

Africa Top Destination for Global 'Voluntourism'

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UC San Diego survey shows all generations will travel to help others

About 40 percent of Americans say they're willing to spend several weeks on vacations that involve volunteer service, with another 13 percent desiring to spend an entire year. But where volunteers want to go and how long they want to stay is linked to which generation they belong.

A UC San Diego survey polled more than 1,400 U.S. adults about global volunteer service and found stark differences between the Retiree Generation (age 65 plus), Baby Boomers (age 45 to 64), Generation X (age 25-44) and Generation Y (age 18-24).

"More and more people in all stages of life are thinking of becoming 'voluntourists'," says Bob Benson, director of the Center for Global Volunteer Service at UC San Diego Extension, the sponsor of the study. "People are looking to spend their vacations and retirement in meaningful ways that make contributions to others."

The top ten international desired destinations for volunteering are:

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| 1. Africa | 17 percent |
| 2. East Asia | 12 percent |
| 3. South America | 9 percent |
| 4. (tie) Mexico | 8 percent |
| 4. (tie) Western Europe | 8 percent |
| 6. Eastern Europe | 7 percent |
| 7. Central America | 6 percent |
| 8. Pacific islands | 5 percent |
| 9. Australia | 4 percent |
| 10. Middle East | 3 percent |

While 26 percent of Generation Y want to hop on a plane and help out in Africa or Europe, about 36 percent of retirees and baby boomers would choose staying in North America for their volunteer vacations.

How old you are also determines how much time people are interested in volunteering on vacation. One week would be the right amount of time for 29 percent of Generation Xers and 23 percent of Baby Boomers. On the other hand, about 45 percent of Retiree Generation and Generation Y would like to help out for many weeks or an entire summer.

The research indicates people want to connect with other people, not to organizations or governments in giving service. More than 84 percent stated that helping school children, families and people in poverty were their top interest.

To gain deeper insight into the initial survey of 1,000 adults, UC San Diego conducted an online survey of 433 adults ranging in age from teens to retirees.

About 45 percent of Americans have considered volunteer vacations for themselves and 72 percent said they know someone who has been a global volunteer.

Benson helped start the Center for Global Volunteer Service because UC San Diego Extension saw a need for more collaborative grassroots approaches that match U.S. citizens of all ages with volunteer opportunities. In the late 1990s, Benson spent two years in the Peace Corps building greenhouse gardens next to village schools in the Andes of Bolivia.

UC San Diego Extension has created first-of-its-kind, self-paced online courses to help potential volunteers determine if foreign volunteering is right for them and prepare them to have a productive, safe experience.

An online course that provides an overview of key issues related to both international and domestic volunteer opportunities is "What Kind of Volunteer Service is Best for You?" "So You Want to be a Volunteer? Getting Ready for a Successful Experience" is an online course for prospective and current volunteers. An online course designed for those considering global volunteer work or currently serving in such capacities is "Global Infectious Diseases."

"Often international volunteers attend more funerals than weddings and birthdays and many have just not been prepared to work in areas impacted by HIV-AIDS. These kinds of situations cause concern and create a lot of stress," says Benson.

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