



You are here: Home > Blogs > Editor's Desk > The Cost of Volunteering Overseas

21 FEB

The Cost of Volunteering Overseas

by: Arden Jobling-Hey in: Editor's Desk

font size | Print | E-mail

Tips on how to fund your overseas experience...

You've "googled" organizations that offer volunteer placements overseas, narrowed down your fields of interests, filled out your application and somehow managed convinced your parents that Africa is not the heart of darkness they read in history books ages ago. Now you're committed to raising thousands of dollars in order to finance your volunteer experience overseas - but how?

When I traveled to Tanzania in 2005 with Youth Challenge International, I had to raise \$3,500 outside of flight costs in order to finance an 8-week placement as an HIV awareness officer. After having already applied and been granted a place on the project, I took one look at the numbers and my jaw dropped.

Something about this didn't seem quite right.

Shouldn't they be paying me to lend a hand overseas?

The simple answer is no. While it may seem like a lot of money to throw down for the luxury of volunteering abroad, you have to take into consideration the value you bring to the project vs. the administrative costs to the organization of sending you there. As an prospective or recent graduate student, this trip is just the beginning of your journey toward a career as a development practitioner, medic, environmental consultant etc. Unfortunately (for you) you're not at a point where your contribution to any project is worth an organization's money to fly you out and provide housing, food and transport free of charge. To be honest, they don't really need you. The trip is more about exposing a new generation of young people to a world of possibilities as well as the realities of working in the field.

The clarity and reasoning behind the fund-raising became all too obvious when, years following my placement, I went on to complete a masters degree in communication and development and realised that during my placement as an international volunteer, I had entered a theatre where my lack of knowledge and experience at the time actually could have hindered more than helped the people I was working with. Organizations not only have to provide the infrastructure for volunteers overseas, they are also very much responsible for making sure that the lack of experience and knowledge of designing a development program don't jeopardize the local community or the project underway.

blog categories

- Editor's Desk (53)
- From the field (1)
- AIESEC (2)
- Youth Challenge International (1)
- Guest bloggers (2)

contributing editors

-  Zalina Alvi (35)
-  Verge Magazine (1)
-  Jemma Young (3)
-  Jessica Lockhart (8)
-  Arden Jobling-Hey (3)

share

subscriber login

Username or email

 LOGIN [Forgot](#)
 login?



email newsletter

The latest openings overseas—direct to your inbox each month. Enter your e-mail address to subscribe

E-mail

 SUBSCRIBE UNSUBSCRIBE

[More information and sample newsletter >](#)

featured opportunity

I DO want to volunteer... but how can I pay for it?

As frustrating as it might be that NGOs can't just send you abroad, fund-raising the amount required to hop overseas is not an impossible task and it just might pay off in the not so distant future. Volunteering abroad is one of the best ways to gain professional experience while contributing positively to the global community. Having to adapt to life overseas is an experience that necessitates an open-mind and results in the ability to work in nearly any professional environment, a skill highly sought after in today's international marketplace. Equally, if not more important, is the exposure you gain to working with people of backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs different than your own. Basically, volunteering abroad is not only a life altering experience, and lots of fun, it also looks great on your resume.

So, if you love to travel with purpose and you're eager to get a head start in your career, taking part in an international volunteer placement can be worth every penny. Just remember to do your research and choose the organization that's right for you ([check out our volunteer program directory here](#)).

Here are some tips to help you get started:

Tip #1: Don't be afraid to pop the question

Use your contacts, of contacts, of contacts. Talk to everyone. Make it your business to tell people what your plans are and don't be afraid to ask for help raising money. As long as you are not continually trying to raise funds, people will listen to what you have to say.

Tip #2: Make a website and go social!

Utilize social media to spread the word about what you're doing. Tweet and post your way into the hearts of friends and family who are kind enough to share your plea with friends of their own.

Tip #3: Get creative!

Organize a bar night, theme night, trivia night, etc. Go big or go home. Sell tickets to a themed event, use your contacts to scope out a band that might be willing to perform pro-bono, or pair up with a venue that will give you a discounted space to raise funds for your overseas adventure. Everyone loves a good time, especially when the ticket sales go towards a good cause!

Tip #4: Work for it. Don't get stressed out trying to raise funds on your own. If you're struggling to collect money from other people, pick up some shifts at a local restaurant or bar. Especially in larger cities, it's possible to earn upwards of \$100/night as a server or bartender/barmaid. A few months of late night and weekend shifts and you'll be ready to roll.

For some more great ideas on how to raise funds to volunteer abroad, check out these links!

Recent Verge Articles:

[10 Ways to Fundraise for Volunteer Travel](#)

[Beg, Borrow or Fundraise](#)

[15 Ways to Travel for Free \(or at least cheap\)](#)

Other resources:

[101 Ways to Fundraise](#)

[20 Great Fundraising Ideas](#)

[Fundraiser Insight](#)

Happy Travels!

Like

[Institute of International Education: Boren Scholarships and Fellowships](#)



www.borenawards.org

Program Description: Boren Scholarships and Fellowships provide opportunities for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students to become more proficient in the cultures and languages of world regions critical to U.S. interests. Award amounts are up to \$20,000 for the Boren Schol ...

[Read More...](#)

[Show more programs...](#)

search *travel opportunities*

 ▾

SEARCH

new - just launched on fb!

[Login](#)

Add New Comment



Showing 0 comments

Sort by popular now ▼

[✉ Subscribe by email](#) [RSS](#)

blog comments powered by [Disqus](#)

Tagged under [volunteer abroad](#) [fundraising](#)



ARDEN JOBLING-HEY

Originally from Toronto, Arden has studied, volunteered and worked her way around the world. From promoting HIV/AIDS awareness as an international volunteer in Tanzania and teaching business English in Germany, to exploring hidden treasures of the Turkish bazaar. Arden believes that as long as there are unknown lands to discover, the adventure never ends!

LATEST FROM ARDEN JOBLING-HEY

[Swap Your Way Around the World](#)

[Parlez-Vous English?](#)

Related items (by tag)

[Arrival Survival](#)

[Goat Lending NGO Empowers Ugandan Women](#)

[Working Abroad on Rwandan Radio](#)

[Gift-Giving Guide for Overseas Volunteers](#)

[Ethical Advertising, KONY2012 and Volunteering Abroad](#)

More in this category: [« A Changing Landscape for Volunteer-Sending Organizations](#) [5 Steps to an Alternative Spring Break](#)
»

[back to top](#)