

UPPER INTERMEDIATE UNIT 6

1 Work in pairs and discuss.

- 1 Look at the image. What do you think 'voluntourism' is?
- 2 At what age do you think people do this?
- 3 What do they do and where do they typically travel to?
- 4 Why do you think the notion of 'voluntourism' could be controversial?

2 Read the article about voluntourism and check your answers to Exercise 1.

3 Read the article again. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false sentences.

Leo

- 1 Leo doesn't like the term 'voluntourism' because most people who do it are not volunteers.
- 2 The Uganda project was successful because now the locals don't need the volunteers.
- 3 Leo believes that the majority of volunteers will forget the experience.
- 4 He says that it is important not to think that charities and companies are the same thing.

Martha

- 5 She says that the trip combined volunteer work and tourist activities.
- 6 She liked the role she played alongside the local people.
- 7 The problem is that volunteers don't really get to know people in the community
- 8 Volunteers should travel but be better informed about their destination and who they are going to help.



Voluntourism: The Great Debate

More and more twenty-somethings are spending their gap years doing volunteer work for people less fortunate than themselves, usually in the developing world. It's called volunteer tourism, or 'voluntourism', and it's one of the fastest-growing trends in travel. Here are two differing opinions about it.

Leo: In favour

I hate the word 'voluntourism' because of its emphasis on the travel side of the experience – 'see the world and help as you do it!' would seem to be the message. OK, it's true that there are volunteer schemes which maximise profits without investing in communities, but a lot of criticism of the idea is unfair and damaging.

For example, there was a great scheme in Uganda that I was involved with where young people built playground facilities and ran sporting projects for primary school children. They managed to do such a good job that it is now self-sufficient, employing a team of young Ugandans as builders. The charity's British founders can now step back and allow the local workers to take over. I saw young people, like me, from the West, form authentic friendships with the locals, developing emotional attachments to the children and becoming truly invested in their future. Perhaps some will return home and forget the experience, but for many more, it was a life-changing experience. It's important that critics do not group genuine charities with companies who do very little to help the developing world and put off young people who genuinely want to help.

Martha: Against

When I was twenty-two, I went on a university-organised trip. We were sent to a disadvantaged community in Chad. I taught English in a local school and assisted in building new homes. Interspersed throughout the week we also had souvenir shopping! There were memorable moments but I had the feeling that it was all a bit fake and that the experience just made me feel less guilty about my privileged status.

It seems that voluntourism almost always involves a group of idealistic and unrealistic travellers. They often enter these communities with little understanding of the locals' history, culture and way of life. All they understand is the poverty and the presumed neediness of the community. The western volunteer is a benevolent giver and the community members are supposed to be grateful receivers of charity. I hated that. There is no sense of really helping, really getting integrated into the community. It made me feel very uncomfortable taking photos with children whose names I didn't know. Volunteers could do more good if they worked at home in a disadvantaged community in a context that they understand. You don't need to fly halfway round the globe to be a good citizen.

4 Match 1–8 with a)–h) to form sentences containing adjective/noun collocations used in the article.

- 1 Some volunteers establish authentic
- 2 It's a controversial topic so there are a lot of differing
- 3 Voluntourism is a growing
- 4 A lot of people don't like the idea of being seen as benevolent
- 5 The idea of voluntourism is to help disadvantaged
- 6 If you do the trip, there will probably be memorable
- 7 Local people often develop emotional
- 8 Ideally, being a 'voluntourist' should be a life-changing

- a) communities and get to know the country as a tourist.
- b) friendships with the people they are helping.
- c) trend – it's especially popular with students in their gap year.
- d) moments and frustrating moments too!
- e) givers, who have to be thanked all the time.
- f) experience, but that's not always the case.
- g) opinions out there about the benefits of voluntourism.
- h) attachments with charity workers.

5 Work in pairs or small groups and discuss.

- 1 What do you think of voluntourism?
- 2 Do you sympathise more with Leo's or Martha's argument?
- 3 Do you know if such trips are organised in your country?

6  **6.1 Listen to an interview with a specialist in voluntourism talking about three volunteer organisations. What is the main difference between them? Make notes.**

- 1 Safe Passage:

- 2 Raleigh International:

- 3 United Planet:

7 Listen again and underline the correct alternative.

- 1 The radio presenter thinks that choosing a charity to work for is quite *complicated/easy*.
- 2 The expert *implies/doesn't imply* that some voluntourism organisations should be avoided.
- 3 The charity Safe Passage works with families who live in the *garbage dump/underground settlements* in Guatemala City.
- 4 The main work of Safe Passage is *educational/healthcare*.
- 5 Raleigh International work in *four/five* different countries.
- 6 The main focus of its Tanzania project is related to *infrastructure/health* issues.
- 7 United Planet will select a charitable project to suit your *profile/exact choices*.
- 8 The expert believes that United Planet are a good choice because they offer projects *in Europe/all over the world*.

8 The words in the box are from the recording. Complete the tips with the words in the box.

commercial volunteer non-profit working
sanitation long-term tailor-made privileged

Voluntourism: top tips

- 1 It's important when choosing a charity that you choose a _____ organisation that doesn't intend to make money from your work.
- 2 Bear in mind that _____ conditions can be hard. This is no holiday!
- 3 Some organisations feature _____ projects that will exactly suit your interests and experience.
- 4 It's a good idea to choose projects which can have a _____ benefit on the community – then your contribution will be remembered.
- 5 Don't think that _____ work means helping the community in the daytime and partying at night. This is a serious commitment!
- 6 It's a mistake to think that you can't work in so-called _____ societies. There are people in need everywhere!
- 7 Don't expect luxuries, there will only be access to a basic _____ system.
- 8 It's best to avoid 'charity' organisations which have, in fact, _____ interests.

9 Work in pairs or small groups and discuss.

- 1 Would you like to take part in a voluntourism project? Why/Why not?
- 2 If you did take part, what kind of scheme would interest you? Where would you like to go?
- 3 Are there any projects that you could be involved in in your local community?
- 4 What kinds of people do you think need help near you?