

Spotlight

Voluntourism

SCHWER AUDIO by Clare Maas



Working abroad as a volunteer for a few months can be both a great experience and a way to improve your intercultural competence and job skills.

Susi: Have you made any holiday plans, Adam?

Adam: Yes, I have. I'm thinking of going on a volunteering holiday for the summer.

Susi: A volunteering holiday?

Adam: Yes. You travel to some far-off country for a few weeks and work there as a volunteer.

Susi: Doing what?

Adam: Oh, all sorts of things: helping in an orphanage, for example, or building a school, or something to do with wildlife conservation. I'm still looking at various options.

Susi: That sounds interesting! But isn't it quite expensive?

Adam: Not really! They usually pay for your accommodation and food, and you get to see a new country!

Susi: Hi, Adam! Have you booked your volunteering holiday yet?

Adam: No. To be honest, I'm having second thoughts.

Susi: Why's that?

Adam: Well, if I go and help build a school in Angola, say, I might be taking work away from the locals. I wouldn't want to do that.

Susi: Yes, that's true. And if you work in an orphanage for a few weeks, you might break a child's heart when you leave.

Adam: Exactly! I also read about a voluntourism organization the other day that was shown to be a scam. There are good organizations out there, but you have to do your homework and weigh up the pros and cons.

Susi: Wow, Adam! You look well. Have you been on holiday?

Adam: Yes. I've just come back from my volunteering trip. Remember?

Susi: Oh, yes, of course. So, where did you end up going?

Adam: To Romania.

Susi: Romania? I thought you were going to, say, Peru or Cambodia or somewhere exotic like that.

Adam: No. I decided I'm not cut out for exotic places and I wanted to do something I am good at. So I looked nearer to home and found a volunteering project coaching football. It was great!

EXERCISE

Evaluation: Make a table to show the pros and cons of voluntourism. Think about the volunteer and the place they work in. Write in your notebook. An example has been done for you.

Pros	Cons
	It might be a scam.

ANSWERS

PROS: possibly learning a new skill expensively
 food & accommodation costs usually covered
 gaining work experience
 getting to see a new country & experiencing life there
 helping the less fortunate
 improving language skills / learning a new language
 looks good on CV
 making a difference in a local community
 meeting new people
 opportunity to travel less

CONS: certain destinations may be risky
 requires careful preparation
 short-term programmes involve limited interaction with locals
 short-term programmes have little lasting impact on place of your work
 some programmes have negative impact on locals
 working during your holidays!



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