



Unit 9 The river

Before you read

The article is about a particular kind of vacation. Think about this question. What do you like to do when you're on vacation?

Read the article

Volunteer Vacations

If you want to do more on vacation than sit on the beach or go sightseeing, think about taking a volunteer vacation. On a volunteer vacation, you work with local people to improve the place you are visiting. There are volunteer opportunities all over the world, for people with all sorts of interests. For example, you can help scientists study parrots in the Peruvian rainforest, build houses for the poor in Romania, teach computer skills in Thailand, or clean up a national park in the U.S.

The number of people taking part in volunteer vacations has gone up about 50 percent in recent years, according to travel experts. People of all ages, from college students to senior citizens, are trying this kind of travel. Delia Martin, a computer technician from Colorado, U.S., spent two weeks working with endangered sea turtles in Panama. Delia said that she chose to volunteer instead of relax during her vacation because she wanted a different experience. "Frankly, I get bored on regular vacations. This was a chance to learn something new, and to do something useful instead of sitting around."

Most volunteer vacations are organized by nonprofit organizations. They make all the trip arrangements and find local organizations to work with the volunteers. However, they are not always cheaper than regular vacations. You have to pay a fee of a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, plus the cost of your own transportation. The sponsoring organization usually takes care of food and lodging.

Volunteer vacations are not for everyone. The living conditions are not luxurious. You might stay in a tent or with a local family. You have to work hard, especially if you sign up for physical work like building a house or working in a national park. However, you will probably experience things that most tourists never see. "We spent two weeks on a beautiful beach that was normally closed to people," says Delia Martin. "I worked side by side with local people and learned a lot more about the area than I would have on a regular vacation."

That's why many people return year after year to volunteer. Audrey and Richard Payson, a couple from Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. have been taking volunteer vacations for the past eight years. He is a bank executive, and she is a librarian. "Our kids think we're crazy because the vacations are a lot of work," says Audrey Payson, "But we love it. Every trip is a once-in-a-lifetime experience!"



Check your comprehension

Read the article again. Answer the questions.

1. What are two differences between a regular vacation and a volunteer vacation?
2. What kind of people go on volunteer vacations?
3. Who organizes volunteer vacations?
4. Why do some people go on volunteer vacations year after year?

Build your reading skills: Identifying supporting details

Match each general statement with the detail that best supports it.

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| 1. You can do many different activities on volunteer vacations. <u>d</u> | a. The number of people taking part in volunteer vacations has gone up about 50 percent in recent years. |
| 2. Volunteer vacations are becoming more popular. _____ | b. Audrey and Richard Payson have been taking volunteer vacations for the past eight years. |
| 3. Volunteer vacations are not free. _____ | c. The living conditions are not luxurious, and you have to work hard. |
| 4. Volunteer vacations are not for everyone. _____ | d. You can help scientists study parrots in the Peruvian rainforest, build houses for the poor in Romania, teach computer skills in Thailand, or clean up a national park in the U.S. |
| 5. Some people go on volunteer vacations every year. _____ | e. You have to pay a fee of a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, plus the cost of your own transportation. |