

VOLUNTEER VACATIONS

This article describes the new trend in service vacations, where travelers volunteer in local communities as part of their vacation.

They could be among the most memorable journeys you take.

Travel with a difference: the essence of the volunteer vacation. You take the trip, you help make the difference for others, and perhaps you see the world differently as a byproduct. If you are thinking about combining travel with some service, there are things you should know.

Know the various options. If you're traveling solo, you'll commonly work alongside locals on a community-organized project, and live in dorm-style lodging with other participants. If you have a young family, a homestay may be arranged with a host couple or family, or personal accommodations could be scheduled for you; the service aspect can often be tailored to the interests and abilities of the kids. Animal lovers often work in shelters or in conservation management programs.

How can you book a service vacation? Travel agents and tour companies guide the way. You can even book one through groups such as REI, Discover Corps, Global Volunteers, and the Sierra Club. Some hotels and resorts will give you a huge discount if you are part of a volunteer effort. Be sure to ask what percentage of your fees will go to the local community (and not to organizational overhead).

Some trips emphasize tourism with a bit of volunteering. Often people can only volunteer for a day or two, not a week or month. A new class of vacations responds to that reality. Agencies such as Namu Travel, specializing in trips to the Caribbean and Latin America, structure trips this way; Carnival is even doing this on its cruises to the Dominican Republic.¹

¹ABCNews.com, "Giving Back While Getting Away: 3 Volunteer Vacation Trends", September 28, 2016.

Sources/Disclaimers:

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PLANNING CAN LEAD TO RETIREMENT SUCCESS

According to a 2012 Household Financial Planning Survey released by the Consumer Federation of America and Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc., families who have a personal financial plan feel more confident and report more success managing money, savings and investments than those who do not.

This shouldn't come as a surprise. When you know what your financial goals are, like major family purchases, education, and retirement, and how your income resources are being allocated for current spending and savings, there's often less financial stress. Having a comprehensive financial plan is a powerful tool that helps you spend, save and invest along a prudent and deliberate path, with the flexibility to change as family and market conditions change.

Though it's good to have this guideline for spending and saving when you're young, it's critical to have a comprehensive plan when you are near, at or in retirement. We are living longer lives—to age 84 for a healthy man age 65¹ today—and retirement income needs to stretch over that lifetime. Having a Retirement Readiness Plan means knowing what your retirement income resource are, what your spending needs will be, and how to invest your resources so that retirement income will last your lifetime.

¹Based on data compiled by the Social Security Administration, <https://www.ssa.gov/planners/lifeexpectancy.html>. ♦

AGING IN PLACE

Aging in place is a term used to describe a person living in the home of their choice, for as long as they are able, as they age. This includes being able to have any services (or other support) they might need over time as their needs change.¹

For many people, the ideal approach to aging involves aging in place—staying in your home and taking the steps necessary to remain independent for as long as possible. And, there are benefits to staying at home versus a nursing care facility:

- Home care allows for a more personal, one-on-one relationship with the caregiver.
- It's comfortable and familiar.
- Seniors are able to remain as independent as they are able, rather than needing to turn over basic tasks to nursing home professionals.
- In-home care is often less expensive than care out of the home.

The good news is that with the right help many individuals might be able to age in place. Home care agencies—which provide all the services that come with an assisted living facility, but do so in the client's own home—can enable a senior to remain at home throughout the aging process, and at a cost comparable to other options.

To meet the needs of an aging population, in 2018, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) broadened its scope of Medicare Advantage plan benefits for 2019 to include nonclinical home care services such as personal care, transportation and

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housekeeping. Plans can now address activities of daily living and social determinants of health like never before.

Unfortunately, insurance companies that offer Medicare Advantage did not have enough time to develop their 2019 benefits packages to these new options. According to AARP, just 3% of MA plans will offer in-home support services such as personal care and housekeeping². It's likely that these types of benefits will be introduced for the first time in 2020. Private health insurance companies that take advantage of the policy change can improve the quality of life of their members, reduce long-term costs, and attract new members seeking these desirable benefits.

Ultimately, make the choice of in-home care or a senior care residence is a very personal one. Resources to help you decide if aging in place is right for yourself or a loved one can be found at <https://www.aginginplace.org/complete-guide-to-in-home-senior-health-care/>. ♦

¹<https://www.aginginplace.org/complete-guide-to-in-home-senior-health-care/>

²<https://homehealthcarenews.com/2018/11/few-medicare-advantage-plans-will-offer-new-home-care-benefits-in-2019/>

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