



Information & Guide to Hosting International Volunteer Projects

Voluntary Service International

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1. Introduction

This guide is designed to help you decide if an International Volunteer Project (IVP) is for you, and how to make it a successful and enjoyable event. Please read the information thoroughly and do not hesitate to ask for more information if you need it.

i. History of Service Civil International and Voluntary Service International

Service Civil International (SCI) was founded in 1920 by a small group of people engaged in reconciliation work after the first World War. The person behind SCI, Pierre Ceresole, plus three Germans, a Dutchman, an Austrian and an Englishman did their first “workcamps’ in Esnes near Verdun, France. They helped rebuild and repair buildings in the village which had been destroyed during the war. The seeds of international voluntary service had been sown. Four years later several ‘workcamps’ were held in Switzerland. These attracted a larger number of participants from a variety of countries.

ii. Aims and objectives of SCI/ VSI

VSI Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote peace, social justice, sustainable development and intercultural understanding through volunteering in Ireland and internationally.

The international constitution of SCI states that “the aims of SCI are to promote peace, international understanding and solidarity, social justice, sustainable development and respect for the environment. SCI believes that all people are capable of living together with mutual respect and without recourse to any form of violence to solve conflicts.” International Volunteer Projects are one of the ways we hope to add to this. The constitution also states “voluntary service activities in co-operation with local communities as well as local, national, and international organisations, is a means of fostering greater confidence between people of different social, cultural, political and religious backgrounds by working, learning and living together.”

iii. Suitability for hosting an International Volunteer Project

Obviously there are some practical reasons why some projects would not be suitable for an IVP but we also have general criteria that the project should fulfil:

1. The Host’s project must have aims broadly in line with the aims of VSI. We work with not-for-profit organisations and projects.
2. The work should not be in direct competition with paid labour i.e. nobody should lose their job because a group of volunteers can do their work. The volunteers should not be used to break strikes.
3. It is unlikely that VSI would have a project where an individual is the sole beneficiary i.e. we normally only work with voluntary organisations, co-operatives and alternative communities.
4. At the other end of the scale we would not normally have an IVP with a large project with lots of paid people involved e.g. some government initiatives, this is so that the volunteers are not ‘lost’ in the project.

iv. Benefits of hosting an IVP

In addition to the above explanations of why VSI organises IVPs there are other reasons, some of which you might not immediately think of.

1. Having volunteers complete a piece of work for you
2. Adding an international flavour to your project

3. Making connections in other countries which could be useful to your project
4. Using the IVP to generate publicity
5. Communicating the ideas of your project to other people

2. Preparing for a project

i. Responsibilities of VSI

VSI are responsible for planning the project with the Host which includes deciding what work will be carried out by the volunteers, setting dates, the number of volunteers required, etc., informing the Host of the aims and objectives of VSI, preparing the Host to run the IVP and supporting the Host throughout the project. VSI is also responsible for recruiting the volunteers.

We will provide the volunteers with an 'Information Sheet' well before they leave for Ireland, we put this together with the Host, it includes info about travel directions, the meeting point, the organisation that the volunteers will be working with, accommodation, the local area, Ireland, useful websites etc., please see Appendix 1 for an example of an Info Sheet. VSI deals with volunteer travel enquiries though we will ask the Host to provide a telephone number in case volunteers need to contact you on the arrival day for example.

VSI will also support the Host and volunteers during the project. If we think a project will benefit we will provide a trained volunteer Project Coordinator. The role of this person is to support the volunteers, act as communicator between the volunteers, the Host and with VSI, help with organising social events and with other practicalities. S/he will live and work together with the volunteers. If a project doesn't need a Coordinator then a representative from VSI will visit the project on the first or second day, to meet the volunteers, explain why VSI is involved in this project and give some practical information on SCI/ VSI, insurance etc. We will also meet with the Host at this time and will deal with any queries you might have. We will also visit again towards the end of the project to carry out an evaluation with the volunteers, you will need to set aside time for the volunteers to take part in this, usually 2-3 hours and often over lunch or dinner. We will of course evaluate the project with you as well. There may also be occasions when we ask to speak to the volunteers about other issues. There may also be instances when you would like us to speak to the volunteers e.g. if there is a problem which would benefit from an 'outsider' to mediate.

ii. Responsibilities of the Host

The Host is responsible for providing food, accommodation and organising the work of a project. So the Host should be prepared to pay for the expenses of having a group of volunteers. Expenses do not extend to buying rounds of drinks for the IVP volunteers! Customarily the Host arranges some social activities for the volunteers' free time and supports the volunteers to explore some of the local sights, this doesn't mean they must pay for them too! VSI can help the Host to plan this if necessary and will discuss with all Hosts beforehand. If a volunteer Project Coordinator (see below) is working on the project then they will take over much of this type of work.

VSI will arrange a meeting time and place with the Host and will inform the volunteers of these details. This is usually in the late afternoon of the first/ arrival day – to give the volunteers time to travel from their arrival airport/ city. The meeting point is usually nearby, the local bus or train station for example but if it's possible to travel easily on public transport to the accommodation or the Host's centre, then the meeting point can be there. The Host will meet the volunteers at the meeting point and transport them to the accommodation. The Host should also arrange an information/ study session for the volunteers on the area of work that they are involved in, the organisation that they will be working with, local interest etc. VSI will help you to do this, as will the Project Coordinator if required.

iii. Budgeting for a project

The budget varies between projects e.g. some projects may have to pay for accommodation or for transport to and from the work site, with others there may be no need for this, if accommodation is next to the worksite example. There are ways of reducing costs, for example some Hosts have been very successful at organising donations of foods from local shopkeepers or farmers. You will be able to judge what you need in these circumstances and we will discuss it with you beforehand too.

iv. The search engine and publicity

Early in the year, each Service Civil International branch organises their projects for that year, the projects are generally planned by the end of February and uploaded to our international search engine: <http://www.workcamps.info/icamps/> Our International Volunteer Projects Programme is publicised internationally and in Ireland, for example VSI holds Info Days, attends volunteer fairs, sends press releases etc. The projects in Ireland also appear on our own website www.vsi.ie Please see Appendix no. 2 for part of last year's programme in Ireland.

v. Contract and 'Checklist'

You will be asked to sign a contract which will also be signed by a VSI representative, it lists each of our responsibilities, Appendix no. 3. We also have a 'Checklist' which we will check through with you, this allows us to check that everything is in place and arranged for the duration of the project, it includes for example description of the work, accommodation details, cooking facilities, transportation details, Info Sheet and importantly, that health and safety procedures are in place.

vi. Designing the project programme

The shape of the project will largely be determined by the nature of the work, the length of the project and sometimes the usual working day/week at the Host organisation. We will plan the programme with you when we meet with you.

Points to note:

The first day is of course very important and it is key to get the balance right between telling the volunteers things they need to know at this stage and allowing the volunteers time to rest after their journeys. The best thing of course is to take a sounding on how the volunteers are. In any case you should facilitate introductions, introduce your organisation and the project and also inform the volunteers of any special rules and important practicalities. It's good to welcome the volunteers with some food - soup or bread and fillers for sandwiches for example, something that the volunteers can easily help themselves to usually works well.

The volunteers generally work the hours of a normal working week (approximately 35 hours a week). Usually this would be 9.00am – 5.00pm with a lunch break but perhaps the work takes place in the afternoons and evenings in which case the working hours should be arranged accordingly. If the project is two weeks in duration the middle weekend is usually kept free for the volunteers to rest and to explore Ireland or local areas of interest, if this doesn't suit the working arrangements of your project, the days off could be mid-week. After the project the volunteers are responsible to clean up the accommodation and if necessary the place where they work, time for this should be allocated in the programme at the end of the project.

Insurance, health and safety

Hosts should be careful to ensure that the volunteers have a safe working environment and are not asked to take undue risks. For example, health and safety procedures should be observed and explained to the volunteers, the volunteers should be shown how to use any tools necessary to complete the work. They should not be asked to take part in illegal activities i.e. driving a vehicle without adequate insurance cover, travelling in an overcrowded vehicle. Specific health and safety procedures for each project will be dealt with in more detail with VSI before the start of a project.

SCI runs its own internal insurance scheme for volunteers. Volunteers who participate on IVPs are insured under this scheme for accident, illness and third party liability. There are limitations to this cover, VSI will provide full information on the insurance policy well before the start of the project, VSI is also responsible for providing insurance info to the volunteers. Host organisations must be covered by their own insurance scheme for hosting volunteers.

3 The volunteers

i. What will the volunteers be like?

Volunteers must be 18 or over to take part in an International Volunteer Project, there is no upper age limit, we have had volunteers in their 60s and 70s on projects. However the vast majority of volunteers are aged between 18 and 30. We have volunteers from different walks of life but the majority are students. So a typical group of 10 volunteers would contain maybe 8 people under 30 and 2 over 30, with 6 students and the others working or unemployed. VSI tries to get a male/female balance on the projects but over the last number of years we have had many more applications from women, so it is likely that there will be more women than men on your project.

Most of the volunteers will be international from other European countries, on this programme we also have a number of volunteers from North America, Australia and Japan; we don't generally have volunteers from Africa, Latin America and Asia on this programme.

Volunteers are responsible for arranging their own visas if required, VSI will write a letter of invitation in support of this. In general the Host is not involved in this process but occasionally an embassy will ask for a letter of confirmation from the Host organisation, if this is the case it will be done through VSI and we will contact the Host.

ii. Language problems

One of most commonly asked questions is 'will they speak English?' The language on all projects in Ireland is English but there is generally a mixture of abilities. On projects where it is important for the volunteers to communicate well in English, for example where they are working directly with people, we only accept volunteers with very good levels of English. However it is part of the idea behind International Volunteer Projects to bring people who speak different languages together and show that communication is possible. So on projects where the work is more practical and English levels are less important, we would accept volunteers with less fluent English. Where this would affect safety though, for example if a volunteer would be unable to understand safety instructions, we may not accept them on the project. We would also seek to avoid having one or two large language groups e.g. two Germans, two Austrians and a Swiss German speaker, in the hope that this would stop the group fragmenting along language grounds. The people the volunteers will find hardest to understand are the native English speakers, try to make sure people understand what is meant, if necessary slow your normal speech and speak clearly.

iii. Special skills

It is part of our aim to be as open to as many people as possible and for this reason we do not normally look for volunteers with particular skills, however if the Host does need particular skills we will try to facilitate this. The other formula we can use is "volunteers do not need to have a specific skill but people with experience of (e.g.) carpentry are particularly welcome."

iv. Special requirements, diets, medical etc.

When volunteers apply for a project they are asked to state whether they have a medical condition or any special dietary requirements. We will pass that information on to you before the start of the project. If a volunteer has a medical condition it is their personal responsibility to bring any medication but it is obviously important for the Host to have this information just in case there is a complication. The Host should also be prepared to provide food for people with different diets, within reason. Vegetarians are quite common on the projects, it is likely that out of a group of 10 there would be at least 1 or 2 vegetarians.

v. Volunteers with disabilities

VSI tries to be as open as possible to volunteers with disabilities, we encourage Host organisations to be flexible in hosting volunteers and offer support where appropriate. It could be that the work is suitable but the accommodation is not, or your project may not be suitable for a wheelchair user but might be for a person with a visual impairment. We will assess the project's suitability with you before accepting any volunteers with disabilities.

vi. Volunteers with children

We would also be open to taking volunteers with children and would again ask Hosts to decide whether their project would be suitable for parent/s and child/ children. Depending on the age of the child they may be able to take part in the work too or the parent may need to spend some time caring for the child. It may be that your project is suitable for children over the age of 5 but not for toddlers or babies for example.

vii. Volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults

VSI obtains two references from all volunteers who will be working with or around children, young people and vulnerable adults. These volunteers are usually also required to obtain a police check and to complete a 'Declaration form' where the volunteer is required to disclose details of any criminal record, see Appendix 4 for documents. We also check that volunteers are motivated to do the work in these categories, in some cases volunteers are required to provide a letter of motivation. This is obviously not a foolproof system and we would ask Hosts to consider how to prevent situations where abuse can take place or suspicions arise. VSI will discuss with the Host the training requirements in this area for the volunteers, when we are planning the project together.

viii. Problem volunteers

The vast majority of volunteers are motivated individuals who wish to do some meaningful work and have a good volunteering experience. However, it is always possible that you are unlucky enough to get a 'problem volunteer'. Problems can be of varying degrees, minor problems are easily sorted out by a quiet word with the volunteer. If the situation is more serious you can ask a volunteer to leave the project. If a situation occurs where you think this is necessary then you should call the contact person in VSI. VSI representatives will keep in touch with you during the project and you can discuss any problems with us. If you feel it is necessary we can visit the project to talk to the volunteer/s.

ix. Arrivals and departures

Volunteers are requested to do their best to arrive in time for a project and not to leave early, although because international travel is involved, sometimes it is not possible for all the volunteers to fit the dates exactly. There might also be personal reasons why a volunteer arrives late or leaves before the project finishes. VSI will do their best to keep you informed if volunteers will be late. Unfortunately we also get the odd volunteer who never arrives, this is obviously beyond our control but the application and preparation systems in place within SCI usually prevent this from happening. If a volunteer cancels they usually do so well in advance, allowing us to find another volunteer in their place.

4. The project

i. Introducing your organisation and the project

It is essential that you give the volunteers a good introduction to your organisation and the work that they will be doing; they must be given a good understanding of your aims and objectives and how they fit in. It should also be explained why you have chosen volunteers and VSI to carry out this work.

ii. Rules and regulations

It has already been mentioned above that you should be careful to ensure a safe environment for the volunteers. An important aspect of this must be to fully explain any safety regulations that you have in place e.g. location of fire extinguishers and fire exits. You should include any extra safety rules associated with the work, for example the safe use of tools and any machinery. Phone numbers of the emergency services must be given to the

volunteers. We will discuss health and safety with you in detail when we plan the project with you.

iii. Leadership of the volunteers

For some VSI projects we provide trained volunteer Coordinators or 'Leaders'. If there are 8 or more volunteers or if the project takes place in an isolated area we would probably try to provide a Coordinator though we will discuss the needs of your particular project with you. It is not always possible to provide a Coordinator due to availability of volunteers.

Not having a Leader or Coordinator among the volunteers throws up lots of issues such as how decisions are made, how information is relayed or what happens if there is a problem.

We have found that not having a Coordinator generally creates a greater sense of responsibility and independence among the volunteers and this normally works well.

Occasionally there has been a problem about communicating information to the group, especially if it is a large group or if the programme is complex. It is important that the information gets to everybody whether by having a regular meeting or by picking a volunteer with good English to tell the rest of the volunteers what is happening. After a couple of days on the project you should have a fair idea whether the message is getting through. Not having a leader also inevitably means that there is more work for the Host as the volunteers will come to you with enquiries.

iv. Organising the work

The work project is very much the centre piece of the project. There are no hard and fast rules on how the work project should be organised but there are some guidelines which may help you.

a. It is better for the volunteers to have a whole piece of work to complete i.e. a project that they finish during the project, or at least something where they can see progress if it has to be finished by other volunteers.

b. The work should be realistic and achievable during the volunteers stay. At the other end of the scale, make sure there is enough work and that the volunteers don't finish the work in the first few days.

c. If the work is monotonous it is good to rotate the tasks involved.

d. The work must be useful.

v. Rotas for cooking and cleaning

VSI would prefer that the IVP volunteers do all their own cooking and take care of the household tasks themselves. This encourages the volunteers to work together better and allows them to get to know each other. There can be problems if one or two of the volunteers do not pull their weight, in this case the volunteers will usually inform such volunteers themselves about fairness and sharing responsibility etc. but it may be necessary for the Host to speak to the group. It is up to the volunteers to decide how they want to organise this work but we recommend they draw up a rota to make sure all work is shared out equally, this is something that the VSI volunteer coordinator or the VSI rep visiting the project at the start will do with the volunteers.

vi. Learning element

International Volunteer Projects are a great opportunity for learning. The volunteers learn about Ireland and Irish culture, about Irish people and about the other cultures and countries of the volunteers on the project. They also enjoy learning new practical skills through the work, learning about the organisation and associated issues in Ireland – for example if the project is an environmental one then volunteers can learn about environmental issues in Ireland. Volunteers often choose a project based on its theme in order to learn more about the issues and about the Irish perspective. We will discuss with you the specific learning opportunities on your project and will incorporate this in to the project's programme. The VSI rep will also talk with the volunteers about the work of SCI and VSI and how the project fits in with this.

vii. Free time and socialising with the volunteers

Again there are no hard and fast rules about how free time and social activities are organised. It is largely up to the volunteers how they organise their free time but it is good if

the Host is involved to some extent. In any case, as the volunteers are unlikely to be familiar with the local area they will come to you for suggestions. If the volunteers have a full weekend off they may want to travel and have an overnight stay somewhere, again it would be useful if you have some suggestions. The Host organisation often provides the volunteers with an info folder on the local area & things to see & do. VSI will discuss possible free-time and social activities with you when we are planning the project.

viii. The local area and community

One of the reasons people decide to volunteer on International Volunteer Projects is for an opportunity to experience another country's culture in a 'non-tourist' setting. For this reason volunteers really appreciate being involved in the local community. This could be involvement in a community event or going to the pub and listening to Irish music. Either way it is important that the Host gives the volunteers info on the area they are staying in and tells them what facilities are available. This might include giving them some guidance on safety e.g. not to walk through certain areas at night. It could include giving them the local bus timetable to allow the volunteers to go in to the nearest town or city on their own or to the local swimming pool for example.

ix. Internet access

These days many people are used to being connected 24/7 through the internet, mobile phones and social media. Some of our Hosts have free wi-fi at their premises and others not, for some it's easy to provide the volunteers with the use of a computer during the project but with others this isn't possible, some volunteers use the local library to use the internet, some Hosts are located in cities with lots of internet access and others are isolated without even mobile phone coverage. So, internet access is varied and it is not expected that Hosts will definitely provide this to the volunteer group. If it's possible and if it doesn't cost the Host anything extra then it's great to offer the volunteers internet access but we realise that this isn't always possible; so long as this is communicated to the volunteers in the project description then it shouldn't be a problem.

Thanks for taking the time to read and think about the information in this booklet.

Enjoy your International Volunteer Project!

Appendices:

1. *Info Sheet example*
2. *Sample section of Ireland Programme 2011*
3. *VSI & Host Agreement*
4. *Child Protection documents: Reference Form, Declaration Form*

Appendix 1 Info Sheet

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INFORMATION SHEET

IE-VSI 4.5 Cuisle (Irish Wheelchair Association)
Co. Roscommon
2nd to 9th July **4 vols**



Background

The Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) is a national organisation dedicated to the achievement of full social, economic and educational integration of people with physical disability as equal, independent and participative members within the general community. Founded in 1960, the Irish Wheelchair Association is a voluntary organisation of people with physical disabilities. It has a membership of 5,500 people with disability and several thousand supporters and volunteers.

Cuisle in Donamon, Co Roscommon is a holiday/ respite centre for IWA members run on a non-profit basis. It is superbly located in a countryside setting, on the banks of the River Suck. It is situated on the grounds of Donamon Castle, one of the oldest inhabited buildings in Ireland. Cuisle is about 8 miles from Roscommon town and therefore in a very rural setting. See: www.cuisle.com & www.iwa.ie

This holiday may be the only holiday that members will have in a year and may be the highlight of their year. The aim of this camp is to allow the members to have as enjoyable a holiday as possible during their stay at Cuisle.

The Work

The Cuisle Centre has a capacity for 70 people. The age and background of the guests varies, all the guests are physically disabled and some of the guests may have speech impairments and/ or learning disabilities. Where appropriate the guests are accompanied by carers and volunteers are not required to provide care for the guests.

The volunteers' main role is to socialise with the holiday-makers. You will also accompany the wheelchair users in the Cuisle building to the dining room etc.

You will 'hang out' with the guests, keep them company and keep them occupied. There will be day trips, shopping trips and other visits to tourist attractions in the area, the volunteers will accompany the guests on these trips when appropriate and spend time with them when in the centre/ grounds. You will also be asked to help out in the kitchens for an hour or two each day, on a rota basis; this is a chance to meet and work with the other staff working at the centre.

Try and bring some activities/ games (both indoor and outdoor) from your own country to share with the residents in Cuisle. Be ready for bingo and table quizzes! Skills in drama, music, dance, circus, juggling etc. will be particularly useful.

Life at Cuisle can be quite spontaneous, sometimes with little structure to each day. For example, you may not know until half an hour before leaving that you can go on a day trip with a group of guests. Volunteers need to be flexible, resourceful, motivated and to be able to use your initiative. An International Volunteer Project is what each volunteer makes of it. It requires seeking out opportunities, looking to see what needs to be done and taking responsibility for both the work and the group. Participants should feel they have an important role in shaping the project. Projects thrive on the initiative of individuals. Like all projects, you will get as much out of it as you put in!

In general, SCI volunteer projects in Ireland do not have designated leaders in the same way that many European ones have and with only 4 volunteers on each Cuisle project, the group is too small for a leader. We see each project as a democratic unit where decisions can be made by the participants, at a group meeting, in a spirit of consensus and dialogue. Members of staff at Cuisle, who are very experienced in hosting volunteers and who are also very friendly, will also help to guide the project.

Please make the most of it and enjoy the great variety of work and meeting the guests with very different levels of dependency and in need of different levels of care.

Training will be provided by Cuisle at the beginning of the project along with an induction pack.

Accommodation and Food

Volunteers will be accommodated in dormitory type rooms at the centre. Towels and bedding are provided. Facilities include a coffee shop/ bar and pool-table. Meals will be provided during your stay.

What to bring

European Health Insurance Card for all EU members. Loose, casual and comfortable clothes and shoes. Rain gear and a sense of humour are essential for the Irish weather! Please bring any musical instruments and lots of enthusiasm and dedication to make the holiday wonderful.

Social life and free time

Please note that the centre is in an isolated area with the nearest shop and pub about 5kms away. Therefore much of the volunteers' free time will be spent at Cuisle. It is up to the volunteers to organise their social lives themselves and to get to the town if they want to go. Cuisle will provide information on local transport and taxis but are not able to provide transport for the volunteers. Outdoor pursuits are possible so bring walking boots etc. if you are interested. Bicycles are not available at Cuisle as the roads are not safe for cycling (very winding, narrow and fast traffic).

Meeting point and travel directions

The meeting point is Roscommon train station at 17.33 hours (5.33pm) or the bus stop in the centre of Roscommon town at 17.45 hours (5.45pm) on Saturday 2nd July (these times are when the train or bus arrives in Roscommon). Someone from Cuisle will meet you and bring you to the Centre.

VERY IMPORTANT: Before you leave home you must inform VSI (----- at -----@vsi.ie) if you will arrive by train or bus, so that the staff at Cuisle knows where to collect you from. Please note, you must contact VSI with this info and not Cuisle.

Travel directions

Arrival in Ireland

The best airport/city to arrive in is Dublin. Although Knock and Shannon airports are closer, it is difficult to get to Roscommon on public transport from these airports, so please arrive in Dublin. You will then need to take a train or a bus to Roscommon from Dublin.

From airport to Dublin city centre

There are lots of public buses from Dublin airport to Dublin city centre -16A, 41, 41B - they leave from just outside the arrivals hall, the journey takes approximately 40 minutes. You buy your ticket on the bus and you will need the correct change, the fare to the city centre on buses 16A, 41 and 41B is €2.30. The express buses 747 and 746 cost €6.00 single (you can use this ticket on Dublin Bus routes for the whole day) and will leave you in the city centre.

Travel to Roscommon by train

Trains for Roscommon depart from Heuston station, below is a link to a map showing Heuston station:

<http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&geocode=&q=heuston+station,+dublin,+ireland&ll=37.0625,-95.677068&sspn=37.956457,69.082031&ie=UTF8&ll=53.346555,-6.292377&spn=0.013988,0.033731&z=15&iwloc=addr>

If you are in Dublin city centre you can get to Heuston station by a short tram (Luas) journey. Take the 'red line' tram that starts at Connolly station, (final destination Tallaght), Heuston is only 7 stops from Connolly www.luas.ie You buy your tram ticket from the machines at the station platforms, it costs around €1.50 from the city centre to Heuston.

You can also take buses 79 or 79a from Aston Quay in the city centre to Heuston station.

Train time:

Departs Dublin Heuston: 15:30 - Arrives Roscommon: 17:32

Please note: In Ireland it is generally cheaper to buy a return ticket than 2 singles and it is cheaper to buy online but at the moment there is an offer on Irish Rail and the ticket costs for these trains range from €10 to €26.00 each way on these trains. If you buy tickets online you can easily collect them at the station.

Go to www.irishrail.ie to buy tickets and view timetables.

Travel to Roscommon by bus

The main Dublin bus station is called Busaras, situated on Store Street on the north side of the city centre, not far from O'Connell Street. The express buses

from the airport will drop you off at Busaras. Below is a link to a map showing Busaras:

<http://maps.google.com/maps?f=q&hl=en&q=busaras,+dublin,+ireland&ie=UTF8&ll=53.349091,-6.260877&spn=0.012835,0.032701&z=15&om=1>

To travel by bus to Roscommon on 2nd July you must change buses in Athlone.

- Depart Dublin: 15.00 Arrive Athlone: 16.55

(bus number 20, final destination Galway)

- Depart Athlone: 17.15 Arrive Roscommon town centre: 17.45 (bus number 21, final destination Westport)

Link to timetable: <http://194.106.151.94/jplan/bin/>

In general it is cheaper to travel by bus than train but as there are special offers on the trains at the moment there is not a big difference and travelling by train can be cheaper than the bus, it is faster and also easier as you don't have to change. A return bus ticket bought online ranges from €17.10 to €25.20. It is generally a lot cheaper to buy a return ticket than 2 singles.

IMPORTANT: Please go to www.buseireann.ie to check timetables and to buy tickets on-line.

Link to fares on Bus Eireann:

[https://194.106.151.95/asp/NationalList.asp?Origin=Dublin&Destination=Roscommon&Date=02-JUL-&_utma=1.1850925849.1290712647.1306439613.1308670215.6&_utmb=1.3.10.1308670215&_utmc=1&_utmz=1.1308670215.6.10.utmcsr=google|utmccn=\(organic\)|utmcmd=organic|utmctr=bus%20eireann&_utmv=-&_utmj=181238951](https://194.106.151.95/asp/NationalList.asp?Origin=Dublin&Destination=Roscommon&Date=02-JUL-&_utma=1.1850925849.1290712647.1306439613.1308670215.6&_utmb=1.3.10.1308670215&_utmc=1&_utmz=1.1308670215.6.10.utmcsr=google|utmccn=(organic)|utmcmd=organic|utmctr=bus%20eireann&_utmv=-&_utmj=181238951)

IMPORTANT: If you are not staying in Ireland after the project and are planning to leave Ireland on the last day (9th July), please arrange for your flight to leave late in the afternoon or evening, to allow time for you to get to the airport from Roscommon.

Phone calls and internet at Cuisle

Please note, it is not possible to use the Cuisle phone for calls, Cuisle hosts a lot of volunteers throughout the year and if all volunteers were to use the phone it would work out very expensive for them. Please use your mobile phone if you wish to contact friends or family. It is possible to use the Cuisle phone, for a limited time, only if you use a pre-paid phone card that can be used on any phone. If you wish to do this, you are advised to buy one on arrival in Ireland, they are easily available from newsagents for as little as €5 - *thanks for understanding.*

At the moment there is no internet access for volunteers at Cuisle, it is available in Roscommon town where you can visit during your time off.

Useful numbers, addressees and contacts:

Irish Wheelchair Association

Cuisle

Donamon

Co. Roscommon

Tel: from outside Ireland: + 353 -----; from inside Ireland: 09066 -----

Email: -----@iwa.ie

www.cuisle.com & www.iwa.ie

Emergency contact at Cuisle:

-----, Irish Wheelchair Association

Mobile number:

from outside Ireland or from non-Irish mobile: 00 353 -----

from an Irish number: 086 -----

IMPORTANT: If you are delayed or lost on your way to the meeting point, you should contact ----- and not VSI.

VSI contacts: ----- at VSI office as above or mobile (during office hours only, 10.00 - 6.00pm Mon - Fri):

From outside Ireland or from non-Irish mobile: + 353 -----

From inside Ireland: 086 -----

Important: All volunteers should contact home when they arrive at the project to let them know that they have arrived safely.

Info on Roscommon and Ireland

County Roscommon

One of Ireland's undiscovered counties is that of Roscommon, in the heart of Connaught in the west of Ireland. Covering an area of 984 square miles and with a population of just over 51,800, Roscommon offers peace and tranquility in an idyllic landscape of lakes, rivers and wooded countryside. The name Roscommon stems from the Irish word 'Ros' meaning a gentle terrain with plenty of trees and 'Conman', the name of the county's famous Irish saint and the first bishop of the See.

Bound by the extensive waterways of the River Shannon and Lough Ree to the east, the River Suck in the west and Lough Key in the north, County Roscommon is a haven for lovers of boats, watersports and of course, angling. Cruising on the water in Roscommon is one of the most enjoyable ways to discover this unspoiled pocket of Ireland. Visitors can also discover a rich heritage of early colonization in Roscommon with many burial grounds, megalithic tombs and ring forts. The royal burial site at Rathcroghan was also home to the kings of Connaught and later became home to the high kings of Ireland. Extensive boglands are found in the west of the county providing turf for winter fuel.

County Roscommon boasts of magnificent preserved forestland with abundant wildlife open to the public. Lough Key Forest Park near Boyle is 350 hectares of mixed woodland, lakes, islands, medieval priories and a castle. It is one of the most picturesque locations in Ireland.

Traditionally the chief industry in County Roscommon has been farming or agricultural related activities. Today farming accounts for 30% of employment in the county. Food manufacturing, bacon production, cannery, dairy food, poultry and other meat products are also well represented.

Roscommon town



The town is the capital of the county to which it gives its name. Ros means a wooded or pleasant gentle height and Coman the name of its famous Irish saint and the first bishop of the See.

It is a town rich in historical associations and contains many impressive buildings and a pleasant day could easily be spent just looking around the town. In the spacious main street is the beautiful renovated Bank of Ireland which was once the courthouse and afterwards served as the Catholic church until 1903. There is an excellent 18-hole Golf Course adjacent to Roscommon town with a fine new club house, where visitors are welcome. Roscommon Race Course hosts many important meetings during summer and autumn. Places to visit in the town include:

- County Museum and Tourist Office;
Roscommon Jail;
Roscommon Castle;
Sacred Heart Church;
Roscommon Abbey;
Library - Old Infirmary Building.

County Museum and Tourist Office



One cannot walk around The Square in Roscommon without noticing the attractive former Presbyterian Church and its Manse. It is offset by its lawn and unique "Star of David" window. The church, which was built in the 1863 was renovated in 1991 and now displays items such as a ninth century inscribed slab from St. Coman's foundation, Church St.; a replica of the Cross of Cong which the inscription states was 'made at Roscommon'; a superb example of a 'sheela-na-Gig' figure. Here also in the County Museum you will find the friendly staff of the Roscommon Tourist Information Office, a service provided by Ireland West Tourism. They will be happy to give you details of what's to see and do and book accommodation for you as you travel this magical county.

Roscommon Jail

Adjacent is the massive building of solid stone, once the county jail. It had the distinction of having a hangwoman in the person of "Lady Betty", a criminal who had her sentence for murder withdrawn on condition that she carried out the hangman's task, without fee or reward. According to local records, the jail was built in the early 1740s and was owned by the Roscommon landlord, the Earl of Essex. The building served as a jail for less than a century. It subsequently became a lunatic asylum, then a refuge for smallpox sufferers and later a private house. The Jail has been totally rebuilt, although the front facade has been retained, and now houses an arcade of shops and restaurant on the ground floor with living apartments on the upper floors.

Roscommon Castle



Located on a hillside just outside the town, Roscommon castle is quadrangular in shape, it had four corner D-

shaped towers, three storeys high, and twin towers at its entrance gateway, one of which still retains its immensely sturdy vaulted roof. The entire castle was enclosed by a lofty curtain wall. It was built in 1269 by Robert de Ufford, Justiciar of Ireland, on lands he had seized from the Augustinian Priory. The castle had a most chequered history. It was besieged by Connacht King Aodh O'Connor in 1272. Eight years later it was again in the hands of an English garrison, and fully repaired. By 1340 the O'Connor's regained possession of it, and, except for a few brief intermissions, they held it for two centuries until 1569, when Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy seized it. It was granted to Sir Nicholas Malbie, Elizabethan Governor of Connaught, in 1578. Two years later the interior was remodelled and large mullioned windows were inserted in the towers and curtain walls. Again, in 1641 the Parliamentarian faction gained it until Confederate Catholics under Preston captured it in 1645. It remained in Irish hands until 1652 when it was partially blown up by Cromwellian "Ironsides" under Commissary Reynolds, who had all the fortifications dismantled. It was finally burned down in 1690, and, from the closing years of the 17th century, it gradually fell into decay. It is still quite an impressive sight, nevertheless. A symmetrical moat some distance from the curtain walls surrounded the entire castle and safeguarded it. It is now a national monument.

Sacred Heart Church

The Sacred Heart Church dominates the town. The church spire is 52 m high. Built of local cut stone and opened in 1903, it was completed in 1925. The church is built on rising ground and fronted by a sunken grotto. Over the main door is a fine example of mosaic, carried out by the Italian firm of Salviati, depicting two bishops of Elphin connected with the building of the church. The interior is equally impressive and contains a replica of the Cross of Cong. This wonderful example of Irish Craftsmanship was made in Fuerty between 1120 - 1123.

Roscommon Abbey



In this Dominican Priory, founded in 1253, a late 13th century effigy of its founder Felim O'Connor is placed upon a later 15th century tomb with eight mail-clad warriors representing gallowglasses, medieval Irish professional soldiers. Famous in early Christian days as a seat of learning under Abbot Coman, it has close ties with St. Ciaran and Clonmacnois. The Dominican priory, the ruins of which still stand, was founded in 1253 by Felim O'Connor, King of Connaught and consists of a church 42m long and 10m wide. Notwithstanding the suppressions of the 16th and 17th centuries, the Dominicans held their community together and its two last survivors died as parish priests of Fuerty and of Athleague in 1830 and 1872 respectively.

Roscommon Library

One of the most modern Library Headquarters and Branch Libraries in the country, Roscommon Co. Library is housed in the building known as the Old Infirmary. This impressive building was built in 1783 from an endowment from Mrs. Laetitia Walcott, a woman of considerable substance. The original building was of limestone, three storied over a basement, with slated roof and plain limestone dressings around the windows. The two symmetrical pavilions on the North and South ends of the central portion were constructed after 1832. The

South Pavilion incorporated the physician's residence with an entrance to the front of the building, with carved door case and steps. Other renovations were carried out to the building in 1902 and 1929. It continued to be used as a hospital until 1941, when the new county hospital was built. Major reconstruction work began in 1989 and was completed at a cost of £1,200,000. The result is a beautiful building, well worth a visit particularly if you are interested in researching your Roscommon roots. The Library houses a wealth of archival material.

Ireland

Facts

- Ireland's land mass has a total area of 84,412 square kilometres, with its coastline stretching for 3152km. Its longest river is the Shannon (358 km), largest lake Lough Neagh (387 square kilometres) and its highest point is Carrantuohill in County Kerry (1024m).
- Since 1921 the country has been divided into the Republic of Ireland, consisting of 26 counties, and Northern Ireland, subject to British rule, which comprises six counties. The Republic's population is roughly 3.9 million, with 1 million residing in the Greater Dublin area, while Northern Ireland's population is approximately 1.7 million, with some 350,000 occupying the Greater Belfast area.
- The UK's 2001 Census reported that just over 40 percent of Northern Ireland's population is Catholic and 46 percent Protestant. The Republic's 2002 Census revealed that 90 percent describe themselves as Catholic, though regular church attendance is considerably lower than this figure. Irish is the Republic's official language but only around 15 percent of people use it daily.
- Ireland comprises four provinces, loosely corresponding to ancient kingdoms: Leinster (covering counties Carlow, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow); Munster (Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford); Connacht (Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon and Sligo); and Ulster (Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Derry, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Monaghan and Tyrone). They do not have a political role but crop up in everything from Gaelic games to weather forecasts.

Traditional music

Ireland and music are as inseparable as fish and chips. Though the country has developed a thriving rock music scene over the last forty years and artists such as U2, Sinéad O'Connor and Van Morrison have achieved massive international success, it's Ireland's traditional music that in many ways continues to hold centre stage.

While the musical traditions of other Western European countries were dissipated by the process of industrialization and political change, Ireland's indigenous music remained at the centre of its people's social life until well into the twentieth century, when its survival became threatened by emigration and governmental controls aimed at curbing dance forms regarded as immoral. It needed two major shots in the arm in the 1960s – the **folk song boom**, which originated in the USA, and the pioneering work of **Seán Ó Riada** in establishing ensemble playing as the new norm – to reinvigorate its existence.

Ireland's greatest musical ambassadors, **The Chieftains**, emerged from Ó Riada's initiative in the 1960s, and the following decade saw the formation of the country's two most influential groups, **Planxty** and **The Bothy Band**. Their performances and recordings effectively laid out the ground for others to tread,

not least **De Dannan**, the Donegal-based **Altan**, and, in more recent times, **Lúnasa**, **Danú** and the US-based **Solas**.

However, the country's musical traditions remain essentially based on the age-old practice of passing down tunes and songs by oral transmission, from generation to generation and from friend to friend. Its core has become the **pub session**, where the richness of the musical tradition can be experienced at first hand, and the *craic* (or crack) – that idiosyncratically Irish heady combination of drink-fuelled chat, banter and fun – simply takes over.

Useful websites:

www.ireland.ie

www.roughguides.com

www.tourismireland.com

www.ireland.com

www.irelandwest.ie

www.irishrail.ie

www.buseireann.ie

Appendix: 2 Sample section of Programme Ireland

IE-VSI 6.1 SONAIRTE

09/05 -29/05. 6 vols

Sonairte was established in the late 1980's by members of the local community and concerned environmentalists. It is a visitor centre that is open to the public promoting sustainable living through learning and cooperation. The Centre runs courses on organic gardening, sustainable living, traditional food preparation and crafts and provides school tours. Food and craft markets are held once a month on site where the garden team sells its organic produce. Sonairte is a non governmental environmental educational charity and currently self funded. It relies heavily on voluntary support to remain open, your interest to volunteer with us is much appreciated. www.sonairte.ie

Work: Greeting visitors in the Eco shop, Reception and assisting in the vegetarian café. Gardening is also an important element: weeding, sowing and harvesting vegetables and fruit. Painting & maintenance work may be needed. Assisting with event days and Food Markets.

Study: Organic gardening & Sustainable living.

Accommodation: is in 2 rooms, it is basic and may be mixed sex. In line with the ecological ethos of the Centre, food is vegetarian only (no meats or fish). Volunteers cook and clean for themselves on a rota basis.

Language: Fluent English is essential in order to communicate with the public.

Skills/experience: Volunteers must enjoy working with the public and have an interest in sustainable living.

Location: Sonairte is in an isolated area, situated in a farm complex of noted historical interest on the banks of the River Nanny, within walking distance to the small coastal town of Laytown, County Meath. Local sites of interest include Newgrange Megalithic Passage Tomb, Knowth and Dowth. Laytown is one hour north of Dublin city by train or bus.

Extra info: Unsuitable for wheelchairs. Volunteers are encouraged to use alternative forms of transport to air travel.

IE-VSI 1.1 MOSNEY (Co. Meath)

27/07 – 14/08. 16 vols

Mixed Age (half the vols will be under 30 years of age and half over)

Mosney is a former holiday resort, which now provides housing for almost 700 residents from 50 different countries seeking asylum in Ireland. There are approximately 100 children and young people aged 6 – 16yrs resident in Mosney, volunteers are needed to help run a Summer Activity Camp for some of these children.

Work: Organising activities: sports, arts, drama etc. for the children, day trips are also planned.

Study: Asylum-seeking process in different countries (volunteers will be asked to bring info from their own countries), interculturalism.

Accommodation: Shared, in former holiday chalets on the site. Volunteers will prepare their own breakfast in the chalets, other meals provided by the centre.

Skills/experience: Experience of working with children is essential, preferably on summer camps. Skills in arts/ crafts, drama and/or sports are desirable but not essential. Fluent English is essential.

Location: Approximately 48 km north of Dublin in Co. Meath. The centre is quite isolated, there is a regular bus service to Drogheda, the nearest large town, which takes about 15 minutes. The Mosney centre is located next to a beach; there is a small supermarket on the site.

Extra info: Important: Strict Child Protection procedures will be applied:

1. Volunteers will be asked to complete an extra questionnaire in addition to the SCI application form.

2. All volunteers will be interviewed using skype and VSI will need to contact the volunteers throughout the application process, all volunteers must therefore have a skype account.

3. Volunteers must provide a Police Check.

4. Volunteers must provide the names and contact details of two referees whom VSI will contact directly.

5. All volunteers will be asked to complete a 'declaration form' (stating the absence of a criminal record that would prevent the volunteer from working with children).

Important: Please send the volunteer application form first and VSI will send details of these extra requirements, this will ensure a place is reserved for volunteers. These procedures take time and volunteers are encouraged to apply well in advance of the project start date.

Wheelchair accessible.

IE-VSI 4.5 CUISLE (Co. Roscommon)

02/07 – 15/07. 4 vols

The Irish Wheelchair Association is a voluntary organisation dedicated to the achievement of full social, economic and educational integration of people with physical disabilities, Cuisle is their holiday centre (www.cuisle.com).

Work: Socialising and interacting with the holiday guests and accompanying them on trips.

The age and background of the guests varies, all the guests have physical disabilities and some may have speech impairments and/or learning disabilities. Activities will include lots of entertainment and music, if you play a musical instrument please bring it with you.

Volunteers are also asked to help in the kitchen for approximately one hour each day.

Volunteering at Cuisle is a lot of fun and is a very rewarding experience.

Study: Disability issues.

Accommodation: Dorm. Meals are provided by the centre.

Language: Fluent English is essential in order to communicate with the guests.

Skills/experience: Volunteers need flexibility, initiative and independence.

Location: Cuisle is in an isolated area in the countryside, in the grounds of Donamon Castle, 15km from Roscommon Town.

Extra info: Important: Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection procedures will be applied; on receipt of volunteers' application forms VSI will request a Police Check, the names and contact details of two referees whom VSI will contact directly and a declaration form (stating the absence of a criminal record that would prevent the volunteer from working with children or vulnerable adults). The volunteer will also be asked to complete a questionnaire.

Important: Please send the volunteer application form first and VSI will send details of these extra requirements, this will ensure a place is reserved for volunteers.

Wheelchair accessible.

NI-VSI 6.1 GLEBE HOUSE (Co. Down)

05/09 - 16/09. 12 Vols ENVI, PEACE

Glebe House is a cross community residential centre on the east coast. It caters for young people, children and adults from catholic and protestant communities. It aims to provide a positive experience for people from all sections, enabling them to live, play and work together, and in doing so, come to understand their different points of view and experience alternatives to violence and conflict and ways of living in peace.

Work: A major clear and tidy up after the busy summer children's programme, including cleaning, redecoration, painting, reorganisation of programme areas, gardening, picking apples, work on the land, weeding, strimming and clearing paths in the wildlife area.

Study: There will be time set aside for discussions on topics relating to Northern Ireland politics and history, the Northern Ireland peace process and its future direction.

Accommodation: Bunk-beds in small rooms. Some food preparation is done by the volunteers and some by Glebe House staff and volunteers.

Location: Glebe House is in a beautiful and isolated area near Strangford Lough.

Appendix: 3 Host/ VSI Agreement

Host & VSI Agreement

VSI has agreed to organise an International Volunteer Project in conjunction with:

VSI will be responsible for:

- Providing a group of volunteers for the project
- Opening the project and providing the volunteers with information on the background and context of Service Civil International (SCI) and Voluntary Service International (VSI)
- Providing trained volunteer Coordinators where applicable
- Providing insurance for the VSI volunteers solely for the duration of the project. This insurance covers volunteers whilst working on the project. It does not cover personal belongings or participation in hazardous leisure activities, e.g. skiing, canoeing
- Following VSI's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection procedures for those volunteers working on projects with children, young people and vulnerable adults
- Closing and evaluating the project with the volunteers

The Host will be responsible for:

- Providing food and accommodation for the volunteers during the project
- Introducing and demonstrating the work to be done on the project
- Providing necessary materials for work to be undertaken
- Safety procedures, particularly with regard to the use of tools
- Providing Incident and Accident books
- Providing information on the background and context of the project and its impact on the local community
- Exploring issues around the theme of the project and organisation

The Host is encouraged to support the volunteers in organising social / tourist activities.

I, _____, on behalf of _____

have read the above and understand the responsibilities of my organisation and also those of VSI.

Signed: _____

On behalf of VSI

Signed: _____

Date: _____

**Voluntary Service International (VSI)
30 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1**

**Tel: 00353 (0)1 855 1011
Fax: 00353 (0)1 855 1012**

Appendix: 4 Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Reference Form

Voluntary Service International (VSI)

Reference Questionnaire for Volunteers Working with Children, Teenagers and Vulnerable Adults

_____ has expressed an interest in becoming a volunteer with us and has given your name as a referee. The voluntary work will involve substantial access to children and/or vulnerable adults (young people/elderly people/people with disabilities) and we are therefore seeking references for all volunteers on this project.

Please complete this reference questionnaire only if you are not related to the applicant or connected to Service Civil International. All the information contained in the form will remain absolutely confidential and will only be shared with the volunteer project host organisation if a place on the project is offered. We would appreciate you being extremely honest in your evaluation of this person.

Please type your answers and use as much space as you would like.

After completing the reference please print it out and sign it as we must receive an original, signed version of it.

Please post the reference to ----- at the address below.

1. Have you any reason to be concerned about the applicant being in contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults?
YES / NO

If you have answered 'YES' we will contact you in confidence.

2. How long have you known this person?

Answer:

3. Relationship to applicant:

Answer:

4. Has she/he, to your knowledge, suffered from any serious illness, accidents, physical or mental disabilities. If so, please give details:

Answer:

5. Is the applicant suitable for this type of work? Please give details:

Answer:

6. Please give details of the applicant's experience and ability to work within a group or team of people and/or on own initiative:

Answer:

7. Do you know of any reason why the applicant may be unsuitable for voluntary work, particularly with children, teenagers and vulnerable adults?

Answer:

Referee's Name:

Signature:

Date:

Address:

Tel number (please state if mobile or landline):

Email:

Please print out, sign and post the paper version to:

Ms. -----

CONFIDENTIAL

VSI

30 Mountjoy Square

Dublin 1

Ireland

Please note, emailing a scan of the completed form to us before posting will speed up the application process for the volunteer. Please email to: ---@vsi.ie

If you have any questions please contact ----- at: ---@vsi.ie

Thank you

Appendix: 4 Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection

Voluntary Service International Declaration Form
CONFIDENTIAL

Declaration Form from All Volunteers

Working With Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults

Ref (project code):

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a Caution or of a Bound Over Order?

YES / NO

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s)

NAME:

ANY NAME PREVIOUSLY KNOWN BY:

ADDRESS:

DATE OF BIRTH:

PLACE OF BIRTH:

NATIONALITY:

I know of no reason, in my personal or professional life, which would make me unsuitable to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.

Signed: _____

Date: _____