YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE
SITE HANDBOOK
#POLAND
> **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. Read this entire handbook carefully and contact our office if you have any questions. Please note that best resource for you during your pre-departure planning is our website, which can be found at amizade.org

> **Amizade's Mission & Vision**

Amizade empowers individuals and communities through worldwide service and learning. We seek to create an equitable world where all people can connect freely and forge lasting friendships.

> **Amizade’s Commitment**

At the heart of Amizade is the sincere belief that intercultural understanding and 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.
1. 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
Service during this program will occur at two sites, weather permitting: the grounds of the Auschwitz concentration camp, and the Jewish cemetery in the town of Oswiecim. The work involves historical landscape preservation and artifact preservation. Because much of the service work is outdoors, we must adapt the schedule if the weather interferes.

When weather interferes with our planned service, we will make every effort to reschedule service hours as well as the planned activities.

2. The On-Site Experience

The Amizade experience
The time that you spend in Poland 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 the country 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 abroad can’t possibly be enough to see and understand all of Poland, 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, yet much of it will happen. And all of this will take place in the context of a relatively unpredictable environment. Unpredictable does not mean that it is unsafe. All programs work through our partner individuals and community organizations. Unpredictable simply describes the “climate” of Amizade programs in Poland. That means it’s characterized by something called a “lack of redundancy.” Lack of redundancy refers to an absence of continuously present and reliable systems and products. With water supply, that means it may go out sporadically. With transportation, it means buses may be delayed. In stores or restaurants, it may mean the things they sell are not what they advertise outside, but rather
whatever they have in stock (or can quickly get from a neighbor) inside. All of this relates to an absolutely essential ongoing Amizade motto, which is:

"OK, GOOD."

"Okay, good" refers to moments when we show up for transit at the right time, yet quickly learn that transit will not be arriving for eight hours. "Okay, good," we have an opportunity to hang out in Poland. "Okay, good" refers to moments when we long for some familiar comfort foods, but we have another helping of the same, exotic local foods. "Okay, good," we have a great deal more exotic local food than most of those around us. "Okay, good" refers to times when we're cramped into transportation (cars, vans, trains) in a way that we did not previously believe was possible. "Okay, good," we have transportation and are moving to our desired destination more easily than most people in the area. "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 (unlike in our local environment) the day-to-day life is just not all that predictable. Of course, "Okay, good" is also useful when the last leg of the return flight home 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 often 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. The site director will work closely with volunteer placements when they first arrive to help arrange everything.

> On-Site Orientation
Upon arrival in Poland, Amizade will hold a program orientation for all volunteers. Many issues such as health, safety, and security 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!

> **Transportation on site**

Transportation will be provided by Amizade for the duration of the program. Transportation will include a combination of public transit, which will allow you to experience the city like a “local,” as well as hired taxis and coaches.

> **Housing**

Hostel and hotels.

> **Internet Access**

In Berlin, we try to book hotels that provide wireless internet access. The Center for Dialogue and Prayer in Oswiecim offers a public computer terminal in the lobby that can be used by guests for short periods of time. There is also free wifi in the Center’s lobby. If you have your own computer, you can talk to friends and family for free over Skype, if they also have Skype on their computer. You will need a microphone and speakers or headphone with microphone to use this feature.

> **Meals**

Your program offers a variety of meals, including restaurant meals where you will order from the menu, as well as fixed meals. In Berlin and Krakow, we plan to eat at restaurants. At Oswiecim, we will take most of our meals at the Center for Dialogue and Prayer. There, meals are fixed and are served family-style.

German and Polish meals are a lot like traditional American dinners that includes meat (often pork), starch (often potatoes) and vegetables. Specialties you may have a chance to sample include schnitzel (fried pork cutlet) in Germany, and pierogies (potato-stuffed dumplings) in Poland.

Breakfasts in both Germany and Poland are a little different than a typical American breakfast. They usually include a selection of cold cuts, cheese, bread, sliced tomatoes, yogurt, fruit and coffee/tea.

In Poland, the heaviest meal is served mid-day, and usually consists of a soup, salad, meat, and starch. In the evenings, they may serve one hot dish (like a sausage or pierogies) with a side or two, or cold foods such as cold cuts, cheese, and bread.

While you'll have an opportunity to taste many wonderful local foods, you may still miss some of the foods from home. You may want to pack a “comfort food.” Some popular foods that travel well include granola bars, cookies, candies, or even single-serving peanut butter packs.

> **Note to Vegetarians**

Vegetarianism has become a growing trend throughout Europe, but vegetarian options are still often limited and do not provide much variety. Amizade will make effort to provide, but sometimes they will be need to be supplemented with further protein and vitamins. We encourage vegetarians to bring snacks and vitamins with them. Please indicate your dietary needs and restrictions so we can best prepare for you.

> **Alcohol**

Your instructor will discuss with you the policy on alcohol. AT NO TIME should a participant become intoxicated. Intoxication impacts your motor skills and judgment and can render you vulnerable. The risks posed by intoxication increase when you are in a foreign place without a good grasp of the local language or customs. Participants who do not follow these guidelines may be expelled from the program.
> Laundry
Laundry facilities are limited. We suggest you bring items that are easy to hand wash and dry quickly, as well as some laundry soap, so that you may hand wash clothes in your room. Travel packs of laundry soap are available in many U.S. drugstores.

> Language
The program will be conducted in English, though we will encourage and support you in learning a few German and Polish phrases. While German remains the official language of Germany, English is widely spoken. Polish is the official language of Poland, but English and German are increasingly spoken as second languages. If you'd like to practice some words before you go, you can visit www.forvo.com, a site that allows you to type in any word and hear pronunciations.

> Climate and Weather
Weather in Germany and Poland is similar to that in the northeast U.S. Because we will be working outside, it is important that volunteers check the weather forecast for the time of year that they will be visiting to best prepare for the program. Please visit www.weather.com for updated forecasts.

> 3. Local Considerations

For more information on the region and our partners, please visit the Poland site on Amizade’s website.
> 4. Preparing for your program

> Transportation to Site
You will be flying in and out of Berlin, Germany. 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
For both Germany and Poland, U.S. citizens may enter for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa. The passport should be valid for at least three months beyond the period of stay. Please visit the following website for information on the entry requirements for US Citizens traveling abroad: http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html

Non-US citizens must check with their country's consulate regarding travel documents and requirements.

>> 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 visa, and store one set of copies in your luggage while leaving another set of copies with your emergency contact at home.

> Electrical Voltage and Outlets Abroad
Voltage is generally 220V/50Hz in Germany; 230V/60Hz in Poland, 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 European outlets. European outlets take a plug with 2 round prongs.

Information regarding US passports is available at: http://www.travel.state.gov/
5. Health and 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 inquiries to 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 the immunizations to take full 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 records. Please consult with your physician regarding your healthy participation in the service work and activities for your program and recommended immunizations.

Unless otherwise noted, international traveler’s insurance is included in your program cost. Our policies are underwritten by CMI Insurance.

> 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. Be cautious with your money and make sure you store it in a safe place or in a 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.
> Currency Converter
You may need two types of currency during your program: the **Euro (EUR)** for Germany and the **Polish Zloty (PLN)** (pronounced “zwah'-tuh”). While Poland has joined the European Union, they have not yet adopted the Euro.

For the latest conversion rate for your country, please visit [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com).

> Cash
As with travel in the United States, it is wise not to rely solely on ATMs and credit cards. There may be places where access/acceptance is limited. We recommend having some cash on hand. Currency exchanges are available at the airports, in the cities, and even at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum. We will provide you the opportunity to exchange money.

> Credit Cards
Credit cards, especially Mastercard and VISA, are accepted many places in Europe. If you would like to use your credit card for purchases while you are abroad, be sure to notify your credit card companies of your travel plans and of all the countries in which you may use your card. Also, please inquire with them about fees, so you are not surprised when you return home and see your statement. Please note that it can be difficult and costly to use your credit card for cash advances.

> ATMs
ATMs are available at the airport and in the cities in which we travel. We will offer you the opportunity to use the ATM. Many travelers find it easiest to use their ATM to withdraw a small amount in Germany (in Euros) and then to make another withdrawal once in Poland (in Polish Zloty). Be sure to notify your bank of your travel plans and all the countries in which you might use your card; otherwise, they may deactivate your card. Also, please inquire with them about fees for withdrawals and purchases so you don’t get any surprises in your bank statement when you return home.

> Tipping
Your program fee includes appropriate tips for service staff, such as wait staff and drivers, and you will not need to provide tips for any group activities. If you take a taxi or visit a restaurant/café in your free time, you may wish to tip your taxi driver and wait staff 5-10%. Service is already included in restaurant bills. It is customary, especially in Germany, for you to pay your bill immediately when the staff delivers it.
7. 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.

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

> Recommended packing list
(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 pajamas
  - 1 long-sleeve sweater, sweatshirt or jacket
  - 1 pair comfortable walking shoes
  - 1 pair sturdy work shoes
- 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
- Travel-size laundry detergent

> Cellular 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). If you want to use your phone the entire trip, you’ll need to make sure your card(s) provide service in both Germany and Poland.
● Work gloves (provided at service site, but you may prefer to bring your own)
● 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. Items with your university logo, or with a picture of your home town will be appreciated as souvenirs by the people you meet.
> Culture Shock
Culture shock is a term used to describe the emotional stress 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!

> 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 the safety of 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
Please read the earlier section for information on cell phones. Landline phones are available at each accommodation; check with the hotel staff for international calling procedures and rates. There are also pay phones available in the cities and phone cards can be purchased. Participants can send and receive emails using the public computer at the Center for Dialogue and Prayer in Oswiecim.

> 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 that 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 similar travel experiences, as they understand the need to talk about the experience in greater detail. If you would like to be connected with past participants from an Amizade program, please let an Amizade staff member know, and we will facilitate that for you.

> 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**: 412-586-4986.
  This phone line is staffed 9 am – 4 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.