

## **LARGEST INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER SURVEY REVEALS THAT, IN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, TRAVELERS FIND MEANING IN VOLUNTEERING ABROAD**

MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA, April 29, 2009 -Today GeckoGo releases the results of Volunteer Travel Insights 2009, the largest international volunteer survey ever conducted. Globally, 2481 consumers were surveyed on their opinions and motivations behind volunteer travel. The survey was conducted in conjunction with Bradt Travel Guides and Lasso Communications in April 2009.

“This survey provides a great insight into the motivations of those looking to volunteer abroad. Demographic as well as psychographic elements were analyzed and the result is a clear, and sometimes surprising, picture of the volunteer traveler,” comments Alexia Nestora of VoluntourismGal.com

Key findings include:

### **Volunteer vacationers help out at home too**

A large number of people who volunteer abroad have also volunteered in their home country (60%), with another 33% interested in volunteering who haven't yet found the right opportunity

### **Females volunteer more than men**

Sixty-four percent (64%) of females are currently volunteering or have volunteered before, compared to only 51% of males.

### **Motivations for volunteering are altruistic**

Travelers looking to volunteer abroad want to be useful (most important to 38%) and have a personal learning experience (most important to 21%), while convenience is surprisingly not important to 48% of the respondents. In terms of activities, 62% of respondents cited they wanted to do humanitarian work, 56% wanted to do conservation and teaching, followed by community development at 53% and building at 28%.

### **Volunteers stay abroad a while**

For those that have volunteered abroad, the duration of their trip tended to be longer than expected, with 51% of respondents going on a trip for more than one month and 76% traveling for at least two weeks.

### **Volunteer solo**

The majority of travelers went on their trip alone (57%), 31% traveled with friends (or church groups), and only 9% traveled with a relationship partner.

### **Top volunteer destinations**

The top overall volunteer travel destinations were Peru (23%) and Brazil (14%). For Americans, the top destinations were Peru (16%) and Costa Rica (15%).

### **Volunteers find their trips meaningful**

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents believed that their trip was very meaningful, 22% found it was meaningful, and less than 1% felt that their trip was not meaningful in any way. A constant battle in the voluntourism field is to effectively manage expectations of the volunteer – the fact that almost 100% of respondents found their experience meaningful in some way shows a major victory for the field.

### **Volunteer programs are not too commercial**

On the subject of commercialization, 29% of respondents found that voluntourism has become too commercialized, 23% thought that it should be more commercialized, and 48% thought the level of commercialization was just enough. The reasons volunteers cited for wanting more commercialization were related to the ability to recruit more volunteers to go abroad and potentially reducing costs.

For a full report, visit <http://www.geckogo.com/volunteer/report2009>

### About GeckoGo

Launched in October 2008, GeckoGo is a travel planning web site that helps travelers identify what to do and where to go based on their interests. It is the fastest growing source of unique user generated travel content. GeckoGo is based in Mountain View, California and Vancouver, Canada.

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