



OCEANS 2 EARTH VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering with O2E - Parent's Factsheet

Embarking on volunteer travel is an exciting but sometimes nerve-wracking proposition for a volunteer and their parents. As experienced volunteers, we know how overwhelming it can be when your son or daughter announces they are packing their bags and heading off to the other side of the globe! This is an opportunity for them to celebrate their years of study and perhaps saving their money from that part time job, to experience what life has to offer and fulfil a dream. They worked hard for it!

To help soften the nerves, O2E has compiled a parent's guide to provide information to help with your concerns. Please feel free to contact us if you have any further queries.

Safety

Safety of the volunteer on their placement is our highest priority, and knowing the specific projects and the countries we work with enables us to strive for a 100% record in terms of safety. Volunteers are given a very strong support structure throughout their placement and O2E staff members are available 24 hours should you, or they need to speak to us. You will always know where your son or daughter is and you will always be able to contact them. Project work and activities are structured and there are rules that the volunteers must adhere to. Many projects have night time curfews. For safety information specific to the country of travel, refer to the [Travel Resources](#) section of the website.

Communication with your son or daughter on a placement

We are notified by the project host when the volunteers arrive at the project. If you would like to know that your child has arrived safely, simply email us and we will inform you that they have arrived. Many volunteers use the local internet cafes to contact home on a regular basis and at some projects there is internet available. Mobile phone signal is also available at most projects, although it can be intermittent depending upon the location.

All volunteers, no matter what age, can take a little while to settle into the new environment they are working in, to get adjusted and settle into their new group and friends. Remember most of our volunteers are in the same position and therefore can all be feeling a little apprehensive at first, especially if they are travelling alone, but bonds are normally formed very quickly. At this point please do not worry if they stop contacting you as much, this often is the case as they find their feet and get busy! If you need to contact them at any time, and have been unable to reach them, you can contact O2E who will be happy to contact the project and send a message to your child to call or email home.

What will my son or daughter gain from this experience?



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Most parents would like their children to develop into well rounded individuals who can deal with whatever life throws at them with confidence. O2E staff has experienced firsthand that the skills and experience that are gained on a volunteering placement are immense and enable young people many opportunities to grow and develop. Contributing to a project gives them the space to make their own decisions, learn a new skill, gain work experience or gain practical knowledge essential for a career in a variety of disciplines. Volunteers bring their own valuable skills to many tasks but often learn and develop new ones.

A volunteer project can challenge your child as it can be very demanding, both mentally and physically, while giving them an experience of a lifetime and a passion and drive which they take home with them. It can give your child a boost of self-confidence and self-esteem, while contributing to the needs of the project and its animals provides a sense of accomplishment and pride. It is the opportunity to broaden their horizons, learn to relate to and accept different kinds of people, to develop resourcefulness and to appreciate other cultures and attitudes. We believe the collaboration that is created when your child is placed as a volunteer is beneficial for both your child and the host organisation they visit.

Volunteering in another country gives your child the opportunity to develop a new and diverse social network. Participating in team work is one of the most effective ways to make new lifelong and like-minded friends around the world. It broadens support networks and allows people to meet people with similar interests. It also creates an opportunity to meet people from very different backgrounds, people that your child would never normally meet. Giving up their time to care for injured wildlife, build enclosures for rescued animals or nurture the environment demonstrates a commitment and dedication to animal welfare and conservation that we encourage at O2E.

Look to the future

Participants gain a wide range of skills when they undertake a volunteering project. Potential employers even consider volunteering as a valuable asset on a CV. It is seen as a competitive advantage and can distinguish your child from other applicants. In particular, volunteering builds life skills, such as communication and process skills, as well as leadership capacities and self-discipline. These skills are often the qualities employers identify as lacking in new recruits and are highly valued.

Volunteering develops initiative, improves communication, develops empathy and finer decision making skills, builds character, confidence, patience and facilitates the achievement of goals. These skills and experiences can assist your child in deciding a career and life path and helps them to look at life and all its opportunities, aiding in the formation and refinement of career choices.

Be Prepared

Make copies of important documents your son or daughter will take with them. These include insurance policies, passports, visas, travel itineraries, flight bookings, the O2E



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Information Guide and bank account details. Bank account details are required if the bank contacts you to determine if any unusual activity on the account is legitimate. It is a good idea for your child to inform their bank of their travel plans prior to leaving.

You may choose to set up a power of attorney for your child while he or she is away. This can either cover specific areas or give you general powers to deal with your child's affairs should the need arise. This means you can talk to the bank or the university should the need arise.

Ensure that your child knows that they shouldn't hesitate to contact you if they run into any problems. Some children are too embarrassed or afraid to call home until things have gone wrong. Open the lines of communication with your child and make them feel that you are always there to listen and assist them should they require it, no matter what happens on their travels.

Enjoy yourself

Finally, use this experience to enjoy yourself as well. You may find you have an empty household and spare time on your hands now that you don't have to clean up after teenagers, cook extra meals or operate a taxi service in the early hours of the morning! So make this time to see more shows, go out for dinners, catch up with friends and take a few holidays of your own. After all, your children will be having the time of their life; you should too!

Be prepared for the pictures and videos to come out when they get home. You'll be amazed at the beauty of the country and the wonderful animals your child experienced.

Finally

Remember that this is your son or daughter's once in a lifetime experience. Whatever your hopes and aspirations for your child, this is an opportunity for them to make their own decisions and set a path for their future. Yes, it can be daunting, but if you can offer assistance and encouragement, it can be an incredibly rewarding and enriching experience that you can share with them.

With the internet as an important medium in today's society, young people are be more in sync with what is actually going on in the world than the older generations. It is important to know that your child travels safely, so talking through your worries and resolving your concerns prior to them leaving will be one of the keys to a happy experience for everyone.

There are a vast number of young people who travel overseas each year and become part of a network that passes on information and tips on places to stay, how to get around, what places are safe and so on. This information is of immense help and will form part of your child's learning experience.

So, relax and take the journey with them...because when they return home, there will be a lot to talk about!