile telephone companies in the country you are visiting.

Raising the funds

The cost of an international volunteering experience may seem a bit daunting to begin with. In some cases, the charitable organisation may have sufficient funds to cover your flights and accommodation, but this is rare. In most cases, you will be asked to cover some, if not all of your own expenses. Don't let this put you off- there are plenty of ways to raise money!



Getting Ready to Go!

Here are a few ideas to help you

Work

Perhaps not the most pleasurable way of raising cash but it is certainly effective. If you can't get a job, persuade your family and friends to pay you for doing odd jobs, or get help running a car wash (ask the local police for permission).

Seek donations

Tell your friends about your plans, they may wish to help you out. Tell your family, club, church or college. They might have some available funding to help you.

Organise activities/events or use crowdfunding

It may be possible for you to organise a series of fundraising activities to help your cause. It is important when you do this to let people know why you are going, something about the country and what the intended impact will be. Some ideas may be:

- Table quizzes
- Night at the races
- Bag packs
- Sponsored walks/runs
- Disco or tea dance
- Fancy dress/themed parties

Crowdfunding is an online-based way of collecting funds for a cause.

While You Are Away

Keeping you and your possessions safe

- Keep your family and friends informed of all of your plans. Write, email or phone at regular intervals so they know you are okay. Or have a travel blog!
- Women travelling alone – think about wearing a wedding ring to cut down unwanted attention. If staying alone always sign in using just your first initial and not Ms, Miss or Mrs – people will not know you are a woman staying alone.
- Be careful if you are going out at night. Seek the guidance of trusted locals as to where is safe for foreigners.
- Keep all your documents in a safe place, under lock and key if possible.
- If you lose anything or have anything stolen obtain a police statement – you will need it to claim against your insurance
- Use a money belt and don't carry too much money. Be aware of local laws and obey them.
- Avoid getting involved with drugs.