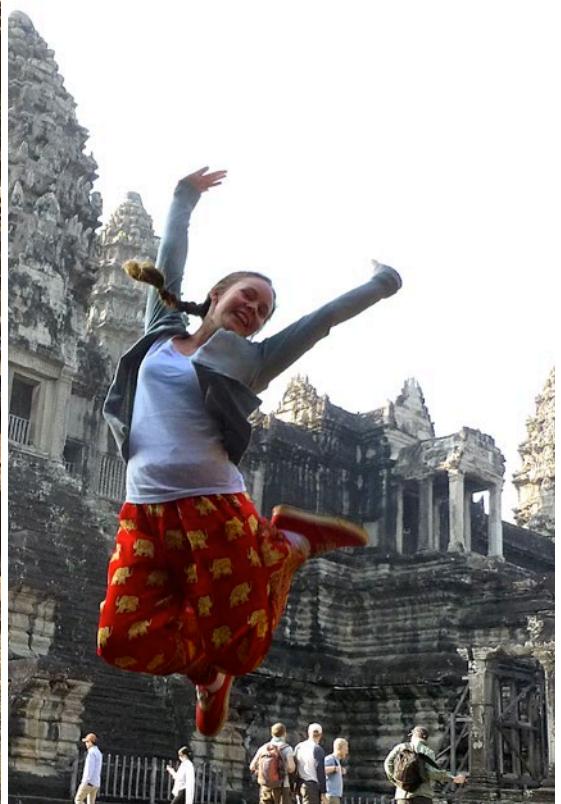


IMMERSIONS



**"We are all invited to walk
the streets of the world with
one's brothers and sisters."**

POPE FRANCIS



 **catholic
mission**
Reach out. Give life.



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have passed away. Catholic Mission acknowledges the traditional owners of the land.



Why travel on an Immersion experience with Catholic Mission?



"I recommend these trips to you as an important form of ongoing support and empowerment of Timorese communities."

Abel Guterres

Ambassador - Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

"I have gained enormous satisfaction in providing this experience to Catholic youth and have witnessed the deeper spiritual growth of every participant. The Immersion experience is a 'lived' experience providing 'lifelong' inspiration within a distinctive Catholic context."

Amanda Wilson

Principal - Holy Spirit College, Bellambi (Immersions 2012-2014)

"Overall our experience was very uplifting and life-changing. So many amazing people that we met and we will be forever changed..."

Bernadette and Bruce Sinclair

Immersion participants

"As a Catholic school, we hope that our students not only flourish and become their true, radiant, confident selves but that they also use their gifts and abilities in service to the world. The immersion experience frequently awakens and draws out of students their compassionate orientation to the world. The immersion experience achieves in 10 days what we hope to achieve over 4 years."

Eamonn Pollard

Principal - MacKillop Catholic College, Hobart

INTRODUCTION

A Catholic Mission Immersion is where a small group of adults or students visit church and school communities in an Indigenous Australian context or an overseas location for 10-12 days. The purpose of an immersion is for participants to experience life, faith and justice from a new perspective and return home inspired to live a personal sense of Catholic ‘mission’ in Australia.

We offer immersion experiences for:

- School groups: Year 10 to 12 secondary students and teachers.
- Adult groups: Catholic parishes, teachers, universities, social justice or health care groups.
- Alternative to ‘Schoolies’: Year 12 students after their final exams.

Catholic Mission tailors the experience for each group in terms of the location, dates and itinerary.

The Immersion program offers preparation and follow-up workshops, as well as experienced facilitators who lead the trip as educators.

Catholic Mission takes responsibility for all travel, bookings and logistics including making payments for all flights, visas, accommodation, meals, local transport, insurance, risk assessment, registrations, client agreement form, workshops and entrance fees. By having Catholic Mission organise your immersion, it takes the pressure off valuable school teacher and staff time which then frees up school resources.



PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

A Catholic Mission Immersion is an educational program designed to provide participants the experience of immersing themselves for ten days in the daily life a local community in Indigenous Australia, Asia and the Pacific. The hope is that they develop an understanding and appreciation of cultures different from their own while learning about themselves.

Our existing extensive mission network provides privileged access to parishes and school communities in our neighbouring countries where we meet with local missionaries, including lay people and religious sisters and brothers. In consultation with the community leaders, daily activities are facilitated so as to become spontaneous and natural moments of interaction and engagement.

Participants return home with a changed and more open mindset as to the realities of difference and consequently appreciate what they have and what others do not have, and therefore commit to working for justice.

The experience is designed for participants to 'be with' rather than to 'do for' and is not designed around service work in the community. The experience will touch your heart, engage your mind and nourish your spirit. This is NOT a sightseeing tourism holiday. It is an educational, challenging, life-changing self-development program founded on Catholic principles.



"Persons always live in relationship. We come from others, we belong to others, and our lives are enlarged by our encounter with others."

Pope Francis

VISION OF

MISSION & IMMERSION



Immersion is a powerful way of involving ourselves in Jesus' mission. It is first and foremost an experience of being with others. Just as God the Father, through Jesus, came to be with us, and Jesus sat at the table of the poor, the outcast and vulnerable, so too are we invited to sit at our host's table as guests.

On immersion we meet the local people face-to-face and recognise we are all brothers and sisters in God's family. We empathise and learn from each other. We share daily joys and sorrows, celebrating riches and gifts.



Guided throughout the experience by critical questioning and prayerful reflection, we acknowledge we are in part also responsible for each other's reality in this global society. Catholic Mission immersions highlight how the Reign of God is present in each community, growing at the pace of the local people's efforts and supported by the Universal Church.

The learning continues long after participants come home. They return with a wider group of newfound friends and a broader vision of God's family. They feel challenged to continue the mission of Jesus in the world by working for global social justice in their own lives.

Catholic Mission is the official mission agency of the Catholic Church in Australia. One of our goals is to continue the mission of Jesus *that all may have life and have it to the full* (John 10:10b).

Developed over 20 years, Catholic Mission's method forms the whole person - their empathy, humanity, faith and responsibility.

INDIGENOUS IMMERSIONS



The Indigenous Immersion program offers participants a privileged insight into the daily lives of Aboriginal communities.



Participants are invited by the community leaders/elders to share in parts of their culture and country, explore their history, and be introduced to the current culture. There will be opportunities to engage in dialogue with locals to hear their stories and to ask questions – seeking a better understanding of the causes and possible solutions to current social and political issues.

Participants may be offered access to community engagement, health clinics, church-based services and other activities specific to the location. They will also have an opportunity to explore the region guided by local elders possibly engaging with gathering bush tucker and painting with locals.

These programs create a space for sharing to occur and an opportunity to “be with” Aboriginal people, to be still and experience and observe their inextricable connection to the land and gain an understanding of *dadirri* (inner deep listening and quiet still awareness).



INTERNATIONAL IMMERSIONS



INTERNATIONAL LOCATIONS:

- Philippines
- Malaysia
- Cambodia
- Timor-Leste
- Thailand



The international program is hosted in many locations in Asia-Pacific including the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Malaysia (Sarawak) and the Solomon Islands.

Our intent is to travel lightly and with purpose. Our immersion group will be small (10–18 people) to enable us to interact in a personal and appropriate manner with our host communities.

Our existing extensive mission network provides privileged access to parishes and school communities in our neighbouring countries.

The essence of being on immersion is ‘being with people’ as we are welcomed like family and blessed by the local people and their simple hospitality. We will have the opportunity to walk in their shoes for a brief time while we spend time visiting those who care for the young

and the vulnerable and the sick and disabled through the programs run by our mission partners.

In all cases the needs and sensitivities of the host communities are recognised as a priority in our planning of the immersion.

Whether it is visiting people living with disability in the Peace Village outside Phnom Penh or practising conversational English with Timorese students in Maliana, the experience will open your eyes, your heart and your mind.



PILGRIMAGES



For over a thousand years pilgrims have walked the many routes to Santiago de Compostela in Spain's Galicia region.

The unique beauty and power of Catholic Mission's pilgrimage lies within the graced experience of walking—a pilgrimage to the sacred inner regions of the heart.

Our focus is on the way we travel, entering into a comfortable personal, contemplative rhythm of daily walking, appreciating simple hospitality in accommodation and food, with strangers as fellow travellers. It's an invitation to make 'your' Way to the apostle, Saint James (Sant' Iago – Spanish for St James).

Catholic Mission's pilgrimage balances walking with times reserved for silence, personal reflection and prayer in the companionship of a small group led by an experienced guide.

CAMINO FRANCÉS

The Camino Frances, or "French Way", is the best known and busiest, with good infrastructure throughout Spain. We start in the ancient Roman city of León (with its Gothic cathedral) and will be sent on our pilgrimage by the Benedictine Nuns with the traditional pilgrimage blessing. Our journey takes us through some of the most beautiful parts of Spain, especially Galicia, arriving in Santiago de Compostela in time for the pilgrim Mass.



FACILITATORS



L to R: Rian Pasan, Patrick Fox and Linda Attard

I am very grateful for having the opportunity to facilitate Catholic Mission Immersions to Sarawak and Alice Springs.

It was inspiring to see students & teachers fully embrace unfamiliar cultures and genuinely connect with the local community.

The experience allowed both the local people and the Australian students and teachers to appreciate the differences and similarities in their everyday life.

Linda Attard
(Facilitator)

Catholic Mission provides experienced facilitators to guide group immersions as mission educators. Every group has a facilitator travelling with them from Australia. Each facilitator comes with the necessary skills and experience, often having lived or travelled extensively in the destination region.

Each facilitator has undergone necessary Working With Children and criminal history checks and is trained in up-to-date first aid and CPR. Wherever possible, the facilitators will meet with their group prior to travel.

The Catholic Mission facilitator will guide the group, manage all the interactions as well as logistics, and facilitate daily debriefing, prayer and reflection.

THREE PHASES OF IMMERSION



PHASE 1

Preparation

This stage, consisting of approximately 5-6 hours of workshops, prepares the participant for the in-country experience by:

- Examining the history, culture and faith of the people in the host location;
- Considering the life challenges and issues faced by host communities;
- Increasing cultural sensitivity and respect towards the host communities;
- Identifying and preparing participants for possible personal experiences such as culture shock;
- Informing participants of the practicalities of what to pack and health and hygiene considerations;
- Completion of documentation, including participants signing a Code of Conduct for the time away on the immersion; and
- An opportunity for the parents to meet the facilitator (if it can be arranged).



PHASE 2

In-Country Experience

Over 10–12 days in-country the participants discover new experiences and new friends in the host communities. Each experience is unique and varies from group to group, day to day and participant to participant. The program allows and caters for variations, under risk-assessed parameters, so that each immersion is a completely personal experience within the security of being in a group dynamic.

The needs of the host communities are equally important. Catholic Mission works collaboratively with local leaders to ensure that every immersion also enriches and enhances the life of the community, always respecting their circumstances. This is emphasised in Phase 1 to prepare participants to enter into this special relationship, and they are required at all times to respect it.

Catholic Mission encourages, where possible and depending on the capacity of the host community, the school to return annually to the same community in order to build an ongoing relationship.



PHASE 3

Debriefing, Action and Follow-up

Many participants only fully appreciate the effect of the immersion upon reflection after having returned home. Catholic Mission assists participants to debrief, to act upon and to integrate their experience at every possible level within their own communities. According to each individual, they identify concrete actions on various levels (the personal, communal and even global) to build a world where all may have life, and live life to the full.

FAQS

WHY CHOOSE AN IMMERSION EXPERIENCE WITH CATHOLIC MISSION?

How do I enquire about or book an immersion?

The best way to enquire about or book an immersion is to contact our Immersions Team on 02 9919 7828 or 02 9919 7824 or email jkerrigan@catholicmission.org.au

What does the cost of the immersion cover?

Unless otherwise specified, the total cost of an immersion covers:

- Phase 1, 2 and 3 material
- Catholic Mission facilitator
- Flights departing from an Australian capital city, including taxes
- Travel insurance
- TravelGuard risk management support
- Visas
- All local transport costs
- All accommodation
- Donations to host communities
- All meals
- Bottled water
- Cost of entry to places of interest and attractions associated with the itinerary

What additional expenses may be incurred?

Each immersion will incur personal costs for participants to prepare them for the trip. These include but are not limited to medical care and vaccinations (as required), appropriate clothing, and luggage.

How many participants make up a group?

Groups can vary in size depending on destination and costs and other requirements. Generally the standard group size is 10-18 participants.

Are passports and visas required?

For international immersions, each participant must hold a current passport from their country of citizenship. Applying for a new passport can take some time, so early application is recommended. Passports must have at least six

months remaining before expiry at the time of departing the host country. Visa requirements are dependent on the destination. However, all paperwork and costs for visas are included in the cost of a Catholic Mission immersion.

How fit and able must participants be?

While the physical demands may vary for each immersion, participants are expected to be relatively mobile, in good physical and mental health and self-sufficient. Some participants may be assessed as not suitable during Phase 1 as part of the discernment process.

Is immersion insurance required?

All participants are covered by Catholic Mission's travel insurance and a copy of the coverage is available for all participants. Pilgrimage participants will need to organise their own cover.

What are the health requirements?

Participants must seek the advice of a qualified medical practitioner to get specific advice about precautions against disease while travelling overseas. Necessary vaccinations may need to be administered in a series of doses over several weeks. Therefore participants should seek qualified medical advice as early as possible to ensure all necessary treatment is completed before departure. Catholic Mission personnel are not qualified to offer medical advice other than the administration of first aid or the provision of general information regarding necessary health precautions.

What forms of transport are used?

Local transport may include a combination of planes, trains, boats and cars. Catholic Mission's risk assessment procedures ensure the safest possible transport options are selected.

What is the food like?

Food on all immersions is basic, sufficient and primarily consists of local staples. Communities will do their very best to offer the group the best food they have available. It may not be possible to cater for special dietary needs on any given immersion. Please specify any individual dietary requirements to see what is possible. In many of our overseas host communities, local tap water may be unsuitable to drink. In these cases, participants are advised to always drink either pure rainwater, or water that is boiled, bottled, or treated with purifying tablets.

For more information on immersion preparation, please see the Three Phases of Immersion on page 12.

Will I be safe on an immersion?

The security and safety of all participants is the foremost priority in designing the immersion program. A suite of preparatory and precautionary measures are taken to ensure that risk is minimised as much as possible. Where risk cannot be managed at satisfactory minimum, immersions will not proceed. See page 13.

What are the accommodation and sleeping arrangements like?

Accommodation for each immersion will vary, but will often consist of a combination of church facilities (for example, seminary, orphanage or parish accommodation) and private accommodation (for example, guest houses and hotels). Immersion accommodation is basic, but satisfactory and comfortable.



TESTIMONIALS

WHY CHOOSE AN IMMERSION EXPERIENCE WITH CATHOLIC MISSION?

"This trip was the best experience I could have ever asked for!"



"A real eye opener... it has changed my perspective."

"It was an amazing trip that I will always remember."

"It has opened my eyes to poverty; it has changed me for the better."

Year 11 and 12 students
Immersion participants

"These Catholic Mission trips just keep growing in popularity because they provide an experience that simply cannot be replicated in a classroom. The face of Christ and the more global mission of the Catholic Church are witnessed in action."

Paul Brodie
Facilitator - Timor-Leste on three immersions for St John Evangelist, Nowra NSW

"I want to thank Catholic Mission for the tremendous support and flexibility in organising the immersion experience. It has changed the way the students view the world and how they intend to live their lives."

Mary-Jane Carroll-Fajarda
Principal, Trinity Catholic College Goulburn

"It's been a privilege to represent Catholic Mission on immersions to both Timor-Leste and Fiji. How fulfilling it is to observe the Australian students and teachers immerse themselves in the communal, liturgical and educational lives of these hospitable and generous people."

Ralph Kershler
Immersion facilitator

*"I have learned that there
are people in the world
doing amazing things for
others and I believe that
I can and should do my
part too."*

Immersion participant



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