



# INFORMATION PACK

A GUIDE FOR UNDER 18  
PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

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GVI

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# LETTER FROM RICHARD WALTON

FOUNDER OF GVI

When you visit another country and experience a different culture first hand, it opens your mind far beyond the ability of any textbook. My wanderlust kicked in early, driving me from one continent to the next, and it served me well. It tested my mettle, and I never came out poorer for it.

Now, as a parent of four, I'm passionate about giving young people, our future generation, the opportunity to do the same – to explore safely, learn, grow and have fun. Our under 18 programs are fundamental to that strategy and goal.

I can't think of a better way to develop a sense of independence, promote responsibility and nurture a sense of purpose than to volunteer abroad with like-minded individuals and passionate, experienced group leaders.

When young people are given the opportunity to discover their own potential, I find that they tend to become leaders, and when they're given the opportunity to make a difference, I find that they tend to go beyond our expectations.

# WHO ARE GVI?

IMPACT - AWARENESS - EMPOWERMENT

It is our mission to build a global network of people united by their passion to make a difference.

Since 1998, GVI has been running multiple-award winning, high quality and high impact conservation and community development programs worldwide. At the core of who we are and what we have managed to achieve is of our team of passionate individuals. We are committed to our mission of making a difference because we believe in what we do.

Travelling abroad is a great way for young adults to learn about global citizenship, community engagement, develop a deeper understanding of the world's problems and experience a new culture.





## WHY GVI?

- Since 1997, we have sent over 24,000 people on our programs.
- We've spent over 70% of volunteer fees in the field.
- We have a 95% approval rating.
- We own and operate our own projects, meaning that we have a long-term impact on the ground.
- We have incredibly high health and safety standards - we challenge you to find others as comprehensive as ours.
- We work with world-renowned partners including Divers Alert Network, World Wildlife Fund and Save the Children.
- We provide real-time updates from the ground, putting you in touch with staff, volunteers and project developments before and after your trip.
- Our Alumni team allows volunteers to stay connected and involved after returning home.





## OUR PROJECTS

We currently operate in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe and we are continually expanding our available list of programs and locations suitable for young adults.

Our programs range from 1-4 weeks long and can involve a variety of experiences from working on a construction project to learning Spanish to conserving sea turtles.

Our focus areas include Marine Conservation, Wildlife Conservation, Cultural Immersion, Construction and Language Immersion.

The wellbeing of our volunteers, staff and the local communities in which we work is something we take very seriously. Upholding our high safety standards comes down to having well trained and managed staff, good protocols and finally, well trained and managed volunteers. We have a strong staff structure, incorporating experienced, trained and dedicated personnel into a fun, professional and caring team.

# BRAND PROMISES

AT GVI, WE BUILD OUR AWARD WINNING REPUTATION  
AROUND 3 PRINCIPLE FOCUSE:S

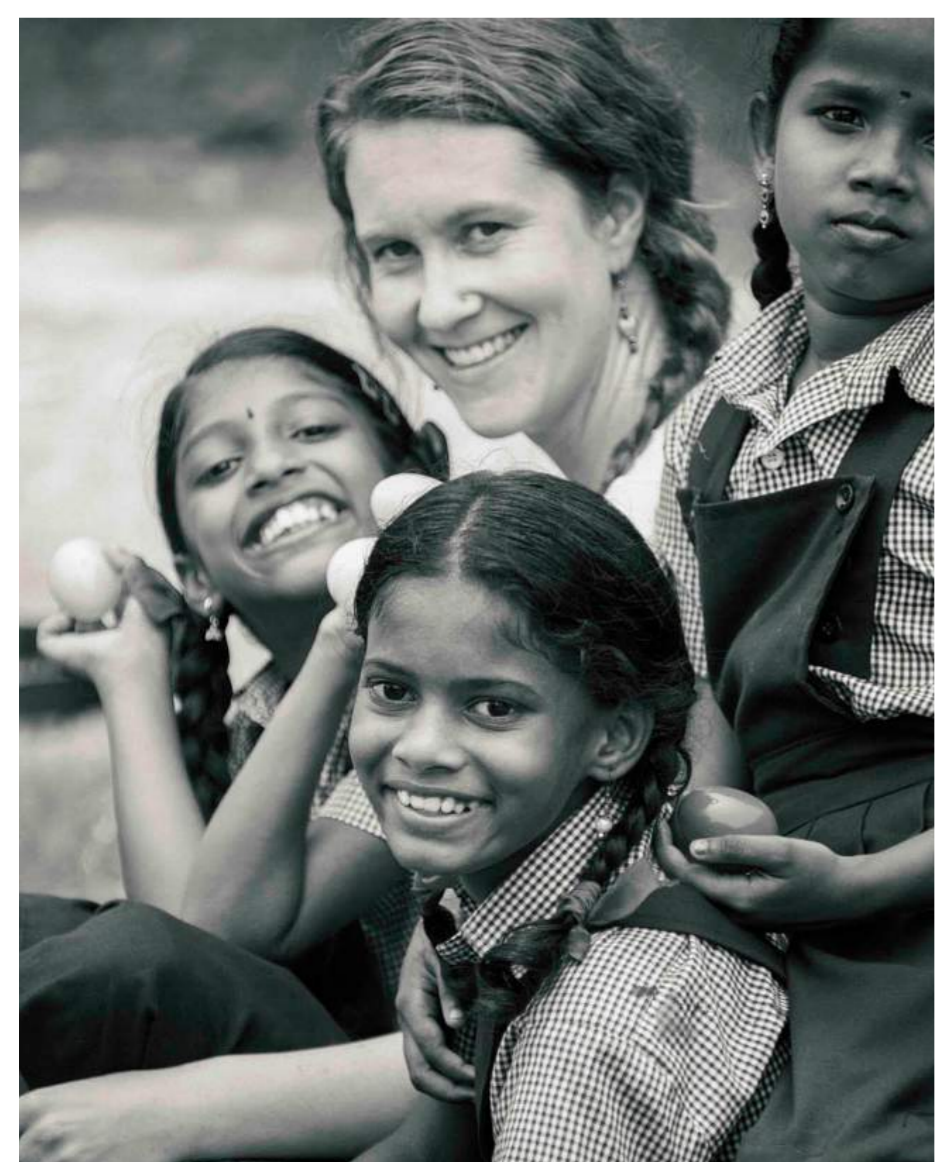


Impact: you will  
make a difference

360 degree support



GVI will positively  
impact your access  
to higher education  
and employment





# OUR HEALTH & SAFETY PRINCIPLES

- All staff working with minors are background checked with professional references and where possible, criminal record checks.
- All our in-country staff receive off-site safety management training and volunteer management training.
- All our staff are first aid trained and qualified.
- Each project has a staff team, supervised by a project manager, who is overseen by a senior in-country manager.
- We have a minimum of one staff member per eight volunteers, however typically our staff to volunteer ratio is much higher.
- All health and safety materials are signed off by our senior field managers in-country, and reviewed and confirmed by our Senior Field Team.
- In the unlikely event that an incident does occur, we have a strong support system to help manage incidents, including senior field managers, the Senior Field Team, and our Director of Operations and Director of Business Operations.
- All volunteers are given emergency contact numbers and addresses prior to departure.



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- Upon arrival all volunteers receive an initial health and safety briefing, plus a communication card, with the relevant numbers, contacts and addresses for our on-site and off-site staff, including the 24-hour emergency number, which we ask them to keep on their person at all times.
- We ensure volunteers always have access to staff, who make time for individual concerns and questions and ensure that all receive training and guidance as they progress through our projects.
- All of our activities and locations are risk assessed, using an internationally recognised system of matrix. We have Emergency Action Plans in place for all major foreseeable incidents written by trained experts and reviewed periodically.
- Emergency Action Plans are tested via communication checks, drills and occasionally, real life incidents, these checks and drills are logged and evaluated.
- We hold night-time debriefings to discuss how each day went, the plan for tomorrow and the week ahead.
- We conduct regular checks on our first aid kits, vehicles, fire extinguishers and record these checks.
- We follow UK Foreign Commonwealth Office travel advice and monitor other major government's advice as well, including the USA and Australia.
- GVI has a Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, two formally trained Child Protection Officers, and works closely with 'Child Safe', a leading UK advisor on child safety. If our guidelines, and in cases, rules, are not followed, we may offer informal reminders, verbal or written warnings, or dismiss someone from the project if we feel they are endangering themselves, others, or the reputation or success of the project. GVI has a strict "zero tolerance" policy for alcohol, drug-use or breaking local laws.



# THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

GVI'S TEAM IS MADE UP OF PASSIONATE INDIVIDUALS FROM AROUND THE WORLD, WHO ARE TRUE EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELD.



Steve Gwenin  
Chief Executive Officer

Andy Woods-Ballard

Director of Business &  
Educational Partnerships



Daniel Ponce-Taylor  
Director of Programs



Laura Dix-Bowler  
 Director of Program  
 Enrollment

Tyrone Bennett  
 Director of Alumni Services



Alice Hawkes  
 Director of Marketing





## FAQS

Here at GVI we understand that joining our projects can be a somewhat daunting venture into the unknown, and that applies to the parents and guardians of our volunteers as well as the volunteers themselves!

In this pack we have gathered together a range of information just for parents and guardians. Our staff team have traversed many parts of the globe as well as participated on many of GVI's programs,

making us well-equipped to discuss your concerns and provide you and your teen with a high standard of support and advice.

We'll begin with some of the most commonly asked questions for parents and guardians, followed by an overview of our health and safety protocols, but please do give us a call if you would like any further information!

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## **How do GVI Under 18s Programs differ from other GVI Programs?**

Our Under 18 programs run in similar locations as our volunteer programs for 18+ year old volunteers. However, we have adapted the number of staff, accommodation, project work and group size to be suitable for our teen travellers.

## **Can my 17-year-old join one of your programs not listed as “Under 18”?**

Unfortunately, we have a very strict age requirement for our programs not listed as “Under 18”. This is both for legal reasons, and also to ensure your teen has a fun and safe time while travelling with us.

## **My teen has a friend who is 18, are they able to join the Under 18 trip?**

We do occasionally accept 18 year olds onto our programs when they want to travel with a friend or friends who are not 18. Any 18 year old who would like to attend our Under 18 programs must adhere to the same rules as our other teen travellers, such as a zero tolerance policy for alcohol consumption.

## **How many staff will be on the program and who are they?**

We have a minimum requirement of one staff member per 8 teens, however, we normally have far more staff on hand than this minimum number to ensure your teen has all of the support they need. All of our staff are chosen based on their experience of the country in which they work, their knowledge of the programs, and their high-class management skills. Our senior management team are always available to assist in an emergency as well.

## **How many other volunteers will be on the project, how old are they and where do they come from?**

Most of our programs have between 8 and 16 participants. These numbers can vary depending on the time of year and the program location. Our Under 18s programs are specifically for 15 to 17 year olds. Most of our participants are from the United Kingdom and United States of America; however, we accept participants from all over the world and have had Under 18 travellers from over 10 different countries so far.

## **What is the accommodation like and is it secure?**

This depends on the location as well, but most of our locations have a shared house or homestays with local, vetted families. The accommodation might be basic, but it will always be secure, and where necessary will employ additional security. Bedrooms will be shared and single-sex and staff will be available 24 hours a day.

## **Is there somewhere safe for valuables to be stored?**

Most of our bases have a safe, which is reserved mainly for passports, cash and debit cards. Larger valuables such as laptops cannot be stored in the safe, and all items are brought at volunteers own risk, however we will do our best to ensure that our accommodation remains as secure as possible.

## **How do we organise flights, visas and all of the other preparations?**

The Country Expert assigned to your teen’s chosen program will run through all of the logistical details and provide support leading up to your teens departure. All of our programs have a comprehensive Field Manual which outlines pick-up details, visa information, emergency contact details and a packing list, just to name a few.

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## **Will there be access to medical facilities, what would happen if my son or daughter were to get sick or injured?**

Staff are well-prepared and experienced to handle these situations, and will support your teen in obtaining any care they require. All of our staff are Emergency First Responders (EFR) and First Aid trained and are aware of the nearest medical facilities.

## **How is an emergency dealt with?**

We have Emergency Action Plans which we follow in any serious event, and our trained and experienced staff will manage the situation effectively, bringing in the experience of our senior management teams where necessary.

## **Will I be able to contact my son/daughter; what if there were an emergency at home?**

Some of our bases may have limited communications, but you will have access to emergency lines if you need to reach your teen urgently, and our office staff are able to contact staff in the field in this situation. Our Country Experts will also be able to advise your teen as to the best way to keep in touch with home when they are on the project.

## **How will I know when they have arrived safely?**

Quite simply, we will let you know! We send out arrival emails once we have all of our volunteers on our base at the start of the program, to the email they provide for their next of kin.

## **Will my son/daughter be met at the airport?**

For all of our Under 18's programs we provide an airport pick up window to ensure everyone can be met at the airport. We ask all of our Under 18 volunteers provide us with their flight details at least 8 weeks prior to departure. We have had many parents

in the past coordinate their teen's flight with other travellers to ensure they have a buddy. If you would like to do this, please contact your Country Expert.

## **What does the program fee cover?**

Program fees cover pre-departure support and materials, food, accommodation, training and orientation, long-term GVI field staff, 24-hour in-country support, project equipment and materials, not to mention the unforgettable, off-the-beaten track, life changing experiences! Not included are flights, insurance, visas and spending money.

## **Does my teen need any qualifications or experience to take part?**

For most of our programs, no, we will carry out all of the necessary training when you arrive at the project.

## **If my son/daughter has a friend who also wants to go, can they travel together?**

Yes. Most of our travellers come independently, but we do also have plenty who come with a friend or sibling as well. Let us know you are travelling together and we will make sure the field team are aware. Please note these bookings would be subject to availability.

## **How much support will they get in preparing to go?**

Your teen will be assisted by one of our Country Experts prior to travel. One main point of contact means continuity and a high level of specialist knowledge in making these important preparations.

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## **How can we trust that GVI is a legitimate organisation?**

GVI is one of the most well-respected and prominent international volunteering organisations, featured in various international newspapers and magazines and various international television programs. Since 1997, we have sent more than 2,000 volunteers away each year and in 2011, we were announced as “Best Volunteering Organisation” at the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards. We also have a number of ambassadors, who were volunteers on our programs previously, and are willing to chat with you about their experiences.

## **Can my teen meet up or connect with other volunteers before they travel?**

We can't share other volunteer's information for reasons of confidentiality; however we can share you or your teen's email, with your permission, and ask other travellers to make contact before departure- just speak to your Country Expert

## **How far in advance do they need to plan the trip?**

Our most popular programs can fill up several months in advance, so we do recommend booking ahead, however we take bookings up to a month before departure on programs with availability, so last-minute is certainly an option!

## **What do we need to do to confirm our place?**

In order to attend our program, your teen will need to select one of the programs listed on our website and fill in an application. A Country Expert will then telephone your teen or yourself (depending who's contract details are listed on the applications) and review the

program details and application information. Our Under 18s programs fill up very quickly, so we recommend completing this process at least 6 months in advance. We can accept applications for programs with availability up to one month before departure.

## **What documentation will I need to provide?**

As minors, we have several additional document requirements in place to adhere to international travel guidelines, and immigration laws in the countries where we operate. We need copies of the following information at least 8 weeks before departure:

- Confirmation of acceptance of our terms and conditions.
- A signed, GVI medical form.
- Flight arrival and departure details Passport information.
- Emergency contact details.
- Proof of comprehensive medical and traveller's insurance.
- A notarized parental consent form signed by all legal parent and/or guardians. We will provide you with a template.



# TESTIMONIALS

*“My volunteering with GVI’s under 18 trip to Costa Rica was not only one of the greatest trips I have had the pleasure of partaking in, but also an immensely rewarding experience.”*

**Max Severino, Under 18s Costa Rica**

*The people I have met were truly the highlight of my trip; whether it be the other under 18s volunteers who have become such good friends and will remain that way for the rest of my life, or the staff who were so kind and generous, or the people of the community who welcomed us so warmly into their lives for our brief stay.”*

**Holly Ainslie, Under 18s South Africa**

*“I didn’t expect us to be so involved in the construction aspects, so this exceeded my expectations. Seeing how happy and excited the students were while building the library was amazing and being able to interact with them and playing sports were some of the best aspects of my time here.”*

**Tori Whiffen, Under 18s Nepal**

*I would say that this whole experience has been absolutely amazing. I have loved being able to meet so many different people from all over the World and being able to aid in the conservation of these amazing animals. I have learnt so many things about myself and I think that the lessons that I have learnt here will stay with me forever.”*

**Charlie English, Under 18s Greece**



# CONTACT US

**Still have questions? We would love to hear from you. Please give us a call on any of the following numbers or visit our regional websites:**

United Kingdom: 01727 250 250

[www.gvi.co.uk](http://www.gvi.co.uk)

United States of America: 1 888 653 6028

[www.gviusa.com](http://www.gviusa.com)

Australia: (+61) 1300 795 013

[www.gviaustralia.com.au](http://www.gviaustralia.com.au)

Canada: 1 888 653 6028

[www.gvicanada.ca](http://www.gvicanada.ca)

Ireland: 1 850 885 880

[www.gvi.ie](http://www.gvi.ie)

South Africa: (+27) 021 782 2386

[www.gviafrica.co.za](http://www.gviafrica.co.za)

