

Global Youth Mission (GYM): Frequently Asked Questions

Where do we stay?

Most of the sites either have a Retreat Center that we live in or we rent a house for the group to live in. In any case, we primarily live as a GYM group. There is always the possibility of our groups living with families—this opportunity creates an even closer experience with the community. If that opportunity occurs, then we have two youth per family and all families are hand-selected by the Parish/Organization that is sponsoring GYM in country.

What will I actually do when we are there?

This varies from site to site. Our true goal is for our groups to *be with* the people of the community, not doing something for the people. With that in mind, we also appreciate that being involved in some activities is an avenue to building relationships. Helping to teach Vacation Bible School, painting buildings, and working on a self-sustainable farm are just some of the types of services GYM has been a part of in the past.

How likely is it that I would get to go to my first choice of location/site?

We try very hard to accommodate everyone to his or her first or second choice. Each site has a limited number of people they can house, which dictates the size of each group. We try to balance the number of males and females in each group. We also keep in mind the wide range of skills that youth bring to the needs of each site when we make the site assignments.

How soon will I know which site I am going to?

For the 2013 trips, interviewing will be completed by early March and everyone will be contacted by Friday, March 8th.

What does the \$2300 trip cost pay for and do you help with fundraising?

The price covers airfare and related fees; housing and food/bottled water; ground transportation; and entrance fees into cultural/site-seeing events while on the mission. The only extra money the youth will spend beyond the \$2,300 would be money spent on souvenirs. We also make a donation to each of the sites to help with the specific needs of their community. We do not specifically help with individual fundraising—that is the responsibility of each participant.

Will parents be able to communicate with their son or daughter while they are gone?

It is our experience that the richness of the mission comes with the groups' ability to be fully immersed with the people of the country they are serving. We ask that they truly try to just be in the present and leave the US behind. For that reason we discourage contact between youth and their parents during the trips. In all sites the leaders have access to phones/computers and generally send one or two email updates while the group is gone. Also, if there is any type of emergency or need to reach a family the leaders are able to do so quite easily.

How safe are the places you go?

Each site has an established system of hosting groups from the U.S. They understand our need for safety and would not take any unnecessary risks with our groups. They are aware of our dietary concerns and of our need for medical availability, safe and secure housing, proper chaperoning of our group by one of their village adults and safe transportation. GYM has had many groups go to each of the sites over the past 12 years and with all of our sites we are linking with people affiliated with the Catholic church.

Who are the chaperones?

Most chaperones come from youth ministry or the teaching field. They must have experience working with youth, traveling internationally and have, themselves, been involved in mission service. They submit resumes, go through background checks, are interviewed and provide references. Once leaders are selected they are led through a series of training sessions and are fully supervised throughout the entire program.

Why do we have mandatory meetings?

Proper formation for an international mission experience is a high priority to our office. It is essential that the leaders have enough time to build a solid relationship with each youth that is part of their group. It also adds to the success of the experience if the youth have had an opportunity to build a trusting relationship with each other before they leave for their two-week experience. We try to be very respectful to the demands of high school students, yet our experience shows us that the amount of time we have set aside for preparation is critical to a safe and rewarding experience for all.

I have a friend who is not Catholic. Could they apply?

Yes, they are welcome to apply. However, if we have too many applicants and not enough openings priority will be given to those youth applying through a Catholic organization. Also, the friend needs to be sure that he or she feels comfortable with the Catholic Mass.