pacific discovery
inspiring educational adventures

Pacific Discovery Program Instructor Position

Program Description

Pacific Discovery is an experiential education organization based in Queenstown, New Zealand. Running programs since 2001, we specialise in international experiential education travel programs. We offer 10-week semester programs and 4-week summer programs for groups of 10-14 gap year and university students, aged 18-24 years. Our programs are deliberate overland journeys, blending immersion in diverse cultures, meaningful service-learning projects, rewarding adventures, wilderness exploration, and personal development.

Position Description

While the essential framework and structure for the programs is defined by Pacific Discovery, each instructor brings their own flavor, breathing life and authenticity into the experience. To ensure safety and provide students with the appropriate balance of challenge and support, program instructors play a variety of roles, summarized below.

Student welfare

- Maintain a high level of safety awareness and assess risk at all times
- Attend to group dynamics – this means making sure that the group is working together optimally and managing disruptive or antisocial behavior
- Maintain professional instructor/student relationship with students at all times during program
- Ensure students understand Program Rules and Guidelines and address issues of student conduct as they arise
- Support students in addressing medical concerns while on the program
- Respond promptly to concerns of student mental health, following our protocol regarding safety, reporting, and scope of practice

Student learning

- Facilitate student learning through individual mentorship and group reflection, including implementing a successful orientation, program curriculum, and re-entry preparation/program wrap
- Guide, facilitate, instruct, and mentor students considering their individual needs and abilities
- Purposefully engage with students in direct experience and focused reflection to support learning, skill development, and values clarification
- Provide interpretation and information to students about history, politics, environment, sustainability, and culture of country/s, as well as background on activities, sites visited, and cultures encountered
- On occasion, assist students with academic courses – support and materials provided

Role modeling

- Set high standards of personal example in use and care of the environment
- Set high standards of personal example in all interactions with operators and nationals. You will need to maintain existing relationships and as well as develop new relationships with local partners
- Learn the subtle cultural norms of the country to engage with local people and pass this information onto students while also deepening your knowledge of history, politics, religion, etc. of the region as you travel

Logistics

- Manage all program logistics, executing the program itinerary and activities
- Arrange for alternative plans/itinerary updates as necessary, executing this calmly so that the group has full confidence in you and their well-being
- Make payments, reconfirmations and liaise with operators during the program
- Liaise closely with the Pacific Discovery office (HQ) during program

Accounts & Reporting

- Maintain accurate budgeting, accounting for the full budget allotted to you
- Ensure that the program budget is not exceeded and completing all relevant paperwork
- Complete written risk assessments prior to running any independent activities
- Carefully log any incidents, accidents, and student tracking needed
- Submit timely reports and updates to HQ

Marketing & Development

- Document the experience for students by taking quality photographs
- Upload photos to the online group album weekly
- Support students in blogging about their experience for the PD Travel Journal
- Provide detailed feedback on the itinerary, curriculum, experience, and potential partners/activities for future programs
- Identify opportunities for improvement, offering suggestions and local knowledge as appropriate

Instructor Qualifications

Pacific Discovery Program Instructors are team players, role models and creative facilitators who thrive in an experiential education setting. They are people capable of working hard under new and (at times) challenging conditions, enjoy working without direct supervision, and have a keen sense of fun/humor. Our instructors range in age from 25-33 with an average age of 28.

Pacific Discovery program instructors come with diverse educational backgrounds and life experience, but they all possess one similar quality: the desire to provide students with an exceptional and transformational experience abroad.

Necessary Skills & Experience

- Experience leading groups on multi-day trips in outdoor and/or international environments
- Prior travel experience and passion for the country/s in which you wish to lead (3+ months preferred)
- Experience in conflict resolution, group facilitation, and/or teaching
- Commitment to clear communication, collaborative leadership, and open and supportive co-instructing relationship
- Strong cross-cultural communication skills and ability to relate well to people from other cultures
- Ability to connect well with people and develop strong mentoring relationships with young adults
- Knowledge of the social, cultural, and natural heritage of the host country/s sufficient to provide cultural interpretation
- Awareness of responsible travel ethics
- Possess good budgeting and account keeping skills
- Fluency in English – spoken and written
- Conversational ability in the host country languages preferred (note: Spanish professional proficiency required for Central & South America programs)
- Technology, communication and photographic skills sufficient to correspond coherently and succinctly by email; to be able to submit interesting and relevant travel journal/blog postings where required; and to take great photos of the group's experience for the group albums (an online archive), and regularly upload these during the trip
- Physically and emotionally fit with self-care practices and energy to withstand demanding and dynamic work while traveling

Nepal / Tibet Specific Requirements

- Extensive multi-day hiking and/or alpine experience required
- Advanced first aid experience preferred

New Zealand / Australia Specific Requirements

- Must be New Zealand or Australian national, or hold residency
- Group catering experience preferred – you need to be able to plan, shop for, and facilitate the preparation of group meals
- Experience working with DOC, or other conservation work, or practical skills gained in farming, building etc preferred

Required Certifications

Instructors must possess the following certifications to instruct our programs. You do not need to have these to apply, but must be prepared to gain them prior to commencing your first program. Training reimbursement is available upon completion of each program you lead.

- Current Advanced First Aid certification (Wilderness First Responder or equivalent) - Must be able to administer Epinephrine
- New Zealand / Australia Programs: Class 2 (NZ) or Light Rigid (Aus) driver license, and P Endorsement (NZ) or Driver Authorisation (Aus) required

Instructor Pay & Benefits

We offer competitive salaries which increase as you lead additional programs. Starting pay is based upon prior experience and all instructors are eligible to reach our guru-level compensation after 6-months of leading. Comprehensive travel and medical insurance is provided for the length of the trip. Training reimbursement is offered per program you lead and capped at an annual rate.

We pay for your flights from the nearest major hub to the program starting location and then offer either a return flight or seasonal bridging allowance for personal travel between programs. All in-country expenses are covered for instructors: accommodations, meals, and guided activities/entry fees along with a modest allowance allocated for personal expenses (laundry, etc.) allowing you to save the majority of your contract pay. What this means is that our instructors use this role to support their lifestyle – often working for us five to six-months out of the year while traveling and enjoying personal adventures the other half of the year.

Other benefits include all eligible air miles, travel and expenses for the duration of Program Instructor training (in New Zealand), additional training and professional development opportunities, and the ultimate reward of seeing students' lives impacted in significant and long-lasting ways.