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Family Philanthropic Mission Vacation



“Philanthropy is almost the only virtue which is sufficiently appreciated by mankind.”

- Henry David Thoreau

Creating Your Family Philanthropic Mission

In addition to consistently volunteering throughout the year to support various charitable causes, consider taking a family vacation to a distant location where you can serve in a charitable manner. You can have a wonderful time together *and* help others!

Rather than volunteering locally, your family may want to help outside of their local community. Because some families are too busy to consistently volunteer throughout the year, combining a family vacation with your family's philanthropic mission may be an excellent idea to pursue. Although a customized family vacation is the best option, signing up for a pre-planned group volunteer mission offered by a school, organization, or church is also beneficial. Whether the mission consists of your entire family, or just a father and son, the experience will be beneficial not only for the charity but also for your family.



your children “hands on” altruistic behavior through working together every day for an extended period of time. You can provide daily demonstrations of kindness and compassion. Your family can display their skills and various strengths to each other.

By traveling outside your community, your family will develop a broader view of the world, allowing them to understand just how much life differs outside of the local community. It will visually teach your children to appreciate their own secure surroundings and how they differ from those who live in fear or poverty. Since children can have stereotypes of what life is like outside of their “hometown,” the vacation will teach tolerance and understanding of various cultures and lifestyles outside of their normal life. This understanding may result in your children being more grateful for what they have and more compassionate to others who are less fortunate. Further, it could help them to be less self-absorbed in their life and the materialism they desire while placing them in a setting to be impactful.

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Imagine if your children had visited Haiti after the 2010 hurricane, had seen the large-scale poverty, illness, and horror that had accompanied that tragedy? Imagine also how they would have benefited from seeing the country's people come together to help each other, alongside volunteers? What a profound impact this type of mission would have on your family. When faced with such compelling realities, children can't help but come out of themselves and look at others in a new light.

The vacation could also serve as a catalyst for them to consider additional volunteering efforts post-vacation. A volunteer vacation should be considered an investment in your children.

Planning Your Mission Vacation

Once your family agrees to take a philanthropic mission vacation, each family member needs to be part of the entire decision-making process. The more engaged your family is during the selection process, the more committed they will be to the result. The more enthusiastic everyone is about the vacation; the more likely it will be a success.



In order to plan your family philanthropic mission vacation, you and your family should consider the following basic questions.

1. What kind of charitable impact does your family want to make during your mission vacation?
2. Will the mission vacation be compatible with your family's current philanthropic mission?
3. What is your family's budget for the mission vacation?
4. How much of the trip will be dedicated to volunteering?
5. What types of volunteer experiences excite your family most and how will they benefit from this activity?
6. Do you wish to plan your mission vacation yourself or will you hire a service provider or consultant to develop the trip?
7. How long will you spend on your mission vacation?

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8. Does your family wish to take the customized solo mission or travel with a group of other people on a similar mission vacation?
9. Does your family wish to stay within the USA or travel internationally?



Ask Yourself

What kind of philanthropic vacation can you envision for your family?

Do you know anyone who has taken a philanthropic mission vacation?

What did they do?

When your family has answered these questions, you can begin the planning. You will need to research the details of various charitable vacation programs. Getting a personal account from former volunteers of the programs will prove extremely helpful.

In order for you to choose the best possible mission, spend as much time as possible extensively researching your options. If you don't have a specific charitable cause already determined and desire your own custom trip, consider searching the Internet for "volunteer vacations," or "family philanthropic mission." Below are a number of web-based resources that will provide help in finding the best vacation option for your family.



- **Global Citizen Network** (GCN): www.globalcitizens.org

This tax-exempt organization "connects the globally-minded (and the adventurous) with indigenous communities worldwide." GCN offers groups and families the opportunity to join a team of participants in expeditions of one, two, or three weeks. During this period, participants will live and work with members of indigenous communities throughout

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the world. GCN gives families the opportunity to join a scheduled trip, or if six or more participants are interested, to create a custom trip.

- **Globe Aware:** www.globeaware.org
This tax-exempt organization “develops short-term volunteer programs in international environments to encourage people to immerse themselves in a unique way to give back.” Every activity they offer is intended to accomplish one of two things: promote cultural awareness and/or promote sustainability. Unlike Global Citizens Network that offers longer term vacations, Globe Aware offers one-week vacations.
- **Helping Abroad:** www.helpingabroad.org/family-volunteer
This 501c3 organization offers low-cost international family volunteering options.
- **Hands Up Holiday:** www.handsupholidays.com
This organization offers luxury custom family travel for family volunteering.
- **Habitat for Humanity Global Village:** www.habitat.org
Habitat is a 501c3 that builds decent and affordable housing for low-income families around the world.
- **Global Volunteers:** www.globalvolunteers.org
Global Volunteers is a private, non-profit that works at the invitation and under the direction of local leaders to deliver essential services to partner communities worldwide.
- **Sierra Club:** www.sierraclub.org
The Sierra Club is the nation’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization that has over twenty thousand local and international outings a year.
- **Travelanthropy:** www.travelanthropy.com
This website provides travel ideas for various family volunteering opportunities both domestically and internationally.

The most important goal for finding the best volunteer program should be compatibility with your family’s philanthropic mission. You want a good match. A good first step is to compile a list of the various organized family vacation programs that are available that fit your mission using the websites provided or doing your own search. Perhaps you know family or friends who have previously taken missions who can offer



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suggestions. Once your list is compiled, narrow it down to no more than three or four opportunities. Next, request from the organizations an information package to learn additional details. When you have further narrowed your list to one or two opportunities, interview the program coordinators of each organization. Below are listed some beneficial questions to ask.

Questions to Ask

What is the cost or fees associated with the program?



What is included and what is not included in their presented costs? If you are looking to reduce costs, staying within the United States will save money. More exotic locations will probably cost substantially more money.

What types of accommodations, if any, will your family be provided during the program? Take into consideration the unique requirements of your family. If your family is used to hiking and sleeping in outdoor facilities, you will have many more options. For some families, taking a vacation with “home like” accommodations may be necessary.

What are the requirements and responsibilities of the program? How will each family member assist in fulfilling these requirements? Are there any minimum age requirements? Knowing each family member’s personality, physical constraints, mental capacity, and desire are crucial in fulfilling requirements of various programs.

How many other families or volunteers will be part of the project? Some programs can be customized for just your family while others consist of a number of families volunteering together.

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What is the specific time requirement of the program from start to finish? How many hours a day will your family be working on the project? Some pre-planned programs will require not only a lot of work but also a huge time commitment. If the family consists of some young children, you may have to limit your scope and effort.

What happens if a family member becomes sick during the project? If the trip is international, understanding the local medical facilities and procedures is very important. In the event that any family member has a pre-existing illness, staying within the United States is probably best.

If your family takes a philanthropic mission, consult your CPA about the tax deductibility of the vacation. If you would like to understand the IRS's position on this type of charitable contribution, see IRS Publication 526, *Charitable Contributions*.

Or you can simply plan a family trip on your own with a philanthropic approach. Perhaps research a different country or area of your own country that is impoverished or needs help that your family can provide; find out which schools need supplies in beautiful Appalachia, what town in Mexico can use help painting a local church, or even simply vacation with supplies for the homeless you encounter along the way. If you'd like to be more carefree in your planning, there are plenty of easy ways to organize a philanthropic vacation without going through a specific program.

Ask Yourself

Would a family philanthropic vacation further your philanthropic mission?

How could you use your family's passions for your philanthropic vacation?





Call to Action
Family Philanthropic Vacation

Planning a Mission Vacation	
Today's Date	
Has your family gone on a mission vacation?	
Would you consider it? Why or why not?	
Where are possible destinations?	
Would you go with an organized group or only with your family?	
Would you travel in the USA or abroad?	
Who would you like to serve and why?	

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Teaching Children	
Draw a chart or map showing your child how his community is part of a larger community.	
Does he understand the differences between communities?	
Would he be a willing person on a family mission trip?	
How can you influence your child to use some of his vacation to serve others?	
What are service activities to include?	
What are recreational activities to include?	

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Further Actions	
Research two or three organizations that plan mission vacations.	
What are the pros of each mission vacation?	
What are the cons of each mission vacation?	
Is a mission vacation an activity your family can accomplish this year? If not, when?	
What preliminary plans have to be in place?	

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CRC # 6064174 10/23

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