

# Sustainability Initiatives: Voluntourism

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# Voluntourism

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Voluntourism took flight in the 1960s with the commencement of the Peace Corps as an effort to serve the United States by **providing aid** and assisting in the peace making process with **local/cultural interaction** of developing countries through living and working in these various destinations.

There are still similar types of voluntourism as explained above, however, the leisure travel market has evolved voluntourism into being a type of leisure travel that is focused on creating a **sense of purpose** while enjoying leisure time. Technically defined, voluntourism involves traveling to a place to improve socio-cultural, environmental, and economic well-being by providing volunteered time and/or goods.

Voluntourism can be done internationally and domestically. It can be as small as helping out at a farm for a day, or rebuilding a community after a disaster. There are several organizations that offer these types of volunteer opportunities. Some of these voluntourism experiences require the traveler to pay, while others will offer free room and/or board in exchange for the volunteer services.

# Economic Impact

Voluntourism is a **valuable** phenomenon as it creates social exchange and **meaningful interactions** between travelers and communities. Voluntourism also brings economic impact to communities, adding to the positive contribution of voluntourists.

A 2008 study from the Corporation for National & Community Service and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found approximately **4.7 million Americans** volunteered away from their home in 2007. **Three in four American** voluntourists (approximately 3.7 million people) volunteered in the U.S., while one in four volunteered internationally.

Volunteers contribute their time, money, and/or goods to organizations, and travel spending also occurs in the destination. Purchases such as accommodations, dining, and shopping bring positive economic impact to a community.

Continuing to **communicate** with volunteers after a voluntourism experience can foster loyalty, return visits and further contributions. Communications can include newsletters that share what volunteers have accomplished, graphics that show where dollars are spent, and feature stories of areas in need. The intent is to continue to foster a meaningful relationship with voluntourists.

# Arizona Voluntourism Assets: Public Lands

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Arizona has an overwhelming amount of beautiful public lands all throughout the state, with the most well-known being Grand Canyon National Park. Many people come to Arizona just to experience the **natural beauty**, however, increasingly people are wanting to go beyond visiting natural wonders and are wondering how they can **give back** to these breathtaking landscapes.

A number of organizations throughout Arizona offer volunteer opportunities on public lands. Arizona State Parks, Arizona Trail Association, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service all offer volunteer opportunities of some sort. Working with organizations such as these, opportunities can be developed to appeal to travelers. Travelers volunteering on public lands may be interested in camping, hiking and other activities to further **experience the great outdoors** of Arizona.



# Arizona Voluntourism Assets: Public Lands

The Grand Canyon Association offers volunteer opportunities to Arizona's most well-known natural wonder ([www.grandcanyon.org/plan-your-visit/volunteer](http://www.grandcanyon.org/plan-your-visit/volunteer)). Trail building, trash collection, invasive species removal, and native planting are all different types of opportunities that can be found by reaching out to local, state, and national parks.



Tourism Cares, a non-profit geared toward giving back to the travel and tourism industry, hosted a special event for tourism professionals to volunteer at the Grand Canyon this past year. This event was set up in honor of the centennial birthday of the National Park Service.

# Arizona Volontourism Assets: Farms

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**Work exchange** volunteer programs are a perfect way to spend time in an area, while also giving back to a local community. The concept of this is not new, however, the idea has been becoming more main stream as the desire to **explore** domestically and internationally grows.

Farm volunteer exchange programs have become especially popular through the organization World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF, [www.wwof.net](http://www.wwof.net)). WWOOFing has become reputable in offering the opportunity to **gain experience** on a farm, free room and board, and time off to explore a visited area, while assisting a local organic farmer. The assistance could come from a variety of tasks ranging from caring for livestock, harvesting, helping create a product from the farm (such as beer, salsa, jam, etc.), or any responsibility needed to assist overall productivity around the establishment.

# Arizona Voluntourism Assets: Farms

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## WELCOME TO WWOOF

**WWOOF is a worldwide movement** linking volunteers with organic farmers and growers to promote cultural and educational experiences based on trust and non monetary exchanges thereby helping to build a sustainable global community.

**WWOOF is an exchange.** In return for volunteer help, WWOOF hosts offer food, accommodation and opportunities to learn about organic lifestyles.

Many countries have national WWOOF groups. Look in the drop down menu or list below to find where they are - and start your WWOOF adventure.

Other countries have hosts - but no national WWOOF group as yet!

You can find out more about these by going [here](#)

Make a difference! Get involved! Join WWOOF! Think local - act global!

Besides the \$20 annual membership fee to join WWOOF, there is no cost to volunteer. A program like WWOOF could be implemented in a variety of agricultural offerings around Arizona.

# Arizona Voluntourism Assets: Community Revitalization

**Community development** is an important factor to any area, whether it be rural or urban. Organizations, such as Habitat for Humanity, utilize the positive nature of volunteering as a means to **rebuild** local, national, and global communities.

Opportunities to volunteer come in responsibilities such as: structural rebuilds (homes, community centers, buildings, etc.), educational programs, veteran specific needs, disaster response, and a number of other opportunities.

Programs are established in local communities, however, the organization offers one to two week domestic and international trips to implement the aforementioned services.

There is plenty of opportunity around the state **in rural, urban, and tribal lands** for these types of voluntourism services to develop. HandsOn Greater Phoenix is another organization which can be useful in developing voluntourism, as they offer a database of volunteer opportunities in the Greater Phoenix area.



# Arizona Voluntourism Assets: Community Revitalization

Adding **educational components** to voluntourism opportunities can further engage volunteers in learning about the **local culture** and history of an area. Partnering with museums, tour guides, community leaders and others could add value to a voluntourist experience and **foster** further interest in participation.



Abbe Museum in Maine offered a voluntourism experience in 2013 which integrated education, recreation and service. Participants learned about the Penobscot Nation native culture, experienced traditional cultural events, canoed, toured the community and worked on various service projects. [www.abbemuseum.org/voluntourism.html](http://www.abbemuseum.org/voluntourism.html)

# Arizona Voluntourism Assets: Convention Centers and Meeting/Event Space

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Leisure travelers are not the only travelers in which to target volunteer opportunities. **Business travelers** are also increasingly incorporating volunteer and charity actions into their travels. **Meetings, conventions and group events** are a growing segment for charitable giving. Charitable components are included in meeting schedules for such reasons as **boosting morale**, team building, **experience building** and adding to corporate responsibility efforts. Arizona's plethora of convention centers, resorts and other meeting spaces attract a number of groups that would be interested in voluntourism.

Right Hand Events, out of California, is one organization helping meeting planners incorporate volunteer opportunities into meetings and events.



<http://righthandevents.com/group-volunteer-projects/>

# Arizona Voluntourism Assets: Convention Centers and Meeting/Event Space

Visit Baltimore

MEETINGS REUNION GROUP TRAVEL ME

INFO

## Voluntourism

Give back to the Baltimore community while attending a convention: plan a voluntourism project.

Many of our incoming groups ask how they can give back to the community. Visit Baltimore has developed a program with Business Volunteers Maryland to identify needed projects throughout Baltimore and to coordinate efforts. Want to be inspired? Build morale and relationships? Benefit the host community? Ask our [Convention Services team](#) how you can organize your own voluntourism project.

Visit Baltimore is one example of a destination highlighting voluntourism for groups. They have partnered with a Maryland based volunteer organization to find the right opportunity to add to meeting and group itineraries.

<http://baltimore.org/info/voluntourism>



# Arizona Voluntourism Assets: Sporting Events



<https://wmphoenixopen.com>

Arizona is a very attractive state for sporting events, including golf tournaments, college football tournaments and more. **Tournaments** and **championship events** often recruit volunteers in order to cover the many tasks needed to ensure large events function smoothly. While some may rely on locals and/or Arizona residents and require a minimum number of volunteer hours, others provide more flexibility with volunteer requirements.

Those volunteering could be interested in a number of activities while in Arizona, including golf, spa, outdoor adventure and other activities leading to economic impact. Partnering with **sport organizations** can provide opportunity for marketing the many things to see and do while in Arizona.

# Other Best Practices

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No matter the type of volunteer activity, **care** should be taken by businesses and community organizations to ensure voluntourism is making a **positive contribution** and resources are being managed well. Globally, concern has developed as businesses try to profit off of volunteer travelers by creating organizations without the right intentions. There is also concern that the use of short-term volunteers uses resources, rather than contributes to a community.

Watchdog groups such as Charity Navigator ([www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)) provide **detailed information to consumers** about where monies go, concerns, and successes from a host of charities. Information like this is important to provide consumers looking for voluntourism experiences. Testimonials, certifications and compliance with state regulations are other things to consider sharing with consumers. Meaningful experiences are at the heart of voluntourism and keeping that front and center as Arizona develops voluntourism will be beneficial to the state.



# Resources

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Arizona Golf Association  
[www.azgolf.org](http://www.azgolf.org)

Corporation for National & Community Service  
[www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)

Global Vision International  
[www.gviusa.com](http://www.gviusa.com)

Habitat for Humanity  
[www.habitat.org/getinv/volunteer](http://www.habitat.org/getinv/volunteer)

HandsOn Greater Phoenix  
[www.handsonphoenix.org](http://www.handsonphoenix.org)

Tourism Cares  
[www.tourismcares.org](http://www.tourismcares.org)

VolunTourism Institute  
<https://voluntourisminstitute.wordpress.com>

VolunTourism.org  
[www.voluntourism.org](http://www.voluntourism.org)

Workaway  
[www.workaway.info](http://www.workaway.info)

World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms  
(WWOOF)  
[www.woof.net](http://www.woof.net)