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> 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 the best resource for you during your pre-departure planning is our website, which can be found at amizade.org

> Amizade’s Mission & Vision
Amizade inspires empathy, catalyzes social action, and links diverse communities through Fair Trade Learning. We want to create a world where diverse communities connect freely, forge lasting relationships, and build a more just world together.

> 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

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.

> 2. 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 the region 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 there can't possibly be enough to see and understand all 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, 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 Northern Ireland. 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 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 Northern Ireland. “Okay, good” refers to moments when we long for some familiar comfort foods, but we have another helping of the same, 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 program 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 Northern Ireland, 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 is the most important element on an Amizade program. Itineraries may change at the last minute for health, safety, and security reasons, in order to meet current community needs, or to 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.)

> Transportation on Site
Volunteer groups are responsible for having transportation to Northern Ireland. Once you arrive, you will use van transportation either on your own or provided by Amizade for an additional fee.

> Meals
For the majority of programs, most meals during the program will be covered by Amizade and eaten as a group. Depending on your housing, the group may cook meals together and prepare packed lunches, or dine out in the city. Some of our partner organizations will offer meals to volunteers during their scheduled service times.

You will get more information about your group's specific meal plan, including meals that are not included (if any), during the pre-departure orientation. Meals will address the dietary restrictions and/or allergies of the group. Some snacks will be provided between meals, but you may also bring or purchase your own snacks.

> Note to Vegetarians and Vegans
Amizade will make every effort to provide vegetarian and vegan options, but sometimes they will need to be supplemented with further protein and vitamins. We encourage you to bring healthy snacks and vitamins with you. Please indicate your dietary needs and restrictions on your Amizade Participant Information Form.

> Laundry
Amizade encourages participants to pack enough clothes for your journey and to bring clothing that can be easily washed in a sink and hung to dry. There are usually no laundry facilities available at your lodging. Laundromats are available in the city, but you're visiting for a short time and do not want to spend time watching your clothes wash and dry!
> **Climate and Weather**

Northern Ireland has a maritime climate, so while it is 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 rain gear are advisable year-round. Before departure, please consult a weather service, such as [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com) for the latest conditions.

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> **3. Local Considerations**

For more information on the region and our partners, please visit:

- Lonely Planet [https://www.lonelyplanet.com/ireland/northern-ireland](https://www.lonelyplanet.com/ireland/northern-ireland)
4. Preparing for Your Program

> Download the Vamoos App

We ask that you download the app before your program begins. Enter the user ID and passcode shared by your group leader to find your program. Vamoos is a convenient way to access information about your program, including maps, itineraries, and important documents. Find it on your phone’s app store.

> 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 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.

> Electricity

Voltage is generally 220V/50Hz in the UK, which is twice the US 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.

> 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 US operates on a different system (CDMA, TDMA or iDEN) and many US cell phones are not compatible with the GSM network. T-Mobile and Cingular operate on GSM, and if you have this service in the US, 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.
> 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, sunblock, 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 never 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 activities such as cleaning or yard work. Please consult Amizade with any questions about physical activity for your individual program.
- An on-site Amizade staff member will have a first aid kit.
- Check with your physician regarding further information about healthy travel abroad.

Current information regarding immunizations can be found on the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

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](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm)

**Email form:** [http://www.cdc.gov/netinfo.htm](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.
> Immunizations
Participants in Amizade programs are solely responsible for receiving immunizations. Amizade defers all inquiries 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 the immunizations to take full effect.

> 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.

> 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.
6. Money Matters

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

> Bringing Money Abroad
Many of the costs of your program are included in the program fees for Amizade, so keep this in mind when you plan the amount of money that you would like to bring from home. When traveling, having cash on-hand is always a useful and wise idea. However, it is recommended that you bring an amount of cash that meets your needs but does not hugely exceed the amount you would typically spend over the course of a few days. Upon arriving in Northern Ireland, there are exchange bureaus. Banks in larger cities and towns will also have currency exchange services. Nevertheless, it is highly recommended that, for the purpose of money access, ATM machines are utilized. With ATMs, exchange rates are applied automatically and are generally up-to-date with the current rates.

> ATMs
Perhaps the best, most highly recommended way to access money while abroad is utilizing ATMs. ATMs can be easily found throughout Northern Ireland. Visa is the most widely accepted card in Northern Ireland (and often, worldwide), but MasterCard is also accepted. ATMs automatically apply exchange rates and are generally up-to-date with the current international rates. It is very important to inform your bank that you will be using your card to withdraw money while in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. This will help to avoid them issuing a "hold" on your card which prevents one from withdrawing money. As always, use common sense and care when using an ATM and planning the amount needed for your activities.
7. General Packing List

**PLEASE PACK LIGHTLY!**
You should bring a maximum of two bags. Ideally, this includes one medium-sized suitcase/duffel/backpackers bag and a smaller daypack for daily activities. You should be able to carry your luggage comfortably by yourself. Please use your best judgment regarding valuables. Amizade does not recommend that volunteers bring expensive jewelry or electronics. Amizade is not liable for lost, stolen, or damaged articles.

**Recommended packing list**
- Documents: health insurance card, passport and/or ID, vaccination cards
- Backup digital copies of all important documents
- Cell phone and charger (check roaming rates)
- Money: ATM/credit cards (set travel alert with bank), US cash ($100 or less), Local currency (small amounts if possible)
- Cell phone and charger (check roaming rates)
- Universal travel outlet adapter (when applicable)
- Water bottle
- Masks, hand sanitizer, and other PPE
- Notebook or journal and pens
- Knapsack or backpack
- Towel and washcloth
- Toiletries – just the basics such as toothbrush, toothpaste, travel-size shampoo, soap, menstrual products
- Sun protection - Hat, sunscreen (reef-safe recommended, sunglasses
- Bug repellant
- Prescriptions in original bottles (be sure to bring enough for the entire program and verify that your medicine is legal in destination)
- Over-the-counter medications (headache, stomach, band-aids, anti-itch cream)
- Preferred snacks (like granola or protein bars)

**Clothing:**
- One nicer outfit
- Socks and underwear
- Pajamas
- Rain gear
- Shower shoes or flip-flops
- Comfortable (closed-toe) walking shoes
- Weather-appropriate clothing (swimsuits, winter jackets, etc.)

**Gifts**
You may choose to bring small gifts or thank you cards for community members. Ideal gifts include those that reflect who you are and where you are from. For example, you may bring pens, flags, or t-shirts with your institution’s logo, or magnets with a picture of your city.

**Specific items for Northern Ireland**
First and foremost, participants should plan and pack according to the weather, climate and temperature. Northern Ireland does have seasons, but they are not as distinct as continental Europe or the eastern coast of the United States. In general, temperatures range from an average yearly low of 40°F to an average yearly high of 65°F. Cloud cover, rain and cool maritime breezes are typical year-round. Keep in mind that, depending on your service placement while on-site, you may consider bringing clothing that you don’t mind getting a little dirty. It is also important to remember that you are acting as “diplomats.” While abroad, you represent not only your country of origin, but also your university or organization, Amizade and even yourself. It is highly recommended that, along with packing for the climate of the region, you pack clothing that is tasteful, respectful and conservative.

Amizade will remind you about specific items to pack for Northern Ireland and answer any questions about clothing during your pre-departure orientation. Please remember to check the weather and your itinerary as you pack.
> 8. While You’re Away

> Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustment is a term used to describe the variety of reactions including stress, excitement, or frustration that can occur when you travel to a new culture. People sometimes feel unsure about what is appropriate in the new culture, confused about how to manage daily tasks, amazed by a new cultural practice, frustrated with managing language and cultural barriers, and/or generally vulnerable. This is normal and affects people at different times throughout a cultural immersion program. It is possible to experience cultural adjustment even if you’re traveling within your home country — no two communities are exactly alike! Remember to rest, eat, and take care of your physical and emotional needs in order to function at your best! Don’t be afraid to communicate how you’re feeling.

> Reverse Cultural Adjustment

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 in the community they visited. Many people feel alienated, knowing that they have grown while many of those around them remain the same. This is also a normal reaction. 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 connect you.

> AMIZADE CONTACT INFORMATION

If someone from home needs to contact a volunteer with an emergency message and can’t reach them directly, they can phone the Amizade US office to relay a message.

- Have the person leave:
  - Their name
  - Your name
  - Their phone number
  - The message to be relayed

For non-emergencies, please try to limit phone calls to Amizade’s business hours: 9 am – 4 pm EST from Monday - Friday.

- Amizade Emergency Phone #: 412-586-4986.
  In an emergency, call the Amizade office phone number at any time. The line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during volunteer programs.

Your journey has now started!

See you in Northern Ireland