

WYSE Travel Confederation publishes survey findings regarding the impacts of volunteering on communities and projects hosting volunteer travellers.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 27 March 2017

WYSE Travel Confederation announces its latest report on volunteer travel, Project perspectives on the benefits of volunteer travel.

Findings outlined in the report suggest that international volunteering contributes towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, brings tourism spend into local economies that might not otherwise benefit from mainstream tourism, and fosters a form of cultural exchange deemed mutually beneficial by all stakeholders.

Projects hosting international volunteers also reported being highly satisfied with both their professional relationships with volunteer sending organisations and preparedness levels of the volunteers those organisations send.

As volunteer travellers are hosted by a project and community, the global association representing businesses involved in youth, student and educational travel, WYSE Travel Confederation, and its Cultural Exchange Advisory Panel, endeavoured to gain a better understanding of the benefits of volunteer travel for not only travellers, but the projects and local communities hosting visiting volunteers.

“When you consider the benefits for the traveller, the volunteer project, and the local host community, volunteer travel is high impact,” said David Chapman, Director General of WYSE Travel Confederation.

Volunteer travel is popular among young people who would like a unique experience combining work and travel. It accounts for an estimated 2 to 5 percent of global youth travel, or 5.4 to 10 million of the more than 270 million arrivals per year. Volunteers contribute a considerable number of work days and spend in local economies and, according to WYSE Travel Confederation research, are among those young travellers that stay the longest and spend the most.

“Negative media attention on international volunteering has portrayed the volunteer travel experience as the province of the privileged simply wanting to broaden their cultural knowledge at the expense of others. This is not an accurate or fair picture,” said Bastian Weinberger, member of the WYSE Travel Confederation Cultural Exchange Advisory Panel and Chief Executive Officer of Smaller Earth, a UK-based company specialised in work experience travel for young people.

“Project perspectives on the benefits of volunteer travel is specifically about the organisations and communities hosting volunteer travellers and their opinions on international volunteer experiences,” explained Weinberger.

The unbalanced media portrayal of international volunteering was debated at last year’s World Youth and Student Travel Conference (WYSTC). Part of the discussion highlighted that travellers contemplating international volunteer experiences have access to more ratings and reviews than ever before and that this has led to a ‘cleaning up’ of the sector. This has been viewed positively by stakeholders who adhere to best practices and quality standards. There was also consensus that a travel trade association like WYSE Travel Confederation helps to differentiate the good players from the bad ones.

Projects hosting volunteers believe that UN Sustainable Development Goals numbers 3 and 4, Good Health and Well-Being and Quality Education, were most supported by the work done by international volunteers, according to the report.

The report, Project perspectives on the benefits of volunteer travel, is the second part of a project examining the perceived benefits of international volunteer travel. The first part of the project focussed on the opinions of young volunteer travellers and culminated in the publication Development through volunteering overseas: Perceptions on personal and project based impact. Both reports are free to download from the WYSE Travel Confederation website.

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