

Alternative Breaks Trip Advisor Manual



SMU ALTERNATIVE
BREAKS

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August 2016

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 29 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

About Alternative Breaks at SMU

Alternative Breaks is a student organization offering direct service opportunities during every academic break, including Fall, Winter, Spring, and even some weekends. 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 2016, Alternative Breaks has a strong Leadership Team, consisting of seven Executive Board members and approximately 30 Site Leaders. The program is offering a grand total of 22 trips during the 2016-2017 academic year, to local, 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



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?**
Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate family members on trips due to SMU's risk management policy.
- **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

(817) 946-9163 (cell phone)*

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

Main CEL Office Line – (214) 768-4403

- SMU Police Department (24/7 Availability)

(214) 768-3333

*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.