

Volunteering Opportunities Overseas

The Volunteer Office within the Students' Union does not actively promote volunteering and conservation overseas projects and opportunities as we do not have the resources to assess and check each group to see if they offer a suitable, worthwhile and safe experience. Therefore we have created this document so that you can make an informed choice and also choose the right opportunity for you.

As a team, the Volunteer Department has experience of the huge benefits that a well-structured, impactful and positive overseas project can provide for self-development, growth and learning. We are also aware that there are some pretty unscrupulous companies out there who charge a considerable amount of money for their programmes and sometimes they are not always what they seem.

Another area to consider is 'ethical volunteering'. Some programmes are much better than others at offering opportunities that are not harmful to the communities you will be volunteering with. While volunteers intentions are nearly always good, this does not mean that all volunteer programmes or indeed volunteers, are good. Indeed there are some programmes, and some volunteers out there that can be said to do more harm than good. Go to www.ethicalvolunteering.org for more information.

So our advice is to explore your options by checking out lots of different opportunities in order to compare their programmes, and think about the following questions:

- What legal status does the organisation have? Is it a charity, NGO or not-for-profit organisation, or is it a profit-making company?
- Is it registered in the UK or in another country? It is better to go through an organisation that is registered in the UK in case of any problems. There is also no way of ensuring they are completely regulated in-line with UK practices and therefore how do you guarantee where your money goes?
- Which country are you going to? Is it safe? Check out the official UK Government advice and make sure you follow it!
- What do you want to get out of your experience?
- Research itineraries, costs and deposits. Are you required to fundraise, and if so how much?
- What is included and what isn't.
- Will you receive any training?
- What are the direct benefits your volunteering will have on the recipients of your chosen activity?
- Have you thought about the ethical issues and environmental impact the volunteering project has on the community? Our guidance found at ?????? will help you here!
- Check out the charities' policies and practices and what structures they are in place to support you.
- Read reviews and feedback from participants.

Check out the following web-sites as a starting point – do get in touch if you have any questions about specific companies/groups and we will do our best to help out.

www.yearoutgroup.org

A great web-site that has loads of info and advice on gap years and volunteering. Has a section for parents and guardians which is very informative! All the companies they work with have signed up to a Code of Practice and a member's charter. Year Out Group holds details of all the companies' risk assessments and other info.

www.gov.uk/fco

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office works with partner organisations to provide current and up-to-date health and safety information for travellers through their 'Know Before You Go' campaign.

www.dfid.gov.uk/ics

The UK Dept for International Development (DFID) funds volunteers to go overseas on short term projects – some volunteers are eligible for free places.

www.wse.org.uk

World Service Enquiry provides independent information to people who want to volunteer or work in international development and aid.

<http://www.vsointernational.org/>

VSO is one of the leading international development organisations that use volunteers to fight poverty and reduce inequality.

www.ethicalvolunteering.org

Advice & information for people who are interested in choosing an ethical international volunteering placement.

[NUS Website](#)

Guidance and information on questions to think about and what to research.

[KnowHow NonProfit](#)

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations' 'How-to' provides practical information on volunteering outside the UK, as well as details of websites and publications that can help you find an opportunity.

[International Citizens Service](#)

ICS is a UK government-funded development programme that brings together 18 to 25-year-olds from all backgrounds to fight poverty in overseas and UK communities. To volunteer overseas with ICS you don't need cash, skills or qualifications – just the ambition to make a difference.

<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/component/content/article/52-magazine-archives/1327-volunteering-abroad?qh=YT0xOntpOjA7czo4OjJvdmVyc2Vhcyl7fQ%3D%3D>

Volunteering England champions volunteering and the third sector and their web-site offers a wealth of information, resources and advice on all areas of work within the voluntary sector.