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## **Taking a Volunteer Vacation in the U.S.**

Staying in the U.S. this year for a volunteer vacation? Don't worry; you won't have limited choices.

I am sure that you are aware that there are as many non-profits, service agencies and good causes in our country as they are around the world. True, you won't get a stamp in your passport, but you probably won't need vaccinations or have worry about water quality.

Strategies for finding a volunteer placement in the U.S. are the same as for an international placement. The benefits of a local, regional or national volunteer placement with a registered non-profit agency are the reduced expenses but also a potential tax deduction.

To begin your search, consider-

1. Volunteer Placement Agencies – If your planning time is limited or you prefer not to spend hours searching for causes to support, agencies such as Global Volunteers, [www.globalvolunteer.org](http://www.globalvolunteer.org), Earthwatch, [www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org), and the Oceanic Society, [www.oceanic-society.org](http://www.oceanic-society.org), offer one-stop-shopping for their programs in several states. Typically your food, lodgings, and insurance are covered in your fee. You also receive pre-trip information on how to make the most out of your experience. As these are all U.S. non-profits, a portion of what you pay may be tax deductible.

2. Local, state, regional or national non-profits – A google search on volunteering + your city, region or state should reveal a list of non-profit agencies looking for volunteers. Other websites to check include:

[www.Idealist.org](http://www.Idealist.org) – allows you to search by city, zip, dates, types of projects

[www.Volunteermatch.com](http://www.Volunteermatch.com) – another comprehensive volunteer search engine

Each of these links offer volunteer work in the U.S. National Parks

[www.passportintime.com](http://www.passportintime.com)

[www.takepride.gov](http://www.takepride.gov)

[www.nationalparksamerica.com](http://www.nationalparksamerica.com)

[nps.gov/volunteer/](http://nps.gov/volunteer/)

3. Individual agencies – If you come across an individual agency that calls to you, contact them directly. You can ask friends or relatives that live in another state for their recommendations. Perhaps during a visit with them, your relatives will join you as a volunteer in their hometown.

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4. Membership agencies – These agencies offer a referral service only and the placements and what is included in your fee tends to be more bare bones. With your annual membership, you receive a listing of outfits that are looking for volunteers.

From the listing or directory, you find and reserve you own space directly with the outfit. A few of these agencies include, Worldwide Workers On Organic Farms – [www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org) and Green Volunteers – [www.greenvolunteers.org](http://www.greenvolunteers.org).

5. I found that these books include volunteer work within the U.S.

### **Currently on the shelves**

- \* 100 Best Vacations to Enrich Your Life – Pam Grout
- \* 100 Best Volunteer Vacations to Enrich your Life – Pam Grout
- \* The Busy Family's Guide to Volunteering – Jenny Friedman (local, national and international options)
- \* Immersion Travel USA – Sheryl Kayne
- \* Volunteer Vacations Across America – Sheryl Kayne
- \* Volunteer Vacations – Short-term Adventures That Will Benefit You and Others – Bill McMillon, Doug Cutchins and Anne Geissinger (national and international options)

There are many in our country impacted by the economy. Any length volunteer vacation can make a difference to not only the agency, but to you. It has been said that getting into action is the fastest way to lift your energy. So while you are serving others, you are giving to yourself as well.

I myself am planning a U.S. volunteer vacation in 2009 for a couple reasons. First, I have never done a U.S. away-from-home volunteer vacation and second, I am busy promoting *Mapping Your Volunteer Vacation* and expanding *Where Is She Heading*.

Thank you for your generous hearts. I look forward to hearing about your 2009 volunteer vacation no matter where you go.

Travel in Safety.

Jane Stanfield