

Vacationing for Good

By Jessica Harris Daum

“Voluntourism” is a growing trend, and it fits perfectly with our call as Christians to love and serve our neighbors wherever we go. Plan to volunteer as a part of your next vacation; chances are you will receive more than you give.

For

Adult, Couple

Season

Summer

Needed

Your vacation calendar, internet access



Prepare in Advance

Prepare a list of possible dates for your vacation or assemble any plans you already have for a scheduled vacation so that you can see where volunteering may fit into your getaway.

Activity Plan

1. Say this prayer aloud to begin.

Holy Spirit, you move us to new and exciting places and experiences. Keep us mindful of others as we travel, and show us opportunities to love and serve our neighbors in need wherever we go. Amen.

2. Lay out your calendars and vacation plans so you can refer to them as you browse for volunteer opportunities to participate in during your vacation.
3. Search the internet for “volunteer opportunities in (whatever location you will be visiting).” It may be helpful to use the search engine VolunteerMatch.org. Read through possible volunteer opportunities and discuss how each may or may not be a good fit for you and your traveling companions.
4. If your internet search didn’t result in any great ideas for volunteering, go a step further. Lookup and call or email a local organization that may have ideas. If you’ll be visiting a National Park, contact the park to see if they could use volunteers. If you are visiting a city, search for a soup kitchen, clothes closet, or food pantry. These organizations can usually utilize volunteers for a few hours or a day. Contact a church at your destination and ask if they know someone who could use your help.
5. Make it official. Book your service experience online or by phone and add it to your vacation plans. Be sure to call a week before you travel to confirm the details such as what time to arrive, what to wear or bring, who to look for when you arrive, and who to contact if your plans change unexpectedly.
6. Pray for those you will be serving. One-time volunteer experiences can be meaningful and make a big difference, but it’s the relationships that you’ll build as you serve that really matter. Begin to build those relationships before you ever meet by holding them in your heart and before God in prayer.

God of mercy, you care for your people and provide for their needs. Help us to give of what we’ve been given so others might know your love. Open us to receive what those we will meet have to offer us as well. Be with the people of (place or organization) that they might welcome us. Amen.

