



Planning Safe Mission Trips

Planning a mission trip for your organization is a huge responsibility. How well you prepare can directly impact the success of your trip and the experience your participants have. If possible, coordinate with an organization or individual experienced in planning and executing mission trips.

Planning a mission trip starts with choosing a location to serve. Ease of travel, political stability, and overall safety are important factors when selecting a mission trip location. Having a local Seventh-day Adventist congregation you can coordinate with may provide extra support and resources

Travel

Many groups travel internationally for their mission trips. This creates new and exciting experiences for participants. However, this comes with additional challenges. All aspects of travel should be well planned and communicated to participants in advance of the trip. Here are some things to consider:

- **Transportation** — Most major domestic carriers have partnerships with international carriers. If possible, book travel through the domestic partners. Major carriers also offer more reliable service than the so-called

“budget” airlines. They may also offer more options if you face flight disruptions.

- **Passports** — Typically, passports should have at least two blank pages and be valid for at least six months after you return home. Immigration requirements vary by destination and are specific to each traveler’s nationality, regardless of what country they are traveling from. For specifics, check with the embassy of your destination country.
- **Other Travel Documents** — International travel often requires securing travel visas and proof of vaccination against communicable diseases. Traveling with minors often requires notarized written consent when crossing international borders. Again, confirm these requirements with the embassy.
- **Local Transportation** — Local transportation laws and options will be very different if you are traveling internationally. Chartering a professional transportation company may offer the safest and most reliable form of travel. If



you will be driving a vehicle at your destination, you may need to acquire an International Driving Permit (IDP).

- **Insurance** — ARM offers travel insurance for short-term travel on [our website](#). This affordable policy offers financial protection for medical emergencies, lost personal property, security threats, and loss of life.

Logistics

In most cases, you won't have access to the same resources as you do at home. This makes planning all the logistics of your trip extremely important as you may not be able to run to the local "big box" store to get supplies. If you are traveling to a new area, you may want to conduct a pre-trip to explore the area and gain a solid understanding of the resources available.

- **Lodging** — Safe and secure lodging is essential for any mission team. When you are not at the hotel, ensure your belongings are locked up and—if available—make use of in-room safes. If camping or staying in an unsecured facility, have someone always present to provide security.
- **Food** — Access to food can be a challenge, especially when feeding a large group. Plan simple menus, and when possible, plan to eat primarily local foods that are easily sourced. Ensure you have proper refrigeration, and take special precautions to wash and sanitize raw foods, including local produce.
- **Water** — The availability of clean water in some locations is often a challenge. The presence of indoor plumbing does not guarantee that the water is safe for your group. Make sure you can provide bottled water for your group. In some locations, this includes water for bathing and brushing teeth. In these high-risk locations, this may include avoiding ice in drinks. Also keep in mind that plumbing infrastructure may also require different methods of disposing of used toilet paper.

- **Excursions** — When planning a day of relaxation for your group, use reputable companies to plan and conduct tours. Make sure none of your planned activities are excluded on your insurance coverage, or inquire about additional coverage for activities with higher risk. For any activities that include water, have certified lifeguards available.
- **Personal Safety** — Crime rates can be higher in tourist destinations, and foreigners are often prime targets for robberies and other crimes. Encourage participants to protect their valuables, especially in crowded areas. Remind participants to always be aware of their surroundings and never walk alone.
- **Cultural Differences** — Have a good understanding of the cultural differences your group may encounter and prepare participants on how to be respectful of the differences in language, culture, dress, and even gestures.
- **Healthcare** — Trip organizers should be prepared to deal with everything from minor cuts to broken bones. If possible, have a doctor or nurse travel with you, and take a well-stocked first aid kit. Know what medical facilities are available near your project site, and be prepared to pay for medical services if they do not take insurance.
- **Finances** — Preparing an extensive budget before your trip can help you plan for most of the costs associated with travel. However, you should always plan for emergencies and incidental costs that arise. Have plenty of cash available for unplanned expenses.

Construction

Many mission trips feature building projects, but very few volunteers have much experience with construction. This is especially true if you have a lot of youth participants on the trip. Keeping your participants safe on the worksite is important for a successful mission trip, especially in areas where medical services are limited. Things you should



consider when planning your construction project include:

- **Equipment** — Inspect all tools and equipment before using it to make sure it is in good working order. Train first-time users on how to safely use each piece of equipment, and provide proper safety equipment, including heavy gloves, goggles, long pants, and closed-toed shoes or boots.
- **Worksite safety** — Construction sites present many inherent risks. There shouldn't be any running or playing on the construction site because of these risks. Minimize the number of people on or under scaffolding. Keep the site as

clean as possible, and avoid leaving tools, trash, or unnecessary debris around the site, as these can cause trips and falls.

- **Personal safety** — Encourage the use of sunblock, hats, and long sleeves to protect from sunburn, sun stroke, or heat stroke. Drinking lots of water throughout the workday is important to avoid dehydration.

When planned properly, mission trips can be a transformative experience that participants will never forget. For more information about preparing for a mission trip, refer to ARM's [Mission Trips Safety Checklist](#).



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