

How To Escape The Rat Race

and

Swap Your Skills
for a Fulfilling Life

of Travel and
Helping Local People
That Need It

By Andrej and Karen Brummer

So you want to Swap Work for Travel, experience the world and make a real difference in people's lives?

Hi, we are Andrej and Karen Brummer, the founders of Swap Work for Travel.

Just 5 years ago we were working hard as a cancer research scientist and bank manager in Sydney, Australia. We had moved to Sydney from New Zealand for a 'better life' but found we had basically just swapped one rat race for another. We were living stressed, unfulfilling lives, spending about 2 hours per day sitting in traffic to and from work, exchanging time for dollars in fields neither of us was passionate about and surviving from short holiday to short holiday.

We had already quit 3 jobs each to go traveling for longer than our bosses decided we could:

1. The first time we quit our jobs for travel was when we wanted to honeymoon in the Caribbean, New York and Florida for 6 weeks in 2005.
2. Andrej managed to keep his job when we went to Europe for 6 weeks in 2006. Karen didn't!
3. We both decided to quit our jobs again for travel when we wanted to drive around the stunning South Island of New Zealand for 2 months in 2008.
4. Then, after planning and booking our dream trip to cruise Alaska and explore Canada for two and a half months in 2009, Andrej's boss refused to give him any time off. So, he quit his job again. This time Karen managed to keep her job, only to find she'd been made redundant when we returned to Australia.

This was kind of like the final straw. We were sick of being stuck in 'the system' and being tied to lives that society had taught us we should want.

We were becoming increasingly dissatisfied by having to return to our mundane jobs after each amazing travel experience. Something needed to change!

So, we quit our LAST JOBS EVER in May 2010 to go and explore Southeast Asia for a year or more!

We are proud to say we haven't returned to jobs since. And we're excited to share with you how we did it.

So, what have we been doing in the past 5 years?

One of the most profound and humbling experiences in our lives came from travelling around Southeast Asia for 18 months. We ended up in rural northern Laos, falling in love with the place and people. After several smaller projects where we helped local people, we decided to move there and set up locally run businesses that benefit the local schools and the amazing, good-hearted people of Luang Namtha.

Teaching people skills they have never been able to learn and watching them grow and become more capable and confident is a life-changing experience.

Especially when you combine it with traveling, living in another culture, learning another language and living like a local in many beautiful destinations around the world.

This has been a ridiculously fun and rewarding achievement.

And along the way we have been privileged enough to meet some amazing people we've been able to help, and who have in turn helped us.

The system we use means anyone with skills to share and an eagerness to travel and experience the world through the eyes of locals, can make a difference in the world. All while travelling virtually for free!

Helping assignments can last anywhere from a few days to years. We know that, at least to begin with, most people probably want to test the waters with shorter term projects before plunging into long term travel.

So you're in the right place!

We're going to show you how Swap Work For Travel can arm you with everything you need to go out into this beautiful world, find an amazing experience and spend time giving the gift of the talents you already have to local people who would really benefit from them.

And in return you get to see the world through their eyes, live like a local for a bit and experience an adventure you will never forget!

So, what exactly is Swap Work for Travel, and how does it work?

The premise is very simple, you want to travel, help people and experience an inside look at a culture and country that interest you...

And...

Someone from a country you really want to visit needs your help doing something you're really good at, or at least know quite a bit about. And they're willing to give you food and accommodation in return for your help.

This is called a win-win situation!

You get to experience local life, basically for free, and feel fulfilled using your talents to help different people around the world.

Local businesses and families get to enhance their enterprises and their lives by leveraging your skills.

And best of all you can do it for a period of time that's as long or as short as you like.

www.SwapWorkForTravel.com has been designed to match your skills to a host who is looking for your expertise, somewhere in the world.

All you need to make it happen

Getting started is easier than you think! If you are someone who is looking for a real experience you will never forget, then you'll need:

1. Eagerness to step outside your comfort zone, go out there and really help to make a difference in a local person's business or project
2. An open mind to learn about a culture that will be very different from yours. To genuinely be a part of another culture is a profound experience
3. An open heart to meet and accept all the new people and different ideas you will encounter
4. Patience and a willingness to teach local people the skills they really need help with
5. A lack of pretentiousness, so that you can experience another way of life without judging it as being too dirty, too communal, too different or more inferior to your own culture. If you really want to live like a local you have to be ready for it, warts and all!
6. A great work ethic, because you only get out what you put in. You need to get out there and take the bull by the horns to reap maximum reward from this amazing opportunity. Making a difference in the world isn't a passive experience
7. Enough money saved up so that you will be able to live comfortably for the time you plan to travel – this will be a lot less than you think once you understand our Swap Work for Travel system
8. A positive attitude and willingness to share a skill you may even take for granted but that is sought after somewhere in the world. Trust us – you, yes YOU, have many skills already that will be a big help to someone

Now we're going to teach you how to discover your skills and share them with the world in exchange for a deeply rewarding, authentic travel adventure.

Here are the exact steps you need to take to swap your current job for an exciting, fulfilling life while traveling the world

Step 1: Define your skills.

Make a list of everything you can think of that you're good at. Don't be shy. Include everything! Can you speak English? That's a skill. Can you write an email in correct English? That's a skill too. We've met people using this system with such widely varied skills: accountants, architects, mud brick builders, plumbers, electricians, bankers, scientists, baby-sitters, gardeners, teachers, writers, marketers, glass blowers, artists, web designers...you name it, if you have a skill there's a chance that someone in the world needs you to share it with them!

Step 2: Search for a SwapHost.

SwapHosts are local people, businesses, families and communities around the world who are looking for help. Each SwapHost can offer something slightly different, but the general agreement is usually that the SwapHost provides you with food and accommodation for the duration of your stay. In exchange you share your skills with them for around 5 hours per day, 5 days per week. Some SwapHosts will offer you a room in their house and home cooked meals, whereas another might have a private ensuite guesthouse you can stay in or a restaurant you can eat at. Some SwapHosts even have entire houses for their Swappers to stay in, so make sure you search on a living arrangement that suits you.

To use the search portal on www.SwapWorkForTravel.com to look for SwapHosts who are in need of your skills, it's as simple as selecting where in the world you are interested in going, what type of accommodation you want to stay in, what skills you can share, how long you want to travel for, and then reviewing a list of SwapHosts who might be right for you!

Step 3: Become a "Swapper".

Once you've found some SwapHosts who interest you, the next step is to contact them and ask any extra questions you might have, and arrange the Swap! You must be signed up as a Swapper to contact SwapHosts. That shows you're serious about living a fulfilling life of

Swapping Work for Travel. Here's the link to sign up so you can contact SwapHosts:
www.SwapWorkForTravel.com. You need to take action to plan and make this dream a reality!

Step 4: Get a Passport and appropriate visas.

If you don't already have a passport then you're going to have to get one. You'll also need to find out if you need to get a visa in advance for your chosen countries, and arrange these.

Step 5: Arrange Travel Insurance.

It's important to sort this out before you book your flights, because travel insurance can also cover you if something unforeseen happens and you are unable to go on your trip. If you're travelling to a remote region, make sure you choose an insurance provider that covers unlimited emergency medical evacuation costs.

Step 6: Book your flights.

Once your travel insurance is organized you are ready to book your flights. First time Swappers often feel more comfortable booking a return flight. However more experienced Swappers often choose to book a one way flight, so that they have the opportunity to arrange more Swap opportunities along the way. Many Swappers meet up with other Swappers and share travel experiences together, and contact more SwapHosts arranging multiple Swaps in one trip. *Tip: If you book a one way flight make sure you keep enough money aside to get home again!*

Step 7: Visit a doctor.

Make sure you consult a travel doctor about any vaccinations or other medical supplies you may need to visit your chosen destinations. Stock up on any medicine you're going to need while you're away.

Step 8: Learn about the areas you'll be living in.

Get a good travel guide of the region you want to visit, so you can discover all the local attractions you want to experience. Do some reading about local culture and customs, and ask your host if they think there's anything in particular you need to know. Make sure you have at least a rough plan so that you can maximize your travel experience in your time off.

Step 9: Get any clothing you need.

If your host or travel guide recommends any special clothing then make sure you either get it before you leave or can get it once you arrive.

Step 10: Fill your backpack and go!

It's always best to take the bare minimum of personal items – a good rule is to take about half the stuff you think you'll need. Chances are most things you'll be able to buy anyway. Now all that's left to do is live like a local, share your skills with your SwapHost, and explore the local area using both the travel information you already have and your SwapHost's inside knowledge of the area. Have fun!

Where to find the best, most rewarding experiences – and how to weed out the most authentic ones from the duds.

What exactly moves you?

Where have you always wanted to travel to and stay for a while?

How do you envision yourself helping people?

What skills would you most like to use to benefit others?

When looking at how to get the most out of your Swap Work for Travel Experience, you need to be able to identify the aspects of your current situation you are least happy about.

This will help you figure out what you really want...

Let me help you with this by using myself, Andrej, as an example when I was in your position five years ago.

My frustrations were:

1. *I am working a job I am not passionate about.* So for me I needed to identify work I could do that I was passionate about such as working with people, helping communities, getting involved in eco-tourism, making amazing espresso and mentoring people who wanted to learn.

2. *I am living in a city that is way too crowded and claustrophobic for me.* So the best thing for me was to get into a non-city environment that was laid back, and not a bustling metropolis where everyone is always in a hurry and no one smiles.

3. *All the people around me are way too obsessed with material things.* So, I needed to get back to grass-roots and find people who were still living a more traditional, community-centric way of life – a lot less influenced by the newest MacBook and the fashion houses of Milan.

4. *I can't actually really help anyone where I work.* As a young scientist in a huge research institute, most people I worked with knew way more about their fields than I did, so I wanted to gravitate to an environment where I could be teaching and helping people on a much more regular basis.

5. *I live in a concrete rectangle surrounded by concrete jungle.* I wanted to shift my experience to a much more natural setting: sunsets, forests, rice-paddies, beaches, temples and mountains. I wanted all of this.

Once I shifted my reality to match what I did actually want, I found I was much more fulfilled and happy in my life.

Tips on how to find the best and most rewarding experiences:

1. A general rule of thumb is, the most rewarding experiences for you usually lie off the beaten path and are in the slightly less touristy regions.

2. Do you want to be surrounded by beach, vibrant cities, jungles, mountains, islands? Identify the destinations that really call out to you and go and volunteer in an environment like this.

3. Where is somewhere you have always been enchanted by? Maybe it's time to go there, and volunteering is the perfect way to spend a little longer and get to know the place a little better.

4. What type of projects interest you the most? Eco-tourism, customer service, working with children, working with plants and animals, making cocktails?
5. What kind of accommodation are you looking for? If you are a couple that enjoys their privacy maybe an open dorm with a family is not for you. If you are single you will want to meet new people so maybe a separate dwelling is not for you.
6. What country has always inspired you? Perhaps it's the culture, the natural attractions or the food. For me after a few trips to Thailand when I was very young I was hooked on this place (and chili). Now is the perfect opportunity to go to the place you have always wanted to, learn more about it and see it from a local's perspective.
7. What hosts most desperately need your skill-set? If you can for example build websites, which hosts would benefit most from this? If you think along the lines of who will get the most benefit from your skills you are sure to have a deeply fulfilling experience.
8. Which hosts are closely geographically positioned to places you want to explore more? This will help you more easily connect work and play.
9. What do you want to get more experience in? Swap Work For Travel is also an amazing way to learn and get experience in new skills. Many hosts will want you to do numerous things. Some things you already know a lot about and some you may want to learn about. Here is your chance to learn something new and awesome!

Getting authentic experiences and weeding out the duds

There are so many experiences to be had and of course some will be more authentic and fulfilling than others. Here are some tips to help you get the best out of it:

1. Look at reviews. Having a host that is caring, accommodating and fun is the best place to start when becoming a Swapper. (The more challenging and potentially fulfilling projects can be left for when you have more experience). Read the reviews to find the

position that will be best for you and what you want to get out of this.

2. Choose those projects that inspire you most.
3. Make sure the skills required by your host will be well met by what you can do. Of course many SwapHosts want lots of different skills and you don't need to match them all perfectly. There needs to be a balance of new things you would like to learn, and help you can give from what you can already do.
4. Choose a host you like.
5. Ask plenty of questions.
6. Make sure you know what is expected of you.
7. Learn about the geographical area to make sure it really is what you're looking for.

The 7 most common mistakes people make when taking up this new lifestyle. Make any of these mistakes and your journey will be far less rewarding than it should be (it could even be dangerous!)

1. Not being prepared for the culture shock. It's going to be different, so much more different than you can imagine right now. But that's a good thing! There will be different sights, smells, tastes and sounds. Embrace them all! Going into a different country and culture with your eyes wide open and being willing to experience everything is the right attitude. No-one would bother traveling if it was the same as being back home. So expect a lot of new things. After all, variety is the spice of life!

2. Expecting the luxury and comforts of home. For a lot of people in the world a proper western soft bed is something they have never experienced. The bathroom may not be

scrubbed spotlessly as it is at home. While some hosts may offer very nice accommodation, others might be more rustic and true to real life in whichever area you choose to visit.

3. Thinking everyone thinks like you. Embarking on life in a different country is going to bring more surprises than you can realistically know about before you leave home. In one culture it might be perfectly normal for a woman to shake hands with a man. In another culture it might be completely frowned upon. In one culture it might be perfectly normal to speak your mind and in another culture there might be a strict set of guidelines about what you can and can't talk about openly. Every experience you have will teach you that no matter what you perceive to be normal, someone perceives to be outrageous, and this works both ways.

4. Expecting to change the world in 1 week. While you can definitely make some level of difference in a week, to make a real difference in the lives of your host or their community it's usually not going to happen overnight. Many cultures take things slowly, and more time is needed to fully immerse yourself in and understand the culture you are working with, and to teach the people whatever skill you came to share with them. Living like a local for a week is perfectly fine as long as your expectations about the level of change you can make is in line with this.

5. Expecting the same food that you get at home. Many people love the variety of food that life in another country offers, but most people like to eat something familiar from time to time as well. One place we stayed ate noodle soup for breakfast, lunch and dinner! While it was delicious and fun to begin with, after a while we did crave some food our bellies considered 'normal'.

6. Thinking effective communication will be easy. Often your host might only have a basic grasp of a common language you share, and you might not know their language so you need to make the effort to get to know your host and share experiences with them whichever way you can. Even if you come from an English speaking country and help in another English speaking country, different cultures can misunderstand each other! It's a good idea to get a local phrase book, especially if there isn't a common shared language that both you and your hosts can communicate in. This is really important if you get sick. Being able to tell your host or a doctor what is wrong could save your life.

7. Not connecting with the local people and local environment enough. As much as you are there to use your skills to better a local project, you should be there to learn about a region, culture and way of life too. Make the most of your local hosts. They know the most about the region, history, people and place. Make use of this knowledge and make friends for life and take the opportunity to really experience something different using the local people as your guides. Make the effort to get out into your local environment to see some stuff!

The 5 most sought-after skills that locals are looking for. Let them know that you have these skills and you'll have your pick of the best opportunities

Any skill you have is highly likely to be sought after by someone, somewhere in the world. There are some skills though, (that you may already have, and simply take for granted!) that are really popular with hosts.

The 5 most sought after skills are:

1. **Marketing.** Many, many small businesses around the world need help to spread their message and don't know where to begin. Often they don't know how to write in English well enough to get started. Even if you know some basic marketing, such as posting offers on facebook or offering your host tips for what appeals to western customers, it could help a family business dramatically.
2. **English language teaching.** So many people in the world are really keen to learn English and there are so many ways to teach it. While teaching in a school after getting your TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate is one way of doing it, don't limit yourself to this! Many businesses are keen for Swappers fluent in English to come and teach their staff conversational English. Or sometimes parents might want their kids to learn to speak English with a native speaker. If you can read this report, then you already have good enough English to teach someone who wants to learn the basics.

3. **Customer service/replying to emails.** There are so many SwapHosts especially in emerging tourism areas that are looking for someone to come and help them serve their customers. It could be because they don't have enough English to answer their customers' questions, or they may just enjoy exchanging cultures with a Swapper. Often someone has conversational English but cannot read or write very well, so having someone who can write in English replying to their customers' emails is becoming more and more popular.
4. **Training staff.** If you have experience in almost any trade, such as building, plumbing, hospitality, accounting or using Microsoft Excel and Word, then chances are there is a family business that needs you to train their staff in this skill. In rural communities, having skilled volunteers come in can sometimes be the only way they can learn a particular skill, so your experience is really valuable to them!
5. **Website/social media assistance.** If you can build a website or post on different social media platforms you can massively help a local business. Sometimes it can even be enough to spend a month with someone who doesn't know how to use social media (or sometimes even a computer) and each day show them how to post until they reach competency.

The do's and don'ts of living with a local family – our top 10 tips for fitting in, being accepted, and feeling right at home

Experiencing life in a different country can be one of the most rewarding things you'll ever do. You get to develop a real connection with people in a way that travelling as a 'tourist' can never achieve. Getting along well with your host mainly comes down to basic mutual respect, but there are a few things you can do to make sure your experience goes smoothly.

1. Learn about the house rules, and follow them. If you're unsure, follow your host's lead. If your host leaves their shoes outside, you should too. If your host sits on the floor, you should too. If your host eats with their hands, you should too. Usually hosts will be very excited to share their ways of doing things with you, and will tell you when it's fine if you

want to observe your own tradition and when it's not. Don't be afraid to ask your host what you should do in a given situation if you don't know.

2. Never bring up the subjects of politics or religion. This can be considered disrespectful, and in some countries hosts might even be worried they will get into trouble if you talk about such things. It's always best to err on the side of caution.
3. Learn your host's view of 'time'. Time is something that can have a very different meaning in some cultures. In Laos, for example, people don't use clock time very often. They don't even have a commonly spoken way of recognising small periods of time. If it's 6.20pm, they'll say "it's after 6 o'clock". If it's 6.35pm, they'll say "It's not yet 7 o'clock" so agreeing to meet someone at 7 o'clock often means "I'll meet you within about an hour either side of 7 o'clock, and whenever that happens to be, it will be fine." Whereas usually in western culture, 7 o'clock means 7 on the dot! So it's important to understand each other's expectations, and not get stressed out.
4. Don't openly show negative emotions. Many cultures consider it rude or embarrassing to show emotions publically. If you're unhappy, angry or stressed about something usually the best approach is talk to your host quietly and privately, explaining that while you can understand that in their culture this situation might be acceptable, normally in your culture it's not. It's important that you don't tell your host their way of doing things is wrong. And remember, everyone sees their own way of doing things as the right way. Remember it's just different and usually talking about things quietly and politely can resolve any issues you may have.
5. Understand the hierarchy within the house and make sure you show extra respect to elders if necessary. For example, in some cultures everyone will eat together, and in others it's more polite to let the head of the house eat first. Always remember every culture is different, and you are here to learn as well as share your skills!
6. Make sure you understand what's expected of you both in a working and personal capacity. While the help your host needs will usually be clear before you arrive, different hosts will have different needs in terms of spending time with you. Some will want to learn as much as they can about you and share as much they can about themselves.

Others will need privacy at times. Make sure you're clear about what you need too, if you like to spend some time each day by yourself make sure your host and living arrangements are compatible with this.

7. Cleanliness is always relative. Some hosts will love it if you can help out with the daily household chores, while others will be offended if they see you cleaning! As with everything else it's important to talk to your host and find out how they feel about this.
8. Take the time to learn some of the local language and make local friends. You will always feel more comfortable in a place when you can understand some of what is being said and ask for the price of something or directions in the local language. Spending time with other locals outside of your host family will also broaden your experiences in a place.
9. Ask your host and their friends to tell you about upcoming local ceremonies and events that you can take part in. Attending a local event is a great way to feel more like a local and learn a bit more of the language too. And best of all, it's fun!
10. Always be happy and enthusiastic to share your skills with your host. Your host wants you to have the best experience possible and can sometimes feel confused or embarrassed if you don't put on your best smile when approaching a new task. Never forget you are in an amazing country with amazing people having an experience you're never going to forget. Even the bad times seem fun when looking back on them months later. Never lose sight of the adventure you're having!

The preparation you MUST do before you leave – miss any of these and you risk having to cut short your travels

1. Consult your doctor for any recommendations about the area you wish to visit. Find out what diseases the area has and what vaccinations are recommended. Is there any medication you should take with you? Are there any common symptoms you should be aware of? Do you

need to drink bottled water? How can you best avoid getting sick?

2. Get travel insurance. No matter where you're going, travel insurance is always a good idea. You simply never know what is going to happen or when. If you are visiting a place with limited medical care that's very remote, it's a good idea to make sure you have unlimited medical evacuation cover.
3. Inform your bank that you'll be spending time in another country. We've heard stories of people having to return home because their bank canceled their credit card, thinking it must have been stolen!
4. If you're going to write a travel blog, let all your family and friends know the address so they can follow what you're up to. Staying in touch with loved ones is a good way to help with culture shock too!
5. Make sure you find out what kind of clothing is appropriate for your chosen destination, and make sure you pack it. Some cultures have very different ideas about what clothing is and isn't acceptable so it's important you respect the local traditions and expectations.

How to avoid “post travel depression” and learn our method to travel indefinitely, just like we do

Post travel depression is a real thing; doctors now even acknowledge that such a condition exists.

It occurs when you return home and feel unsatisfied with the life that you lead there. There are basically 2 ways to effectively combat this phenomenon.

1. Change your regular life. If the time has come for you to spend time at home for a while, whether it's temporary or permanent, there's no need to live a life you don't enjoy. Change whatever needs to be changed: your job, your house, even the people you

spend the most time with if necessary. Life is too short to be unhappy!

2. Book your next trip before you return home. Make contact with your next host and start sussing out your next opportunities for long term travel before you even hit the ground. Even if it's 6-12 months in the future, you will always be able to look forward to it, and it will make doing some things that may not be your passion in the short term tolerable, because they are contributing towards your next adventure.

There are several steps to take to travel indefinitely, and you might be surprised to learn our top tip.

1. **Make sure you budget time and money to return home regularly.** For most people, the reason they end up returning home is friends and family. For some, the need to be near loved ones becomes strong after only a few weeks. For others it may take years. But very few people can or want to spend an indefinite amount of time away from the people they are close to. One advantage of the Swap Work For Travel system is that you do tend to form close friendships within the community you stay in, so you end up with a much wider network of friends from all over the world. Everyone is different, but we generally find that after a year away, spending at least 2 months a year at home is good for the soul. Even if you can only manage a week or two it's always good to reconnect with your loved ones.
2. **If you are more interested in shorter term projects, line up hosts consecutively so that you can progress through a continent or country without spending much money.** While you are Swapping, you will essentially live for free, so if you line up your destinations in a logical order then you'll be able to travel a lot longer by saving on transport costs. You may find some hosts are willing to transport you to an airport or bus station, or sometimes even to your next destination.
3. **Consider earning some income along the way.** This can be done either by finding odd jobs, taking a 'proper job' for a period of time in another country, or earning money online via consulting or an internet business. This is the step that enabled us to free ourselves from the rat race permanently, and failure to do this step was why we initially had to return home to our jobs after each trip to replenish our bank account. Once we

started earning income independently from our jobs, the world became our oyster.

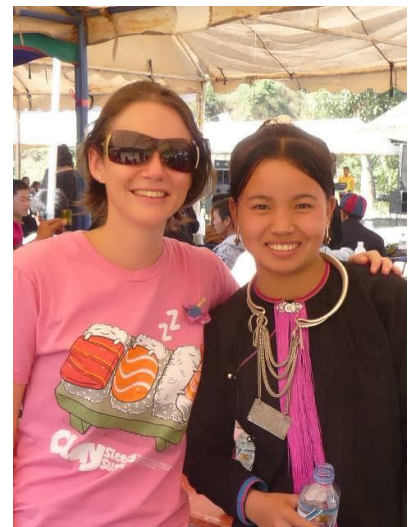
4. **Some people will fall in love with a destination so much that they may even consider starting their own business there and becoming a SwapHost themselves.**

We did this too. We started a community-based training restaurant in rural northern Laos. We staffed it with local minority people who had no prior knowledge of English language or western food, drinks or customer service. This was a great way for us to contribute to a community that we love so much. And we were able to involve volunteers in training the staff, too. We have since empowered the local staff to the point where they are managing and running the business, including accounts, salaries and looking after customers. Senior staff are teaching junior staff English and how to cook and make coffee and cocktails. This has been a huge success in that now the business runs without any input from us so we are free to spend a few months a year in Laos, and the rest of the time travelling and spending time with our families. This is obviously a much larger commitment and only recommended for people who have already spent an extended time Swapping Work for Travel and making sure it really is what they want. It was also important for us to have our online income, so that even if the business didn't thrive as fast as we'd hoped, we had income to fall back on.

We can thoroughly recommend the freedom and enjoyment this life has given us, and hope you will take this opportunity to experience it for yourself. Swappers are an emerging new breed of travelers and here's your chance to become part of it!



Hanging with kids in a small village in Indonesia



Enjoying a tribal ceremony in
Luang Namtha, Laos



Teaching local kids some games in Muang Sing, Laos



Enjoying the view in Gili Air, Indonesia



Writing a sign into correct English in Luang Namtha, Laos



The finished product



Teaching computer skills, Luang Namtha, Laos



Learning about weaving in a village, Muang Sing, Laos



Opening our community based training restaurant in Luang Namtha, Laos



Exploring the jungle in Bukit Lawang, Indonesia



Enjoying a local meal, Laos



Making a pizza oven in Luang Namtha, Laos



First time cooking in the pizza oven!



Visiting Halong Bay, Vietnam



Making some new friends in Luang Namtha, Laos



Exploring the countryside, Laos



And more exploring in Laos



Learning about local customs in Luang Namtha, Laos



Supporting a Lanten village in Luang Namtha, Laos



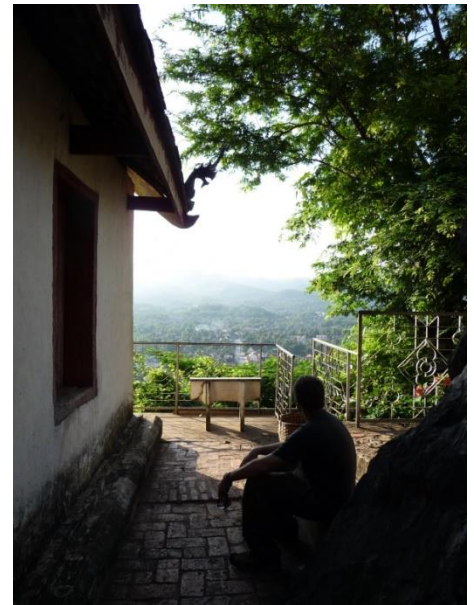
Local waterfall in northern Thailand



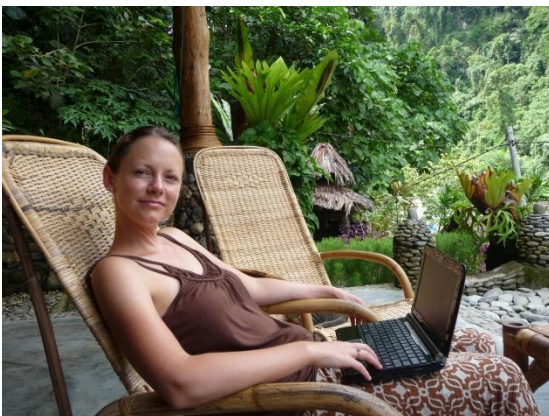
River rafting in Canada



Local celebration in Fiji



Serenity in Luang Prabang, Laos



Our "office", Indonesia



Helping local tribal women in Laos

Travel stories from other Swappers

Here are the stories of some other people who have successfully Swapped Work For Travel.

Marcella Segre:

“My first trip as a volunteer was in 2004 in Nepal. Since then, I have always tried to combine my travels with some volunteering in different communities around Asia. Volunteering while travelling gives you an insight into the community you are visiting and is a fantastic and meaningful way to learn about yourself too, about your culture and skills as well as your interpersonal and communication skills. It is not easy for a community to receive and manage volunteers, and it is important to know this when you travel and wish to give your help to a project. Try to focus on some specific skills or needs and, most of all, have fun and smile, because this is the best cultural exchange and travel experience you can offer to others and to yourself! Volunteering is indeed a mutual learning experience!”

George Wilcox:

“I love the idea of volunteering as I travel around the world, and I don't think that now I would want to travel any other way. Not only do you get food and accommodation, which is so so nice on an incredibly tight budget, but you also meet people and experience things that aren't a part of the normal hostel world type of travelling. In hostels and hotels you meet people like you. You can chat, drink, enjoy the places you go to, but I always felt like I never really got to know a place. I just knew it as a tourist with all my friends who were also tourists.

Volunteering allows you to open a world that isn't seen as much by the normal backpacker. You can experience real cultures, go to places that the locals go, meet the people who live in those countries and really understand their own culture. And perhaps most importantly, the projects you do are often there to help. The people that run them always have a dream of making the world a bit of a better place, and you can be a part of that.

I haven't regretted any of my volunteering, but one warning to people who want to do it. It is not just a holiday. This is a person's life you are becoming a part of and you shouldn't expect to sit around all day in a sun bed reading Kerouac. You have to work. But if you really do accept this advice then I assure you that you will love every single second of it.”

Debra Doyle:

“Traveling slowly is the ideal way to go. You get to know more about a culture and how things really work instead of blazing in and out of a tourist center, seeing the main sites and leaving with only a glimpse of what it's like to live there. Obviously, time and money are a concern but if you've got the time volunteering is the perfect way to make up for the lack of money. As a volunteer you get to live in a foreign country, usually exactly as the locals do, and you usually get free food and accommodation in exchange for your work.

In my experience, it's the best way to get to know a local culture for virtually free. If your hosts are seeking volunteers that means they're also seeking genuine cultural exchange. I lived in Cambodia for 6 months as a volunteer and ended up getting invited to parties, festivals, ceremonies and even went on seemingly mundane errands that turned into bigger adventures than I ever anticipated. I would have never gotten to attend a Khmer wedding or celebrate Khmer New Year the way that I did if I were just traveling through.

Imagine what you would show someone who is only visiting your city for 2 days. Now imagine what your guests would get to experience if they were with you for a few months. The perspective you gain gives you a deeper understanding of the place you're visiting and a more intense travel experience overall.”

So as you can see, it's easy and rewarding to Swap Work For Travel. You too can travel long term and make a positive difference in the world.

What are you waiting for? Join us and find your perfect SwapHost today. For more information contact us on support@SwapWorkForTravel.com and we'll be happy to help you.

Good luck



Andrej and Karen Brummer