

Audioscript (Section 2 – questions 11-20)

You can use this to read with the recording when you check your answers.

Pay particular attention to the underlined parts, which provide the answers to the questions.

Remember, in the real exam you will only hear the recording once!

Travel broadens the mind – that’s what they often say. But many people, the people who are careful to describe themselves as travellers rather than tourists, claim that this is only the case in the right circumstances. And a package holiday that has you sitting on the same beach in front of the same crowded hotel for fourteen consecutive days doesn’t broaden the mind. There must be another way. There is. My old friend Peter, an architect, recently returned from a three-month trip to Africa. Instead of just flying out on a bargain flight and hanging out on beautiful beaches or safari, he put his architectural training to good use and helped on a project to build a health centre for a group of villages. He says he’s made friends for life and that he knows he’s contributed something of value to those people.

And Peter’s not alone. A survey that was published last month makes it clear that travel is changing. The idea of a tourist as someone who consumes, who takes, is being replaced by the idea of someone who gives. So tourists are thinking less about exactly where they go, and more about what they do in the places they visit.

The terms ‘voluntouring’ and ‘voluntourism’, ‘voluntourist’ have come into currency recently, referring to this trend of mixing some tourism with some volunteer work. It seems to be a positive development, as long as you choose sensibly where to go and what to do. Wherever you do decide to go, be it tropical or in the arctic circle, you should try to put two or more things – projects or classes or whatever – together, so that if one doesn’t turn out to be as interesting as you hoped, then at least the other should make up for it. One good thing about spending maybe a bit longer in a place is that you’re more likely to learn some of the language while you’re there.

Now, remember that the idea of giving as much as taking is important, so consider carefully what skills you have, how you could benefit a volunteering project. You won’t be alone on these trips, so you need to be sure you can help the other people there over the period of time you spend there, long or short.

Voluntourism also benefits *you*. The local people will look at you with interest, this stranger who has been transported into their midst, and, usually, they’ll be happy, keen even, to show you their way of life, the way they do things in their culture, and this will be very helpful for you.

You can pay your own way, but it’s also well worth investigating the possibility

of getting sponsorship from a business. All sorts of businesses may be interested in the area you want to visit, and if they support you financially, the money you save will mean you can stay there for longer. Local people, moreover, may well see you as more important in this way than if you just turn up on your own account.

But, whether you get sponsored or not, the mixture of work in another country and a holiday there is a good one. The people who do this become more interested, more involved in the places and so they are much more likely to return for further visits, so they commit more, invest more of themselves in the places. And a world in which many people care about other countries, based on their own experiences, is one that surely has a better future environmentally, as it means more people think more about the implications of what they do.

Well, that's the theory anyway. I read a newspaper article the other day that was questioning whether the trend for voluntourism will last a long time. It said that although people seem currently quite happy to spend their money directly on local communities, this is just a passing trend, and it will soon be replaced by another one. I hope they're wrong about that.

If you decide to go on a voluntouring trip, research before you go. There are at the moment a bewildering range of schemes you could go for, from the very small to the very large, and you should check the organisers' history, see if they've been organising the trips for some time. You don't want to go for something run by people without any qualifications to do so.

Some schemes involve spending time in very remote places, so security is important. It's always best to arrange your own insurance, rather than relying on general policies, and remember that your family will want you to be able to tell them exactly who they can get in touch with while you are away, if they need to get an urgent message to you, or want to check that you're OK.

And, when you do go, pack carefully. Credit cards are not much used in jungles and distant mountain ranges. You don't get phrasebooks of tribal languages and you don't find a handy pharmacist on street corners in the desert, so take your own medicines.

Some people like to take a whole string of photos, but personally I think it's much better to take a journal and record your impressions in that, in words or sketches: that's the gift to yourself you'll be bringing back.