



Long march: trek along China's Great Wall and attract sponsorship for your chosen cause.



New homes: Cambodian children are intrigued by foreigners who come to help.



Men at work: there are many tasks for volunteers on a Phnom Penh building site.

Make a world of difference

Promised to help change the world in 2008? Ewen Bell has some suggestions on how to do it travelling

IF YOUR New Year's resolution involved giving a little good fortune back to the world, you've come to the right place.

Travel does this on many levels, but you can go one step further and choose a travel experience designed to bring charity to the people you visit.

What drives people to get involved with charity tours is the desire to make a difference to the world. A bonus is getting out and seeing some of it.

Melbourne-based company Intrepid Challenges provides a bridge between adventure-seekers and recognised charities, bringing the two together and operating challenge groups.

By signing up for the physical challenge of trekking along the Great Wall of China or cycling across Vietnam, you can attract sponsorship and donations to support your chosen cause.

Mike Howell has been organising charity challenge events for Intrepid for more than four years.

He left behind a career in finance and now helps hundreds of others get out from behind their desk every year.

"It's fantastic to explore the wilds of China on a bicycle with a group of like-minded people, but it's even better when you know that as a group you've raised \$100,000 for Oxfam Australia," he says.

Participants are given advice on how to plan their fundraising activities — and it's not an easy path.

A lot of work goes into hosting events and rattling the tin, but the proceeds from such challenges form a critical part of fundraising for many charities — such as Guide Dogs Victoria, Cancer Council Victoria and MS Australia.

The whole point of a charity challenge is to push yourself beyond your current limits. Discovering you can achieve more than you realised is a recurring theme.

Kirily Graham rode from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City and says: "I actually didn't know I could cycle 100km in one day. With the right preparation I guess you can do anything."

It's a similar story for volunteers who help Habitat for Humanity build houses in Asia and the Pacific.

You don't need specific skills, but everyone goes home with new abilities.

The Global Village program operated by Habitat for Humanity gathers teams in Australia to lend their time and effort to help build houses in places such as Cambodia and Fiji. Under the guidance of experienced locals, your hands can become an effective part of erecting brick walls, tiling roofs and mixing cement.

Habitat specialises in helping families in the transition from poverty to home ownership. The new owners not only repay the cost of materials but also work side by side with volunteers. Extended family members help, either on the construction or by preparing drinks and fruit for a break.

Success on these projects is not only measured by how many houses are built each year but also by the depth of inspiration given to families when a team of Australians arrives to help. You're not just building a house.

Most of the recipients of support through Habitat for Humanity are in communities outside the realm of government assistance, people who previously regarded themselves as forgotten.



House call: (above) volunteers and locals build together in Sri Lanka.

Grateful: (left) holiday visitors find a warm welcome when they arrive to help.

HELPING HANDS

Intrepid Challenges

These people make a business out of making a difference. Most of the challenges require significant dedication to fundraising before you travel, but a few new programs simply include a charitable donation within the cost of the tour. Choose from more than 25 charities for your good will.

www.intrepidchallenges.com
ph: 9597 0210

I-to-I

Teaching English as a foreign language is just the start of the volunteering adventures. Wildlife options also include pandas, turtles and lions. On the softer side of charity you can join the humanitarian tours that include a short period of volunteer work before carrying on with the tour.

www.i-to-i.com
ph: 1300 881 590

Habitat for Humanity

Teams are scheduled all year round to travel to places such as Cambodia, Fiji and Mongolia. When you register, part of the tour cost goes towards helping finance the construction and part of it goes towards your accommodation and travel.

www.habitat.org.au
ph: (02) 9635 0199



Perfect escapes

Overseas

Bangkok and Phuket from **\$1305***
INCLUDES Return airfare, return transfers, 8 nights accom in Phuket PLUS 4 nights accom in Bangkok. BONUS Includes FREE breakfast daily.

Bali from **\$995***
INCLUDES Return airfare PLUS 4 nights accommodation with breakfast daily.

Fiji from **\$935***
INCLUDES Return airfare, return transfers PLUS 3 nights accommodation with breakfast daily. BONUS Kids stay free.

Australia

Gold Coast from **\$159***
INCLUDES 4 nights accommodation for the price of 3. ADD Return airfare from \$218*.

Hamilton Island was **\$1120*** NOW from **\$789***
INCLUDES 7 nights accommodation, return transfers PLUS kids stay and eat FREE. ADD Return airfare from \$358*.

Sydney from **\$139***
INCLUDES 2 nights accommodation. ADD Return airfare from \$218*.

Airfares

Auckland	return from	\$575*
Bangkok	return from	\$935*
London	return from	\$1785*
Los Angeles	return from	\$1735*
London Business Class	return from	\$5345*
Round the World	from	\$2189*
Sydney	one way from	\$119*

Call 1300 722 079
Visit **www.escapetravel.com.au**

EscapeTravel®

*If you book a holiday (comprising airfares and/or accommodation) with Escape Travel and it is not the holiday you paid for in your itinerary, then see us in-store up to one month after you return from your holiday, and we will give you a \$100 voucher per booking (not per person travelling) for use towards your next holiday package. Issue of the voucher is not an admission of liability. We reserve the right to withdraw this offer at any time. *Travel restrictions & conditions apply. Please ask us for further details. Prices & taxes are correct as at 31 Dec 07 & are subject to change without notice. Prices are per person & are subject to availability. Accom (if included) is based on twin share unless otherwise stated. Seasonal surcharges may apply depending on date of travel. Additional levies, government charges & other applicable fees may apply & are beyond our control. Additional taxes specific to your flight routing may apply (where airfare is included). Payments made by credit card will incur a surcharge. Service charges from \$10 per one way domestic airfare & \$15 per one way Trans-Tasman airfare apply to in-store & telephone bookings. Booking fee of \$15.95 applies to domestic airfare online bookings. FROM MELBOURNE. Lic. No. 31089. Flight Centre Limited trading as Escape Travel.