

Trip Leader Playbook

Go. See. Engage.



EXPEDITIONS

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Trip Leader Playbook

We hope and pray the plans for your Expedition are coming together. Please know that you all are such a blessing to the hosting ministry in the community that you are going to serve. Words can't accurately encompass the blessing you are to our international community.

Included in this playbook are few documents that will aid you and your team as you prepare.

- **Welcome Letter** from Executive Vice President Marty Caldwell.
- **Managed Missions Set Up.** This is the main source of information and tools for you and your team.
- **Trip Leader Timeline** – A checklist to make sure all the aspects of your Expedition are getting done.
- **Pre-Trip Information** - A helpful document sent to travelers and should answer many questions. There's a lot of practical information from packing lists to spending money.
- **Team Meeting Agendas** - This is a helpful guide for your pre-trip meetings.
- **Travel Safety Policies** - An explanation of what Expeditions does to ensure travel safety.
- **Crossing Cultures** – Everyone on your team needs to read this important document. As an Expeditions Team you are representing Young life. We want to protect you and protect the local ministry as you serve. History is littered with stories of mission teams that came to serve and actually end up doing more damage than good. This document goes hand in hand with our Crossing Cultures with Expeditions Ed video. This task is listed in Managed Missions and your team will receive an email reminder with instructions on how to watch it.
- **Recommended Reading List**–We are a big believer in being prepared as possible to serve cross culturally. We suggest selecting at least one book to read together as a team before departure.
- **Re-Entry** - It's important to start thinking about what life will look like upon your return. We have two documents including an article on debriefing that is an important part of the process.

Welcome to Young Life Expeditions!

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” Isaiah 6:8

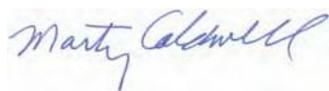
We’re excited that you and your team are the ones responding with a resounding ‘send me!’ You’re in for a joy filled adventure. The Expedition experience began as soon as you and your team said ‘yes’ and continues long after you return home. Every step of this journey offers great discipleship opportunities; from fundraising to the cultural intelligence preparation to team building to the actual service in the field to the long-term partnerships established with new friends in new places.

The enclosed information is offered to you as a guide to give you the best possible experience. The Expeditions staff is available to walk alongside you throughout this process. But our bottom line is that you will know the grace, truth, and love of God in a new way and the people in the mission of Young Life will grow more deeply interconnected. Additionally, we hope:

- you’ll see firsthand the work that God is doing around the world.
- you’ll build deeper relationships with the people on your team.
- you’ll create lasting partnerships with Young Life around the world.

On that last point, we want you as the Trip Leader to be equipped to lead your team in exploring the possibility of an ongoing relationship with the Young Life staff you've met and built a relationship with around the world. We’re striving to be intentional with teams before they leave about establishing long-term partnerships

Thank you again for your willingness to lead an Expedition. As you go out, we pray that “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Marty Caldwell'.

Marty Caldwell
International Executive Senior Vice President

Managed Missions – Trip Leader Overview

Young Life Expeditions has partnered with Managed Missions, a ministry whose mission is to build efficient, effective, and inexpensive software to help spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have been able to integrate Managed Missions software into Young Life's existing giving and management systems allowing us to manage trips efficiently with excellence.

As the trip leader you are able to view & manage Trip Details, Team Members, Trip Meetings, Tasks & Goals, Fundraising and Applications. Your Expeditions staff team will send you a link to register as the trip leader. Once registered the coordinator will walk you through the program and how to use all functions.

- ❑ **Trip Details** – This is the trip “home” screen, where you will see an overview of all trip details including trip dates, upcoming meetings, to dos and goals.
- ❑ **Team Members** – You will see all registered members of the team. Here you can email the team as a whole or an individual member as well as export group rosters.
- ❑ **Meetings** – This is where you will can set up team meeting and conference calls. You can enter all details as well as send emails and reminders for the meetings.
- ❑ **Tasks & Goals** – A “Task” is an action item to be completed. A “Goal” is a financial goal or deadline. YLX has created some default tasks that are required for all participants, but you will be able to add other tasks that apply specifically to your team.
- ❑ **Fundraising** – Gives a summary of contributions by team member.
- ❑ **Mission Apps** – You will see all applications and have the ability to approve applications for your trip.

Once registered as the trip leader, provide your team and/or potential team members with the registration link provided by your YL Expeditions Regional Coordinator. Along with the link you can send out the document with simple instructions on how to get registered for the trip and set up a personal fundraising page.

Once registered team members & leaders can return to their personal MM page by using the link provided in the welcome email or by going to the “My YLX” section of ylexpeditions.com.

Trip Leader Timeline & Checklist

Phase 1 Logistics

- ✓ Determine location, dates & trip activity with Expeditions team.
- ✓ Promote trip – e.g., send email, Facebook message, and Instagram posts out to potential folks. Your Expeditions staff can offer more ideas, photos, stories, videos etc. If someone locally has traveled to the area or is from the area perhaps they could come share about the country at a team meeting.
 - Expeditions staff can assist with promotional material if needed.
 - Specifically invite people. Take time to cast vision with individuals you're invested in.
 - Expeditions are perfect for multi-generational trips. They're great for families, committees, leaders, donors.
 - Have Travel Safety Document available for potential trip participants and parents.
- ✓ Determine approximate group size. We can secure airfare without names typically with groups larger than 10. This gives you time to line people up for the team while securing some air space.
- ✓ Work on airfare with Expeditions office or purchase through your area. This can take longer than we want – there's a lot of back and forth between travel agents, airline group offices and our office. We all work as quickly as possible.
- ✓ **Action:** Sign Trip Agreement sent by Expeditions. Upon receipt of signed agreement our team will do an Internal Transfer from your area. If you aren't a YL group, send the \$500 check to the address provided in the deposit invoice.
- ✓ **Action:** Confirm deadline for trip sign-ups.
- ✓ **Action:** Collect \$150 from each participant. Alternatively, participants can pay via their Managed Mission account upon approval of application.
 - **PLEASE make note of airline seat drop date, passport upload due dates and fundraising deadlines on Managed Missions.**

Phase 2 – Getting your Team Committed

- ✓ **Action:** Make sure to clearly lay out to trip participants any and all deadlines - financial and otherwise.
- ✓ **Action:** Trip leaders and participants must complete a Managed Mission Application (your Expeditions staff will send you the details and instructions for this).
- ✓ Managed Missions will be your trip management tool. It will allow you to email trip participants and their parents, give them access to pertinent documents, list required tasks and manage finances as well as give everyone an opportunity to create fundraising pages.
- ✓ Your Expeditions staff team will email you the invitation to set up your own profile and then you can invite others. Note: All trip leaders and trip participants must be registered in Managed Missions. All required paperwork will be on your trip details page.
- ✓ Your Expeditions staff team will discuss visas and immunizations. We will direct you to the best resources.
- ✓ Develop fundraising strategy with team as soon as the team is determined.
- ✓ Establish timeline and deadlines for finances and pre-trip meetings.
- ✓ Confirm team has passports and visas if applicable. **Passports must not expire earlier than 6 months of date of travel.**

Phase 3 – Team Community and Prep

- ✓ **Action:** Hold team meetings.
- ✓ **Action:** Keep tabs on fundraising via Managed Missions. We encourage electronic giving but if there are checks, they **MUST be sent directly to the Expeditions office and NOT the service center.**
- ✓ **Action:** Airfare Travel payments are often due 60 days from departure. Please make sure to allow plenty of time to have that amount raised and available when funding is required.
- ✓ Ask Expeditions staff team about specific needs of host staff in case the team would like to collect items to donate to the YL International Ministry they're going to serve.
- ✓ Traveler Prep Guide will be in each trip participants Managed Missions account. This will have the basic information for an Expedition; packing list, reading list, travel insurance information etc.
- ✓ Expeditions staff team will be in touch with you about ways to start preparing your team early on about establishing long-term relationships with the people you will be serving.
- ✓ Encourage team members to create their own personal prayer team.
- ✓ Ensure team is securing passports, immunizations.

Phase 4

Final Month

- ✓ **Action:** The Expeditions staff will submit a final invoice to the trip leader by email. Final payment for field costs is due 2-4 weeks **prior to departure.**
- ✓ **Action:** Final Team Meeting within two weeks of travel. Prayer and cultural intelligence should be the main focus here.
- ✓ **Action: *Final Travel Information*** documents will be in Managed Missions. This has emergency phone numbers and visa form information. Your Expeditions staff will also be sending it to you in the last month.
- ✓ Expeditions staff will connect directly with the host staff about final needs for time together.
- ✓ Confirm team has passports, visas if applicable. **Passports must not expire earlier than 6 months of date of travel.**

Phase 5

Final Week – It's Go Time!

- ✓ **Action:** Confirm flights within 24 - 48 hours of departure. Double check names and flights.
- ✓ **Action:** Communicate with banks, cell phone companies etc. about travel dates.
- ✓ **Action:** Distribute **Re-entry** doc now. It is available on Managed Missions under trip documents.
- ✓ **Action:** Send out prayer request to prayer team.
- ✓ **Action:** Make sure everyone has their consent form filled out and brings to last trip meeting or airport. A binder with all essential documents is key for a trip leader.
- ✓ Have a person at home who keeps a copy of passports and will send out an email to team's emergency contacts that all have arrived safely.
- ✓ Travel Day – Have a blast and check your agenda at the airport curb and let God be in charge!

Phase 6

In the Field

- ✓ Meet with host staff and talk about any expectations or special needs. Discuss the best time for an orientation meeting with host staff to discuss cultural topics as well as how to stay healthy and safe. This is fairly typical but because of arrival schedules sometimes it can get lost in the shuffle.
 - ✓ Give host staff your team's consent forms if you are working at a camp. If not, keep safe with you at all times.
 - ✓ Contact your person at home and ask them to let team's contact know all are safe.
 - ✓ Make sure to allow for time for end of the day interaction and decompression.
 - ✓ **Action:** Be alert to cultural issues that may come up. Don't hesitate to discuss with your host.
 - ✓ **Action:** Post updates on team blog/Facebook page. Take photos, journal. Make time and space to observe, learn and listen. Be present.
-

Phase 7

1-2 weeks post trip

- ✓ Get some rest.
- ✓ Set up Debrief gathering.
- ✓ Fill out trip evaluation.
- ✓ Help team find ways to process and seek everyday justice in their own world. Book your team for the next year!
- ✓ Connect with Expeditions staff about relationships and commitments made with staff, leaders, DGL students.

PRE-TRIP INFORMATION

Getting Ready

In just a short time you will be leaving for your Expedition! In this document you will find some travel tips, packing help, as well as some final pieces of information that will assist you as you prepare for this adventure. **PLEASE READ THIS DOCUMENT CAREFULLY!**

What Are You?

Have you been talking to your friends and family about your upcoming Expedition? While to you and your friends see your Expedition commonly known to many as a 'mission trip', this does not accurately define you or your reason for travel.

A foreign-born, religious worker requires certain types of visas (documentation about the purpose of your visit) for entry into many countries. Acquiring this type of "missionary" entry visa can be a difficult process involving many months of applications and paperwork. In the end, most short term Young Life Expedition trips do not fulfill the definition of a "foreign-born, religious worker". Thus, stating the reason for travel on an official visa application or entry document as a "missionary" can carry certain implications that are best to avoid for Young Life Expeditions.

Young Life Expeditions has found it is best to think of your trip as a faith driven opportunity to visit, observe, experience and edify that country and its people. You come as traveler and you are bringing your faith.

Therefore, it is best to always officially declare your reason for travel on any visa applications or entry documents as "holiday" or "tourist" as to avoid any official misunderstandings about the nature of your travel. If you have questions about this, please talk to your Trip Leader.

Luggage

Please make sure you know your luggage requirements and fees for checked bags. Limit your bags. A carry-on bag should have a change of clothes and important items like your Bible, journal, snacks, and toothbrush in case of a late bag arrival. Your carry-on bag has a weight limit and sometimes is weighed or measured.

If you are traveling on smaller, regional jets sometimes the luggage requirements can be stricter (e.g. bags must be less than 30 pounds). Be sure to restrict your bag size to the smallest bag requirements. Always check with your air carrier when in doubt, bag fees can be very expensive. Bottom line, don't push the limit on your suitcase weight – remember you will have to carry it.

NOTE: All carry-on liquid items (i.e. toothpaste) must be 3 ounces or less and put in a 1-quart clear plastic bag. See the 3R1R1 rule on the TSA website (www.tsa.gov) for more information.

Airport and Flying Tips

It's important to stay hydrated when flying long distances. Maybe bring an empty water bottle in your carry-on bag and fill it after you get through security. You can also get refills while in flight. Also, wash your hands often. Carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer as airports and planes are filled with people!

Wear loose fitting clothes and shoes while traveling. Avoid lots of jewelry, shoes with laces, belts and anything that must be removed before entering security. The key is simple – dress simple.

Don't be the 'funny one' while in security. Security personnel take their job very seriously and it's important to be respectful and polite.

Passports and Forms

Please make three (3) photocopies of the front page of your passport. Leave one at home with a family member, put one in your carry-on bag and give one to the Trip Leader when traveling.

It is required that you complete the **YLX Travel International Consent Release Form** and give to your Trip Leader AND upload it to your Managed Missions page. If you're pregnant, you will need to have a doctor's signature indicating that you are cleared to travel as well.

Due to increased security at airports many airlines are becoming increasingly cautious in allowing minor children to travel without their legal guardians – especially internationally. If you are a minor (under 18) traveling on an Expedition without, or with just one, of your parents or guardians you will need to fill out an **YLX Travel International Consent Release Form**. If you are traveling alone BOTH parents/guardians will need to sign the form with a notary present. If you are traveling with ONE of your parents/guardians, then the NON-TRAVELING parent/guardian will need to fill one out.

Please be sure that your passport does not expire within 6 months of travel.

Immunizations

Everyone should check with the Center for Disease Control (wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel) and observe their recommended immunizations for the country you're traveling to. Vaccines should be administered 4-6 weeks prior to travel. Consult a travel clinic or your own physician for more information about immunizations or medications.

Clothing & Basics

In most cases you should pack your entire trip's worth of clothing and/or plan on washing clothes in a sink. Bring a travel size of detergent if you want to wash some items. We encourage light clothing that doesn't wrinkle and can dry quickly. Wicking/nylon-blend/backpacking/travel clothes are ideal.

Men, it's typically best to wear long pants but longer shorts will be appropriate some of the time. Pants are best to work in with breathable cotton or nylon-blend as opposed to only jeans.

Women, please dress modestly as most countries are far more conservative in dress than the US. This is a cultural issue and important! Skirts are acceptable; just make sure they fall below the knee. A few pairs of shorts are okay as there may be times when appropriate. Pants are best to work in with breathable cotton or nylon-blend as opposed to only jeans.

Below is just a packing guideline. Please adjust this list to your personal situation. **Modesty is the key in all attire.** Please check with your Trip Leader for any clothing restrictions based on culture or religion.

- ! A couple pairs of pants
- ! A nice, but casual set of clothes for any special events or church
- ! Several casual shirts and/or t-shirts
- ! Outerwear – sweatshirts, rain jacket, etc.
- ! Work clothes (*think: getting dirty*)
- ! A couple pair of shorts
- ! Athletic shoes
- ! Sandals (not Flip-flops)
- ! Underclothing, Socks
- ! A modest swimsuit
- ! A towel
- ! Travel pillow
- ! Sleeping bag – check with Trip Leader

Other Items

Additional items to consider, please adjust this list to your personal situation.

- ! Small Backpack (use as carry-on)
- ! Passport and Copy of Passport
- ! Bible, Notebook or Journal
- ! Sunglasses, Hat, Small Umbrella
- ! Small Flashlight
- ! Camera
- ! Pocket photo album (*to share with new friends or host families*)
- ! Travel Alarm
- ! Ear Plugs
- ! Sunscreen, insect repellent
- ! Personal Toiletries (*soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, feminine items, hand sanitizer, etc.*)
- ! Personal medications (*prescriptions, Tylenol, motion sickness, etc.*)
- ! Note: If you need special medications or equipment (narcotics, syringes, etc.) please bring official doctor's permission.
- ! Converter/adapters

Cameras, Gadgets and Phones

Please do not bring expensive cameras that you would hate to lose. Bring throw away personal cameras or share a nicer digital camera among several team members.

iPods for travel are fine, but don't bring other high-tech gadgets please (i.e. DS, PSP, etc.).

Bringing your computer is not recommended. You may have internet access from time to time and be able to send emails to your family or friends. But keeping up with a computer is not ideal.

If you have a US branded cell phone and plan on taking it, please check with your carrier before you leave to make sure you are aware of all the fees involved in using your phone internationally (this includes all calls, data and texts). You might consider using a phone card instead.

Money

Bring \$50-\$100 in cash to cover any unexpected expenses or tourist activities, as well as extra money for souvenirs and snacks. Please wait to convert currency until you are in your host country.

If you are bringing a credit card on your trip, please contact your credit card company to let them know you are traveling internationally. Many banks will lock your card if they see international charges without notification.

Please do not bring travelers checks as these can be hard to process in some countries.

Donations

At the end of your Expedition, you may have an opportunity to donate or leave behind any clothes, work gloves, shoes, or other items that you brought. This is totally voluntary, and nothing is expected. **Please give all your donated items to your trip leader and not directly to anyone.** These items will be given away to folks in need as determined by our local staff or volunteers.

If you have things you'd like to bring along in addition to the packing list items, specifically for donation, please check with your trip leader who in turn will discuss with the Expeditions staff and hosting staff. We typically want to be very intentional and only give what is needed for ministry. In some locations money can be a great gift to the local ministry. However, these gifts must be handled with a certain amount of discretion. Please talk to your Trip Leaders before offering, promising, or giving any monetary gifts.

TEAM MEETING AGENDAS

Meeting #1 Interest Meeting

Who: Interested trip participants and families, significant others

Objectives:

- Vision Casting
- Communicate expectations
- Address questions, concerns from families
- Distribute pertinent information and materials

Support Materials:

- Promotional Flyer
- Travel Safety Information
- Timeline of meetings, financial expectations/deadline
- Video if applicable

Suggested Agenda

- Discuss vision, importance of service
 - Visions of Expeditions i.e. relationship building, long term engagement, seeing different parts of God's family, coming alongside people in faraway places, building up God's family.
- Discuss details of Expedition: location, description of local ministry, cost of Expedition, fundraising
- Questions
 - Be prepared for:
 - What is included in costs?
Air travel, ground transportation, meals, cultural and/or adventure activity, project and/or camp costs, ministry donation
- How is it tax deductible?
 - IRS does allow for acts of service and associated travel costs within reason to be tax deductible expenses.
- Make sure to review Travel Safety documents prior to meeting and have plenty of copies.
- Overall short-term mission philosophy. Why not just send money instead of going? Why not serve in our own neighborhoods?
- Do I need shots? Visas? Passport?

Meeting #2 and/or #3 Team Prep Meetings

Who: Trip participants

Objectives:

- Distribute and discuss pertinent information; introduce schedule of meetings, payments due
- Community building and spiritual preparation
- Cultural intelligence preparation

Meeting Ideas:

- Have cuisine of country serving at one of the meetings
- Have a Skype call with hosting staff if possible
- Visit a museum or cultural center of the country you are serving.
- Have a person of the country's recent visit with the team.
- Have screen up with documents that are accessible on Managed Missions

Suggested Agendas

- Prayer
- Introductions, possible questions: Why are you part of this team? Biggest hope? Biggest Fear
- Country Info (ask a couple of people ahead of time to give some info on the country or community you'll be serving)
- Nuts and Bolts
 - Travel arrangements i.e. flight schedule
 - Visa, immunization, medical, travel insurance, trip cancellation insurance
 - In the field preparation i.e. work project needs (gloves, old shoes, clothes) or camp prep (program prep etc.)
 - YL Expeditions required paperwork (copy or passport, international consent form)
- Financial deadlines, fundraising
 - Discussion Topics:
 - Fundraising philosophy i.e. team oriented not individual, why fundraise? Dependence on God, allow others to participate in the story.
 - Brainstorm, plan any group fundraisers
- Crossing Cultures Discussion
 - Strong suggestion: Team reads a book from Reading List or articles prior to meetings
 - Cultural expectations; Discuss Expeditions Crossing Cultures document.
 - Learn a few phrases of local language (have someone research ahead of time a few key phrases)
- Prayer - Consider prayer partners or small groups. Encourage folks to have personal prayer teams

Final Pre-Travel Meeting

Who: trip participants, parents if appropriate

Objectives:

- Cross cultural discussion
- Communicate expectations
- Address questions, last minute travel concerns.
- Collect final payments, consent forms, copies of passport to leave at your office.
- Collect, distribute any materials for host country that needs packing.
- Distribute any other final travel information.

Suggest Agendas

- Time frame: Suggest within 1-2 weeks of travel
- Prayer
- Final travel details
- Final packing tips
- Discuss social media, electronics while traveling --we encourage only the trip leader to be wired up and communicate to the team's contacts. Being present while on the Expedition is key.
- Discuss how to be good guests in host country – Crossing Cultures Doc is a good guide for discussion. View Expeditions Ed video.
- Hand out emergency contact information for families.
- Discussion: Re-Entry—returning from the Expedition. Distribute Re-Entry documents.
- Travel reminders at the airport, in country (see final travel prep)
- Prayer

'Home Again Home Again' Meeting

Objective: Debrief, photo sharing, what's next?

Who? Team can include family and friends and donors of the trip Meeting

Ideas:

- Serve cuisine of where you visited
- Skype in with new friends
- Show a video of your time together
- Play a game of something you learned on your Expedition
- Create time and space for interactions and hanging out.

Suggested Agendas

- Prayer time of Thanksgiving
- Sharing - Ask for folks to share how they've acclimated back into home life. What they're hearing from God as to how they can live differently? What they want to do next to stay engaged with their new friends?
- Show video, photos

Travel Safely with Expeditions

Guidelines & Policy

As a mission we take great care to monitor our international ministry fields, to support our missionary and national staff and to assess the risks assumed by any of our Expeditions. The following is a list of policy points that we take into consideration when determining the safety of our foreign fields as they pertain to US travelers and our willingness as a mission to sponsor official travel to these countries through Young Life Expeditions. For further information or questions please contact the Young Life Expeditions office.

- Young Life Expeditions provides a Complimentary Security Assistance Services Plan and a Complimentary 360° Basic Protection Plan; both paid and provided by Young Life Expeditions to all eligible travelers, as part of traveling and serving with Young Life Expeditions.
 - The 360° Basic Protection Plan includes coverage for Trip Interruption, Trip Delay, Emergency Medical Expenses, Baggage Delay and Travel Assistance & Concierge Services.
 - The Security Assistance Services plan includes coverage for, Political and Natural Disaster Emergency Evacuation/Repatriation, Safe Haven Accommodations, and Return Airfare.
 - Please Note: The Security Assistance Services Plan and the 360° Basic Protection Plan do not include Trip Cancellation. Additional Trip Cancellation and Adventure Travel Protection can be purchased in conjunction with the complimentary plans. The Trip Cancellation and Adventure Travel Protection are underwritten by Transamerica Casualty Insurance Company.
- Prior to approving travel to a particular YL International field, we will consult with the respective YL Vice President, Regional director, National director and national staff, as well as other consultants knowledgeable about that destination regarding safety and risk issues. One of our Expeditions staff or one of the aforementioned supervisors will make a site visit to the host country and service location(s).
- We carefully review and monitor the US State Department Travel Alerts and Warnings posted on their main web site, www.travel.state.gov.
- Young Life International contracts with an international travel organization called **ISOS International**, www.internationalsos.com, which monitors current affairs in each country around the world. Young Life strictly adheres to ISOS' safety rating protocol and recommendations. ISOS provide information on varying travel safety factors in each country including political and medical risk ratings. Also, Expeditions staff always remain in close contact with the national staff and senior leadership of the various countries where Young Life Expeditions sends teams.
- Expeditions serving on international fields will always be accompanied and chaperoned by our local staff who know the country best; the roads, places to avoid (if any), best times to travel, safest lodging facilities, etc.

- Expeditions will always use private or pre-arranged transportation while within their host country. Expedition participants will not travel alone while abroad but will be escorted by staff or trusted volunteers. All Expeditions will be picked up and returned to airports by private and/or trusted transportation and will always be with our local Young Life staff or volunteers.
- Expeditions will only lodge at facilities well-known and trusted by our US and national staff.
- The Expeditions staff will always provide trip leaders contact information for the local hosting staff well ahead of the team's trip. The trip leader can then pass this information on to parents, friends, church or Young Life staff who might like to monitor and track the team while they are serving overseas. Additionally, our US Expeditions coordinating staff can always be reached via email or phone throughout the duration of a team's travel.



CROSSING CULTURES

Bottom Line

The question for everyone on an Expedition -- *Is what I'm thinking, saying or doing honoring to our hosts, serving their culture and community and ultimately building trust and enhancing our relationship?*

Top Ten Ways to Build Trust

1. Pre-Arrival

Become a student of the place you are going; in particular, learn a bit of the language, culture, history and politics. Communication is vital to the mission, so even learning basic phrases communicates that you care. Bring some pictures to share – your family, friends, home – these are good conversation starters or helpful when communication gaps are present. Be aware of any clothing restrictions before packing and always err on the side of conservative dress.

2. Arrival

If you have brought gifts to share with people you meet (shirts, toys, school supplies, hygiene kits, sports equipment, etc.) be prepared that even though it may not feel as satisfying, it's *critical* that you give these gifts directly to your hosts and allow them to distribute these items at the right time and place. They know the needs of their community and ministry intimately and are the best judge. Finally, if your Expedition is doing home stays, it's appropriate to bring a small host gifts for the family. Make sure to give the gift to the eldest member in the household. Trip Leaders should inquire if there are any specific needs or wants prior to arrival.

3. Food

Learn and understand the importance of food (or lack thereof) in a culture. Learn about local staples and food traditions. Use their utensils. Show honor and enthusiasm for trying the local fare by *always* receiving and at least *trying* the food you are given without commentary or complaint.

4. Gender

In many cultures, public displays of affection may be different or non-existent. Maybe men and women do not socialize publicly, maybe men hold hands with other men (in a brotherly fashion), and maybe people greet each other with a kiss. Please be sensitive within your own teams to the cultural norms as well as steering clear of distracting in-team romances.

NOTE: please err on the side of caution. While various cultures have different ways of expressing fondness for the opposite gender, never compromise your own level of comfort for the sake of cultural sensitivity. Please communicate to a trip leader if those boundaries have been crossed.



5. Communication Styles

Some cultures are very straightforward and confrontational, others are indirect and passive and still others are non-verbal yet physical. Always be observant. Please remember that your experience and understanding is from a US context. For example:

- After high school we go to “college” but in many places, schooling beyond the 10th or 11th grade is known as “University”.
- Football is BIG in the US, but in many other cultures, Fútbol is HUGE!

6. Time

In some cultures, time is very fluid and free flowing, but in others it’s very precise and exact. Flexibility with more flexibility and one last dash of flexibility will get you far on an Expedition.

7. Respect

Many cultures offer respect to the senior members of their society, some to the youngest. Make sure to show due respect and watch how the locals show respect. Putting yourselves in someone else’s shoes is always the best way to adapt to another culture and shows a great deal of honor to your hosts.

8. Humor

It can be a unifying cultural bridge for sure. Being self-deprecating gets you far in any culture. Be especially sensitive concerning or around cultural, political or religious landmarks, symbols or monuments. Finally, note that loud laughter as a group of Americans in public can be construed to the local population as negative, disrespectful or exclusive. When in public, less attention is best.

9. Money

Your host will tell you if it is appropriate to give money to people who appear to be beggars. Generally speaking, it is best to avoid giving handouts on the street. And yes, heartache is very normal. Giving money directly to people can potentially cause damage on a variety of levels – Here are just a few reasons:

- The whole story isn’t always obvious to us.
- Giving money can create tension with local staff or volunteers (i.e. why did the Americans give money to John but not Tim when both need to go school?).
- It can continue to create an unhealthy dependency on visitors.
- It can take away from the local economy (i.e. bringing 100 shirts to hand out to street folks could be taking away business from local merchants). T-shirts could be a huge bonus to the Young Life ministry but it’s crucial to ask the hosts how you can serve their ministry and community.
- Please understand that your “maybe” or “I’ll get back to you” is often interpreted as “YES” – so when approached be clear and direct. If you have questions talk to your host.



10. Friendships

We want your relationships to continue after you return home! Expeditions are an investment in people. Thanks to email, Facebook, and texting, this can happen naturally with those you meet and wish to stay connected with. However here are a few words of caution:

- Please do not invite your new friends to the US. This can be very a complicated process – from funding, to applying for entry, to obtaining passports or visas through the US State Department, to the US culture shock. Our International Staff are building leaders around the world who are transforming their schools, neighborhoods, communities and nations. A visit to the US can impact that momentum and negatively influence these leaders.
- Likewise, it is difficult to make a personal visit back to the country you've visited outside of Young Life. But whatever the situation, we ask that you would contact the Young Life staff who oversee the various countries and ask for their blessing with any kind of visit outside of an Expedition.

Final Word

Sociological studies indicate that typically Americans are “doers” and regard time as a means to accomplish things. However, in many other cultures, “being” is much more highly regarded than “doing.” Time is often seen as a vehicle for building relationships.

Young Life Expeditions seeks to be a bridge between “doers” and “be-ers.” We desire to serve by working on community projects or helping run camps, but these are only a means to building meaningful relationships with our new friends in a new culture. We seek to have a ministry of presence and hope that ongoing partnerships will foster year after year of learning and growing together in their understanding of Jesus Christ and one another.

We urge you to check your “American Agenda” at the airport and only bring God’s Agenda. God’s agenda is always about relationships. Sometimes that means serving and sometimes that means sitting. But it always means asking yourself how you can serve Christ, your hosts and then bring your new found perspective back into your own families, homes and communities.

The information in this paper was gathered from years of experience, conversations with friends from other cultures and within our Expeditions staff and reading many articles and books that are found on our recommended book list. Our Top Ten List is by no means an exhaustive list. We're continually asking ourselves how we can have the lightest touch when visiting another culture and are always open to new thoughts on the subject.

RECOMMENDED READING

The following books have been read and discussed by the Expeditions Staff. We strongly encourage each person on an Expedition take time to become culturally intelligent and develop an understanding of the complexities of service.

[Radical Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream](#) by **David Platt**. It's often easy for American Christians to forget how Jesus said his followers would actually live, what their new lifestyle would actually look like...what it means to take up their cross daily. David Platt challenges readers to consider what Jesus actually said about being his disciple and then invites you to *believe* and *obey* what you have heard.

[Toxic Charity](#) By **Robert Lupton**. Veteran advocate for the poor in the US and abroad, Robert Lupton reveals the shockingly toxic effects that modern charity has upon the very people meant to benefit from it. Toxic Charity provides proven new models for charitable groups who want to help—not sabotage—those whom they desire to serve.

[When Helping Hurts: Alleviating Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...and Ourselves](#) by **Brian Fikkert & Steve Corbett**. Many people have false assumptions about the causes of poverty, resulting in the use of strategies that do considerable harm to the poor and themselves. This is a must read for *anyone* who has a heart for the poor; *When Helping Hurts* provides foundational concepts, clearly articulated general principles and relevant applications.

Re-Entry

It is not too early to begin thinking about what your life will be like when you return from your Expedition. Below are some helpful tips for thinking about your Expedition.

Keep A Record

You might not keep a regular journal but during your Expedition you might consider writing down things each day that you don't want to forget. These could include lessons learned, personal commitments made, things God showed you, people who impacted you, highlights and observations.

Telling Your Story

The most common question you might hear upon returning is “How was your trip?” Some people ask this question as a formality or greeting; while others will really want to know. Anticipating that people have different levels of interest can help you “make friends” with this question rather than to despise it. One way to anticipate a person’s interest level is to have answers of varying lengths that can be used when someone asks, “How was your trip?”

- The “sound-bite” - Write a 15 second response. Just a short, friendly answer.
- The “commercial” - Write a one-minute response, inviting them to hear more.
- The “interested conversation” – Write a five-minute response (Of course anticipating that this is a dialogue in a normal conversation).

Strategy

Sometimes re-entry back from your Expedition can be difficult. Generally, it's because you have changed or are changing in your attitudes and values, and you are coming back to an environment that has not changed in the same way. On your way back home, spend some time answering these questions to deal with and get practical with your Expedition experience.

- The first three days I am home I want to make sure I...
- The first full week at home I want to make sure I...
- The first month that I am home I want to make sure I...
- The first three months I am home I want to make sure I...
- Over the next year I hope to make adjustments in my life in the following areas:

Debrief

It's important for you to see your Expedition as a beginning or continuation of the Lord's work in your life, not as a one-time deal. You might ask yourself questions about how this experience will affect your life back home. What are some ways you can care for the less fortunate back in your own city or community? What things can you share? In what ways can you serve others?

We often talk about the following equation with trip leaders and teams:

Resources + Relationships = Regeneration

Your Expedition provided both **resources** and **relationships** and along with the relationships represented by the Young Life volunteers and staff in the host country, you helped to bring **regeneration** to the lives of the local youth.

Even though you might not be able to see the immediate impact of your service, you can be encouraged to know that for years to come literally thousands of young people will have a chance to hear the gospel as a result of your work and your willingness to give your time, energy, finances and your very life!

Post Trip Gathering

Finally, we strongly suggest that you continue to process this experience with your team after you return home. In addition to gathering for future study, reflection and discussion, you might organize a picture swapping party, one-on-one times with each team member and a group work project for the needy in your local community. Maybe you do this on a regular basis. Encourage them to be life changers, not mere spectators!

DEBRIEFING THE MISSION TRIP

by Mike Woodruff

I'm almost 40 years old. I've been a Christian over half that time. I have a master's degree in divinity, more than a dozen years in ministry, and a job that regularly keeps me in touch with missionaries and leading Christian nationals all over the world. I've read about missions, written about missions, raised money for missions, and been on more short-term mission trips than I can immediately recall.

However, (drum roll please), when it comes to reentry—that two-week period immediately following cross-cultural outreach—I'm a mess. In fact, more often than not I turn into a puddle of goo. One minute I'm happy. The next I'm in serious need of Prozac. At noon I'm planning a return trip to Guatemala, and at 12:15 p.m. I'm promising to never leave the U.S. again. Right is left and up is down (except when it's up). Which side of the street do we drive on again? Can I drink the water? What time is it in Kenya right now? Did I really just spend a \$1.44 for a cup of coffee? While people are starving? I must not be a Christian!

Reentry is a confusing, upside-down whirlwind of emotions that can put even veteran missionaries on their ears. And if it does that to people who don't regularly spend much time on their ears, imagine how it can affect teenagers who regularly do! Which means that you deserve 20 years of hard labor—or two hours watching presidential election debates—if you don't take the time to weave debriefing into the fabric of every mission trip you lead.

A Definition

Though the word itself has CIA overtones, debriefing is simply a matter of helping people reflect on their experiences. It can be done in a group setting or solo, both during the trip or after it. And in fact, there is no one right way to debrief. Because people—even those who look alike, dress alike, and have pierced the same body parts—are unique. But there is a goal: *We need to help people process what they've learned so they can grow in Christ and become of greater value to his work in the world.*

Rest assured, if you leave your students alone, they will sort through their experiences and lock into some high and low points. But they're also likely to take a circuitous path and return home more hurt than helped by the trip. I find it helpful to think about debriefing as a process that occurs in four stages:



Pre-Trip

Several years ago I joined a half dozen buddies on a hike to the top of Mount Baker in Washington. It's a three-day ordeal for a novice, and while it's no Mount Everest, it's far more taxing and dangerous than any E-ticket ride at Disney World. We had a wonderfully challenging climb to the summit and enjoyed glissading—i.e., skiing without skis—back down to basecamp.

But after that point, the trip fell apart. Why? Because we were emotionally unprepared for the six-hour hike back to the van. We never talked about the last part of the trip. I never even thought about it. In fact, I sort of mindlessly figured that once we stepped off the glacier, took off our crampons, and unhitched our ropes, we were done. But we weren't. We faced a 10-mile hike, all carrying 40-pound packs, on a dangerous ridge. And we'd been up for 20 hours when we started. Needless to say we were a surly group when we finished. But it didn't have to be that way.

The next year we climbed a different mountain and easily survived an equally difficult hike out. Why? Because I started preparing people for the descent while the trip was still months away.

And that's when debriefing starts! Months in advance. Your students need to be told—when they pay their deposits—to expect a disorienting reentry. Parents must be told that their kids may be out of sorts when they return. Everyone is miles ahead even if you pass out a packing list that includes "bring a good attitude for reentry because it can be confusing" right next to "bring bug spray, a Bible, and Spanish- English dictionary."

I'm not suggesting that we offer kids a heads up in order to take the pain away. It's necessary for students to struggle with the gross inequities of wealth and opportunity on our planet. I want them to wrestle with spending more money on a movie than it takes to feed a third- world AIDS orphan for a week. I think we should be worried if their transitions back into Western culture are seamless. I just don't want them becoming catatonic or ripping anyone's head off during their reentry struggles. That's why advanced warning can help kids stay sane. They face enough emotional peaks and valleys during adolescence—as adult leaders, we need to help them process the additional ones that short-term mission trips will add.

During the Trip

The second natural stage for debriefing occurs during the trip itself, especially if you're on the field for more than a week. It can be as simple as ending the day with some probing questions: *What's been the high point of your trip so far? The biggest surprise? How did God break your heart today? What was the biggest lesson you've learned? What was the memory you will most likely hold onto? What do you think God is calling you to do?*

You can also encourage your kids to spend 20 minutes writing in their journals. But even that can be more deliberate—and should be if you've had a particularly taxing day or if the team is facing some internal conflict. Sometimes I've found it helpful to give people a couple hours on their own to simply sit before God. Other times it's wise to gather the group together for a Bible study or circle of encouragement (i.e., pick a person and have everyone on the trip share one thing they appreciate about that person, then move around the circle until everyone has been affirmed).

Pre-Reentry

When the hostages were released from captivity in Iran, the U.S. Army flew them to Germany for a week before reuniting them with their families. Why? Because our government learned a hard lesson from the Vietnam War: *People under great stress in faraway lands need places to catch their breath before they're dropped back into everyday life.*

If possible, add a day to your trip and spend it someplace between the field and home. Devote part of the time for fun: Go to a nice restaurant. Visit a museum. Hit the beach. Act like tourists. Give your group a chance to stop thinking and to begin unwinding.

Then gather your students together for an extended time of prayer, sharing, and reflection. If the group needs prompting, ask any of the standard debriefing questions listed above—or others like them. Be careful to facilitate the discussion in a healthy way.

Everyone needs a chance to share. Broad, sweeping promises to God—or others—are to be avoided. Remind your kids that they're emotionally vulnerable and that it'll take time to really sort through everything God is teaching them.

Post-Trip

In the days and weeks following your mission trip, there is value in pulling your team together just to talk. The first, obvious opportunity is after the pictures are developed—and in some settings you can get away with just a little gathering to look at slides, eat some ethnic food, and retell funny stories. But after other trips—especially longer ones or those that were particularly taxing emotionally—you may need to be more thoughtful.

After one spring-break trip where God had touched a number of students' lives, the group felt that our regular debriefing drill was inadequate. The group wanted more time together, and that led about 60 of them to meet for prayer late into the night—every night—for a week. I didn't know what to do about their meetings and briefly entertained the idea of telling them to phase them out so they could get back to being students. But in the end, I simply decided to leave them alone. Eventually they felt God's call to "do something local." The result was the formation of a soup kitchen that continues to provide a weekly meal to the poor more than a decade later.

I realized the importance of mission trip debriefing after hearing a college pastor say that he didn't want any more of his leaders "ruined by summer mission projects."

It reminded me of how close I came to being a short-term ministry casualty myself.

After leading a team of college students on a spring-break trip to inner-city Los Angeles, I returned home so drained and confused that I thought about quitting the ministry. I was exhausted, restless, and depressed—and couldn't bear the thought of returning to the office.

It was only after I reread my journal entries for that same trip—taken a year earlier—that I remembered I felt the same way then and that the feelings left after a few days. Armed with that additional insight, I started to set a different pace on future trips and came home prepared to face the confusion. As leaders we cannot afford to do otherwise.

Some jobs aren't over until the paperwork is finished. Your job as mission trip leader isn't finished until it is over.