

Small Space, Little Effort, Big Impact: Why We Think You Should Pack for a Purpose

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*"Pack for a Purpose is simply a way for people to express generosity and gratitude."
- Rebecca Rothney, founder of Pack for a Purpose*

More and more, travelers are looking for ways to give back to the local community wherever they go. Here at SustainableTrip.org, we exclusively promote businesses that are supporting the community in a meaningful way, and now we've found a way for you, the traveler, to support the community you're traveling to as well--and you won't believe how easy it is.

Here's how it works. The program is called **Pack for a Purpose**, and it invites travelers to pack school supplies, medical supplies, and other small items (such as soccer balls) on their next trip as a donation to the local community that they're visiting. If you're staying at a hotel that participates in Pack for a Purpose, all you have to do is drop off your donation at the front desk, and the hotel will deliver it for you. It doesn't get much simpler than that!

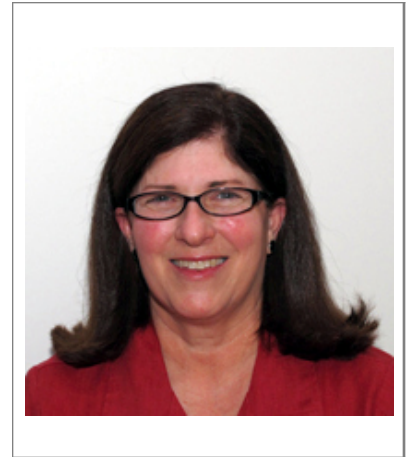


We spoke with Rebecca Rothney, founder of Pack for a Purpose, about how the program got started and why it's so important.

Q: How did you get the idea to start Pack for a Purpose?

A: My husband Scott and I have been taking supplies to Africa for many years with the help of Wilderness Safaris, whose lodges and camps we were staying at. We started out taking supplies for schools, and then once the AIDS epidemic broke out, we started taking supplies for orphanages, as well, which were quickly increasing in number and size.

Before one particular trip to Kenya in 2008, I noticed that our destination had a medical clinic and school on the property. So I emailed the clinic and asked them, if they could have anything at all for their facility, what would they ask for? The clinic emailed me back and said, "We are really in need of a stethoscope and a blood pressure cuff." Needless to say, I was pretty appalled! How could you have a clinic without a stethoscope? I contacted my friend who is a nurse, and she sent me two stethoscopes and a blood pressure cuff to give to the clinic.



I asked our travel agent why all of his clients didn't do this, and his exact words to me were, "Because people don't think about it." And I thought, well I can give them a way to think about it. And once they think about it, I bet they'll do it, especially if it's easy and convenient.

So I got a small group of friends together, and one was able to hook us up with a web designer who supported what we were trying to do, and agreed to help us for free. After a few months of planning, we were up on the internet.

Q: Tell us more about how the program works. How do travelers participate?

A: Travelers can go to our website and look through our **Destinations** page to find a participating hotel or look to see if the hotel they've already booked is on our list. Each hotel's page on our website tells you what type of projects they're involved with, and what the needs of those projects are. Then, the traveler is free to pick the supplies they'd like to bring from the needs list.

Q: How can hotels and other tourism businesses get involved?



A: The program works very simply and it's absolutely free for hotels to participate. If you own a property and are already involved with a community-based program, such as a school, orphanage, clinic, or anti-poaching organization, then you're the perfect candidate to be on our website. All you have to do is **submit your property**, specify what type of project(s) you're involved with, and provide a "needs list." Once we review your submission, we'll create an individual profile page for your hotel, and then the only requirement is



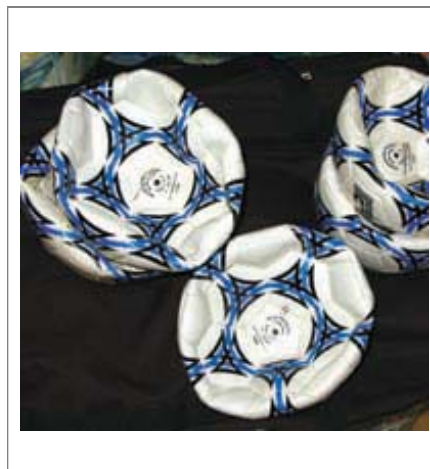
that you put a link to Pack for a Purpose on your website in return and report back to us twice a year regarding how many supplies you have received.

Q: Like your travel agent said, people just don't think about donating, or associate vacation with charity. How can we change this?

A: Instead of putting it in terms of charity work, Pack for a Purpose is simply a way for people to express generosity and gratitude. People do that in many different ways every single day--in the same way you might say thank you to the person who holds a door open for you, now when you go to someone's country, you have a way to say thank you for the wonderful time you're having. It's easy if you're going to a friend's house, because you know that they like chocolate or that daisies are their favorite flower; it might be more difficult giving to a community in a different country if you don't know what they need. But if you use our website, you'll know exactly what they need. So you can say, "That's so easy, I can do that! It would be a lovely thing to do that wouldn't take time away from our trip and would maximize our vacation experience." Pack for a Purpose is a benefit most of all to the local community, but it's also an enormous benefit to the travelers themselves.

Q: What kinds of hotels/tour operators participate in Pack for a Purpose? Is it mostly eco-lodges or luxury resorts?

A: It really runs the gamut, and I'm very grateful for that. There are several backpacking places on our website, some more high-end places like the Ritz Carlton, and everything in between. We have two cruises--not giant cruise ships, but small eco-cruises. The range is wide, and it should be, because all kinds of people and properties are keenly aware of how important it is to give back to local communities. I think that giving back is a moral mandate for everyone, no matter what your price range is. If you have the means to go somewhere out of the country for vacation, you could probably find \$10 to pack school supplies. And if you feel like that's too much, you can take a single deflated soccer ball with you--it would cost you less than \$10 and take up even less than 1 lb of your luggage.



Q: How successful has Pack for a Purpose been so far?

A: We have gotten some wonderful stories from PFAP travelers. Of course, it's not at all necessary to send us an email when you get back--taking the supplies is the big thing--but we always love to get feedback from travelers. We have a section on our website called **Your Story** where we post some of the stories and photos.

Twice a year, our properties report back to us how many supplies they've collected. In 2010, PFAP travelers took over 705 pounds (320 kg) of supplies. This year so far, just 6 months into the year, they've taken over 1,378 pounds (625 kg) of supplies to all 5 continents on our site.

Q: What if you're not staying at Pack for a Purpose hotel but you're traveling to the

area? Would it still be possible to donate supplies?

A: It's not only possible, all of the hotels on our website would be delighted should you choose to drop off supplies at their property, even if you're not staying there. A perfect example of this happened a few years ago. A group of women who were traveling to Istanbul contacted me. The only Pack for a Purpose hotel in Istanbul is the Ritz Carlton and the women weren't planning on staying there, but they asked if they could still bring supplies. Not only did the Ritz Carlton agree to pick the supplies up, they invited the group of women to come have tea at the hotel as their guests!

Travelers should feel free to **contact me** to find out if the hotel is willing to pick the supplies up, or they can just drop the supplies off at the hotel themselves.



Q: Why do you think it's important for travelers to participate in programs like Pack for a Purpose?

A: Being a part of the community you are in is so important. I think communities come together in times of joy and in times of tragedy, and that's what sustains us as a species. So even if you're only in a community for a week or two, there's no reason that you can't participate in a meaningful way. By participating in Pack for a Purpose, you can make a contribution to the community you're in, enriching their lives, thereby enriching your own. But to do this, you need information, and hopefully that's what Pack for a Purpose can provide.

Here's a list of properties on SustainableTrip.org that are already participating in Pack for a Purpose--and we expect this list to keep on growing!

- **3 Rivers Eco Lodge**, Dominica
- **Cotton Tree Lodge**, Belize
- **Ecoventura Yachts - Galapagos Network**, Ecuador
- **Hamanasi Adventure & Dive Resort**, Belize
- **Hotel Mocking Bird Hill**, Jamaica
- **Lapa Rios**, Costa Rica

- **Lodge at Chaa Creek**, Belize
- **Playa Viva**, Mexico
- **Yachana Lodge**, Ecuador

Learn more about Pack for a Purpose at www.PackforaPurpose.org. You can contact Rebecca with questions about Pack for a Purpose at info.packforapurpose@gmail.com.

How do YOU feel about giving back to the community while traveling? Leave a comment and tell us about it!