



GOOD TRAVELS ADVISOR



Steps for Making a Difference by Giving Back

The impulse to give and show kindness can take place anytime and anywhere. It can occur while traveling to Africa on safari, to seeing the temples of Angkor Wat, taking cruise excursions from Alaska to Mexico and beyond, or exploring America's cities or national parks.

There are many causes competing for your support; from social needs to investing in the environment, arts and culture, and so much more. You can easily make a charitable gift to any nonprofit as a gesture of your generosity and support, but choosing a cause or a group that is meaningful to you, for any amount of gift, requires some thought. All gifts are valuable. The energy and initiative that you invest in the giving process can be transformative, rewarding and educational.

Below are three steps that can turn a simple gesture into an amazing journey of self-discovery and fulfillment for you and your family.

Step 1: Zero in on how you want to make a difference

There is no one way to discover your giving passion; it can be a tragic social inequity that won't leave you, an inspiration to solve a problem, gratitude or a desire to help.

You should give to any project that appeals to you; there is often no harm in impulse giving. But, for a more meaningful and impactful giving experience, consider focusing on what you care about, what you want to support, and how you can help create change.

Your issue may be education for girls or wildlife conservation, but don't stop there, as there are so many layers within each issue. If you can narrow your interests sufficiently, you may be surprised by where you end up – and that may lead to an appealing new cause or a special organization to support.

Additional factors that can be used to narrow giving interests include:

Who do you really want to help?

Sometimes it is best to think about “who” - whose life you want to change. If it is children, is there an age group you are concerned about? The more specific you can be relative to age, location, and circumstances, the better your gift will be for you, the nonprofit and the beneficiaries they serve.

Think about helping the truly disadvantaged

Consider using some of your giving to support those most in need. Sometimes that means trying to find the most marginalized, such as ethnic minorities, girls or particularly vulnerable populations.

Root causes versus essential band aids

Do you care about addressing immediate needs or the harder task of getting at the root of the problem? Being curious and asking why the situation is what it is will help you dig into the problem and ensure that you are part of the solution.

Looking at social entrepreneurs and market based solutions

How often have we heard the “teach them to fish” parable? There is indeed something appealing to microfinance and other market-based solutions. Look at their business models, check their results and see who funds them. Also search for social entrepreneurs with the ability to scale projects and bring about significant changes in the status quo.

The ultimate litmus test - common sense and butterflies

When it comes down to it, when donating any of your hard-earned money, be sure you know what is going to happen and that you’re excited about it!



Step 2: Seek out trusted and effective organizations and projects

Once you have a better idea of what you want to focus on, the next step is to find a great organization that is a match. Remember to check with your travel advisor as they may have suggestions of groups that align with your interest.

Below are some tips for finding good organizations to consider giving to.

Surf and search

Visit websites of organizations that work directly in the area you are interested in and don't overlook lower capacity nonprofits that can't invest in snazzy tech; sometimes they are the most effective and most aligned with what you want to do.

Check in with the international specialists

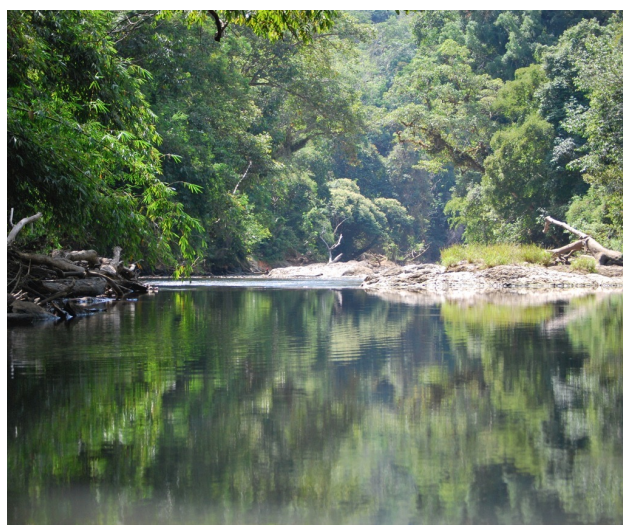
"Intermediaries" work with foreign organizations that may not be registered in the U.S. Donors making a gift to an intermediary may claim a charitable tax deduction. They can also help you find and vet charities. There are general intermediaries (CAF America), while some are geographically focused (e.g. Give2Asia, the Resource Foundation, the King Baudouin Foundation), or issue-based (e.g. Global Greengrants Fund).

Browse online marketplaces

Sites such as GlobalGiving and Kiva list hundreds of specific projects available for donors.

Go local

Community foundations are a special type of charity that serves a specific city or region. You can see what they fund, ask for recommendations or fund their special initiatives. They are found in many communities around the world.



Piggyback on the pros

Established foundations like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation and Skoll Foundation are expert resources: they have the staff to research great organizations, and they also publish their research and lessons. Check out what they do and their list of grantees!

Look for "un-usual suspects"

Sometimes your donation may best be placed with a large, known charitable organization (e.g. Mercy Corps or Doctors Without Borders). But don't overlook the smaller guys. GlobalGiving provides descriptions of various overseas organizations and for local groups, community foundations are a wonderful resource. Depending on what you're looking for, smaller and more-focused groups may be a better fit. Regardless of who you partner with, it's always important to listen to their priorities.

Connect and listen to others

Giving is very personal but you don't have to do it alone. Ask your family, friends and colleagues who they know is also interested in your issue. Passion for places and causes is infectious – learn what people are doing and connect with them, you'll be surprised at what you learn.

Do your due diligence

For all the stellar charities out there, there are also some not so good ones. Start by looking at the organization's website and see if it shares how they work, their results and leadership team. You want to gauge how transparent they are, and try to get a feel about their finances. You also want to make sure they are legitimate; sites like [Guidestar](#) and the Better Business Bureau provide reports for free.

Step 3: Make the right gift for you and the nonprofit

Once you have chosen the organization you want to give to, the last step is to make a gift that works for both you and the organization. Most donors make a simple gift directly to a charity. However, sometimes making the best gift requires extra thinking.

Donating assets versus cash

The easiest way to make a gift is to write a check or make a gift online; these are considered cash gifts. Alternatively, it may be best to donate highly appreciated, publicly traded stock, allowing you to realize far greater tax savings - and perhaps give a good deal more.

General support or project support

Maybe you are looking for a super project that has a beginning and an end; alternatively, you can provide “unrestricted” or “general operating” support that can be used for project activities but also to strengthen the organization. Always allow for, if the charity includes it, some measure of overhead costs; these expenses are critical to keep an organization functioning.

Recurring/repeat gifts

Some charities allow you to make a recurring gift each month or each quarter. Instead of having to go online each time you wish to make a gift, you can spread out your gift over time.

Matching/challenge grants

Always consider timing your gift to take advantage of any matching offers from the organization so you can increase your impact and encourage others to give!

As you begin or renew your giving journey, remember that you don’t have to do it alone. There are many resources you can access and many people who will help you explore ways to make a difference!

Your travel agent is a certified Good Travels Advisor, part of an industry training and learning community focused on maximizing travel giving and volunteering so you can make the greatest impact possible – and have the greatest experience possible!

