



What you should be concerned of as a volunteering traveler



by Jenni, on July 24th, 2018



Traveling the world and doing good at the same time: sounds perfect. No wonder, this kind of traveling is becoming more and more popular. However, a tourism industry has emerged from this trend causing a negative reputation of volunteerism. Luckily, you can also find various positive examples of volunteering and green projects, demonstrated by our [Green Pearls®](#) partners. Helping where help is needed – we tell you what you should watch out for.

Which skills are helpful in the long run?

According to dubious travel agents, volunteering only requires your motivation as a requirement. It is advertised as a great chance for young people to discover other cultures and countries and gain first experiences before they start to work. True indeed, though just as a positive side effect. Volunteering is not about self-discovery but about helping others in need.

You should ask yourself sincerely which of your skills are helpful. Without decent skills, voluntary work is not helpful and might even cause the contrary. Therefore, no one lacking appropriate knowledge should teach children for instance, or work in medical areas.



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Easily and effectively doing good while traveling: collecting waste which was left behind. © Inkaterra

Help on site or rather donate money?

Responsible aid agencies organize projects acting sustainably on site and supporting long-term capacity building. Accordingly, they keep the needs of locals in mind and include them in all relevant processes. Meaning, no volunteer will do a job locals could do on his or her own.

Take a close look: Are you about to take someone's job away when volunteering? Do you have skills relevant for the project adding value to the people? Needless to say, there are circumstances where any helping hand is required, following natural catastrophes for example. Check out carefully if your help on site is needed (causing costs as well), or maybe donating goods or money enabling experts to do their job is the more efficient way.

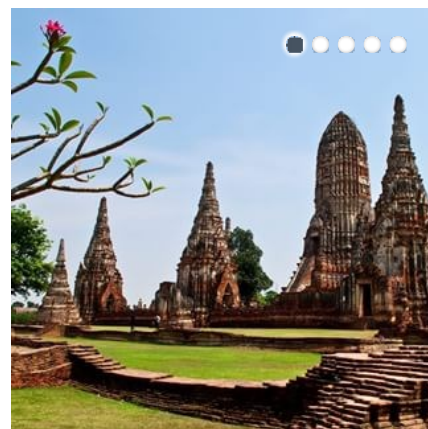


Discovering the rain forest on a tour with Inkaterra, you can learn a lot about the wonders of nature – and how to preserve them. © Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica

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Reflect upon your own situation and motives: Are you capable of doing voluntary work regarding time, money, and energy in order to provide useful help? If you are not, it might be better to travel sustainably with the aim of encountering new people and cultures beyond touristic spots.

You can find several sustainable trips focusing on experience: On tours through the rain forest organized by the Peruvian NGO Inkaterra Asociación (ITA) you can discover the plant and animal life, or participate in the numerous activities supporting nature conservation, for example at the [Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica](#). How about helping to regenerate the coral reefs at [Gili Lankanfushi](#) on the Maldives? There, you can assist marine biologists attaching corals fixed to ropes and actively participate in the [Coral Lines Project](#). Raising awareness of animal and environmental protection is the goal of [Reethi Faru](#) through regularly cleaning the beaches with the initiative “Reethi Day.”



Participating in the Coral Lines Project, you can actively contribute to the corals' regeneration. © Gili Lankanfushi

Building bridges between tourists and locals

You can increasingly discover touristic initiatives in [Thailand](#) focusing on community life. Here, you can experience the village's everyday life and learn about cultural and close-to-nature activities, such as fishing or vegetable growing. That way, tourism assures locals a livelihood while maintaining their culture and traditions. And you can gain valuable and authentic memories just like the unique opportunity to comprehend the country and its people.

When returning from your vacation you can easily go on helping: become an ambassador for such great, sustainable projects and tell your family, friends, and colleagues about it. Moreover, share your experiences on social media. In doing so, you can raise people's awareness and help differentiating good aid projects from pretended good ones in the long term.





© Andaman Discoveries

A precious and authentic experience: taking part in the daily life of locals © Andaman Discoveries

Find out about [further green projects](#) and check out TourismWatch for a selection of criteria regarding reliable voluntary work.

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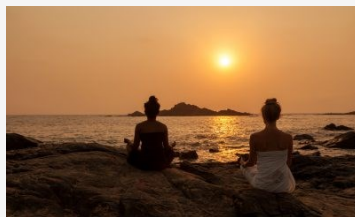


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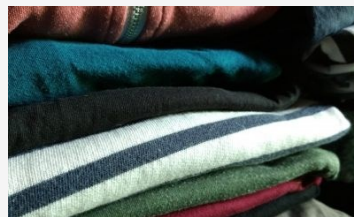
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