

CHANGE LIVES AND VOLUNTEER IN MERIDA 2012 - 2013



Merida

Volunteer in the steamy colonial city of Merida, close to Caribbean beaches and Mayan ruins. Enjoy a mixed variety of projects from teaching English, arts and crafts activities to hospital work, there is plenty to try when helping in Mexico. Placements can be easily chosen on arrival, according to your preferences,

after chatting with the local volunteer co-ordinator, who is there to support you during your stay. Volunteers travel and volunteer together in groups or pairs, so you will never be short for company whilst volunteering.

Helping in Merida is a great experience as you get the chance to live in the

stunning Yutucan peninsula, a culturally unique part of Mexico and a must-see region for any tourist. Volunteers spend their free weekends in a variety of ways from climbing the Mayan pyramids to swimming in the famous sinkholes.

Highlights

- Opportunity to take part in different activities
- A dedicated English speaking co-ordinator, always there to help
- Exploring the Mayan pyramids and sinkholes

Volunteer in Merida / General information for volunteers



Your role as a Volunteer

Helping the children in Merida gives you the opportunity to try out teaching English, perhaps for the first time. The volunteer's main role is to teach and help the children learn English in a variety of different locations, both in Merida and the surrounding villages. Volunteers travel together and a weekly schedule is organised for you by the co-ordinator. Volunteers teach English at; soup kitchens, after school clubs in community centres, orphanages, children's homes and schools. Classes are usually small and informal and will usually include some fun activities. For those with an interest or background in healthcare, the Red Cross Cancer clinic is an option. A little bit of Spanish will be helpful at the clinic, but don't worry as your co-ordinator can help prepare you.

Skills and experience

No experience is required when working in Merida. As long as you come with energy and enthusiasm, you will be sure to fit in and have fun in your volunteering experience. Your volunteer co-ordinator will provide training and support for all volunteers new to English teaching.

Overview

On arrival

Most volunteers fly into Merida airport and an airport pick up is available. Volunteers can also be picked up from the Merida bus station, if they have travelled from Cancun.

Local support

An English speaking volunteer co-ordinator provides support during your stay, and can be easily reached for any out of hour's advice or assistance.

Accommodation included

Volunteers stay in shared accommodation, in a house. There are four bedrooms in the house, with bunk beds for the volunteers to sleep in. There is also a living room, dining room and a large kitchen that has a sink, fridge, stove, dishes and utensils to cook with.

Food

Merida is a self-catering project. There are plenty of shops nearby where you can buy food to take back to the kitchen and prepare. There are also cafés and bars close by where you can go to eat out.

Getting around

Merida is a fairly big city and has most of the amenities and facilities needed, including: cinemas, bars, restaurants, internet cafés and nightclubs. A day after arrival, the co-ordinator will usually arrange a tour of the city and the area surrounding the city. On this tour you will be shown the facilities, shops, and where best to get buses etc.

Project resources and advice

Volunteers are encouraged to take some general activity books or language books, to help with ideas for teaching.

Free time

During the week, volunteers often spend their evenings at the volunteer house relaxing or strolling in the colonial heart of the city. Merida is well known for its street café culture, especially in the evenings with live bands and a typically Latin party fiesta feel.

With weekends free to explore and some of Mexico's tourist highlights to see this placement in Merida is the perfect volunteer holiday. Merida is known for its archaeological sites; Chichen Itza is the most popular, easily reached on a day's visit. Almost all volunteers will climb the Chichen Itza ruins and often report this is one of the highlights of their Merida volunteering experience. Volunteers also like to visit the Mayan city, Dzibilchaltun, which is only nine miles from Merida. Dzibilchaltun is a great historical site and an amazing experience. Another great day out especially on a hot day is a trip to the underground caverns where you can swim in the azure warm water amidst the stalactites. All activities and excursions can be easily organised through one of the many tourist agencies in Merida. Just ask your co-ordinator for advice on what to see during your visit.

Local facilities

All the facilities that are expected in a large city are available to volunteers in Merida. Most facilities, cafés, bars, banks and shops are a walk or short bus ride away.

Health

There is a hospital nearby and should you need the use of one, the project co-ordinator will help you with your transfer there.



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What to take

Once you have applied and registered with Original Volunteers, you will receive an Information Pack via email that will have further details on the project in Brazil; in this email there will be a list of items to take and items that are best not to take.

Not on your own

Although some volunteers travel with friends, the bigger majority travel alone. It is possible to get in contact with other volunteers before your travel, and a lot of people tend to do this. Some volunteers even plan to travel together and set this up themselves before they depart.

How to apply

It is quick and easy to register with Original Volunteers. You can either do it online via our website www.originalvolunteers.co.uk or you can call us on 01603 627 007 and register over the phone.

It costs £125 to register and this registration lasts a whole year; which means you can go to as many placements as you want within that year without having to pay the £125 again. The registration fee also instantly books and reserves your place in any month you choose. We are very flexible however and you can always change your mind. Just let us know if dates change and spaces permitting we will put you on another list.

When to pay for this project

This project will need to be paid in full before departure.

Things that you will need to organise yourself

- Flights to Merida
- Travel Insurance
- Any resources you wish to bring
- Food



Fast Facts

Project Information

- Project Duration: Min 1 week - Max 12 weeks
- Location of project: Merida and surrounding villages
- Arrival Airport: Merida
- Activities: General day-to-day care of the children, English teaching, assisting at the orphanage, organising and assisting arts and crafts activities and hospital work
- Working Hours: 5 days a week. Weekends free
- Getting to the project: Airport pick-up and transfer from Merida airport or Merida bus station (if travelling from Cancun) to the volunteer house is automatically arranged for all volunteers, once flights have been received.
- Requirements: Minimum age 18

What's Included

- Accommodation: Volunteers stay in a shared volunteer house
- Airport Pickup: Airport pick up is available.
- Training: During your stay you will be trained on the job informally via in-country orientation

What's not included

- Flights
- Insurance
- Return Airport transfer
- Local Transport during free time
- Meals

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Merida

Merida is the largest city of the Mexican State of Yucatan. Yucatan Peninsula is now known for having the largest group of modern Maya. The Maya's were first found by Europeans in 1511 when a group of Spanish shipwreck survivors arrived in Yucatan. The Maya is a Mesoamerican civilisation. It is most known for its fully developed written language of the pre-Colombian Americas. Merida is most popular for its Maya architecture. A spectacle to see, architecture that spans from thousands of years, the Mayan style is unique, and an amazing experience for the tourist. For those interested, Mel Gibson's 2006 film, Apocalypto depicts the last days of the Mayan civilisation. Cancun, only a short bus ride away from Merida, has the world's second longest coral reef. A popular tourist visit in Cancun is The Hotel Zone of Cancun. It shaped like a 7, with bridges on each end that connect to the mainland. This zone has beautiful beaches on the short end where locals go to surf and relax.

Climate

The climate in Merida is tropical and warm. In Yucatan the average highest annual temperature is 28 Celsius. The hottest months are June to August but the region is generally warm all year round making it a great winter getaway.

