

Top 10 Mistakes Short-Term Volunteers Make

(with input from nationals of 70 countries)

Your national host asks that you DON'T:

10. **Expect the luxuries you enjoy at home.** Our standard of living is not the same.
9. **Underestimate the effectiveness of our leadership** or act as if the leadership structures and business/church models in your country are ideal for the whole world.
8. **Focus on the problems/evil** in our land without admitting or addressing the struggles in your own backyard.
7. **Be obsessed with picture taking.** It is actually quite embarrassing for us.
6. **Give gifts quickly.** Many problems are caused by well meaning, generous people. Our children are especially drawn to your kindness through gift giving, but it builds jealousy and dependence rather than character. Always check with your hosts before giving even the smallest gift.
5. **Give advice quickly** (in presentations or personal conversations). You will not “revolutionize” us with “cutting edge” principles. We pay attention because we are very courteous and curious about your foreign behavior. We will learn the most from those who humbly build long-term relationships with us.
4. **Be consumed by accomplishing the tasks.** We want you to be effective and efficient while you are here, but what is most important is how you compliment the ongoing work and serve those who are living here. On the other hand, don't expect a holiday or vacation—plan to learn, work and serve among us.
3. **Think we are “backwards”** because we do not like the same food, music and technology. We will help expand your view of the world if you are open to it.
2. **Let your journey end with the flight home.** Make this short trip part of your life journey by staying involved with the sending organization. Help them help us.
1. **Tell your story in a way that makes it sound like you were the hero** rescuing us from ourselves and our backward culture. Share WHAT you did and WHO you met. Keep it personal. Help your friends/family get involved through a sponsoring project with the sending organization.

Adapted by the Global Outreach Staff of CURE International
from work by Dr. David Livermore, author of “Serving with Eyes Wide Open:
Doing Short-Term Missions With Cultural Sensitivity”.

