



FAQs for Parents!

Pre Departure FAQs

What is involved in the application process?

Once a candidate submits an online application and \$250 deposit, they are contacted via email by a Project Coordinator from the Boston office to set up an interview. The interview is designed to assess the candidate's suitability for the Quest they have chosen. They will need to prepare for this interview – this will be explained to them in an email. If the candidate's interview is successful, and once we have confirmation of their placement from our in country coordinators, they will receive an email officially accepting them as a Quest volunteer. In this email will be further information about the steps they should then take to ensure they are fully prepared for their Quest. Please ask your child to share this information with you.

Can you give me information about my child's destination?

Once a volunteer is accepted into the program, they must create an account on United Planet's online platform – the HUB. The HUB contains further information about the volunteer's destination country and culture, in addition to health and safety information, a contract and health form that must be printed out, signed and sent into the Boston office, and a forum where they can leave messages for other volunteers traveling to the same destination. In addition to this we strongly encourage that you and the volunteer research independently the Quest country and culture. This is essential preparation which makes the Quest experience much more enjoyable and beneficial for the volunteer.

What type of work will my child be doing abroad?

The work a volunteer does depends on the destination and project they have chosen. Volunteers typically work between 5-8hrs five days per week on a community project. The volunteer is given more information about the project they will be working on before they

depart. Please ask your child for this information. Please be advised that community's needs change regularly and this can sometimes mean that a volunteer works on a different project than the one they originally signed up for. While this is rare it does happen, and we encourage all volunteers to be open minded and flexible in this case.

What is included in the travel insurance coverage?

The insurance that UP provides to all its volunteers' is emergency medical insurance which includes evacuation and repatriation services. If your son/daughter needs to be treated at a hospital or clinic in-country, he/she will have to pay at the time of treatment and call the 24-hour number to report that treatment. Then you will have 60 days to send in a claim form with the receipt of treatment for reimbursement. Please see the pdf document of travel insurance benefits located on the HUB for reimbursement and other details.

Will my child need a visa?

Most U.S. citizens do not need a visa for stays of less than 3 months in most of the Quest countries. India, Tibet, Cambodia, Ghana and Tanzania are the exceptions. Your child will receive information about acquiring a tourist visa. This is their responsibility.

Does my child need vaccinations or anti-malarial medications?

Some Quest destinations do require vaccinations and anti-malarial medications. We recommend that the volunteer make an appointment with their doctor well in advance of their Quest to discuss the necessary vaccinations and medications needed. They can also find a list or recommended vaccinations on the Center for Disease Control website – www.cdc.gov

Where can I find additional information about my child's Quest?

Once a volunteer has been accepted to the Quest program, they are asked to create an account on the UP HUB. This is an on-line space with documents available about his/her specific country, important documents for them to fill out and in-country contact information. Please ask your child to share this information with you.

In Country FAQs

What kind of supervision will my child have in country?

United Planet has In Country Coordinators based on the ground in each destination. They are the first point of contact for you and your child in country and coordinate all volunteers during their Quests. In addition to our In Country Coordinator, volunteers also have supervisors at their work placements.

Will my child be picked up at the airport?

Volunteers are met at the airport by either our in-country coordinator, their host family, or a representative of United Planet. They will need to look for a person with a sign with their name on it. If they do not see this person, they must call the in country coordinator (whose number is listed on their emergency contact card) or the Boston office.

What type of accommodation will my child be staying in?

In many destinations, volunteers live with host families. In some countries they stay in a guest house or dorm style accommodation. Volunteers must be prepared for living situations different than those they may be used to at home. They may be staying with communities who have no running water and only sporadic electricity. All accommodations are safe and (relatively) clean. Remember -the idea is to experience a foreign culture: this means that things will not be the same as in the US!

How will I be able to communicate with my child while they are on their Quest?

Be prepared to communicate with your child much less while on their Quest than you would normally at home. Calling or emailing too much can have a detrimental effect on your child being able to 'let go' of life at home and really immerse in the new culture they find themselves in. The In Country Coordinator will show them where the nearest phone is and how to use it, how to buy an international calling card, or where the nearest internet café is. Arrange with your child prior to their departure how you will communicate. The first day is often extremely busy with orientation. Please don't worry if you don't hear from your child within the first 24 hours after their arrival in country. Your child will contact you as soon as possible. The volunteer will also be provided with an emergency contact card before their departure, giving the emergency number of the In Country Coordinator. Do not be worried if your child does not communicate with you as much as they would at home. In many destinations electricity and phone networks are not as reliable as you may be used to and they may not be able to communicate as easily or as frequently, especially to call internationally. In a lot of cases, volunteers are often too busy to call or email as frequently as at home. You should view this as a positive thing – your child is gaining greater independence and maturity through this process, and he/she is relying on themselves rather than you to work out any issues that are arising.

How do you choose host families?

Host families are chosen by our In Country Coordinators. They have been hand picked and are usually a family that the In Country Coordinator already knows and trusts. All host volunteers regularly throughout the year.

Will there be other UP volunteers with my child?

United Planet Quests are for individuals, each volunteer travels and works independently of others. Depending on the time of year, there may be other UP volunteers at certain work sites, but this is not a guarantee. Volunteers should be prepared and ready for the possibility that they may be the only volunteer in the community. This is the whole point of a United Planet Quest as you get to really immerse in the culture and community you are working and living in.

Is the destination safe for my child?

No responsible organization can ever guarantee absolute safety of volunteers abroad, nor should they. Every destination that United Planet sends volunteers to is vetted for safety and our In Country Coordinators keep us constantly updated on safety and security issues in country. Safety is our top priority and the decisions about where to send volunteers are made accordingly.

What measures are taken to ensure the safety of volunteers?

Volunteers on United Planet Quests have access to the help of our In-Country Coordinators 24/7. They are provided with the emergency cell phone number of the in-country coordinator and can call that number at any time of the day or night. Host families and host organizations go through a rigorous interview process to ensure that all necessary safety procedures and protocols are in place. However, while United Planet does all it can to ensure the safety of our volunteers, much depends on the volunteer making sensible decisions and behaving in a responsible manner during their Quest. Talk to your child about making smart choices during their Quest, e.g. traveling late at night, using caution when meeting new people, not drinking to excess or using illegal drugs.

My child has called and is not enjoying their Quest – what can I do?

This is when your child will need your support. Remind them that every day will not be a good day. There are always low moments when your child may miss familiar things from home. Accommodations, food and culture will not be the same as at home – this is reality of living in another country. Remind your child that this is the very reason they went abroad – to experience something new and different and to get out of their comfort zone! Urge your child to be the one to find solutions to any problems they are having, as part of what they are there for is to learn to deal with a new place and new situations on their own. They will come out of the experience with much more confidence and determination if you let them deal with any problems themselves.

Post Quest FAQs

How can we stay in touch with UP?

Your child will receive a Welcome Back package about how to stay in touch with UP and the country they volunteered in. They are then considered United Planet alumni and added to receive our monthly e-newsletter giving updates about UP Quests and Special Projects.

How do we receive the evaluation refund?

Your child will receive an email asking them to fill out an on-line survey upon their return. Once the survey is submitted, they will receive a check in the mail for their evaluation fee. Volunteers may also decide to donate the \$25 refund to their Quest's Country Fund. Country Funds are special funds set up for each Short Term Quest Destination. A portion of the Quest fee that you pay goes towards that Quest's Country Fund. These funds allow the host community that UP works with the opportunity to apply for funding for special projects happening in that community. In addition to a portion of the Quest fee being contributed, you can also choose to donate your evaluation refund to your Quest's Country Fund.