

THE YEAR OUT GROUP STUDENT GUIDELINES.

1. Look at who can take part and how they are selected

a) Age range of participants.

VentureCo operate three types of Ventures.

1. Gap Year Ventures (4 months) which cater for school leavers taking time off before entering University or employment. Venturers are aged between 17 and 19 years old on joining the Venture and applicants are taken from UK and overseas.

2. Career Gap Ventures (4 months) will appeal to those taking a career break or sabbatical from work or university. There is no upper age limit although the majority of participants are aged between 21 and 35 years old.

3. VentureGo which are 4-6 week trips. There is a minimum age of 17 and no upper age limit.

b) Selection criteria - who are they looking for and what is the interview procedure

We are looking for individuals with a desire to explore the world and find out what lies beyond the horizon, to be part of a team, to work hard and play hard and who will relish the challenge of helping a disadvantaged community while learning new skills. Once we receive your application form you will be invited for an interview to discuss your gap year. You will then receive a formal offer and be asked to make your decision within 21 days.

c) Number of participants selected on each programme?

The maximum number for each group is 16, but groups can be anything from 12-16. You will stay with your group throughout the Venture except when living with families on the language phase (South America only). Family stays can be individual or in pairs.

2. Look at who benefits from the programme

a) What will I gain from doing this?

Greater Global Awareness: VentureCo have a published Environmental Code; Guide to good expedition practice; Financial Code, Social Code and Responsible Travel Code. VentureCo aim to be a living example of a responsible expedition travel company.

Soft skills: during the aid project and expedition you will need initiative, determination and teamwork. The Venture will provide you with actual examples of your soft skills that can be used to enhance a CV. You will also have travel anecdotes that will help you during a tough interview.

Language skills: all Ventures have a foreign language element: not only will you be traveling to an amazing area, but you will learn a little of the local language too.

Sense of achievement: Ventures are tough and challenging at many different levels: physically, emotionally, being a member of a small group, dealing with obstructive foreign bureaucracy, foreign language the list goes on! The challenges are there to be met and the support is on hand to ensure you rise to them! After four months there will be a great deal to reflect upon. (Read the live reports on our website for proof!)

b) Will anyone else benefit from this placement apart from me?

The obvious answer is Phase 2, the aid project work that each team carry out. Projects are small, human-scale initiatives that directly benefit disadvantaged communities. The projects are supported by in-country NGO's (non-government organisations) so

bureaucracy and admin' costs are minimised and in many cases eliminated altogether. The projects we support are too small to be charities in the UK, but VentureCo is committed to supporting them financially through the VentureCo Trust. The less obvious answer to this question is the rest of your team will benefit through your participation. 16 people working together achieve a great deal more than 16 individuals working independently. What you give to the team, you will get back in the form of a team spirit that lasts well beyond the end of the Venture. (Our first Inca Venture group travelled in 1999 and they still have reunions!)

c) Why are UK young people needed on this and who asked for us to do it?

To provide momentum: the communities we support are subsistence communities living hand-to-mouth. Our role is to come in and create a facility that allows the community to improve it's environment. We follow the maxim: "Give a man a fish and he feeds his family for a day; give him a fishing net and he feeds his family for life". We like to provide fishing nets! What we definitely don't do is create a dependence culture who come to rely on free handouts.

All our projects come from the grass roots: a request is made to our in-country project managers (who are residents and nationals of the country). They do the initial feasibility study and come to VentureCo with a proposal. We carry out an evaluation and the general parameters are that VentureCo will provide half the finance and half the labour (You!). It has been our experience that once we give the initial momentum to a project, the local community will carry it forward.

d) Will the programme continue after I have left?

All our projects are long term and on-going. Our involvement on the other hand, is for between 1 and 4 years. We intend to work ourselves out of a job! To return to the fishing net story: having provided the net, we may need to return and repair it, or offer instruction on its best use, but our intention is to empower local communities to become autonomous, not dependant.

3. What exactly will I be doing?

a) How has the programme been chosen and checked out? Has a representative of the sending organisation had a good look?

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All the projects are personally vetted by our Operations Director. We work closely with project partners and local community leaders. VentureCo visit all projects annually, seek feedback from the community, Project Manager, and most importantly, you upon your return.

b) Are the host organisations paid to take me? Do they pay me?

Host communities are asked to provide a camping area, or basic building and VentureCo cover all subsistence and travel costs of the project. You work as a volunteer, unsalaried! All the costs of the project are included in the price you pay VentureCo.

c) What exactly will I be doing?

During the 4 month Ventures you will take part in three phase, language school and cultural orientation, aid project and expedition. To see more about each individual itinerary go to the relevant Venture's page.

d) Will I be alone, who will I be placed with?

You will not be alone on these Ventures. This is a group trip and you will stay with your group throughout the 4 months. If you are staying with a host family for your language school or aid project you will always either stay with another person from your group or be within easy reach of the other members of your team. If you are not comfortable with the idea of living with a family on your own, we will make arrangements for 2 or 3 or you to stay together. All Ventures are accompanied by two VentureCo leaders throughout.

e) What can I expect in terms of accommodation and food?

You will need to be realistic here! We eat local food which is nutritious and wholesome, sometimes vegetarian (and vegetarian is always an option) but different from UK cuisine! One of the biggest pleasures of travel is the local flavours you encounter. A curry in India is different from one in London; wildebeest steak is different from steak in Edinburgh and the Mexican dish "molee" is different from anything I've ever eaten! (Roast chicken with raw chocolate and chillie source!!)

f) What is expected of me? What will be my responsibilities?

To join in: 100%. We need enthusiasm, good humour and toleration. You will have specific responsibilities as the Venture progresses, but they can be summed up by saying that each individual has the responsibility to make the Venture flow.

g) Do I have to sign anything? Is there a written agreement between me and the organisation?

You are required to sign a Booking Form and a contract will exist between you and VentureCo. The contract established our responsibility to you, and vice versa.

We also conduct a Risk Assessment on each Venture and you need to be a part of that process and sign off the report.

MONEY & THE ORGANISATION LOW-DOWN

4. What's the cost?

a) What is the precise programme cost and what does it cover?

Our Ventures are fully inclusive and include the following:-

- International Flights and all airport taxes
- Travel Insurance
- Accommodation
- Language Tuition fees
- Food
- Cultural Orientation
- Aid project funding and living expenses
- All Expedition Activities as described in the brochure/website
- Transport throughout the 16 Week Venture
- All trekking fees, mountain fees and national park entrance fees
- Two VentureCo leaders, one of whom may be a local resident, with specific local knowledge.

The Program costs are:

Venture	2005/2006
Inca	£5134
Patagonia	£5325
AztecMaya	£5045
Indochina	£5325
Rift Valley	£5435
Himalaya	£4985
L'Afrique	£545
VG Peru	£3475
VG Ecuador	£3873
VG East Africa	£2676
VG Nepal	£2982
Extreme Andes	£2882
Extreme Peru	£3628

b) What is the recommended budget for extras?

We suggest you allow £35 per week for nights out, souvenirs and personal expenditure

c) If I have to pay a deposit, is it refundable?

To confirm your place on your chosen Venture VentureCo require a deposit of £300 at time of booking. This is a non-refundable deposit.

d) When and how do I pay? What happens if I cancel?

Full payment is made 8 weeks pre-departure in the form of a cheque. If you cancel the following penalty charges apply:

- At any time before the scheduled departure of the Venture - Loss of deposit
- 56 days to 31 days before the scheduled departure of the Venture - 75%
- Within 30 days of the scheduled departure of the Venture - 100%

e) If I have to raise funds, does the organisation give advice?

You will receive two pre-departure handbooks, one at the time of booking which provides, amongst other things, preparation advice, equipment lists and ideas for fundraising. It also includes useful tips and past success stories of previous Venturers. The second handbook, The Field Manual, contains overseas travel advice and is designed to be taken with you when you travel overseas.

5. Ask how it operates. Make sure it is right for you in terms of type and length of programme

a) Why does the organisation exist? How long has it been around?

VentureCo was established in 1999 by two experienced expedition organizers, David and Mark, both of whom manage the company today. We set VentureCo up because we observed from our own travel experience that all too often groups passed through remote areas and had little to show for their experience other than some pic's. The barriers were first of all communication and second the fact that you get a profoundly different relationship with someone if you work with them, rather than just take their photograph. And so, over a beer in a remote Warwickshire pub, was born the concept of "3 Phase Travel". All our Ventures consist of a language school and orientation course, aid work and expedition: learn about your hosts, give something back and enjoy the natural wonders of their backyard!

- b) Is it a partnership, private company, public company, registered charity, sole trader or other? Where is it registered?

VentureCo is a private limited company registered in Warwick, England. We are a private company committed to charity work.

If you would like to speak to a past Venturer, who has survived any one of the Ventures (!) please contact Mark or Dave in the Warwick office, and we'll put you in touch.

- c) What if there is an emergency? Does the organisation have sufficient funds to cope with emergencies?

VentureCo groups always carry satellite phones, so we can react to an emergency quickly. We have a detailed "Major Incident Plan" in place so that we can react appropriately. We have complete insurance policies in place so that we can repatriate or treat casualties quickly and correctly. We have an in-house expedition medical advisor, so that we can get advice promptly. And.... so far we've never had to use our emergency procedures!

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

6. Before you go

- a) Who is responsible for travel arrangements? This includes travel visas and work permits!

VentureCo are expedition travel professionals, so we take care of all travel arrangements and visas as part of our service. Having said that, we are also flexible, we are ATOL bonded allowing us to deal directly with the world's airlines and we can tailor your flights to fit your plans, whatever they might be! If you would prefer to arrange your own flights, or make your Venture part of a round the world ticket – no problem! Let us know what your plans are and we can either advise, or make the arrangements on your behalf. Group travel arrangements are part of the whole package we offer and around 60-70% of groups stay on after their Venture: return dates on group flights can be changed as you travel, so they too are flexible.

In South America, as long as you have a British passport (or almost any EU passport) there are no visa requirements for VentureCo countries.

In Africa, Asia, India and Nepal British nationals require visas which are arranged by VentureCo either before you leave or in country. We'll tell you exactly how the process works.

- b) Who provides insurance and what is included in the cover? Health, possessions, cancellation and repatriation?

Your insurance is included in the cost of the Venture and is tailored-made to include all Venture activities. We arrange insurance with AXA Insurance Plc through Campbell Irvine Insurance Brokers.

This covers:

SUMMARY OF COVER

A Medical Expenses £5,000,000		D Delayed Departure or Arrival	£100/£1000
Hospital Benefit	£200	Hi-jack of Aircraft	£3,000
Criminal injuries	£5,000	Failure of flight connections	£150
Personal Liability		Interruption of Transport	£300
£2,000,000		Government Travel Restrictions	£750/£300
B Personal Accident	£25,000	E Personal Effects	£2,000
Permanent Loss of Sight	£25,000	(Valuables limited to £350)	
Loss of Limb(s)	£25,000	(Single Article limit £250)	

Permanent Total Disablement	£25,000	(Disc Collections £200)	
Death	£10,000	Money	£500
		Passport ad Visas	£250
C Cancellation or Curtailment	£5,000	F Legal Expenses	£15,000

c) What about inoculations and health precautions? Help and advice please!

Staying healthy at home and away is covered in detail in part 1 of your handbook.

d) How about training and pre-departure briefing - do I get any of that?

Each Venture has a build up weekend 10 week's pre-departure, which lasts three day. The weekend consists of a dozen seminars on a variety of travel-related topics. This is a great opportunity to meet your group, learn more about your aid project, discuss equipment selection and check the vaccinations you need. The weekend is held in the Peak District and you will be involved with team building exercises, a trek and a few surprises: it is the perfect opportunity to ask all those questions about the countries you visit, equipment and onward travel! Your Venture starts now!

7. During your placement. Ask about support and safety whilst on your placement

a) Who is the person responsible for me at the programme location?

Each Venture in accompanied by an experienced leader who will have experience leading the route as well as extensive personal knowledge of the countries and places you visit. Throughout each phase you will also have a trainee leader, and sometimes local leaders to work with you.

b) Where is the nearest representative of the organisation?

A VentureCo leader is on site at all times. When the team divides, one leader will accompany each sub-group of 8.

c) What if there is a major emergency - can somebody deal with this and get me home?

VentureCo groups always carry satellite phones, so we can react to an emergency quickly. We have a detailed "Major Incident Plan" in place so that we can react appropriately. We have complete insurance policies in place so that we can repatriate or treat casualties quickly and correctly. We have an in-house expedition medical advisor, so that we can get advice promptly. And.... so far we've never had to use our emergency procedures

d) If I have a problem with my placement, can I chat to somebody?

Your leader will be your first point of contact as they stay with you throughout the 4 months. The next point of contact is the in-country Project Manager, and you can call the UK office any time, and we will call you back.

e) What is included in the living arrangements? Who selects and checks out the accommodation?

All Ventures are full board and lodging (no local payment at all, and no food kitty). VentureCo's Operations Director is responsible for host family selection. We tend to use the same families each year.

f) If staying with host families, are they paid or are they volunteers?

Host families are always paid, and well paid. Such charges are included in the cost of the Venture.

8. After your return

- a) Will the organisation have any contact with me when I return?

We ask all returning Venturers to complete a detailed feedback form. We use this information as part of the aid project evaluation, to monitor the success of the three phases and gauge the overall success of the group.

Ex-Venturers receive a regular newsletter as well as an invitation to the annual Reunion. The Reunion Party gives you the opportunity to catch up with your group and find out what other groups got up to in both previous and subsequent years.

- b) Can my experience be of any use to future participants?

We regularly attend gap year fairs for future participants and what better way to find out about the Ventures than to talk to people who have actually been there! This is your chance to tell it like it is!

- c) Will I get a reference or certificate, indeed anything to prove that I was actually there and completed the programme?

You will receive a certificate detailing where you went and your contribution to the aid project. For Gold Duke of Edinburgh participants the aid project or expedition can be used towards their award.

- d) Will I be debriefed?

All Venturers will be sent a Post Venture Feedback Form. This looks into the successfulness of their Venture, positive and negative aspects of their aid project and any recommendations. The questionnaires are then assessed and programmes altered and improved where appropriate.