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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 and Ballycastle communities and volunteers will have the opportunity to contribute to these efforts. In the past volunteers have worked with after-school and summer programs with youth, and have helped perform maintenance at a retreat center.

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

YOUR AMIZADE PROGRAM

Experience the beautiful sites and warm hospitality of Northern Ireland while contributing to peace and reconciliation efforts in this country. Your program experience may vary based upon availability of speakers/activities and the needs of our community partners, but typical program elements are described below:

Your program begins and ends in Belfast, the capital of Northern Ireland. A key city in the Industrial Revolution and the building site of the RMS Titanic, Belfast was the site of violence between nationalist and unionist groups, and is now central to current efforts to promote peace and reconciliation.

In bustling Belfast, you'll learn about the period of past conflict known as the "Troubles" and about current peace-making efforts through guided tours and personal meetings with ex-combatants, ex-prisoners, politicians, and other community members. Make personal connections as you serve with Amizade partner organizations who are working to bridge divisions and improve the lives of children and families in Northern Ireland.

Travel to Derry/Londonderry to learn about the historic event known as Bloody Sunday. Then, head up the coast to the bucolic seaside town of Ballycastle, where you will be welcomed by members of the peace and reconciliation organization, Corrymeela, and learn about their work.



During our recreational time, you will have the opportunity to experience the natural wonders of Northern Ireland as we visit the Giant's Causeway, where lava flow created a unique field of hexagonal basalt columns, and Carrick-a-Rede, where a walk across a rope suspension bridge will give you an exhilarating view of the coast. And of course no visit to the island would be complete without a visit to the pub and an opportunity to hear traditional Irish music.

You will return home with fond memories of the people and the sites, and insight into the past conflict and current efforts at peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland that you will want to share with your own community.

THE ON-SITE EXPERIENCE

The Amizade Experience

The time that you spend in Northern Ireland is sure to be one filled with many new experiences: new outlooks, new cultures, and new situations. Therefore, the Amizade experience is enhanced by looking at some of the things that have been written in relation to Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom and the issues over the last several years, getting a rough idea of what's happening, and going with an informed set of questions in mind. The entire experience is about getting in deep enough and starting to dream enough to realize that your time in the state can't possibly be enough to see and understand every aspect of Northern Ireland, but it can be enough to get an idea of it, connect with new friends, meet and struggle with some significant challenges, make connections, create difference, and begin to understand an entirely different kind of place. That's really a lot for such a short amount of time, and much of it will happen.

And all of this will take place in the context of an environment that requires flexibility. Flexibility describes the ability of Amizade volunteers to be open to all aspects of the unexpected that can arise in Northern Ireland. All of this relates to an absolutely essential ongoing Amizade motto, which is:

“Okay, Good.”

“Okay, good” refers to all the moments when things do not work out as planned. “Okay, good,” we have an opportunity to learn from and adapt to a variety of new situations. The unexpected can even be a highlight of any excursion. “Okay, good” is the flexibility that every volunteer must have in mind when choosing to experience unique cultures, serve in different environments, and meet new people. “Okay, good” is about remembering – even when we feel that we are struggling – that we are fortunate for the opportunities to travel and serve; that we are still in amazing places with incredible people; and that life will go on even though the day-to-day life is not as predictable. Of course, “Okay, good” is also useful when the last leg of the return flight doesn't connect at the right time!

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

In Belfast, you will stay at **Farset International**, a well-appointed hostel with private bathroom in each room. Ruth Quigley, the manager, and her staff will welcome you warmly to this hostel which was designed as an intercommunity project to bring together people from opposite sides of the conflict in a neutral space. It sits on the edge of a wildfowl reserve, in an “interface area” where two communities come together. Farset offers wireless internet access in the public areas, flat screen tvs with satellite, an on-site restaurant, laundry room and meeting space. The public bus into the city center stops right outside Farset's gate.

In Ballycastle, you will stay in the **Corrymeela** center which also has very nice accommodations, with communal bathrooms and kitchen. You'll have the opportunity to take meals with the staff and volunteers of Corrymeela and rub elbows with the diverse groups from around the world that use Corrymeela's space. Typically, volunteers will have roommates. Wireless internet access is available in public spaces. It's a pleasant 40-minute stroll into town along the scenic coast, and if you don't feel like walking, Corrymeela will provide transit into town. (Transit at night is provided, since the roads are quite dark for walking.)

Meals

Eating abroad is an adventure of new tastes, smells, and meals!

In the mornings, you will typically find a continental-style breakfast with toast, cereal, coffee/tea, fruit and yogurt. You'll have the opportunity to "upgrade" your breakfast at least once to a traditional Ulster Fry: a heavy breakfast of eggs, rashers (bacon), sausages, beans, toast and tomatoes.

Some other traditional dishes you might be able to sample during your visit include fish and chips, colcannon (mashed potatoes and cabbage), and curries.

Depending on the culture of the place you are staying, you may take tea in the late morning or afternoon.

Finally, you'll also find more familiar options such as Starbucks and Subway, as well as a variety of international cuisines. Grocery stores carry many American food products (such as peanut butter and cereal).

Transportation on Site

Transportation will be provided by Amizade for the duration of the program and may include a combination of private coach/minivan, and public transportation.

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". You need not come to the program with a thorough knowledge of the history, but it is helpful to come with a basic background. Amizade will create a program that will bring history to life for you as you have the opportunity to meet with key players in the conflict and reconciliation, including ex-combatants, ex-prisoners, elected officials, artists, and other community members.

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>

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, a basalt formation which is one of the natural wonders of the world. Volunteers have met with prominent politicians, academics, and community members working for peace and reconciliation.

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.

Ballycastle is located on the idyllic Northern coast and is home to the Corrymeela retreat center. Corrymeela is a long-standing peace and

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.



reconciliation organization dedicated to bringing the communities together to reduce prejudice.

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 and must be valid for three months beyond the end of your stay.

Important Note: A visa is not required for tourist stays of up to six months in the United Kingdom (UK). However, note that the UK has instituted a new visa requirement for “charity workers” who are doing volunteer work. While you will be doing some volunteer-type work during your visit, the main reason for your visit is tourism. It is imperative that you state upon your entry to the UK that your purpose is tourism. If you state that your purpose is “volunteering,” the border control may assume you are a charity worker and you will be denied entry to the UK.

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.
- Please don’t hesitate to ask for assistance from your Site Director if you have any health needs; your information will be held in confidence.
- “Pub culture” is an important part of life in Northern Ireland, and you will have the opportunity to visit pubs, but at no time should a volunteer become intoxicated. The risks to your health and safety increase with intoxication.
- Participants should be prepared for walking up to two miles per day, periods of standing, and for activities such as cleaning or yardwork. Please consult Amizade with any questions about physical activities for your specific program.
- An on-site Amizade staff member will have a first aid kit.

- Check with your 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.

**Current information regarding immunizations can be found on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov.
Please refer to the website for further information.**

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.

Your program includes medical insurance; however, it is ultimately the responsibility of every Amizade participant to make sure that they have adequate medical coverage for the duration of any Amizade program.

Safety

You will receive a safety orientation upon arrival, but it is ultimately each volunteer's responsibility to guard his/her own 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

The unit of currency in Northern Ireland is the pound (£) (*NOT the Euro*). 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.

Practical Information

Cell Phones

Cell phone service is generally available at all locations to which we will be traveling. European cell phone service operates on the GSM digital network. Much of the U.S. operates on a different system (CDMA, TDMA or iDEN) and many U.S. cell phones are not compatible with the GSM network. T-Mobile and Cingular operate on GSM, and if you have this service in the U.S., you may be able to use your phone overseas. Contact your cell phone provider for rates, coverage information and to confirm that the phone you have will operate overseas.

Several internet providers offer international cell phones and SIM cards (the chip-like card inside the phone that allows you to connect to a network). Make sure the card you buy is for the UK.

Climate and Weather

Northern Ireland has a maritime climate, so while is it relatively far north, it is moderated by the Gulf Stream. In winter, temperatures are in the 40s and in summer, hover in the 60s. The weather is not extreme, but "changeable", so you may experience periods of sun, wind and rain – all on the same day. Coats and raingear are advisable year-round. Before departure, please consult a weather service, such as www.weather.com for the latest conditions.

Electricity

Voltage is generally 220V/50Hz in the UK, which is twice the U.S. standard of 120V. Check any appliances you plan to bring to ensure that they can operate on this higher voltage (many laptops and digital cameras can), or bring a converter. Plug adaptors are recommended for all appliances. These do not convert the electrical current, but simply allow your plug to fit into UK outlets. Outlets in the UK typically take a 3-prong plug, where the prongs are thick and flat (not round). Please note that the outlets in the UK are different than those in mainland Europe and so adapters for mainland Europe will not work.



(The plug adapter to the right is available for about \$10 from Radio Shack and online)

Internet Access

Internet access is widely available. At Farset International in Belfast, it is free in public areas. In Corrymeela in Ballycastle, it is also free in the main building. Elsewhere, you will find access at cafes and other locations.

Laundry

Laundry facilities are available at the hostel in Belfast and laundromats are available. However, since you do not want to spend your short time watching your clothes go through a wash and dry cycle, we recommend you bring items that you can easily wash in a sink and hang to dry.

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. Please contact your airline for weight and size restrictions and note that your return flight from Europe may have different restrictions than your outbound flight from the U.S. You will probably want to bring home some souvenirs from your journey, so be sure to leave yourself some room.

It will be easier for you to narrow your packing list if you plan on doing some laundry during your trip. We recommend you bring items that are easy to hand wash and will dry overnight. You can also use the laundry facility in the hostel in Belfast.

Dress in Northern Ireland is generally casual and relaxed.

Please use your best judgment regarding valuables. Amizade does not recommend that volunteers bring expensive jewelry, electronics, laptops, etc. and is not liable for lost or stolen articles.

Recommended Packing List for trips 7-21 days (feel free to add/subtract items to meet your personal needs):

- Documents: passport, airline tickets/airline itinerary, personal health insurance information (and copies of these documents in a separate place)
- Cash, credit/debit cards and money belt or wallet
- Water bottle
- Prescriptions in original bottles (be sure to bring enough for the entire program and bring a copy of your prescription, if possible)
- Over-the-counter medications (headache/stomachache medicine, band-aids)
- Toiletries – just the basics such as toothbrush, toothpaste, travel-sized shampoo, and soap
- Wash cloth (this is not provided at our accommodations)
- Clothing
 - 5 shirts
 - 2 pairs of pants (one pair for working)
 - 5 pairs socks and underwear
 - 1 pair pyjamas
 - 1 long-sleeve sweater, sweatshirt or jacket
 - 1 pair comfortable walking shoes
 - 1 pair sturdy work shoes(at least one pair of shoes should be waterproof or water-resistant)
- Umbrella or rain jacket
- Sun protection: bandana, hat, sunglasses and/or sun block
- Watch
- Small knapsack or bag
- Addresses of friends and family to send postcards
- Travel alarm clock

Nice to bring, if you have room:

- Family photos to share with other participants
- Notebook/journal and pens
- Reading materials
- Guide book/phrase book

- ❑ Travel-size laundry detergent
- ❑ Earplugs/sleep mask
- ❑ Comfort food, such as granola bar, cookies, candies

Optional electronics:

- ❑ Digital camera and charger
- ❑ Cell phone and charger
- ❑ Electricity converter (if needed)
- ❑ Plug adaptors

Gifts

You may choose to bring thank you cards for community members. Photographs are generally appreciated around the world so feel free to collect addresses and mail or email pictures back if possible. The best gifts represent who you are or where you are from. A pen with your university's logo, or a magnet with a picture of your city, will be welcome gifts.

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 are 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 #:** 412-444-5166. 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.