

CHOOSING YOUR NEXT MISSION TRIP DESTINATION

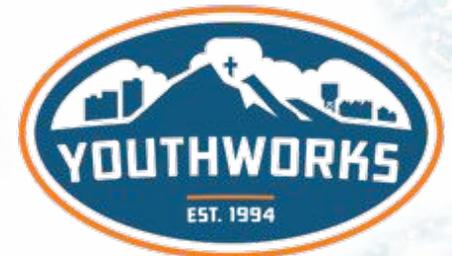
A resource to help you navigate the road to the next community you serve alongside.

MAP KEY

- Middle School Site
- Mixed Site

- Small Urban
- Large Urban
- Small Town

- All Buses
- 15-passenger Mini Buses



It might be your youth group's first trip. Then again, you may be an old pro. Whatever your experience, there are some key questions to ask when choosing where you go on your next trip. Rather than throwing a dart at the map this year, pick your trip by asking a lot of questions and getting the information you need.

This resource will help you think about students needs, budget considerations, travel time and more. Take some time to ask critical questions so you can intentionally pick a mission trip destination that will best impact your team next summer.

DETAILS, DETAILS

Answering these questions will help you narrow your search.

- ❑ How old are the youth who will go on the trip?
- ❑ What maturity level do they have?
- ❑ Do we need to take a bus? (Certain YouthWorks sites are bus accessible.)

MONEY MATTERS

Some choices might be based on your budget. Of course, you might flip this and decide that your budget will be based on the choice you make! Either way, it's good to know what you're getting into.

Costs:

- ❑ What will vehicle rental cost?
- ❑ How far should we go and what will gas cost?
- ❑ How much will each participant cost?
- ❑ Will the church pay for Adult Leaders' Cost?
- ❑ What are the other expenditures? (e.g. travel meals, overnight lodging during travel, stops along the way, etc.)

Funding:

- ❑ What budgeted money is available for this trip?
- ❑ How much would each student need to raise/pay for this trip?

CATCH THE VISION

While it might be easy to shoot from the hip when picking a destination, take time to dream while considering what your students need.

- What do you hope your teenagers will take from this trip?
For instance, cultural understanding, a stretching experience, community building, expanded worldview.
- What are your students' limitation in a trip like this?
Will a given destination be too intense, too far, too expensive, etc.
- What type of community do you think they would benefit from visiting?
i.e. Small Town, Small Urban, Large Urban, American Indian Reservation or International
- Do you want a change of scenery or a different view of your context?
In other words, if you live in an urban setting, would it be better for your youth to see a different urban setting and how ministry is done there, or for them to see the new context of a small town?
- How do the passions or mission of your youth group or church carry over to the destination you choose?
For example, if your church is passionate about working within a Latino culture, you might choose a site with that context such as Kansas City–KS, Eastern Shore or Puerto Rico.
- What connections do you already have with a church or ministry in another city?
Missions is all about building relationships with communities. So if you have a sister church in Chicago, why not go do ministry in that city and learn about the needs there. Pursue the relationships that already exist!

CRITICAL CONSULTANTS

Before picking a site, you may want the input of some key players

- What do your teenagers want to do?
- What voice will your Senior Pastor or supervisor have in this decision?
- Does parent input play a part?
- Are there any veteran volunteers you should consult?
- Have you taken time to pray about your decision?

TRY THE LONG HAUL

It can be pretty exciting to visit a new community every year, and it can offer students a diversity of incredible experiences, expanding their worldview. Those are good things! But another good thing we've seen at YouthWorks over the past 20 years is the ongoing relationships of church groups who have committed to returning to the same community year after year. In a culture that is easily distracted by "the next big thing" you have a unique opportunity to help teenagers stay focused on the same service-learning relationships they started last summer. You can help them understand that ongoing service is less "touch and go" and more "sit and stay." As you think about your next mission trip destination, don't rule out the possibility of returning to your previous destination. And if you are looking for somewhere new, consider looking for a place where you can form ongoing relationships and partnerships. Consider committing to a community for the long haul.

GET A FEEL FOR THINGS

As you look into your options for mission trip destinations, you might be wondering what your options look like. Here's a few descriptions to help you get a feel for what Small Urban, Large Urban, Small Town and American Indian Communities sites are like.

Small Urban Communities

Small urban areas are unique in that they can be a city that feels like a small town or a small town that resembles an urban area. The community could be very unknown to the greater United States but may be the largest town in miles. Life can be fast paced but not as rushed as that of a large urban area. There are often deeper issues that small urban communities face that you may not notice at first glance. Poverty, family issues, racial tensions are a few examples.

As you serve in small urban areas, you may encounter cultural and ethnic diversity, various levels of poverty and the challenges that come from a lot of people living in a small area. But you will also experience how this unique blend creates community. Because of this abundance of factors, you'll find that the stereotypes you've held about people – or certain kinds of people – may not hold true. We invite you to join us as we continue to let go of preconceptions and interact with people as they are and not as we expect them to be.

Large Urban Communities

Life in a big city keeps moving. It's always morphing into something different, which can make serving in the city difficult. While one neighborhood is transitioning from a slum into a creative arts district, another is sliding into decay and poverty. Because urban areas are such diverse environments, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the sheer number of sensory influences. The sights, sounds and smells of the city can easily overwhelm the most seasoned traveler. Population densities are much higher in the city, so there is always more people, more shops, more cars... more everything.

As you serve in urban areas, you may encounter cultural and ethnic diversity, various levels of poverty and the challenges that come from a lot of people living in a small area. But you will also experience how this unique blend creates community.

Small Towns

Unlike the hum of city traffic and business of urban life, the atmosphere of a small town is slower, quieter and more personal. There are fewer choices in the small town – where to eat, what movie to see, where to shop, where to hang out... And cultural trends and social issues are sometimes different than in large / small urban areas.

Life in small towns may feel slower, but to simply say it's slow misses the bigger picture. The focus of life in these communities is often about relationships. With fewer distractions and plenty of familiar faces, residents value conversation and friendships. They usually know their neighbors, but also their barber, the guy at the gas station and the person in next aisle at the grocery store. This close community can build a strong support system, but it can also create conflicts that leave some on the fringes.

The close-knit atmosphere also means that when your group comes into town, residents will know it! This gives your group a greater ability to impact the community positively, but it also gives youth and leaders the responsibility of being in the spotlight all week long. Wherever you go in the community, residents will likely know who you are and what you are doing there.

As you serve, get to know the people you meet. They will enjoy meeting someone who has traveled to be in their town. Take the opportunity to meet community members who have invited YouthWorks in and supported us in many ways as we come to learn and serve.



American Indian Communities

Beauty and pain: Even the most seasoned traveler can be overwhelmed by both in the American Indian community. You will probably encounter evidence of a people and culture that have been systematically oppressed for over 100 years. But you will also encounter men, women and children who are passionate about their culture, their sense of identity, and their grasp of the relationships and space around them. You will be overwhelmed by the beauty of the landscape and humbled by those who are willing to share their culture and history with you.

With a focus on relationships rather than schedules, life in American Indian communities may feel slower but there is more than just a slow tempo to life. Schedules and plans are secondary to friendships. Getting to the next thing is less important than being present now. YouthWorks has been facilitating mission trips in American Indian communities for 20 years now, and we are continually confronted with the fact that real service cannot happen outside the context of relationships. We desire for students, adult leaders and staff to learn that people matter, attitudes are important, and the posture of our hearts determines how we connect with others. The reality is that every community has its struggles. Our hope is that time in these community will not only raise awareness of life on the reservation, but also move people to reflect on the impact they can have in their own community.

As you serve in the community, you may encounter various levels of poverty and the challenges remaining from the oppression Native Americans have endured. Don't become distracted by material poverty. Look through it and listen to those you meet in the community. You'll find a rich heritage and history lying just beneath.

JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY

Whether you throw darts at destinations or launch a full out investigation into which community your team should visit, we're here to help. We want you to have a successful summer mission trip experience with your teenagers! So if you need help figuring out what community will fit your group best, give us a call or chat with us online. We are excited about what God will do in and through your group next summer.

youthworks.com | 800.968.8504