

# GROUP VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION



# CONCORDIA GROUP VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION

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## INTRODUCTION TO CONCORDIA

### Who are Concordia?

For nearly 70 years now, we've provided volunteering and work opportunities overseas and in the UK. Today we work with 80 like-minded non-profit organisations from 60 countries, to offer medium and short term community volunteering around the world.

### Our Ethos

Concordia is a charity committed to international volunteering as a means to promoting intercultural understanding and peace. Through our projects, we support hundreds of people to have amazing international volunteer experiences all around the world.

### Group Volunteering

Concordia has been sending groups of young people to volunteer projects overseas since 2009, when we sent our first group of students to a two week social project in Vietnam. The experience was so successful that we decided to expand this programme and involve more groups. This also coincided with an increased demand from colleges and other youth organisations for this type of experience.

# WHICH COUNTRIES AND OUR OVERSEAS PARTNERS

We work with over 80 partners in 60 countries and among these we select the ones who can best accommodate groups.

Countries that we are currently sending volunteers to are:

- Estonia
- Greece
- Iceland
- India
- Italy
- Korea
- Turkey
- Vietnam

We also work with other countries so please ask if you have somewhere else in mind.

Most of our partners are selected within our international networks: The Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations

([alliance-network.eu](http://alliance-network.eu)) and the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS.org). They have a track record of successful international volunteering projects and extensive experience in working with young people. We've been working for many years with all our partners and we share the same ethos and working practices, so we are sure that the projects are ethical, bring a benefit to the local community and that the volunteers are well looked after.



*"We work with over 80 partners in 60 countries and among these we select the ones who can best accommodate groups."*

# TYPES OF PROJECTS: CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND VOLUNTEERING

- Children's projects
- Disabled children and adult projects
- Environmental projects
- Experiencing rural village life
- Maintenance work
- Supporting community events

## WHAT CONCORDIA PROVIDES

Concordia works with its groups to support them through the whole process, including:

■ **Travel** Concordia will organise travel including flights. Concordia has partnered with STA travel which enables us to get some of the best flight deals for young people and groups.

If needed, Concordia can arrange overnight accommodation before the flights ensuring a quick and easy journey from accommodation to airport.

■ **Insurance** Concordia insists, as part of the Group Volunteering package, that the group has appropriate travel insurance. Concordia can arrange this or the groups can arrange their own insurance. Concordia just needs copies of the policies and documents.

■ **Health and Safety** Concordia ensures that all the projects are suitable for groups to take part in. Concordia staff will carry out health and safety visits with their partners.

Concordia has a 24/7 emergency support for their leaders to use if there is an issue whilst the group is overseas. They follow a tight procedure which includes liaising with a UK link person for the group and with parents and guardians. We also follow FCO advice about travel to countries.

**Trained leader** Concordia trains all its leaders and will only send experienced and suitable volunteers to take on this role. Concordia leaders don't get paid but their travel and expenses are provided.

Their role is to be the link between Concordia's overseas partners, Concordia staff members in the UK and the group. They deal with logistics and ensure the smooth running of the programme. The other adults accompanying the group/group leaders are there to support the group and act as loco parentis.

### **Training, planning and preparation for the group in the UK**

Concordia will meet the groups and provide training to support their planning and preparation before they start their trip. Training includes: fundraising advice, health and safety, vaccinations, culture shock, as well as going through the logistics of the trip.

**Visas** Concordia will facilitate visa applications where necessary (countries which need visas include India and Vietnam).

**Food and accommodation** All the trips will include food and accommodation as part of the package. It is essential that groups give Concordia any medical and dietary details when the group members fill in the relevant forms.

**Additional trips** Concordia can organise additional trips or visits such as the golden triangle in India, Halong boat trip in Vietnam, the Parthenon and other historical museums in Athens, temple stays in Korea, just to mention a few.

The nature of what our partners do means that most projects' final details are not confirmed until the February before the summer of the projects. Concordia work to get as much information as possible before this date but this is not always possible.

Concordia provide a bespoke trip for each of its groups which means they can have a 'once in a lifetime experience'.

*"Concordia provide a bespoke trip for each of its groups which means they can have a 'once in a lifetime experience'."*

Concordia is a charity and aims to keep the cost of the projects to a minimum. The costs vary depending on the country that the group is going to.

As a guide costs can be from £1500 - £2800, depending on the destination and length of the trip. The breakdown of costs can include:

- Flights – we charge for the actual flight cost
- Concordia cost – which is a set fee that includes, all the administration, planning, preparation, H&S, risk assessments and H&S backup, training the group
- Host organisation costs – which include food, accommodation, travel to and from project, materials, local visits, leisure and intercultural activities
- Concordia leader costs
- Insurance – if Concordia provide this service
- Add on trips
- Visas
- Overnight accommodation in the UK the night before flying out to the project (where chosen)
- Deposits – Our deposits are normally £400 per person, these are non-refundable.

Key payment times are agreed with the group leader. Normally we work in a 12 month period. So for example, if the group is going away in the summer holidays we ask for the deposit in the October/November the year before. We then ask for the flight payment at Christmas or just after. The third instalment comes in the spring and the final payment is asked for in May/June.

We can also share our fundraising guide to help volunteers reach their fundraising goal.



# DOCUMENTS NEEDED

## Contracts

Terms & Conditions – every group leader will need to sign a contract with Concordia that outlines the budget, payment plans and the programme.

## Invoices

Concordia will invoice for each payment date which is set out in the contract. Normally the first invoice is for the non-refundable deposit, followed by three other invoices during the course of the year. We try to be flexible with our payment plan to make it accessible and transparent.

## Passports

We will need copies of everyone's passport. Most countries will need people to have at least 6 months on their passport in order to travel. If we are arranging visas we will need the actual passport of each person and we may need to have them for up to 6 weeks depending on the country in which the visa is needed. We will try to work around holiday times when passports may be needed for other purposes.

## Consent forms

Each person going on the trip will need to fill in a Concordia consent/medical form. All information will be treated confidentially but we need people to be honest about medical conditions/dietary requirements and any other information that may be necessary to know whilst on the trip. Plus anyone aged under 18 must have parent/guardian consent.

*"Concordia prides itself on intercultural exchange through volunteering."*





## FAQ

### 1. What sort of experience should we expect from a Group Volunteering project with Concordia?

Concordia is part of a network that prides itself on intercultural exchange through volunteering. Your contribution is not only made by the actual work you do, but also by just you being there. In many of our projects, the local host and communities don't have the chance to meet people from abroad. The fact that a group of international volunteers decides to spend their time supporting a local cause helps the local organisations that are promoting these activities tremendously.

You can expect to be taking part in lots of intercultural activities with local young people, visiting the local area and learning about the local culture.

Finally, Concordia is happy to organise trips to nearby major cities or attractions during your free time.

## 2. What are the requirements for a group to join the Group Volunteering Programme?

We take groups aged 14 years upwards. With the group there should be at least 2 adults that will act as leaders accompanying the young people. We expect the leaders, or the organisation that is behind them, to select the participants according to their criteria and to make sure that the volunteers are motivated and ready for the trip overseas.

## 3. When is the best time to approach Concordia if I'm interested in sending a group overseas?

We normally ask groups to allow a 12 month build up period, so that we can contact our international partners and select the best destinations/projects for you. Depending on the brief you give us, it usually takes time to identify the best project for each group. Please note that due to the way our overseas partners work we cannot always confirm your precise project details until a few months before the project starts. These projects are not off-the-shelf projects, but tailored to the needs, composition and interests of the group as well as trying to meet a real need in the local community.



#### 4. How long does it take to receive detailed information about the project for my group?

If you are going on a project in the summer, normally by the September of the year before we would send you a project proposal with an outline of the project, which includes the country, information on the international partner organisation hosting the project, location of the project, approximate dates, general background information about why a project is being proposed there, outline of work and intercultural activities, accommodation, leisure activities, budget/costs per volunteer.



Final details of the project usually are given 2-3 months before the actual start of the project, after Concordia has visited and risk assessed the project.

Generally our partner organisations overseas don't define the final details of their project 2-3 months before the actual project starts. This may be because the project is hosted by local municipalities who have long bureaucratic procedures to give their permission to carry out specific tasks (for example, renovation of local heritage, etc.). Alternatively, it may be supporting local charities/institutions whose projects are not ongoing, but are specifically planned each year for each group. Therefore the work is finalised only a few months before the summer season starts.

There are several elements of the project that can't be defined until closer to the project start: local transport timetables, recruitment of local volunteers, dates of local events to be confirmed and organised meeting with local youth groups, to name a few.

Finally, there is a cultural element to this as well. Many of our partners simply are not used to finalising their work in advance as would be normal in the UK. Nonetheless, the volunteers' contribution would always fit within the mission of the host organisations and ethos, and within the outline of the project provided earlier in the year.

## 5. The fees for Group Volunteering are higher than our other programmes, why?

The fee charged for group volunteering projects not only includes a registration fee, but also includes the costs for travel (international and local), food and accommodation during the project, leisure activities, intercultural activities, recruitment and training of Concordia leaders, risk assessment of the project by Concordia, training sessions for the group leaders and participants, visas and admin costs of both Concordia and our partner organisation. Also, Concordia has a 24 hour emergency contact available while the project is running.

*"Concordia has a 24 hour emergency contact available while the project is running."*



**6. If a group of volunteers under 18 years old already has adults going with them who are responsible for the young people, why does Concordia send their leader to accompany them?**

The Concordia leader and the group's adults/leaders accompanying the group (group leaders) have different roles: the Concordia leader is there to make sure that all logistics of projects are running smoothly, liaise with Concordia, the local host and local leaders and act in case of emergency following Concordia emergency procedures.

The adults/leaders accompanying the group provide pastoral care and personal support to the young people, supervise them closely during their project, make sure that the group respects rules and regulations and don't put themselves or others at risk. However, we do ask for the group leaders to work in partnership with the Concordia leaders to ensure the trip is a success.



**7. Are the Concordia Leaders members of staff or volunteers? If volunteers, do they pay the same fee as the group to go on the project?**

Concordia leaders are volunteers with experience in leading groups of young people in residential projects. Their food, travel and accommodation costs are covered by the fees paid by the group as part of Concordia's costs.



*"We ask for the group leaders to work in partnership with the Concordia leaders to ensure the trip is a success."*

## 8. How does Concordia select their leaders for the projects?

Our leaders are selected mostly among our pool of experienced leaders of UK international projects who've been supporting our organisation for several years. We also recruit volunteers who have a proven track record of successfully leading residential projects for young people, preferably overseas. We organise a training/selection weekend for all our leaders where we assess their skills and potential and make sure that they are the best leaders for each group. Each group leader will be subjected to a DBS check.

## 9. As contact person for the group and adults going on the project with them, what role do I have in the run up to the start of the project?

Your role will be selecting your group participants, giving us the brief of what project/experience you are looking for, working with Concordia to fine tune the project details as the preparation goes along, passing on the information provided by Concordia to the volunteers, meeting Concordia for a briefing/training, organising training for the group in cooperation with Concordia and according to the needs of the group, providing Concordia with all the information needed about the group (consent forms, visa documents, passports), liaising with Concordia at the end of the project for a final evaluation.

## 10. What sort of support does Concordia provide before, during and after the project?

Concordia is available for you on the phone and email throughout the whole preparation for the project. We will also discuss with you your training needs and arrange training sessions for you and your group. We will help you with sorting out your flights, visas and we will provide you with a Concordia Leader to support you during the project, as well as a 24hr emergency number while you are overseas.

 *"Concordia is available for you on the phone and email throughout the whole preparation for the project."*

## 11. How do we know that a project is safe for the group?

A representative from Concordia will visit the projects to carry out a full risk assessment of the accommodation, work, transport and leisure activities. We also liaise with our overseas partner to get up to date information about the projects. Concordia also check with FCO advice on the country.

## 12. Do you have any testimonials about the previous groups and their experience?

Yes, and here is what Girlguiding CYMRU says about their experience with Concordia:

*"Working with Concordia and their international partners on projects overseas, has given our girls the opportunity to 'discover and grow' by helping make a difference to communities around the world whilst gaining valuable life skills and promoting cross cultural learning. Girlguiding's values empower girls through fun, friendship, challenge and adventure to find their voice, inspiring them to discover the best in themselves and make a positive difference in their community and working with Concordia has certainly provided the help and support to accomplish these values and I would without doubt warmly recommend working with them to accomplish your goals!!"*

*"Working with Concordia and their international partners on projects overseas has given our girls the opportunity to 'discover and grow'."*



  
**concordia**  
*Live. Learn. Experience.*



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