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NORTHERN IRELAND HANDBOOK

Introduction

This Handbook was written to provide you with useful information regarding your participation in an Amizade sponsored program. It answers many of the frequently asked questions by previous participants. We encourage your feedback on how it can be improved for future participants. Please read this entire handbook carefully and contact our office if you have any questions.

Amizade's Mission & Vision

Amizade encourages intercultural exploration and understanding through community-driven service-learning courses and volunteer programs. Amizade imagines a world in which all people have the opportunity to explore and grow, realize their ability to make change, and embrace their responsibility to build a better world.

Amizade's Commitment

At the heart of Amizade is the sincere belief that intercultural understanding & the development of global citizens is essential to our increasingly connected global world. We are committed to providing you with an intercultural experience that allows you to make concrete contributions to a community resulting in a deeper understanding of your role in the global community.

APPROACH TO SERVICE

Ethic of Service

Amizade strives to promote an "ethic of service" on all our programs. This means that we envision the entire experience as one of service to our fellow human beings. There will be scheduled time for completing service projects on each program but we also encourage you to carry your ethic of service with you throughout the program. You can do this by volunteering to help with food preparation, cleaning, or various other daily tasks.

As guests in the host community, Amizade volunteers are encouraged to act respectfully in all community interactions. The global service experience provides a unique opportunity to learn from the traditions, beliefs, and customs of a new community. Since most Amizade volunteers come from outside of the community, they are often seen as "ambassadors" representing their countries and are able to use this opportunity to share positively about their culture. At the same time, volunteers have the unique opportunity of experiencing another culture while taking the time to absorb and respect new world views.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are a variety of community organizations working on peace and anti-prejudice activities in the Belfast community and volunteers will have the opportunity to contribute to these efforts. In the past volunteers have worked with the Belfast Habitat for Humanity, which brings Catholics and Protestants together to build houses as well as various after-school programs with youth.

The following placements are for groups of 4 students in after school projects working with 4-12 year olds. Depending on the availability and schedule of the program participants will be scheduled at one of the following community service sites.

1. ForthSpring – Methodist Church Hall on the peace line with Cross Community Program
2. Whiterock Community Centre – Community project in Catholic area
3. Blackie Centre – Community Project in Catholic area
4. Highfield Community Centre - Community Project in Protestant area

Please refer to your specific program sheet for more detailed information about your volunteer program.

THE ON-SITE EXPERIENCE

Amizade Staff

Amizade programs are staffed by a variety of motivated, trained people. We encourage you to get to know the staff members that will be coordinating your volunteer program. Any concerns or questions during the in-country experience should be directed to the appropriate Amizade staff.

Site Director

The site director is the primary program contact responsible for coordinating volunteers. The site director is responsible for coordination of logistics such as greeting volunteers, arranging housing and meals, setting up cultural experiences with local community members, and leading reflection discussions. Coordination also involves setting up the service project, arranging transportation to and from various locations, partnering with local masons and builders, procuring building supplies, and any other related planning.



On-Site Orientation

Upon arrival in Northern Ireland, Amizade will hold a program orientation for all volunteers. Many issues such as health, safety, and security issues will be addressed as well as site logistics, standard procedures, and other important information that will benefit each volunteer to know.

Group Living

Amizade programs generally have a strong core element built around group living. For many people, living, volunteering, studying, completing projects, and spending leisure time in a group may be new. Therefore we ask all Amizade volunteers to approach group interaction with flexibility, openness, and constructive communication. We strive to respect each other's space and needs while also supporting each other to achieve personal goals on the program.

Flexibility

Flexibility on behalf of the participants is the most important element on an Amizade program. Itineraries may change at the last minute in order to meet current community needs or participate in unexpected opportunities for recreational, educational, or cultural exploration. Many aspects of traveling are unpredictable and time-consuming, so be prepared to enjoy the unexpected surprises and embrace the opportunities they provide!

Housing

There are a variety of housing options in Belfast including religious retreat centers and hostels. The majority of these places will have communal bathrooms and sometimes kitchens. The Corrymeela center in Ballycastle also has very nice accommodations, with communal bathrooms and kitchen. Typically, volunteers will have roommates.

Meals

Eating abroad is an adventure of new tastes, smells, and meals! Since you are living as part of the community, you will have the opportunity to try genuine local dishes. You may be eating the same or similar food regularly if that is the local custom. In Northern Ireland, there are a wide variety of international cuisine options as well as fast food. Grocery stores carry many American food products (such as peanut butter and cereal).

Note to Vegetarians

Amizade will make every effort to provide vegetarian options, but sometimes they will need to be supplemented with further protein and vitamins. We encourage vegetarians to bring healthy snacks and vitamins with them. Please indicate your dietary needs and restrictions on your Amizade Medical Form so we can best prepare for you.

Transportation on Site

Transportation will be provided by Amizade for the duration of the program.

Laundry

There are laundry mats available locally.

Climate and Weather

"Despite its northern latitude, Ireland's climate is moderated by the Gulf Stream, bringing the dregs of Caribbean balminess, as well as turtles and triggerfish. The temperature only drops below freezing intermittently during the winter and snow is scarce. Summers aren't stinking hot, rarely hitting 30° C (86° F), but they're comfortable and it stays light until around 11 pm. Whatever the time of year, be prepared for rain because Ireland is *wet*. The heaviest rain usually falls where the scenery is best, such as around Kerry, which can be drizzle-bound on as many as 270 days of the year."

(Source: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/ireland/environment.htm>)

Find out the current weather in Northern Ireland at Yahoo's Weather Website: <http://weather.yahoo.com/>

Cultural and Recreational Activities

Volunteering in Northern Ireland will put you in the heart of a vibrant and fascinating culture. Volunteers may have the opportunity to visit neighborhoods involved in the conflict, view famous murals, and visit various other historical sites. In the past, volunteers have traveled to Derry, the Northern Coast and Giant's Causeway, as well as to the Irish Republic to meet with representatives of various organizations and learn about Irish culture and current events. Volunteers have met with prominent politicians, academics, and community members working for peace and reconciliation.

Culture and History

Famous for its beauty as well as its troubled history, Northern Ireland is a fascinating place. Centuries of history has seen the country divided between those who want to preserve the Union with Britain, typically Protestant and those who want to unite with the Republic of Ireland, typically Catholic. Currently Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom. For the past 30 years, the divide has escalated to the point of being designated "The Troubles". For more information on Northern Ireland, please visit the following websites:

Lonely Planet World Guides: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/ireland/>

Encyclopedia.Com: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/I/IrelandN1.asp>

GeographyIQ.Com: http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/uk/United_Kingdom_map_flag_geography.htm

Community Background

Amizade volunteers serve in Belfast and Ballycastle, providing both an urban and rural environment. Belfast is a city with an international airport and a wide variety of restaurants and shops, historical sites, and cultural events. Public transportation can be used in Belfast as well as taxicabs and group vans. Thirty years of conflict have taken a toll on the city. The majority of neighborhoods are divided and schools are segregated. Amizade volunteers join with Corrymeela, a long-standing peace and reconciliation organization dedicated to bringing the communities together to reduce prejudice.

Ballycastle is located on the idyllic Northern coast and is home to the Corrymeela retreat center. Opportunities to hike along the cliffs of the coast, visit the stunning natural formation called "Giant's Causeway", and travel to the nearby city of Derry exist. This space serves as a peaceful space for Corrymeela to complete their reconciliation work, such as holding workshops, creating newsletters, and embracing diversity of all kinds. More information about Corrymeela can be found on their website:

<http://www.corrymeela.org/>

PREPARING FOR YOUR PROGRAM

Transportation to Site

You will be flying in and out of the Belfast, Northern Ireland airport. An Amizade staff person will meet you at the airport to transport you to the program site. All volunteers are required to arrive on or before the scheduled program start date and depart on or after the scheduled finish date. If volunteers arrive early or stay late, the individual volunteer will need to make his/her own arrangements for food, lodging, and airport transfer.

Travel Documents

The following information is for US citizens going abroad. If you are a non-US citizen, you must check with the consulate in your country regarding travel documents including passport and visa requirements.

A passport is required. A visa is not required for tourist stays of up to six months in the United Kingdom (UK) or to enter Gibraltar. Please note that passports can take up to 6 weeks to process so if you do not have one or it has expired, please address this immediately.

Information about US passports is available at:

http://www.travel.state.gov/passport_services.html

Please visit the following website for information on the entry requirements for US Citizens traveling abroad: <http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html>

Please be prepared in case of losing your wallet, passport, or other travel documents. Bring copies of all your important travel documents and monetary documents, especially your passport, and store one set of copies in your luggage while leaving another set of copies with your emergency contact at home.

HEALTH & SAFETY

General Notes

- Traveling often affects one's health so it is imperative that all volunteers are in good physical condition.
- Typical travel ailments include stomach upsets and diarrhea, bug bites, jet lag, minor cuts, scrapes, bruises, and sunburn. Please feel free to bring travel-sized portions of over the counter medicines such as headache medicine, stomach medicines, sun block, bug spray, band-aids, etc.
- An on-site Amizade staff member will have a first aid kit.
- Check with your medical physician regarding further information about healthy travel abroad.

Immunizations

Participants in Amizade programs are solely responsible for receiving immunizations. Amizade defers all recommendations to the current recommendations and requirements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). All participants are expected to consult the CDC for required and recommended immunizations for the country or countries they will be visiting for their Amizade program. See your doctor at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for immunizations to take effect.

The following information was taken from the CDC website, www.cdc.gov, on July 26, 2006. Please check the website for up to date information.

Recommended Vaccinations:

- [Hepatitis A](#) or immune globulin (IG).
- [Hepatitis B](#), if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay >6 months in the region, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- As needed, booster doses for [tetanus-diphtheria](#) and [measles](#).



For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd.
Atlanta, GA 30333 USA
(404) 639-3311 (404) 639-3312 (TTY)

Public Inquiries 1-404-639-3534 and 1-800-311-3435
National Immunization Hotline (English) 1-800-232-2522
National Immunization Hotline (Spanish) 1-800-232-0233
Traveler's Health 1-877-394-8747

Traveler's Health Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>
Email form: <http://www.cdc.gov/netinfo.htm>

Prescription Medicines

If you have prescription medicines, bring them in the original prescription bottles with your name on them and bring an ample supply for the duration of your program. In some countries, certain medicines are not as readily available.

The Best Medicine is “Preventative Medicine”

Throughout the program, please rest, drink plenty of water, and take care to avoid overexposure to the sun. While on the program, let the Amizade staff know if you have any concerns about your health and contact them immediately if you experience a health emergency.

Amizade Medical and Insurance Form

All volunteers are required to complete and submit the Amizade Medical and Insurance Form prior to participation. It is imperative that you complete this form as comprehensively as possible so Amizade staff can best address medical situations on site. On this form you will also list your immunization record. Please consult with your physician regarding your healthy participation in the service work and activities for your program and recommended immunizations.

It is the responsibility of every Amizade participant to make sure that they have adequate medical coverage for the duration of any Amizade program.

Safety

As a volunteer in the community you will have local companions and friends. Volunteers should observe and imitate local customs regarding safety. Regardless of where you are it is best to travel in pairs, especially at night. We highly recommend taking a taxi after dark. Be cautious with your money and make sure you store it in a safe place or money belt.

Trust your instincts. If you do not feel safe in a situation or someone's behavior is making you uncomfortable, get out of the situation immediately. Firmly say "no" to any invitation you do not want and turn away. Ignore persistent overtures.

Money Matters

Currency Converter

For the latest conversion rate for your country, please visit www.xe.com.

Spending Money

Please bring some spending money to use for costs beyond those covered by the Amizade fee. This may include money for souvenirs, additional food/snacks, recreational activities or taxis. A Debit card is a recommended as it allows you to withdraw money from ATM machines. It is very important to inform your bank that you will be using your card to withdrawal money while in Northern Ireland. This will help to avoid them from issuing a “hold” on your card which prevents one from withdrawing money. Credit cards are also widely accepted throughout Northern Ireland. If you bring cash, expect to get a lower exchange rate.

PACKING LIST

PLEASE PACK LIGHTLY!

You should bring a maximum of two bags. Ideally, this includes one medium-sized suitcase/duffel bag and a smaller daypack for daily activities. You should be able to carry your luggage comfortably by yourself. Rolling luggage does not always work effectively in developing countries. Please use your best judgment regarding valuables. Amizade does not recommend that volunteers bring expensive jewelry, electronics, laptops, etc. Amizade is not reliable for lost or stolen articles.

Recommended Packing List:

- Documents: passport, airline tickets, personal health insurance information, and ATM/credit cards (and copies of each in a separate place)
- Cash or traveler's checks and money belt or wallet
- Family photos to share with the community
- Postcards of your hometown to share with the community
- Water bottle
- Notebook or journal and pens
- Travel alarm clock
- Watch
- Camera and film
- Knapsack or book bag
- Towel and Wash cloth
- Toiletries – just the basics such as toothbrush, toothpaste, travel-sized shampoo, and soap
- Prescriptions in original bottles (enough for the entire program)
- Over-the-counter medications (headache, stomach, band-aids, anti-itch cream)
- Clothing
 - T-shirts
 - Two pair of pants (one pair for working)
 - One nice outfit
 - Socks and underwear
 - Pajamas
 - One long sleeve shirt, sweatshirt, or jacket
- Shower shoes or flip-flops
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Work boots if applicable – they are required for construction projects.
- Work gloves if applicable
- Flashlight & batteries
- Bathing suit
- Hat, scarf, cold weather items in winter
- Sun protection: bandanas, hat, sunglasses and sun block
- Bug spray
- Shorts and comfortable clothes for warm weather

Gifts

You may choose to bring small gifts or thank you cards for community members. Photographs are generally appreciated around the world so feel free to collect addresses and mail pictures back if possible.

WHILE YOU ARE AWAY

Culture Shock

Culture shock is a term used to describe the emotional upset that may occur when a person travels to a new culture. When experiencing culture shock, people sometimes feel unsure about what is appropriate in the new culture, confused about how to manage daily tasks (such as banking or telephoning), frustrated with managing language and cultural barriers and generally vulnerable. This experience is

normal and affects people at different times throughout a cultural immersion program. Remember to rest, eat and take care of your physical and emotional needs in order to function at your best!

(Source: Amigos Website at <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/cultshok.htm>) Information on culture shock specific to different countries can be found in the "Culture Shock" book series.

Drug Use

Amizade in no way encourages the use of, or purchase of drugs while visiting any of our sites. As an organization, our primary concern is that of safety for our volunteers. For this reason, we adhere to a drug-free policy for all of our programs. We ask that all volunteers please respect this as a rule of Amizade. Failure to comply with this rule is grounds for removal from the program.

Contacting Home

You can use telephones to call home by purchasing a phone card in Northern Ireland. There is also internet cafes available throughout the city.

AMIZADE CONTACT INFORMATION

If someone from home needs to contact a volunteer with an emergency message, they can phone the Amizade US office to relay a message.

- **Amizade US Office Phone:** 304-293-6049. This phone line is staffed 8 am - 4:30 pm EST from Monday - Friday.
 - Have the person leave:
 - Their name
 - Your name
 - Their phone number
 - The message to be relayed
- **Amizade Emergency Phone #:** 412-853-4032. This phone line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during volunteer programs.

To call the United States from Northern Ireland, dial 00-1-area code-local number. For instance, if you were to call Amizade from Belfast, you would dial 00-1-304-293-6049.

RETURNING HOME

Reverse Culture Shock

Many participants find that they encounter difficulties when transitioning home. Volunteers will be happy to return home and visit with family and friends but after the initial reunions take place, they often find that they experience problems when trying to communicate the experience they had abroad. Many people feel alienated, knowing that they have grown while many of those around them remain the same. It may help to connect with others who have had travel experience, as they understand the need to talk about the experience in greater detail.

