

Traveling to Camp Sonshine – Tips and Things to Consider

This document is to be used as a resource when getting ready to travel to Camp Sonshine! In this document you will find Travel tips, information about Culture Shock, and other helpful information to read over and consider before you begin your travels.

A Well Prepared Traveler

- Travel in a spirit of humility with a genuine desire to meet and talk with local people.
- Do not expect to find things as you have them at home. You have left your home and you should expect to find things different.
- An open mind is the beginning of a good experience.
- Do not let others get on your nerves. You have come a long way to be an ambassador of Christ, to teach as much as you can, to learn as much as you can, and to enjoy the experience.
- Do not worry. One who worries has no pleasure.
- Do not judge the people of the country by the one person with whom you have trouble. This is unfair to the people as a whole. Remember that you are a guest in every land. One who treats a host with respect will be treated as an honored guest.
- Cultivate the habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing or seeing.
- Realize that others may have different thought patterns or concepts of time-not inferior, just different.
- Be aware of the feelings of the local people to prevent what might be offensive behavior. Be particularly respectful of other people and cultures when taking pictures.
- Make no promises to locals or new friends that you cannot follow through.
- Spend time reflecting on your daily experiences in order to deepen your understanding of your new experiences.

Adapted from The St. Olaf College Orientation Handbook, St Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

Packing Tips

The following tips are to help you as you pack your bags and prepare for the day of departure.

- Pick out everything you think you could possibly need and lay it out on your bed. Put half of that away. Yes, half! ☺ Take a few minutes to look at something else then come back and take away half of what is remaining. Maybe now you can fit everything into one bag. The more stuff you take, the more stuff you have to carry. Less truly is better!
- One checked luggage and one carry-on is all you are allowed most times. Your second checked piece of luggage, another bag, will contain supplies for the camp activities. Do not forget that you are limited to the weight of your luggage. The best way to determine the weight of your bag is: pack it completely, weigh yourself without the bag, then weigh yourself holding the bag in front of you. Subtract the difference between you and you with the bag. Airlines limit the weight of individual checked bags to 50 pounds each.
- If you wear glasses, pack an extra pair. Bring them and any medicines you need in your carry-on luggage.
- Pack everything in jumbo size Ziploc bags. That means all underwear in one bag, all socks in one bag, all shirts in one bag, etc. Why? Rain and baggage handlers. This will keep everything nice and dry, as well as make it easy to find stuff and pack. The Ziplocs may come in handy at camp.
- Roll your clothes to pack them. If rolled properly, there will be less wrinkles and it makes it much easier to pack more things in a confined space. In the same way, don't let any space or weight go to waste;

stuff shoes with socks and small articles. Take items out of the packages they are sold in, if possible. (Exception: medicine should always remain in its original container)

- o Whenever possible, carry any liquids in plastic travel bottles. They are flexible, provide more room, and prevent accidents. Do not fill bottles to the top, squeeze out excess air and reseal. All liquids should be packed in a Ziploc bag of their own with the lids taped down.
- o For anything requiring batteries, put them in backward. They won't run down and won't need to be packed separately. Do not do this with cameras!
- o Take your Bible, journal, and books in your carry-on

Culture Shock

Culture shock occurs when a person is cut off from the familiar. The known patterns and lifestyles have been cut off. Everything in which you find meaning is altered and makes life incomprehensible. Culture shock occurs when a person is living or working over an extended period of time in a situation that is unfamiliar. Culture shock is having your own personal and absolute values brought into question. Culture shock is being forced to function at full speed and skill without fully knowing or understanding the guidelines by which to act.

There are various stages to culture shock. Most people will recover once they become familiar with their surroundings and get into a routine. However, some people are not able to make quick adjustments and may be less successful in dealing with this type of stress. Before leaving home, decide that you will not resist the culture nor surrender to the culture. Recognize that your culture is not necessarily “right” or “best”, but different just as the culture you are visiting is different.

Symptoms

1. The Honeymoon: “Life is great, the people are great. I think I’ll stay forever.”
2. The Honeymoon is over: “Life is depressing. I can’t get any decent food. I’m leaving.”
Characterized by: homesickness, chauvinistic excesses, need for excessive sleep, exaggerated cleanliness, boredom, stereotyping of host nationals, loss of ability to work effectively, compulsive eating or drinking, irritability, unexplainable fits of weeping, loneliness, anxiety, less self-confidence, lack of energy, physical ailments, hostility to nationals or teammates, excessive time alone, excessive time with Americans only
3. The Marriage: “This place is okay after all. I like spending time with locals. I think I’ll stay.”

Cycles of Adjustment

1. Application Anxiety – Anticipate cultural differences but have only a superficial awareness of potential problems.
2. Arrival Fascination – Excitement of departure continues until sometime after arrival in the host country. High expectations.
3. Initial Culture Shock – Fascination fades, novelty of a new country wears off and spirits decline. Changes in sleep patterns, disorientation about work, inability to relate to others, and language difficulties characterize this stage.
4. Surface Acceptance – Adjustment begins. Communication and navigation improve within a small group of friends.
5. Mental Isolation – Frustrations increase and a new and more pervasive sense of isolation can set in. Boredom and a lack of motivation along with conflicts with friends, hosts, peers, or basic communication problems occur.
6. Integration/Acceptance – Finally at ease with the work, language, friends, and able to examine the new society. Differences become understandable. Acceptance of the new situation and his/her place in it will allow him/her to relax and feel at home.
7. Return Anxiety – The same anxieties that preceded the trip may appear when returning home. You are likely to experience difficulties in readjusting to the once-familiar surroundings.

Cures

1. Don’t overreact. Be aware of what culture shock is and how it will affect you and those around you.
2. Meet new people and try new things. Don’t sit around being negative and critical. Keep busy.

3. Give yourself a break-rest, pray, meditate.
4. Write your thoughts and feelings down or share your feelings with someone you trust for advice.
5. Observe others' body language.
6. Attempt to speak their language.
7. Relax and appreciate the differences.

When Cultures Clash

- Do prepare ahead. Find out as much about the ethnic background, country, and religion as you can.
- Do not assume you know the reason for the particular behavior or custom. Politely ask about what you do not understand.
- Do keep your English simple if language is a barrier.
- Do not be surprised if a local says or does something outside your cultural norm. Many routine behaviors are handled differently from culture to culture. Respond graciously. People will notice.
- Do be sensitive to body language and facial expressions. Standing too close or too far away may be interpreted differently in various cultures. Observe how others behave in social situations.
- Do pray for discernment in your interaction with people of other cultures.
- Do not stereotype. Ask God to help you view each person as His unique creation. Be especially careful about making cultural assumptions regarding second, third, and fourth-generation ethnic groups.

Journaling

This is a list of questions that you are encouraged to think through. Some of the questions are to challenge you to think about the trip, personal growth, and spiritual development. Take some time to think through and to write down your thoughts, emotions, and ideas concerning the trip. This will help you gain a better understanding for all that is in store for you. Speaking from experience, this is time invested which is well spent.

Before the Trip

- How do I feel today?
- What do I believe will happen on the trip?
- What is God already doing (site, team, personally, etc.)?
- What does this trip mean to me, to my team, to the people I will encounter or have encountered?
- What are some goals and/or expectations for me, for the team?
- How would I tell my testimony today?

Daily

- How was today?
- How would I define success today?
- Where were my priorities today?
- Where was my heart? Mind?
- What cultural influences are shaping my world view and/or my life?
- What do I value about this trip thus far (site, people, team, etc.)?
- What did I experience today that I want to remember?
- How did the experience touch me?
- How did it make me feel?
- What did this experience teach me about God, others, and me?
- What did I learn from my quiet time today? How am I going to apply it to my life?

Debriefing and Returning Home

Please think through and write answers (in journal or separate piece of paper) to the following questions before your team debriefing session. These questions will help you process your experiences as well as facilitate an evaluation of the trip.

A. To enrich the spiritual lives of individual team members

1. How did you see God at work during the trip...both personally and with the team?
2. What were your experiences...gratifying and/or challenging?
3. What feelings are you experiencing at this time?
4. What is the vision for God's work in the future?
5. What effective way can you tell your story?

B. To facilitate positive changes for future Camp Sunshine International trips

1. What went well?
2. What challenges did you encounter?
3. What improvements do you suggest be made?

C. To empower leaders to be more effective

1. What were the team strengths?
2. In what ways did the leader interact with the team and in-country leaders? Were the methods effective and were positive results achieved?
3. Did the leader lead by example?

Making the Transition from Missions to Life At Home

1. Where your identity lies
 - a. Luke 10:17-20
 - b. It's not in what we've accomplished
 - c. It's in that we're children of God with our names written in "The Book."
2. Don't be a "special" case
 - a. An attitude that sets you apart from other Christians who have stayed at home is pride.
 - b. You have no rights; you surrendered them to the Lord Jesus
 - c. You went to the field out of obedience, love and devotion. If you went for any other reason, it was the wrong reason.
3. Don't be judgmental and/or critical
 - a. Eph. 4:4-6/James 4:6/Eph.6
 - b. Be humble, not haughty.
 - c. Don't battle with others.
 - d. We're all one and equal.
 - e. Don't look down on others because they didn't go or have ever gone on a mission's trip.
4. Adjust to change in ministry
 - a. Just because you ministered one way there, doesn't mean it will be the same at home.
 - b. Above all else, be a servant wherever you are.

Ministering through a short-term mission's trip is an experience of a lifetime. You have helped impact each person you ministered to. You may find that you have been changed as well. The experiences you have had were shared only by the team members you went with. It will be hard for others to understand. You may be asked, "How was your trip?" and you are exploding to tell all that you experienced and what God did through you but the question may have been asked in courtesy and not expected to have a lengthy detailed answer. Know that this may happen. It may be easy to fall into a judgmental and critical attitude towards others but remember that they do not know. They did not experience what you did. People are affected by what they know. Share from your heart when asked, but keep it short. Respond in love and understanding always. Your attitude and response may influence someone else to venture out and do a missions trip themselves. Your ministry does not end at the end of the trip. The purpose of carrying Christ's love to others continues throughout your life no matter where you are.