

Before you Travel

Maasai Land Explorer

- Volunteering while traveling abroad opens the door to many new and exhilarating possibilities. Volunteering creates a feeling of personal satisfaction. It grants you a privilege not afforded to the typical tourist: a unique opportunity to experience local everyday life while making a positive impact. Volunteering abroad immerses you in a new culture which improves your language skills, gives insight of a culture from the inside out and hopefully broadens your view of the World.

Why choose Maasai Land Explorer

Maasai Land Explorer offers customized program placements and provides one-on-one personalized experiences. We cater to the individual looking for a unique volunteer travel experience. Knowing that people often have a limited time frame, we offer both short and long term placements ranging from 1 week to 3 months. We know that people like choices. For our programs you get to choose where you go, when and for how long. We do not have fixed start dates; however, we recommend you arrive in-country on a Saturday or Sunday if possible.

Is volunteering abroad for me?

Only you can answer this question. Volunteering in another country can be both challenging and rewarding. Our programs are not summer camps. You will not have every minute of every work day planned for you. You must be an inventive, self-starter who can handle situations where schedules are occasionally non-existent and resources are scarce. Flexibility and patience are the keys to having a satisfying experience. Developing countries, in particular are not as obsessed with time as the US or Europe. Often schedules are ignored or appointments begin later than arranged. NGOs, international non-profits and volunteer organizations are almost always understaffed. If you are willing and able to except this, volunteering abroad can lead to an unlimited feeling of personal satisfaction.

Why should I pay to volunteer?

You are not paying for your volunteer work; you are making a financial contribution to support the hundreds of needy communities where our programs are based. Donations are helping to stimulate the local economies with hosting jobs, with new constructions at local schools and orphanages, with much needed medical supplies to rural clinics. **Maasai Land Explorer** works tirelessly year round to support our volunteers, and also to serve the local communities where we are based. As a non religious, non government agency, we receive 100% of our funding from the volunteer program donations.

Do most Volunteers Fundraise?

Yes! We know the cost of volunteering abroad can be extremely daunting. There are transportation costs, program fees, visa/vaccinations expenses to consider, and then your everyday living costs while you're away. After you submit your application and US\$200 deposit, we will email you a fundraising guideline with helpful information.

Is there an age requirement?

We accept volunteers 16 years and older. We do not have a maximum age limit in place, as an increasing number of volunteers are retirees. As long as you are physically and mentally healthy with an open mind you shouldn't have any problems participating on our programs.* Children traveling with their parents must be 12 years and older.

Do I have to be a US citizen to participate?

No. We accept participants from all countries.

How is my program fee being used?

65% goes directly overseas into the **Maasai Land Explorer** programs: volunteer housing, meals, airport transportation, in the form of salaries for local staff; project coordinator expenses as well as direct financial aid year round.

We allocated a small percentage of the program fee for our US overhead administrative expenses and salaries. We also use a percentage for on-going recruitment, marketing project development costs, travel expenses. Our company goal is to be sustainable and offer professional support and services. We cannot do this without the volunteer program fee.

What is the average length of a project?

We offer short term programs ranging from 1 to 4 weeks, as long term placements up to 3 months. Some projects can extend up to 6 months. Most volunteers commit to a 2 week program allowing enough time to acclimate to their new surroundings as well as complete orientation and still feel as though they made a contribution to the program.

Do I need a passport and visa?

Yes, you need a passport, with an expiration that is no less than 6 months from the time of travel. Visa requirements differ by country, based on the length of time and nationality of the volunteer. Please check the local embassy within your home country about specific requirements. You can find information on our News & Travel Links page.

Is there an application deadline?

Most people will sign up 3-6 months prior to traveling. You should apply no later than 30 days before your intended start date. Some exceptions can be made for last minute traveling, please contact us for more details.

Do I need immunizations?

Most countries do require some vaccinations. We urge participants to consult a travel doctor at least two months before arriving in the host country, to discuss any necessary immunizations and for advice on staying healthy while traveling. You can find more information from.

Do I have to book my plane tickets myself?

Yes, you do. We aim to be as flexible as possible and allow our volunteers to pick their travel dates, carrier and times of departure.

Is travel insurance included in the program?

Maasai Land Explorer does not provide insurance for the simple reason that we think our participants should be able to decide on the nature of your coverage. Some insurance are very inexpensive. We recommend STA International Travel insurance, Tel: +255 655 707 352 www.maasailandexplorer.com. More affordable insurance sources are Patriot Insurance and Multi-National Underwriters.

It's possible to combine countries, cities or programs?

Yes, you can combine the countries and programs. If you would like a multiple-city placement, there is an extra \$200 administrative fee to cover the cost of your orientation, airport transfers and transportation costs. Please specify your plans on the application.

Can I volunteer with my sister/friend/husband/boyfriend?

Yes! We can arrange for you to live and work together in the same host family and placement.

What qualifications or skills do I need?

There are no qualifications necessary except for our medical programs. These programs are available for medical professionals or medical/nursing students. There is no TEFL or teaching qualifications needed for our teaching programs.

Do I need to bring my own supplies from home, or are they provided?

Most schools, clinics and orphanages which you will be placed in are very under resource. Supplies from home that would be of benefit to you should be taken with you. Or, as most volunteers do, buy supplies locally once they arrive in-country. Medical volunteers should bring their own lab coats and rubber gloves.

Do I need to know the local language?

This varies depending on the country and program. In Asia and Africa the programs are conducted in English, except in Morocco where conversational French is required. In our Spanish speaking country locations, especially the indigenous communities in Ecuador, volunteers need to have a basic conversational level of Spanish. Medical and dental placements in Central/South America require proficient Spanish. For those less than proficient in Spanish we offer a Language and Cultural Immersion program in Peru, Honduras, Ecuador and Chile.

*If you do not know, or need help in deciding your level of Spanish or French contact our office for assistance.

How are volunteers selected?

When you submit the online application, we ask for a copy of your resume/CV as well as a personal reference. We review the details you sent to us, we speak to your contact reference and follow up with a phone interview with you to determine you are suitable for a placement.

What if I have more questions?

If you have any questions or would like to discuss our programs in more detail, please don't hesitate to contact us by emailing; info@maasailandexplorer.com

How can I pay my program fees?

- For the deposit of \$150 we accept Bank to bank wire transfer payment.
- For final payment we only accept wire transfer.
- For International payment we only accept bank wire transfer.
- Volunteers are responsible for their wire transfer fee.

What is the deadline for sumitting my Form?

Most people will sign up 3-9 months prior to traveling. You should apply no later than 45 days before your intended start date; if you are on the deadline you should submit all the paperwork and the full payment the same day. Some exceptions can be made for last minute traveling, please contact us for more details

While you are away

How many hours and days I'm working each week?

You are expected to work 40 hours a week, 8 hours a day, the supervisors should be notified when you arrive and leave the program each day. If there is a holiday you may take the holiday as well or informed your coordinator you will take that day off.

Language Lessons – Cultural Immersion?

When you are doing the Cultural Immersion Program, it's your responsibility to call the Language School and informed them if you are sick and that you can't assist to the lesson, if you don't do so, you will lose that class with no option to recover that day. If you call in advance 12hrs you can reschedule your lesson.

Accommodation in Country?

Who are your partners abroad?

Our local partners are NGO's, private institutions and community organizations dedicated to the improvement of their communities. They are leaders in the community and social activists knowledgeable in the needs of their society and offer insight and guidance to our volunteers. They believe in the benefit of international assistance and value our volunteer's time, skills and knowledge.

Will I be met at the airport?

The Country Coordinator and staff will pick you up from the airport in the Host Country if you timely inform us of your flight schedule, in writing, at least four weeks in advance of Your arrival in the Host Country. Unfortunately, travel delays in developing countries are a common occurrence. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, you are delayed or miss a flight, it is your responsibility to contact the Country Coordinator or **Maasai Land Explorer** office. You will also be provided an emergency telephone number to reach the **Maasai Land Explorer** office to report any delays.

- **Will I be on my own or will I be with other volunteers?**
 - Our programs are customized and individual based. This being said, you will never be isolated. Our hosting organizations receive volunteers year round, so you may have the chance to meet other volunteers. You also have the support of the Project Coordinator, the local staff at the organization you with at and the host family that you live with.
- **Will I have free time to travel when I'm there?**
 - Yes, most programs are based Monday-Friday, with weekends free. Volunteers often take this opportunity to arrange weekend getaways to places of interest. Most volunteers travel extensively after the end of their placements, our Project Coordinators can give suggestions and tips for trips.
- **What is the typical work schedule?**
 - For volunteers working in schools it is more or less the same working hours as you would find in Western countries. Hours for orphanages will be more flexible. Volunteers should expect to work 7-8 hours per day (5 days a week).
- **Is there any training involved?**
 - We provide in-country orientation on arrival to help familiarize you with the city where you will be living. You will be shown how to use public transportation, where to exchange money, local restaurants and a general sightseeing tour of the city you will live in. In our Central and South America programs we provide a half day Spanish class to brush up on your basic phrases. Prior to your departure for your hometown, we will send you information on the project, health advice, what to pack, currency and visa etc.
- **Is there A Broader View staff in-country when I am traveling?**

Yes, we have a local Project Coordinator in all of our host countries. **Maasai Land Explorer** Coordinator is responsible for the airport transfers, placement orientation, and introduction to the local accommodations or home stay arrangements. Our **Maasai Land Explorer**

Coordinators are natives of our host countries. Our Coordinators are professionals, fully trained and enthusiastic about sharing knowledge and love of their country.

- **What are the local accommodations provided?**

The majority of our volunteers live with a local host family. These families have a working relationship with **Maasai Land Explorer** and are deemed suitable by our Project Coordinators based on sanitation, security and comfort. A home stay provides firsthand insight into the local culture and helps with learning the local language. It also acts as an additional in-country support network. In some locations, a local guesthouse or shared volunteer accommodations are provided. Although you should not expect western standards, the accommodation are good by local standards, clean and secure. Although we cannot guarantee to meet all requests, we will let you if there are accommodation options for your specific program location.

- **Do most volunteers become sick?**

- What happens if I do? Most volunteers do not experience any major medical problems. The most common complaint is an upset stomach as one's body is introduced to new foods. Elevation sickness is common in Cusco and the higher altitude places in Peru. If take sensible precautions and follow the guidelines we suggest on healthy traveling (such as using bottled water and avoid eating uncooked food) you should not have any major issues. There are several medical facilities in all the places we work. However, if you do have any serious medical complaints you are advised to contact our Project Coordinators for immediate hands-on assistance.

- **Can I stay longer than 4 weeks?**

- Yes, we can arrange long term placements. Please contact us for more details.

- **What about the security in the countries?**

- We choose our locations based on the stability of the government, low crime rates, security and the integrity of the hosting community. We have a local Project Coordinator on-site in each city for assistance. By taking basic precautions and knowing basic "street smarts" you should not have any problems traveling abroad.