

Teens: Ask These 7 Questions Before Your Next Mission Trip

By Catherine Workman

Simply put, a mission trip is: The incredible opportunity to see lives changed for the better, because of the love of God, through your acts of service. It is the opportunity to be an encouragement to people around the globe. You have the chance to speak the universal language of love, show your support, and make a difference in the world. Of course there is more to it than just showing up in a foreign country, so before you board the next plane to anywhere, make sure you know what you are getting yourself into. (Keep these important safety tips in mind, as well.)

Who?

Who will I be traveling with? There are countless organizations that plan mission trips year-round. Some require that you log a little time with them first so that you can get to know the group before traveling abroad. Check with your local church to see if they have any trips planned in the near future and ask them how you can be involved.

Who will I be traveling to visit and serve? Consider the culture where you will be visiting, and read up on the differences between American culture and their lifestyles. Are there any varying laws you should know about? A great example of one difference between American law and some foreign countries' laws is the legality of drugs and alcohol. (You are smart enough to know the harm that can come from these substances, so be don't be tempted toward experimentation and ruin the purpose for your trip.) Other cultural differences might include: phrases they use to respect adults or the elderly, or the roles of each family member. Maybe you could honor those you are visiting by learning a few significant cultural greetings and polite terms to use during your stay.

What? What will I need to pack?

Check with the group leader before you leave to see if there are any specific items you should pack, such as a flashlight, donations, old clothes to work in, or clothing items that fit the culture. Make sure you have some extra cash on hand for souvenirs or to help with any travel surprises that could come up.

What will I be doing when I arrive?

Your guide should have an itinerary in mind for the duration of the trip, so ask them what type of activities you can expect to accomplish. You can also offer to provide any special talents you have, like playing the guitar to lead songs for the group, or completing a craft with any of the kids in the community.

When?

When are the deadlines for the trip deposits? Your pastor or leader has to pay for transportation and supplies long before it's time to leave for the trip. Check in with them for the deadlines for your trip fees so that you don't accidentally miss the opportunity to go. Also, plan a few fundraisers to earn money for your trip.

When will I arrive to the destination, and when will I be back in my home town? You parents or guardians will need to be filled in on these details. It's good for them to have an outline of your travel times too, in case they need to get ahold of you for emergencies.

Why?

Why should I go on a mission trip? There are people around the world who live in much different circumstances than most people who live in America. Sometimes visiting another country is a solid reminder that there are people and cultures that we can learn from, and we can grow in our maturity and faith. Your talents, skills, abilities, and strengths are much needed and very rare, because they are all uniquely yours. You are the only one who can accomplish the mission the way that you can accomplish it, and the world would be grateful for it. (Plus, there are a lot of other reasons too!)

During your trip, write out a few of your own "who," "what," "when," and "why" moments. You will likely be surprised by your ability to change lives and encouraged by how much your life has been impacted also. So go change the world, one mission trip at a time.