



Eight Ways to Optimize Your Social Service or Medical Mission Trip Experience

There are ways to make an awesome mission trip even more awesome. Much of this has to do with your attitude and expectations for the trip. To help you optimize your experience, here is a list of suggestions:

1. **Go with a humble heart.** Do not try to be perfect, but have a servant attitude. Focus on relationships with the people you serve.
2. **Reflect, journal, meditate or pray** about your experience.
3. **Practice Spanish, Creole or Swahili** before and during your time in-country. Reach out and communicate with those you meet no matter your language proficiency. Sing simple songs in their native language to play with and teach the children. A smile and use of English also goes far!
4. **Be respectful of the people and the culture.** Be respectful of the Dominicans/Haitians/Kenyans at all times. Dress and behave as your hosts do. Remember, actions speak louder than words! Be expressively thankful for all they do for us. Hosting mission teams is not an easy task!
5. **Leave your watch in your room.** Don't worry about the timing of the schedule for the day. Trust your group leaders to lead the flow of the day even if the things that happen may be very different and/or later than planned. Let things be spontaneous and on "local time."
6. **Bond with your group and your new Dominican/Haitian/Kenyan friends in an appropriate manner.** It may be easy to fall in love with your new friends on the trip or with the handsome indigenous people. Make sure you are developing your relationships in an ethical, moral manner. Don't make any follow-up promises you aren't able to keep, such as phoning or writing to your new friends after you are back in the States.
7. **Give only your friendship.** It may be tempting to give material gifts to your new friends or candy to children. All of our gifts are to flow through the organizations and churches we work with except for medicines and hygiene kits provided during medical clinics. Please provide them to your FFP staff member for distribution after the group departs. We do not want to be seen as the materially wealthy who came with material gifts to give away. That undermines our mission to share our time and talents and can turn community members into beggars who are trying to get whatever they can.
8. **Take care of your body.** It is easy to overdo it in the first few days when you are so ready to work.
 - Drink water frequently, even if you aren't very thirsty.
 - Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before every meal or anytime you are going to eat.
 - Make yourself stop talking and get to sleep before 11 pm so you are energized to do work the next morning.
 - Eat breakfast even if you aren't hungry.
 - Wear a hat and sunscreen every day.