

PLANNING FOR YOUR

Mission Trip



CHRIST-CENTERED MISSION TRIPS

YOUTHWORKS.COM | 800-968-8504 | INFO@YOUTHWORKS.COM

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR,

Last year was my first summer as an Adult Leader on a YouthWorks mission trip. I have *facilitated* mission trips for YouthWorks for many years, however, this was the first time bringing a group of students on a trip. ***Before going further, I want to offer some **mad props** for all the youth workers out there. It is not an easy thing to travel with a group of teenagers across the country! You all are amazing. * **

My husband, Sam, is a full-time youth pastor in St. Paul, Minnesota and he planned our mission trip to Philadelphia. With 20 teenagers in tow, we took three days to drive to Philly and three days to drive home. It was of course, our choice to do a big road trip (In hindsight, I am glad we did... it was epic) but it took Sam SO MUCH TIME to plan and figure out trip details before we ever arrived at YouthWorks' site. Three days (two nights) of travel one way meant he had to organize two places to sleep, seven meals, fun activities, travel routes, parent communication and so on. It was a lot.

Even before our group did any service activities, Sam's planning capacity was completely used up on the logistics for the rest of the mission trip (and this isn't even mentioning fundraising- another huge task!). Someone else had to help us with the rest. I now understand just how helpful it was for YouthWorks to take care of the mission trip details once we arrived in Philadelphia.

Mission trip planning is a lot of work, and we want to help make your trip as easy as possible. YouthWorks offers turn-key mission trip experiences, but we want to make your life *even easier* by offering super practical tips and resources like this Guidebook. You can receive help with things like:

- Creating a trip budget
- Determining what to charge students
- Planning travel to and from your mission site
- A case study on trip planning

This information is crowdsourced from numerous youth workers who have been on YouthWorks trips in the past. It is their best advice on how they plan and fundraise for a YouthWorks trip. I hope this information is helpful for you and will free up your time so you can do what you do best, love on some teenagers!

Take it from the spouse of a youth worker; if every youth worker has as much to do as Sam, it is too much. Let us help you simplify your pre-trip preparations. Use your extra time to take a teenager out for Chick fil-A or go take a nap... you deserve it.

Your friend at YouthWorks,

Rachel Townsend



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- PART 1 -

Where Did You Come From, Where Did You Go?

PLANNING WHERE TO GO

Alright. Let's get started, your mission trip awaits!

There are lots of options on where to go on your mission trip. At YouthWorks, there are over 35 places to choose from and we think they are ALL great. But you can (usually) only go one place each year and it can be hard to pick a place to serve. Don't worry, we're here to help.

Questions to Ask:

Go through the list of questions below. These will help you think through aspects of the trip that are important to your group. When you're done, it may be obvious where your group should serve!

How far do you want to travel? Most people want a mission trip experience that is a one-day drive, usually eight hours tops. Other groups have the time, capacity and willingness to take on a longer trip. It is totally up to you. Know, if you choose a trip further from home, you will need to plan more logistics. Keep reading this guidebook if you want more information on planning those logistics!

What type of service do you want to do? Do you want to work with kids, the elderly, food insecurity, homeless populations? Does your group want relational service, tangible service a mix of both?

Are you looking for a specific experience? What type of cultural or community experience would be most educational or meaningful for your group? If you know for sure you'd like to have a specific experience, will help you narrow down locations. Do you want to serve a population that is similar to your home community to introduce concepts of service to younger students? Is your group

A NOTE OF SERVICE EXPECTATIONS ►

At YouthWorks we plan our mission trips with principals of respectful service in mind. Often, respectful service is not about what we want to do, rather what the community asks us to do. Because of this, students sometimes have unmet expectations for service which can lead to disappointment. It is OK to choose a mission trip location based on the service experiences offered, however, it is important to teach students that all service can be meaningful! If you'd like additional resources on respectful service, check out our Respectful Service Guidebook.



mature enough to learn from Indigenous Leaders? Do you want to unpack the causes of poverty or learn about racial justice? Do you want to experience urban ministry, or life in a small town? Would your students benefit from learning about food sustainability?

How much are you willing to “rough it”? Some mission trip locations have fewer amenities than others. We don’t always love to admit it, sometimes our personal comfort can make or break a mission trip experience. It is so powerful to push students out of their comfort zone, but not everyone is ready to go all out on their first mission trip and that is OK. Usually groups who’ve had less-than-great experiences on a mission trip find that the location just wasn’t a good fit for them.

Understand you will almost always sleep on the floor and shower at a pre-determined time (most likely after serving each day- not in the morning) on your mission trip. Is your group willing to sleep somewhere without air conditioning? Would you be OK taking a cold shower? Be sure to know your deal breakers ahead of time and to speak directly with a trip consultant about any preferences before deciding on a location. At the very least, it is helpful to know the amenities available so you can mentally prepare for your experience.

What’s your budget? There is a lot more information on this in Part 2 of this Guidebook, but good rule of thumb, if money is tight, stay close to home.

Who Makes the Decision?

You Decide. Ask yourself the questions. After weighing all the factors, you choose a destination, register for the trip and advertise to students. If you have a large youth group, this might be the best option.

Students Decide. Get your students involved in the decision. Have a night at youth group where you brainstorm types mission trip experiences that would be a good fit for your group. Talk through the questions together and get a good idea what students are looking for. You could also leave the decision up to your Seniors for their last mission trip as a student.

You and Students Decide Together. Take some time to narrow mission trip locations to a few, then have the students talk about preferences and they can vote to choose.

Plan a Surprise Trip! Are your students (and parents) open to adventure? Can you keep a secret? A surprise trip is unconventional and obviously will not work in every context, but it has been done before! You pick a destination and plan the mission trip without telling students any specifics. Before choosing this option, gauge your audience. Some student and parents will not be into this, if that is the case, it is best not to do this. Understand that it really has to be a secret to work... if you tell the anyone, even parents, all the students will find out too.

- **Pros:** Students will not be signing up for a travel experience, rather this can be vision casted as an experience for students to invest in service no matter where they are. You are helping your students develop flexibility and it could be really fun!



- **Cons:** You are not able to specifically prepare for a community. For example, if you are headed to a Reservation community, you are not able to include cultural learning in your pre-trip meetings. Also, your teenagers will constantly ask you to spill the beans.

Please Call Us!

You can register for a YouthWorks trip online, but don't hesitate to call or email us with your questions. Our Trip Consultant Team knows additional details about each YouthWorks community that isn't necessarily on our website. They can help you decide where to go and find a place that is a good fit for your group. The more details you can provide about preferences, the easier it will be for them to point you in the right direction.

Please Note: spaces for trips start filling up as soon as we open registration. If you have a larger group, we'd encourage you to register as early as you can!

PLANNING WHEN TO GO

Most likely, you're already a pro at organizing your calendar, so I am preaching to the choir here. But in case you need some ideas, start by planning your events about a year in advanced with your mission trip date on the calendar. Think through school and sports schedules for your students (in general, you'll go crazy trying to coordinate with everyone). Determine if your church has other events (like VBS) that would need teenage volunteers or that your teenagers would like to attend. If you wanted to be diplomatic about it, you could even crowdsource opinions by sending out a survey with several date options. Basically at the end of the day, you want to choose a date that works for a critical mass of your students and chaperones.



- PART 2 -

All About the Money

MISSION TRIP PLANNING CHECKLIST

We've already covered where and when to go on a mission trip. Now it's time to sign up! If you have signed up for your trip, good job! If checking things off your to-do lists bring you joy, then go ahead, here is your opportunity:

- ☐ Determine when to go on a mission trip
- ☐ Determine where to go on a mission trip
- ☐ Sign up for your mission trip

Check you out! I bet that felt good. You are already on track. But now for the more difficult part. You need to plan everything else. Don't worry, you've got this!

Start by creating a big to-do list of tasks to help you stay organized. See below for some ideas to get you started. Don't forget to keep reading this guidebook, there are details on how to do most of the items below.

- ☐ Create a trip budget
- ☐ Determine and book travel
- ☐ Book transportation
- ☐ If flying, book flights
- ☐ If traveling multiple days, secure lodging
- ☐ If traveling multiple days, find showers
- ☐ Decide and plan fun activities, especially if they will add to the trip cost
- ☐ Determine amount to charge students
- ☐ Determine amount (if any) to charge adult leaders.
- ☐ Advertise & recruit students for your trip (See the "How to Get More Students and Adults to Sign Up" Guidebook)
- ☐ Recruit adult leaders (See the "Supporting and Developing Adult Volunteers" Guidebook)
- ☐ Create a fundraising plan
- ☐ Create a fundraising calendar
- ☐ Plan mission trip meetings: when, where and content of meetings
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Now that you have a rough outline of your to-do list, let's tackle some items right now!



CREATING A BUDGET FOR YOUR MISSION TRIP

You're not going to get too far in your trip-planning process without at least a rough budget. A lot of people get into youth ministry in the first place so they don't have to think about numbers as a career. I get it, but numbers are so important! If this is not your thing, that is OK. Ask a numbers-minded individual in your church to help walk you through this process. If you have a lot of administrative support, leverage that help for this portion of the trip planning.

When you determine a budget early on in your trip planning process it will help figure out what you should charge students, fundraising goals, fun activities you can afford and even how many students can come.

Determine fixed vs. variable costs

It is probably not a shock that there are some trip costs that are the same regardless of the number of students attending the trip, these are called **fixed costs**. The costs that increase with additional students are **variable costs**. Here are some examples:

Fixed Costs: Gas for travel, rental car fees (can also be a variable cost depending on how many vehicles you need to rent), incidentals, insurance, and costs for adult leaders (if you plan on paying for your leaders).

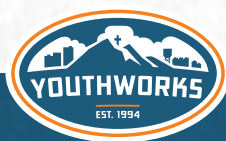
Variable Costs: Program fees, food and fees for fun activities.

When you create a budget, it is necessary to balance the fixed costs with the number of mission trip participants expected and maximize the numbers as best as possible. For example, if you plan on renting a 12-passenger van for \$800, it will be cheapest for all if you fill every seat. Obviously \$800 divided by 12 people will be a lower number than \$800 divided by 8 people. The same is true for gas for travel to your destination. Try and have this amount divided by the maximum amount of people. It may be a good idea to make a few versions of your budget: best case scenario (ideal numbers), likely scenario (realistic numbers) and worst-case scenario (bad numbers). Check out this example:

Best case scenario: 12 mission trip attenders. Gas cost: \$400, rental car cost: \$800. \$1,200 total. Divide this by 12 people, so fixed costs are = \$100 cost per person

Likely scenario: 10 mission trip attenders. Gas cost: \$400, rental car cost: \$800. \$1,200 total. Divide this by 10 people, so fixed costs are = \$120 cost per person

Worst-case scenario: 8 mission trip attenders. Gas cost: \$400, Rental car cost: \$800. \$1,200 total. Divide this by 8 people, so fixed costs are = \$150 cost per person



When you are creating a budget, decide how conservative you'd like to be with these numbers. Accuracy is important, but you cannot plan for every situation. If you don't have enough students sign up, what is your plan to offset these costs? Find out if you can retroactively offset additional costs from the mission trip with funds from your general youth ministry budget. You can also plan to include some padding in the budget to offset this cost if needed. Bring in other leaders from your church into the conversation to decide on the best practice for your youth ministry budget.

How to Save Money on your Trip

When you think through your objectives for your trip, decide on your priorities. Do you want high adventure and lots of planned activities (amusement parks, ziplining, canoeing)? Do you want to make it as inexpensive as possible? Is the location so important that you're willing to make any cost "work"? There is no wrong answer, but you need to come up with your own philosophy as you make your budget.

The philosophy of many youth workers is to include the most experiences for a trip for the lowest possible price. If saving money is your objective, then check out some tips below!

Register Early: Many organizations have promotions for churches that sign up early (usually June through September). For example, at YouthWorks, churches who have been on YouthWorks trips in the past (alumni) can save \$15 per person if they register early. For a group of 20, that is a savings of \$300!

Fluctuate Dates and Travel Destinations: A longer, further trip means added expenses. If you know your budget will be tight, pick a location close to home. This will result in drastic savings. If you're from Portland, Oregon maybe choose to serve in San Francisco instead of driving all the way to Niagara Falls, New York. Also, the dates you choose matters! For example, certain weeks of YouthWorks trips are priced lower than others.

Car Rental: Maximize your seats. If you have 24 seatbelts, try to recruit 24 students. Decide if it is a good option to recruit an adult to drive their own personal car for luggage and/or a few additional students. Does your church have a reliable van or bus you could take? If you are traveling long distances, find a van rental with unlimited miles. Renting 12 or 15 passenger vans sometimes include different rental policies than typical compact rental cars. Sometimes these companies require you to pay an additional fee per mile when you exceed 750 miles. This can add up fast on a long road trip.

Check if your church's insurance is adequate coverage for your trip. If so, you may not need to purchase additional rental van insurance. This could save money on rental costs. Before making this decision, talk to someone at your church who is good with these types of things. It is possible your church already has a policy about this.

BUS PRO TIP ►

Check with your mission organization for rules on vehicles before finalizing your plans. For example, at YouthWorks, only a few mission trip locations can accommodate busses due to parking restrictions and community sensitivity.



Prepare Food on the Road: Purchasing food for breakfast and lunch is inexpensive and more cost-effective than eating out. This can be a huge money saver on trips-especially trips with multiple travel days. Purchase sandwich fixings, chips, fruit, water, carrots, etc. For dinner, you could include a stop at a grocery store deli for rotisserie chicken, prepared salads and potato wedges. If you're staying overnight with kitchen access, be strategic about your breakfast options. Eggs are cheap and easier to pack in a van than cereal and milk.

There will undoubtedly be a few fast food stops, but it could also be nice if these were optional for students. For example, on a dinner stop, students could get Taco Bell OR they could choose to make a sandwich and eat snacks from the van. This can help students save money. Or, it can be a helpful alternative in the "unlikely" scenario if on second day of a nine-day trip and the student has already run out of money (facepalm).

Find Free Lodging (if traveling multiple nights): Since you will likely sleep on air mattresses during your mission trip, consider staying at a church. More on this in Part 2 of this Guidebook.

Choosing Your "Extras": When you're taking a group of teenagers on a trip, it can be fun to add some additional activities to the itinerary before or after your trip. If you're driving through South Dakota, why not stop and visit the Badlands? If your group is really into theme parks, add a day to visit Six Flags. When making these plans, be sure to choose fun outings that are affordable and worthwhile. If it applies to your outing, check for special promotions or coupons online before purchasing tickets. Check for discounted tickets through a website like Groupon.com. You can even call and see if there is a discounted rate for groups or students.

Trip T-Shirts: Often groups on mission trips will create custom T-Shirts. It is a good idea to simply roll in the shirt costs into your trip. Usually the more shirts you purchase, the more you will save.

YOUTHWORKS STORE ►

YouthWorks sells custom T-shirts which are available for purchase before your mission trip! There are a plethora of design and color options to choose from. This is a great money-saving option because YouthWorks does not charge a set-up fee for t-shirt printing. You simply pay per shirt (with a minimum purchase). **BONUS WIN-** the proceeds of these shirts go right back to YouthWorks communities.

CHECK OUT:

youthworks.com/custom-order-shirts/

DECIDING WHAT TO CHARGE STUDENTS

Once you have a rough outline for your trip budget, you will need to decide how much of the cost will fall on students and/or leaders and what you will charge them. You will need to figure out a few things. Ask yourself the following questions:

For practical example on putting this all together, see the Case Study section on page 14 for a real budget and trip-planning help.



Church Budget. Does your church have room in the budget to cover a portion of the cost for student missions? Is there a line item in the youth ministry budget for this already? When is the fiscal year ending? Is it possible to propose new budget items in time for your trip? If there is budget for the church to cover some of this cost, how much money can be given to students?

Adult Leader Cost. There is no way around it, you need chaperones for your trip. A decision must be made who will pay for their trip cost. Will their expense be added to the student cost, or will funds come from the church budget or the adults themselves?

Guaranteed Funds. Apart from the actual church budget, there are sometimes opportunities for individuals to make restricted donations for student missions. Perhaps your church collects offerings toward student missions throughout the year and there is enough money to reduce the cost for example, by \$50 per student.

How Strict is the Budget? How will costs be covered if you accidentally go over budget? Are you able to go into “debt” for a mission trip? Do you need to adjust the budget to add buffer money for incidentals and factor this into the cost for students? Could you plan a conservative budget but offer a refund if there is excess money at the end of the trip?

Creating a Payment Schedule

Once you have decided on the cost for each student/adult leader, you next have to decide on a payment plan. Paying the total cost of a mission trip all at once could be a challenge for some families. Sometimes it can be very helpful to break up the cost over a few payments. You may also want to consider if you have specific payment deadlines through your mission trip organization. It may make the most sense to consider creating a payment schedule that reflects the payment schedule from the mission organization or your church’s fiscal year.

WHO SHOULD PAY FOR THE LEADERS? ►

Paying for additional people on the trip could add hundreds if not thousands of extra dollars to your trip cost. Should adults pay to chaperone? Unfortunately, there isn’t a right answer. There are, however, some factors you should consider make the decision.

- Do you usually charge adults for retreats? If yes, then there is already a precedent for adults to pay for themselves.
- Will your church cover the cost for adults? If so, there is no need to pass along this cost to students.
- If it is impossible to pay for adults, what is the lowest amount to charge adults that works with your budget?
- What fundraising opportunities are available for adults?
- How many adults do you have? If you have lots of adults who want to go, you probably can’t pay for all of them. Decide on the number of adults you will cover.

Some churches roll in the cost for their Adult Leaders into what is charged to the students, or this cost is covered by the church. Other churches will charge Adult Leaders.

At the end of the day, it is nice to pay for Adult Leaders. It is a great way to let them know they are appreciated and thank them for chaperoning.



Down Payment: When you book your mission trip through an organization, they will often require a down payment within a month or two of your registration. You can cover this cost by likewise requiring a down payment when students sign up for the trip. It is helpful to make this payment as non-refundable (likely it is also non-refundable from your mission organization). This will also encourage students to commit to attending the trip if they have some financial stake in the process early on. Charge your students whatever the deposit amount (usually, it is around \$50-\$100 per person).

Second Payment: This could be an optional payment but could serve as an incentive to collect on fundraising dollars.

Final Payment: This should be due right before you leave on your trip. Schedule this payment the same day as your final team meeting. Have a roster printout with a list of what each student owes and cross this out as you receive checks or online payments.

Mission Trip Scholarships

It would be a shame to turn away students for a mission trip because they are unable to pay for it. Your church could consider (perhaps it already does) offering scholarships for a free/reduced cost mission trip. Best practice for offering scholarships is to have an application process. When deciding who receives limited scholarship dollars, you can consider things such as: prior youth group attendance or fundraising participation. Although you may have a disengaged student who could really benefit from attending the trip. Use your best judgment on this, but don't operate in a silo. Find a group of people to review scholarship applications and determine rewards and amounts.

HOW MUCH TO FUNDRAISE?

Fundraising can be a huge help in making the trip financially possible for students. Likely, your church has financial goals based on the giving and generosity of the congregation. In the same vein, it is helpful to have fundraising goals for your mission trip that align with your overall trip budget. Take the overall cost of the trip and ballpark a number for how much you'd like each student to pay out of pocket. Plan your fundraising efforts accordingly.

Individual vs. Group Fundraising

Group Fundraising. One way to coordinate your fundraising efforts is to create a general fund for your mission trip. Your fundraising dollars will go in this general fund rather than to individuals. You have the option to cover general expenses from this group fund and not pass on the expense to the students (for example, you can use this method to pay for the cost of adult leaders). This approach is good for event-based fundraisers such as church meals, bake sales, etc. Hold the fundraiser event and then all the money from the event can go in the general mission trip fund. When all fundraisers are complete, and the general expenses (if any) are covered, divide the money to the students who participated in each event.



If you have a reoccurring fundraising event and know approximately how much money you'd be able to raise, you can advertise this savings to students as you promote the trip. For example, you can publicize the price for the trip as \$500 but students can get \$150 off if the student serves at four Lenten Supper events.

Individual Fundraising. A great way to have students to invest and take ownership over their mission trip experience is for them to be directly involved with fundraising efforts. In addition to group fundraising, encourage each student to have a personal fundraising goal/ If you have margin, check in with each student for how they plan to meet that goal. The level of excitement and commitment towards fundraising will obviously vary from student to student and that is OK. It is best to keep a detailed spreadsheet of the revenue that each student brings in through personal fundraising efforts.

5 LESSONS STUDENTS LEARN FROM FUNDRAISING/ SUPPORT RAISING ►

1. **Learn to Rely on the Lord for Provision.** Encourage students to pray about their fundraising efforts and to be expectant for God's provision**.
2. **Paints a Picture of Community.** We all need each other. Through fundraising, students learn a practical lesson on how the Body of Christ can offer support and encouragement to one another.
3. **Foster Future Generosity.** Through engaging in fundraising efforts themselves, teenagers may be more inclined to charitably support missions, church or other organizations in the future.
4. **Develops Social Skills.** To fundraise, students will have to talk to people, sometimes even people they don't know well. They will grow as confident communicators and learn to overcome social barriers with others.
5. **Encourages Creativity and Action.** Teenagers have an abundance of creativity. Likewise, there are endless fundraising opportunities. When students are responsible for their own fundraising, they get the opportunity to give legs to their innate creativity. These skills can lead to future business ideas, foster innovation, critical thinking and problem solving.

***As a youth worker, it could be helpful to teach students what the Bible says/ doesn't say about God's provision.*



- PART 3 -

Planning Travel to and from Your Mission Trip

TRAVEL LOGISTICS 101

Your mission trip likely involves a few (or more!) hours of travel. There are a lot of logistics that goes into planning those few hours. Depending on the length of travel to your mission site, you will need to create a plan to use this time efficiently.

General Travel Tips:

Consider Purchasing Travel Insurance. If flying domestically for a mission trip, it can still be beneficial to purchase travel insurance. Travel insurance offers trip protection if you need to cancel last minute, additional medical/dental coverage (if needed), trip interruption and trip cancellation. Decide with your church leadership if this is a good option for your church.

Be Aware of Your Church's Travel Policies. Does your church or church insurance policy have any regulations on length of travel days? For example, some churches only allow groups to drive for 8 hours at a time. Are you only allowed to rent 8 passenger vans? Know all the details before getting too far with travel plans.

Tips for Planning for Road Trips:

Determine the Number of Drivers Available. How many people can drive the vehicle? Most car rental companies require drivers to be over the age of 25 or they include a fee for underage drivers. These fees can really add up, so if possible, avoid younger

TRAVEL INSURANCE COMPANIES ►

There are seemingly endless options for insurance, here are a few ideas:

www.travelguard.com 1.800.826.4919

www.travelprotectors.com 1.877.515.9055

BONUS TRAVEL PREP! ►

1. **Plan your PLAY:** Make your 10-hour drive 10 hours of FUN! Plan car games, get-to-know-you games, van wars, provide coloring pages, crosswords, mad libs, etc. This will help your students stay engaged so they aren't on their phones for 10 hours straight.
2. **Plan Your PLAYLIST:** Make a stellar playlist that can be a good default for van rides when no one can agree OR when your students' music makes you cringe.
3. **Plan Your PROVISION:** Sneak in some fun surprise snacks to pass out during your travels!



drivers altogether. If you are limited on drivers, you may have to factor in extra travel time to give your drivers a break from the road.

Factor in Time Changes. Sometimes these can sneak up on you. Be aware if you're gaining or losing an hour (or two) during a travel day.

Plan Your Pit Stops. Although things come up while travelling, do some research ahead of time about where you'd like to stop. This will save you time in the long run. For example, don't bring a group of 30 teenagers to a sub sandwich shop, that will take forever.

Be Aware of Tolls. Check for tolls roads on your route ahead of time so you won't be surprised with additional costs to your trip. If there will be tolls, plan to stock each van with some cash.

Tips for Booking Flights

Book Early. Flights are usually cheaper when they are booked further in advanced. Also, if you're traveling with a large group, early booking secures everyone on the same flight.

Use Group Booking. If you are traveling with a group of 10 or more, you can utilize group booking. You will need to call the airline directly with your number or travelers and specific dates. The airline will then get back to you with a specific quote. You should contact several different airlines for multiple quotes before you decide a carrier. Know that this process is slower than getting quotes online through companies like Google Flights, Kayak or Expedia. This type of booking doesn't necessarily provide a discounted rate (in fact, these rates usually are more expensive), however there are some nice perks. This type of booking guarantees everyone will be on the same flight. Additionally, depending on the terms negotiated with the airline, you don't have to provide the passenger names at the time of booking. You can also sometimes make changes to add or remove up to 10% of the passengers (policies vary for every carrier). If you have a smaller group however, it is probably a better option to book the flights yourself.

Factor in Baggage Fees. If you receive comparable quotes for flights, consider choosing the carrier with the cheapest option for baggage.

Fly to a Bigger City and Drive to Your Final Destination. This will save a lot of money. Usually, smaller regional airports are much more expensive than large international airports in larger cities. Most mission trip organizations require you to have transportation anyway, so why not save significantly on flights and spend a little time driving?

Consider a Travel Agent. Travel Agents are experts in group bookings and sometimes can get deals through airlines. They do all the work to contact the airlines on your behalf and do all the work to find the best option for your group. They will also help with booking rental vehicles as needed. Travel Agents of course have booking fees, so decide if it is worth it to outsource the booking to a third party.



Vehicle Rental at the Airport. When you fly, you will still need to rent a van to transport your group during the week. The most convenient way to do this is to pick up the rental car at the airport. Most car rental companies have a counter at the airport or offer a free shuttle service to their office. Airport rental counters typically have longer business hours which may offer better flexibility. For example, if your flight is delayed, you will still be able to pick up your car. Car rental at an airport is typically more expensive than other car rental locations, however it is by far the most convenient option for most people.

Rent Vehicles Away from Airports. If you can figure out the logistics, it is often significantly cheaper to rent a car at an off-airport location. Bring another leader and take a Lyft/Uber/ public transportation to the rental office (only if the students have enough supervision!) and circle back to the airport with the vehicles to pick up the rest of your group. This obviously won't work in every location, but it could be a good option for cutting costs!

Use Your Memberships. Sometimes certain memberships offer discounts on car rentals. Frequent flyer programs sometimes offer discounts, as does AAA. You can even find discounted rates when you rent using a Costco membership!

LET'S TALK ABOUT VAN RENTALS ►

Do your research! Van rental prices and policies vary significantly from location to location. Typically, it is easiest to use a website like Expedia or Kayak to compare prices on rental options. Play around with these search engines changing the pickup locations to various places in the city. See if there are any drastic price changes. If the prices are comparable, it is probably best to conveniently rent at the airport. See page 5 for other van rental tips.

HOW TO MAKE IT AFFORDABLE

Find Free Overnight Accommodations

If you're driving more than one day to your trip. Look for cheap or free housing accommodations. A great way to do this is to sleep at churches. Contact churches (or individuals if your group is small) en route to your destination and request lodging. You can ask students to stay at host homes or for everyone to sleep on air mattresses in a church. It is a good idea to secure housing for your group before you plan your official driving route. This may seem difficult; however, you may be surprised to find that many churches are open to this type of request.

Host Homes: Usually this is only possible if there is a contact at a local church that will make these arrangements on your behalf. You may want to take into consideration that while host homes may be more comfortable, the logistics can be more difficult. Here are some considerations before planning home stay accommodations:

- **Do you have enough time?** If you're going to arrive to town at 10PM and are planning on leaving again at 7AM, home stays may not be the best option.



- **Consult Leadership from your home church.** Does your church have a Safe Sanctuary-type policy? Are students permitted to stay with adults that don't have a verified background check? Do students have to be with a leader from your church?
- **What is the transportation plan?** Consider how you're relying on transportation from host families back to a central location and for your group's departure the next day.

If you'd rather all stay together in a church, here are some tips for finding **host churches**:

It's All About Connections. It is easier for a church to agree to host a group of strangers if there is someone who can make a personal recommendation on your behalf. Talk to your friends, leaders, congregation or students' parents. You could also reach out to online communities to see if someone could make a connection on your behalf. You never know... one of your students might have an uncle who is an associate pastor of a church near where you're looking.

Contact Churches in Your Denomination. There is usually name recognition within a denomination. There may be some connections with individuals at your church and their church. If you are looking for lodging on a Saturday night, it could also be fun for your group to attend church on Sunday morning at a church.

Ask for Access to a Kitchen. Cooking meals is a great way to cut down on the mission trip cost. Depending how your travel times shake out, you could be able to enjoy two meals prepared in the church's kitchen (and maybe even prepare a bagged lunch!). It is also common that someone from a host church would be willing to prepare a meal for you.

Check if the Church has Access to Showers. While teenagers could probably go a day or two without a shower, they may not have to. Decide if access to showers is a factor you'd like to consider when choosing a housing location.

Ask About Fire Codes. Sometimes churches agree to host overnight guests only to be shut down by the local Fire Marshall (this is rare for a one-night stay, but could happen). Typically, churches with a built in sprinkler systems and hard-wired fire alarms can host people overnight.

TIPS FOR FINDING SHOWERS ►

1. Ask your host church if congregation members would be willing to have a group of teenagers over to use their showers. This will only work if you had a smaller group.
2. Contact local fitness or community centers. Call and explain to a manager about your group. Sometimes they will allow for free showers for youth groups. Otherwise, you can always pay per shower. Usually it is only a few dollars. Ideas for shower locations: The Y, fitness centers, public pools, schools, colleges, community centers or local campgrounds.



CASE STUDY ON TRIP PLANNING

It is time to put it all together! Here is an example of trip planning in action. Obviously, your trip will look really different, but this can give you a good idea where to begin!

Details:

- Our Local Community Church in Minneapolis, MN
- Travel to: YouthWorks site in Denver, CO
- Dates: June 21-June 28, 2025
- Numbers: 20 students, 4 adults = 24 total people

Cost Breakdown:

ITEM DESCRIPTION	PER PERSON FEE	TOTAL COST
YouthWorks Fee	*\$449 per person	\$10,776
Van Rental Fee	\$750 per van/week with 2 vans	\$1,500
Gas	About \$500/van	\$1,000
Food	Avg. \$5/person/meal (6 travel meals, some eating out, some bagged lunches, some cooking as a group)	\$720
Whitewater Rafting	\$50 per person	\$1,150(with group discount)
Subtotals		\$15,146 Total
Youth Mission Budget Contribution for Adult Leaders		-\$1,500
Fundraising Money	This money is available to any student who works 2 shifts at an advent/lent dinner	-\$1,000
Totals	\$632.30 per student (free for adults)rounded to advertised cost of \$650 per student	\$12,646 (divided by 20 students)
(Extra Budget Money for incidentals)	\$650 (charged cost per student)-632.30 (actual cost per student) = difference of \$17.70 per person * 20 students =	+\$354 extra money

**YouthWorks Fee is based on the typical cost of a summer 2025 mission trip. This fee additionally does not include any group discounts.*



Fundraising Plan

- **Lent and Advent Suppers.**

- Total of 9 soup and salad dinners before advent and lent services, 5PM-6:30PM
- \$5 per meal
- Expect about 60 people in attendance on average.
- Total fundraising amount expected: \$1,000 towards Youth Missions (*the rest will be for other ministries*).
 - Youth Missions money will go into the general fundraising account.
- Volunteers Needed: This is a mandatory fundraising event for all mission trip participants. Each student is required to work 2 dinners. *If unable to work these dinners, students will need to pay an added \$50 to trip cost.*
 - Small group ministries will also volunteer for these dinners.

- **Parent's Night Out.**

- Babysitting at church from on December 14th and February 14th, 5-9PM
- \$10 per child, will also accept freewill donations
- Expect up to 70 children each event
- Total fundraising amount expected: \$1600 total
- Volunteers Needed: Depends on registration. Probably will need 10 students and 4 adults minimum. Note: These are optional fundraisers.
- Money will be divided among the students who volunteer for these events.

Travel Itinerary

- **Saturday, June 21**

- *The Plan:* This is our long travel day. There are not a ton of scenic areas through our drive, we're going to power through and do most of our drive this day. Stops will be quick; we will have a more leisure trip on Sunday.
 - **7:00 AM** Meet at Our Local Community Church (bring a no-heat, bag lunch)
 - **7:00-7:30 AM** Load vans and circle prayer send off with families.
 - **7:30 AM** depart Minneapolis
 - **11:30 PM** stop to eat bagged lunches at rest stop near Des Moines, IA
 - **7:30 PM** (about) Arrive to Ogallala, NE (now in Western time, gain one hour)
 - Pick up dinner at Walmart, prep and eat at 1st Lutheran Church 555 Pleasant Street, Ogallala, NE 69153
- Jane Johnson's uncle's is the pastor of this church.
 - There are 2 showers at the church, we will have to coordinate times.
- Minneapolis to Ogallala, NE (10 hours, 700 miles)



- **Sunday, June 22**
 - **Before church:** clean and reset the sleeping rooms. Pack everything in the vans.
 - **9:30 AM** Attend the worship service at 1st Lutheran.
 - **10:30 AM** Church members will serve us breakfast
 - Everyone will pack a lunch at this time
 - **11:30 AM** Back on the road
 - Students can eat lunch in the van whenever they'd like. We will stop at rest stops or gas stations as needed.
 - **3:00 PM**, arrive in Denver. Find a park or something fun to do (depending on time) near the housing site.
 - **4:30 PM** Arrive to YouthWorks site
 - Ogallala, NE to Denver, CO (3 hours 15 minutes, 211 miles)
- **Sunday, June 22-Friday, June 27** YouthWorks Mission Trip- YouthWorks will take over here for our schedule, meals and service activities.
- **Friday, June 27** Fun day in Red Rocks Park and Whitewater Rafting.
 - **8:30 AM** Depart YouthWorks site
 - **9:00 AM** Arrive to Red Rocks, hang out and walk around. (*Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre, West Alameda Parkway, Morrison, CO*)
 - **10:30 AM** Arrive for White Water Rafting Orientation (*Geo Tours Whitewater Raft Trips, Colorado 8, Morrison, CO Colorado 8, Morrison, CO*)
 - **11:00-1:00 AM** White Water Rafting Trip through Geo Tours, price included in trip cost.
 - **1:30 PM** Lunch at Chick Fil A in Lakewood, CO (*Chick-fil-A, 14730 W Colfax Ave, Lakewood, CO 80401*). Pass out van snacks, dinner will be later this evening.
 - **8:00 PM** Arrive to Kearney, NE and have a late dinner. Lots of fast food options in the area.
 - Sleep at Lutheran Church of the Cross (*25 Acorn Ave, Kearney, NE 68845*)- they have showers!
 - Morrison, CO to Kearney, NE (5.5 hours, 370 miles).
- **Saturday, June 28** drive Kearney, NE to home (8 hours, 550 miles)
 - **7:30 AM** Wake up, pack up rooms, load stuff in van, clean church
 - **8:15 AM** Breakfast at the church, pack lunches
 - **9:00 AM** Depart Kearney
 - **12:30 PM** Stop for lunch at rest stop when folks seem hungry
 - **6:00 PM** Arrive home to Our Local Community Church (your student will send time updates if ETA is earlier or later)



- PART 4 -

Before You Go

That was a lot! We hope this resource has been a helpful tool as you plan and prepare for your mission trip this summer. There is obviously so much more that goes into trip planning than logistics. If you'd like more information on planning any additional portions of your trip, check out our additional resources found in the Mission Trip Resources Library. Head over to our website and click on the "Explore Resources" tab on the top of the main page. Or simply visit: <https://youthworks.com/free-mission-trip-prep-resources-library/> These resources are FREE- we want to make your job easier! You can find additional resources such as:

- Bead's Needs: A Healthy Service-Learning Activity for your Mission Trip
- Engaging Parents with Your Next Mission Trip
- How to Create Student Leadership Opportunities with Your Mission Trip
- Supporting & Developing Adult Volunteers with Your Mission Trip
- An Introduction to the Myths and Generational Impact of Poverty
- Forming a culture of us. Addressing the Dangerous "Us vs Them" Mentality in Missions
- Systemic Injustice: An Introduction That Helps Mentally Prepare You Before You Serve
- Respectful Service: Deepen Your Understanding of Respectful Service
- What to Do when A Teen Tells you about Anxiety on a Mission Trip
- What to Do to Prevent and Address Misbehavior on a Mission Trip
- What to Do When a Teen Self-Injures on a Trip
- Engaging, equipping and empowering every student on a Mission Trip
- How to Get More Students and Adults to Sign Up

