



Where Is She Heading

Jane Stanfield, Where Is She Heading
P.O. Box 27482, Lakewood, CO 80227
303-988-1356

wiladyjanes@gmail.com

www.janestanfieldwish.com

Student International Volunteering and Travel

Volunteering is generally a learned behavior. If you have begun volunteering with your children while they were young, by the time you have a teenager, they are most likely experienced and constantly looking for ways to volunteer on a broader scale.

For this issue, I will be focusing on ways for a student to travel and volunteer without a parent or guardian. Programs that offer students (from 12-17 years of age) opportunities to travel and give back at the same time are beginning to emerge. There tend to be more programs for the 16+ age group, but with research you can find options for your middle school, freshman and sophomore students as well. In order to find the right program, both you and the student need to be clear on why they are volunteering and the desired results from an international volunteer trip.

WHY IS THE STUDENT VOLUNTEERING?

As you will see, a single trip can fulfill many goals at once.

Graduation Requirement or College Entrance? More high schools are requiring community service or volunteer work as a requirement for graduation. Universities are searching for well-rounded candidates for degree programs. Volunteer work not only at home but abroad may help the student clarify their study and career goals as well as build confidence and life skills. Summer vacations are an excellent time to get your middle and high school students involved in projects that help achieve these goals.

Life or Leadership Skills? Afraid your student is planning to make a career out of typing with their thumbs? International travel with a purpose can help open young eyes to how the rest of the world lives and approaches life. You can enhance this by searching thoroughly and finding quality experiences to make the trip more meaningful. Just the experience of traveling without parents or navigating in a culture where they don't know the language or customs, can be a boost in self-confidence and self-reliance for the student.

Perfect a Language? During many programs, the emphasis is on cross cultural understanding and exploration. This can be increased during home stays and when working with the local community. The local staff traditionally speaks English; so if the student is interested in a more in-depth experience, check around for language intensive programs both locally and abroad. Some agencies sponsor daily language lessons in the foreign country.

Student Volunteering

Page 2

Career Investigation? Is your student considering a field of study where they could “try before they buy”? Do you have a budding archaeologist, biologist, teacher, economist or engineer in your house? There are agencies that specialize in different fields such as science or education. If the student has a clear preference, focus on those agencies that can offer a glimpse into an actual career or work experience. This is also a way for a student to check out potential internship opportunities for college.

QUESTIONS TO ASK AND COSTS

As with any type of travel, the cost of some programs can be quite high. In addition to the traditional room and board, local transportation, insurance, etc, the companies that take groups of teens abroad also tend to have a large infrastructure. In order to find foreign volunteer opportunities and student to complete them, they will have staff both in this country and abroad. The agencies work to assure the quality and reliability of the projects and use staff members and chaperones from home as well as local staff on the ground to facilitate the group of students. Contact the agency and speak to a staff member to determine what the fees cover. They can help you get a realistic idea of additional costs such as airfare, medical supplies as well as spending money for the teen during the trip.

Once the teen has selected a project or agency, it is time to get clear on the actual trip logistics. With the answers to these questions, you should be able to find the project that fits both the student and your comfort level. (List compiled by C.L. of the Washington Post with several additions by Where Is She Heading.)

- * How long has the company been in business and the program been offered? How is the company organized, profit or non-profit?
- * Can you speak to a previous student traveler and their parents?
- * What the ratio of students/staff in the country? What are the ages of the staff members and chaperones?
- * Will the students travel independently to the country or congregate at one airport and fly and return as a team?
- * What accommodations, bathing facilities and food options are offered?
- * What is the policy about alcohol and drugs and how does the company prevent access to illegal substances abroad?
- * Is insurance offered and how are medical emergencies handled?

Student Volunteering

Page 3

- * What percentage of time per day/per week is spent on volunteer work?
- * How was the specific project selected? By the foreign community or the sending company?
- * How can you keep in contact with student while they are abroad?

Service travel at any age can be life changing when it is chosen to fit the purpose and goals of the individual. Careful questions and research can help to make sure that the student's first international volunteer trip is one that will keep them traveling to serve for the rest of their life.

Programs that focus on Student Volunteering

Cross Cultural Solutions – www.crossculturalsolutions.org
Earthwatch – www.earthwatch.org
Habitat for Humanity Collegiate Challenge – www.habitat.org
Global Routes – www.globalroutes.org
Globe Works – www.globeworkstravel.com
Life Works International – www.Lifeworks-international.com
Putney Student Travel – www.gopotney.com
Rustic Pathways – www.rusticpathways.com

General Student Travel

While these agencies do not offer volunteer work as a main part of their trips, international experience and cultural exposure is still available.

Al Campo International Programs – www.alcampinternational.org
Global Leadership Adventures – www.experiencegla.com
Renaissance Adventure Guides – www.raguides.com
World Leadership School – www.worldleadershipschoo.com

Resources for Flights and Travel Information

Student Travel Association – www.stattravel.com
Student Universe – www.studentuniverse.com
Fly for Good – www.flyforgood.com
Student Traveler – www.studenttraveler.com

Until next month, please

Travel in Safety. Jane