

10 Tips when trying to #travelforgood



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1

Educate yourself on development theories *before* volunteering. Before jumping into a program, research and find out with theory of change you want to be a part of.

Make sure you recognize your own cultural assumptions.

We're all a little biased and bring our assumptions along with us, but by learning about a country's historical and present challenges can further your capacity to do good work.

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Don't assume in a "developing" country you have a lot to offer and they have nothing to offer you. It's not wise to solely focus on giving. Make sure you're open to learning from others so there is a two-way exchange.

Don't volunteer for activities you aren't qualified for.

Volunteering to gain experience is essentially using community members as a means to an end. Rather, by volunteering for activities you are qualified for, you'll be able to be more productive.

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Watch out for organizations deemed harmful by child development and medical professionals. Volunteering for a short period of time in an orphanage isn't effective in supporting child development. If people are continually coming and going out of a child's life, it can be harmful. Furthermore, pre-professional clinical volunteering is discouraged because it is a violation of medical ethics and can be harmful to patients.

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6

Take a critical look at how the organization markets to you. If an organization focuses on short-term care with children in orphanages and the like, they're probably more interested in selling you a product than in supporting the community and its development.

Low-overhead cost doesn't necessarily mean the organization has responsible programming. Instead, you need to focus on how and where the funds are used and whether there is evidence that the organization is focused on community development.

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Be sure to ask about the role of community voice within the organization. In order to have a successful impact on the community, an organization must listen to the community and allow it to have a voice. Organizations should help communities utilize their strengths not take over the community.

Don't accept an organization's past "success" at first glance. When looking at an organization's past outcomes, think about how the organization measures success. Ask yourself what their approach measuring outcomes tells you about their commitments and goals.

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Take your time when choosing an organization. Don't make the mistake of picking the first one that looks good. Compare and contrast organizations and ask questions. This will show you the variation and quality among the different organizations.

Adapted from "10 Mistakes Travelers Make When Trying to #travelforgood" by Eric Hartman
<http://matadornetwork.com/pulse/9-mistakes-travelers-make-trying-travelforgood/>