



27 Questions to Ask Before Volunteering with Animals Abroad

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of animals are there? Can you touch them?
2. Is there evidence of breeding?
3. How does this organization support education?
4. What factors have contributed to the need for animal sanctuaries in this country?
5. What is the long term, sustainable impact of my presence and work? Does it affect the welfare of the animals?
6. If the volunteer placement is a mismatch of my skills, will I still go?
7. Can I actually “make a huge difference” during a short term program?
8. Is this sanctuary located in a “touristy” part of the country? Why? And why does this matter?
9. Does this organization run background checks, ask for references, or have systems in place to protect animals?
10. Is there transparency in where program fees are allocated?
11. Does this organization have language or wording geared towards tourists or very short-term travelers?

ASK YOURSELF:

1. Do I have a working knowledge of the country’s culture, politics, history, and economy?
2. Do I understand the concept of “hero syndrome” and does it apply to me?
3. Am I an asset or a necessity?
4. What skills am I bringing to the table?
5. Do I understand what animal trafficking is and it’s impact on foreign communities?
6. Do I genuinely believe this organization has the animal’s needs as a sole motivator for their work?
7. Does the project really need hands on volunteering or could I provide more practical help from home with fundraising or virtual volunteering?

ASK THE AGENCY/INSTITUTION/ORGANIZATION/PROGRAM PROVIDER:

1. What if I questioned whether you operate solely to earn profit. What would be your response? What proof or evidence can you show that proves the latter?
2. Tell me about your strategies for keeping the animals mentally, emotionally, and physically safe. What plans do you have in place, and how do you hold your organization accountable to accomplishing these goals?
3. If I called your organization a zoo, how would you convince me otherwise?
4. Why have you chosen to seek outside help from foreigners rather than sourcing labor from within the local community? Are all local resources, including capable workers, exhausted?
5. What is your vision for the future of this project – is sustainability an objective and how does that look to you?
6. Are you sure my skills – x, y, z – are a reasonable fit for my pending projects at your organization?
7. What is one piece of advice you’d give me as I prepare my heart and mind for this experience?
8. Do our projects allow for collaboration with locals? Can we brainstorm ways to get them more involved?
9. How do you measure your impact?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Earth Touch News](#)
- [EarthwiseAware.org](#) - *My Journey to Becoming an Ethical Wildlife Volunteer*
- [GoAbroad.com](#)
 - [How to Volunteer with Animals Abroad](#)
 - [What the End of the Tiger Temple Means for Volunteering with Animals Abroad](#)
 - [What You Need to Know Before Volunteering with Turtles](#)
- [Find animal welfare volunteer programs](#)

