

Alternative Breaks Trip Advisor Manual



Table of Contents

Welcome Letter

About Alternative Breaks

Mission, Vision, & Program History at SMU

The Active Citizen Continuum

Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break

2015-2016 Trip Information

Who's Who on Your Trip

Role of the Trip Advisor

Responsibilities & Expectations

Emergency Contact Information

September 1, 2015

Dear Trip Advisor,

Thank you so much for deciding to take part in an Alternative Break trip this year. Alternative Breaks has a long history at Southern Methodist University, with more than 28 years of successful trips. Although the organization and program are student-led and run, I truly mean it when I say these trips would not be possible without faculty and staff advisors like you.

The Community Engagement & Leadership Center is committed to sending each and every trip with a carefully selected advisor; not only in case of emergencies, but also for the unique perspective you bring to the trip. Thank you in advance for the work you will do in the communities in which you spend your break, and also for the work you will do with our students. The key to the student learning that takes place on these trips is through immersion in a new community, examining social issues and injustices, and reflection on their observations and experiences. The students who run Alternative Breaks pride themselves on offering "world changing service and life changing experiences." Get ready for just that!

The information that follows is intended to provide a more in-depth look at the Alternative Breaks program, as well as specific information about your trip, the role of the advisor, and other pertinent information. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time prior, during, or after your trip if you have additional questions.

Thank you again, and I look forward to hearing about your trip!

Best,

Bailey Guthrie Alternative Breaks Advisor Community Engagement & Leadership Center (214) 768-7304 cguthrie@smu.edu



Community Engagement & Leadership Center

About Alternative Breaks at SMU

Alternative Breaks is a student organization offering direct service opportunities during every academic break, including Fall, Winter, and Spring. Alternative Breaks takes groups of students, student leaders, and faculty/staff to communities in need across the country and world to perform vital service with amazing organizations. Participants have the opportunity to do quality service, gain education about important social issues, and reflect on how they can create positive social change. Alternative Breaks is a movement of active citizenship that strives to create sustainable change and fight social injustice in all communities.

Program History

SMU Alternative Breaks was founded in 1987 on the SMU campus. It was started in the Chaplain's Office by then Chaplain Bob Cooper. The original three trips were called "work projects" and were offered in 1987-1988 in Brownsville, Texas, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Dallas, Texas. The sending of service trips on spring break was even going on earlier in the 1980's, but not within a formal program. The program began having student leaders in 1989, and had a few ups and downs throughout the 1990's. It was very strong in the mid to late 1990's, and dipped somewhat around the early 2000's. The program grew again in strength in 2010, skyrocketing from three trips in 2009 to 9 trips in 2010.

Now, in 2015, Alternative Breaks has a strong Leadership Team, consisting of seven Executive Board members and 30 Site Leaders. The program is offering 18 trips in 2015-2016, to both domestic and international locations. SMU Alternative Breaks has also been a supporter and member of Break Away since 1991, and was helpful in the founding of the national organization.

Mission

To provide quality service experiences and awareness to all members of the Southern Methodist University community while creating active citizens through education, direct service, and reflection.

Vision

To inspire the entire Southern Methodist University community toward active citizenship by offering world changing service and life changing experiences.

Values

Love - Hope - Equality - Diligence

The Active Citizen Continuum

Member

Not concerned with their role in social problems.

Volunteer

Well-intentioned but about social issues. not well-educated

Conscientious Citizen

discovering root causes; Concerned with asks why?

Active Citizen

a priority in values and Community becomes life choices.

Pre-Break Transformation

Prepare students for on-site experience and provide initial education about sitespecific social issues.

- ▶ Education, orientation, and training
 - Pre-break direct service
- Preflection: goals and expectations
 - Icebreakers and group building

On-Break Transformation

Encourage participants to look critically at the root causes of social issues and challenge them to evaluate the role they have in the community.

- Strong direct service
 - ▶ Ongoing education
- ► Community involvement
- ▶ Daily reflection tied to direct service and social issue education

Post-Break Transformation

support their efforts to take action locally. continued community involvement and Help participants find avenues for

- Organize or join small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens
 - Continued education
- Reflection about reorientation process
- Post-break direct service, advocacy, and philanthropy
 - Life choices that benefit the community



Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break

Strong Direct Service: Programs provide an opportunity for participants to engage in direct or "hands-on" projects and activities that address critical but unmet social needs, as determined by the community. Community interaction during service projects and throughout the week is highly encouraged during breaks.

Orientation: Prior to departure, participants should be oriented to the mission and vision of the community partner or organization(s) with which they are working. Participants are encouraged to look at the context of the work of the organization within the broader community and to become allies to their mission and vision through direct service.

Education: Programs include issue specific educational sessions which participants attend prior to and perhaps during their alternative break. These sessions provide participants with the historical, political, social, and cultural context of the social problems they will be working with during the break. Effective education provides faces and opinions from all perspectives on the issue, including ways that the participants' personal life choices are connected to them.

Training: Participants are provided with adequate training in skills necessary to carry out tasks and projects during the trip. Ideally this training should take place prior to departure, although in some instances it may occur once participants have reached their site. Examples of training include teaching basic construction, learning how to read with children or gaining first aid skills.

Reflection: During the trip, participants reflect upon the experiences they are having - synthesizing the direct service, education, and community interaction components. Applying classroom learning and integrating many academic disciplines can occur. The site leaders should set aside time for reflection to take place, both individually and in a group setting.

Reorientation: Upon return to campus, programs carry out reorientation activities for all participants where they can share their break experiences and translate them into a lifelong commitment to active citizenship. Through these activities, participants continue their volunteer efforts in their local area, learn about possible internships, engage politically in their community, obtain resources for continued education on social issues, and make life choices that benefit the entire community.

Diversity: Strong alternative break programs include participants representing the range of students present in the campus community. Coordinators should recruit, design, implement and evaluate their program with this end in mind. Break programs should also plan to intentionally address the issue of diversity and social justice, or in other words privilege and oppression, and how it relates to service work.

Alcohol and Other Drug Free: Programs must be aware that issues of legality, liability, personal safety and group cohesion are of concern when alcohol and other drugs are consumed on an alternative break. Programs provide education and training on alcohol and other drug related issues as well as develop a policy on how these issues will be dealt with on an alternative break.

Source: Break Away – The Alternative Break Connection found at http://www.alternativebreaks2011.org/philosophy/8components/.

Who's Who On Your Trip

Each trip is comprised of a few key leaders and participants. Below is a description of each key role:

- **Co-Site Leaders** responsible for his/her designated trip. This includes planning pre and post-trip activities, participant development, leading reflection, planning all details given to them by the Site Trip Coordinator, planning community programming day ("Service Enhancement Day"), documenting the trip, keeping an itinerary, and managing the money/receipts on the trip. Site Leaders attend their trip for no charge.
- **Program Participants** each trip hosts approximately eight student participants who are selected for the trip through an application process.

Role of the Trip Advisor

As outlined in the AB Constitution, the Faculty/Staff Trip Advisors:

- are responsible for adding their valuable experience to the trip and its participants
- are not meant to micromanage the trip, but provide leadership in the event of a crisis and help ensure all students are abiding by agreed upon student contracts
- are expected, although not required, to participate in pre and post trip activities as much as possible
- will attend their trip for no charge

Expectations of the Trip Advisor are to:

- Participate in all trip service, reflection, and fun activities
- Be accessible to trip leaders to provide mentorship and facilitate leadership development.
- Communicate and collaborate effectively with trip leaders.
- Communicate and collaborate effectively with community organization representatives.
- Be prepared to facilitate conflict resolution strategies.
- Be prepared to help participants process issues encountered.
- Be prepared to help trip leaders manage stress, logistics, conflict, exhaustion, and crisis.
- Be prepared to share your thoughts and experiences with participants.
- Complete appropriate follow-up activities, evaluations, and program documentation with participants.
- Uphold the mission, values, and policies of the Alternative Breaks program.
- Must be certified through SMU to drive a 15-passenger van and willing to serve as a driver.
- Assist students in the event of an emergency.

Ultimately, the Alternative Break is student-driven, and the Community Engagement & Leadership Center asks that advisors give student leaders the opportunity to exercise their leadership 'muscles.' Potentially, this may involve them making some decisions that you yourself would not make if you were to be the leader of the group, and/or them taking a longer time to arrive at certain decisions than you would take yourself. If their decision will result in a hazardous situation, it would be appropriate to step in and suggest a different approach, a debrief of which could be a great learning opportunity for the students. Otherwise, we encourage advisors to let the students figure things out for themselves.

Trip Advisor FAQ's

• How much does it cost an advisor for an AB trip?

Trip advisors attend the AB trip at no charge to themselves, with the exception of incidentals and food purchased en route to and from the trip location.

• Can my partner and/or children attend with me?

This can be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on space available on the trip, and only at the expense of the trip advisor.

Will I share a room with students?

In most cases yes, as AB trips travel very economically. Most trip accommodations are made through hostels and churches with shared room accommodations. Exact accommodations vary by trip.

For more information or additional questions, please contact Bailey Guthrie at cguthrie@smu.edu or 214-768-7304.

Emergency Contact Information

Here are the resources that are available to you through the Community Engagement & Leadership Center in the event of an emergency on your trip:

• Bailey Guthrie, Alternative Breaks Advisor

• Community Engagement & Leadership Center (8:30am-5:00pm; M-F)

• SMU Police Department (24/7 Availability)

*Site Leaders or Assistant Site Leaders are asked to call to check in at least three times during the trip – when you arrive at your location, mid-way through the trip, and when your group returns to campus. This is just so that CEL staff know things are going great with your group's trip.

*Feel free to call at any other point that you deem necessary or have questions.

Alternative Breaks 2015-2016 Trip Descriptions

Fall Break

October 10-13, 2015

1. Farm to Table: Sustainable Food Practices to Fight Hunger in America

Today, approximately one in six Americans struggles with hunger. This trip will partner with a unique organization in Waco, Texas that addresses hunger issues of low-income, elderly, and persons with disabilities through various community gardening projects. The group will work on the farm and focus on sustainable agriculture, environmental responsibility, and world hunger issues.

2. House Rehab: Restoring Health to Homes

In the small town of Hartshorne, Oklahoma, the group will partner with Rebuilding Together Kiamichi Country to work on critical home repairs and improvements for low-income homeowners. Rebuilding Together strives to develop "a safe and healthy home for every person."

3. Lending a Hand to Little Hands: Fostering Hope in Foster Care

In Austin, the capital city of Texas, Alternative Breaks will partner with Helping Hand Home, an organization that seeks to improve the lives of kids who have suffered neglect, abandonment, and severe abuse. Participants will assist with homework and read to young students. There are also opportunities to engage in activities with the kids, such as arts and crafts, a karaoke party, or game night.

4. Empowering Women to Willpower

The Women's Home, a safe, supportive, and drug-free community in Houston, Texas, helps women in crisis re-build their lives. Students will get the opportunity to learn about a holistic approach to empowering women in six wellness areas: emotional, financial, physical, social, spiritual and vocational. Service will be focused in all areas of the non-profit organization: the administration office, the Cottage Shop, and the residence. The group will also get the opportunity to share a meal and fellowship together with the women.

5. Breaking the Domino Effect of Poverty: Housing, Education, and Nutrition

This trip will engage in direct service with three organizations right here in Dallas, Texas to learn about the complex issue of poverty. At Trinity River Mission, students will tutor kids in West Dallas and see how poverty relates to educational disparities and youth development. The group will help bring fresh fruits, vegetables, and recipes to low-income families through Brighter Bites, while learning about healthy food access. Finally, the group will help build a Habitat for Humanity house and will be exposed to housing issues in South Dallas.

6. Working Together to Ensure our Future

90% of brain development occurs by age five. Child care programs have a major impact on school-readiness and student success. This group will team up with the Collaborative for Children to support quality child care programs in Houston, Texas. Volunteers will help build playgrounds, paint facilities, and engage in other projects to better these organizations.

7. Echoes of the Ecosystem: Environmental Restoration with the National Park Service

Alternative Breaks is answering "<u>A Call to Action</u>." This adventurous team will travel to the fresh waters of the Big Cypress Swamp in Florida to serve the environment for the $100^{\rm th}$ anniversary of the National Park Service. Clearing trails, preparing burn areas, and clearing invasive plants are among the many service activities that the group will engage in, while learning more about the importance of the environment and our national parks.

8. Holistic Recovery: From Homelessness to Self-Sufficiency

Founded in 1992, the mission of Ashby House is to empower families experiencing homelessness and individuals to improve self-sufficiency, self-advocacy, and holistic recovery. This trip will serve the residents of this community and learn more about women and family issues as well as homelessness.

Winter Break I

December 17-21, 2015

1. Winter is Coming: Community Empowerment for the Holidays

In Austin, Texas we'll be working with Blackland Community Development Corporation, a non-profit that supports Austin residents who earn less than

60% of the median income for Austin. Participants will serve in the Blackland Neighborhood by washing windows, painting, cleaning up the community playground, as well as assisting community members in their local garden.

Winter Break II

January 4-14, 2016

1. Street Smarts: Guiding Youth to Better Futures

For the sixth year, participants will travel to *Quito*, *Ecuador* to volunteer with UBECI, which is an organization focused on providing educational services, recreational opportunities and social support to at-risk youth and their families. Students will assist in educational programs for the street children and child laborers of Quito. Through their service, students will gain exposure and knowledge on issues of global poverty and lack of educational opportunities.

In order to apply: Must have a passport that is valid until at least August 5, 2016.

Spring Break

March 6-12, 2016

1. City on a Hill: Living, Working, and Sharing in an Intentional Community

Among the winding roads of rural Kimberton, Pennsylvania sits a dynamic farming, gardening, and handcrafting intentional community that includes adults with developmental disabilities. Participants will be returning for the third year to this site and will engage in outdoor farming tasks, work in the greenhouses, weaving and crafting activities, and evening meals with the "villagers" and "coworkers."

2. Empowering Residents through Food

This group will travel to Atlanta, Georgia to work with the Atlanta Community Food Bank, a very large and well-established center that supports the reduction of hunger in the city. Participants will work in the Product Rescue Center, the Grocery Floor, and the Mobile Pantry. The group will also have the opportunity to serve in the organization's Community Gardens, which provide neighborhoods with fresh vegetables, beautiful land, and a place to meet and work towards positive goals.

3. The Road to Opportunity: Providing Support for At-Risk Youth

Alternative Breaks will travel to Cartago, Costa Rica to work with El Pueblito, a non-governmental and non-profit organization located on a beautiful field surrounded by the mountains overseeing the Irazú volcano. The organization offers programs and services for children, teens, and women in crisis due to sexual harassment and domestic violence. The group will be working on educational activities with the children, mostly English teaching and tutoring, and potentially a small construction project.

In order to apply: Must have a passport that is valid until at least October 1, 2016.

4. Caring for Kids as Teachers and as Caretakers

In St. Louis, Missouri participants will be volunteering at Crisis Nursery Kids, which provides temporary care for young children in order to help prevent child abuse and neglect. The group will serve by giving the children individual attention from rocking and playing to feeding and dressing at the 24-hour shelters.

5. Beauty Through the Eye of the Storm: Rebuilding Homes and Lives

[In collaboration with SMU Multicultural Student Affairs]
It has been a decade since Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans—and there is still much work to be done. Alternative Breaks will return to serve with a disaster recovery organization called the St. Bernard Project. This non-profit organization engages youth in the recovery and rebirth of the New Orleans area through rebuilding distressed and foreclosed homes to stabilize neighborhoods.

6. Empowering Students through an Education in Exploration

In Taos, New Mexico, the group will work with the Roots and Wings Community School. The school is very understaffed, so volunteers are crucial to creating a positive classroom experience. While at Roots and Wings over Spring Break 2016, SMU Breakers spent a majority of their time tutoring and teaching mini lessons in classrooms. They also repainted the school's entry hallway and helped with outdoor landscaping and remodeling. SMU students are able to serve as role models for younger children as well as truly inspire and positively influence the lives of many children.

7. Food as Medicine: Providing Hope and Healing to a Forgotten Community

In New York City, New York, Alternative Breaks be partnering with God's Love We Deliver to prepare and serve food to individuals living with serious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and cancer, who are not able to provide quality meals for themselves as a result of their illnesses. Every day, God's Love We Deliver prepares and delivers close to 4,6000 meals.

8. Saving the Sea: Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration

[in collaboration with SMU Outdoor Adventures]
South Padre Island will see a different kind of Spring Breaker during this trip—college students volunteering to rescue, rehabilitate sea turtles and restore their natural habitat. PLEASE NOTE: Participants will be camping outdoors in tents for the majority of this trip. While you do not need to be an experienced camper to apply, full consideration should be given

to the camping-nature of this trip.