

A Guide to the Alternative Breaks Experience



Navigating all aspects of our community-engaged learning experiences.

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Alternative Breaks Office: GAC 166

What makes Alternative Breaks so unique and meaningful? Alternative Break experiences are week-long, service-oriented projects that allow students to be immersed in community-identified social issues. Through a student-led model, Alternative Breaks provides opportunities to travel domestically to live and learn alongside a community. There are team meetings, the experience itself, and reorientation activities that allow your team to complete a service experience in Rochester and share what they learned with the Nazareth community.

Components of Alternative Breaks and the time commitment:

Alternative Breaks starts with a written application and an in-person interview to follow. Once a participant is placed on a team, they will attend 5 team meetings before traveling that allow for education on the community partner and preparation on entering the community. After the week-long travel experience, there is a reorientation that allows for the participants to bring their learning back to Rochester and continue the work by addressing similar issues locally. Throughout the year, every Alternative Break participant is required to attend three all-participant meetings that provide each team the opportunity to share their experience with a larger audience.

Communal Living and Shared Meals:

The type of housing in an Alternative Break varies based on experience, however there will most always be communal living. This could vary from a large room for the whole group to smaller rooms with more personal living situations. Communal living is essential to an Alternative Breaks as it fosters friendship, time together, and affordable cost for service experiences. Living together also allows for your team to share meals, cook, and reflect together, which is another great bonding experience amongst your team.

In the past, Alternative Breaks have stayed in hostels, youth camps, churches, basecamps, community rooms, and more. The sleeping arrangement could involve bunk beds or air mattresses. Alt Breaks teams involve between 8 and 14 people, so the group size is relatively small.

Examples of Housing and Communal Living Experiences:



The Different Types of Alternative Breaks:

The kind of Alt Break varies on the location and social justice topic that it is focusing on. Some experiences are more physical and hands-on, whereas some experiences are more educational and learning based. Both types of experiences are meaningful and have many components of service incorporated into it. When applying to an Alternative Break, consider what your physical limitations may be and what might be the best experience for you.

Schedules:

Alternative Breaks are busy, but a good and meaningful type of busy! There are many different components and service experiences that are jam-packed into the week. There is also always time for downtime, reflection, and fun experiences with your team. See the last pages in this document to view itineraries of some of the most recent Alternative Breaks!

Reflection:

Reflection is another part of Alternative Breaks, as it allows for time to focus on the impact that you are leaving on your community, but also the impact that the community is leaving on you. On an Alternative Break, team leaders facilitate meaningful activities and conversations each night that help foster safe and inclusive reflection environments. Participants are expected to share only what they are comfortable sharing, but also are encouraged to consider being vulnerable with this particular group of people that are experiencing new things together.

Accommodations:

Whether it is food, living, or daily accommodations, Alternative Breaks strives to provide every resource and adjustment needed so that a participant can have the most meaningful, equitable, and engaging experience possible. Please never hesitate to reach out with any accommodations needed to either your team leaders or Jen Canning!

Example Itinerary from an Alternative Break focusing on Justice-Impacted Communities - Includes multiple different organizations and different areas of focus.

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
AM	Eastern State Penitentiary Museum 10 am	Why Not Prosper/The FIRM 10 am - 12 pm	Broad St. Love 9:30 am - 2 pm	Abolitionist Law Center 10 am - 12 pm	Mural Arts 10 am - 11:30 am	Let's Circle Up 10 am - 12 pm	Books Through Bars 9:30 am - 11:30 am
Lunch	Reading Terminal Market	Lunch with Why Not Prosper until 1 pm	Bag - eat at Broad St. Love until 2:30 pm	Bag - eat at Abolitionist Law Center?	Lunch with Petey Green Program - delivered at 12:45 pm	Lunch with Let's Circle Up 12 pm - 1 pm	Bag
PM		Magic Gardens 3 pm - 4 pm		National Constitution Center 2 pm - 5 pm	Petey Green Program 1 pm - 3 pm	Malcolm X Memorial/ Hakim's Bookstore?	Drive to ROC
Dinner	Cook	Cook	Dinner in community	Cook	Cook	Triple Bottom Brewing	
Evening		Human Rights Coalition Letter writing? 7 - 8:30 pm	Tindley Soup Kitchen 5:00 pm - 7:15 pm	HRC General Meeting? 6- 7:30 pm	HRC Meeting? 6 - 8 pm		**arrive approx. 7:00pm
NEIGHBORHOOD	Fairmount /Center City (Independence NP?)	Germantown (Uncle Bobbie's Books & Cafe? M 8am - 2 pm)	South Street? (Jim's or Angelo's, Italian Market)	Spring Garden/Franklin Square	Center City (Independence NP?)	Cedar Park/W. Philly/Walnut Hill (Bookstore?)	University City
FOCUS AREA	History	Re-Entry	Re-Entry	Incarceration	Incarceration Restorative	Restorative	Incarceration

Sample Itinerary from an experience in North Carolina focusing on Domestic Disaster Relief - working with just one organization.

Friday:

- Depart Naz at 3:30am for the airport. Flight is at 5:00am
- Layover in D.C. Second flight departs at 1:00pm
- Arrive at the All Hands and Heart Base at around 4pm
- Tour of the base with the volunteer coordinator
- Dinner with the whole base at 4:30pm
- Grocery shopping
- Reflection at 8pm
- Wind down, get settled in bunk rooms, and early to bed

Saturday:

- Breakfast with Naz groceries at 9am (Come down as you please)
- Downtime until 12pm (Sleep, group activities in the lounge, more unpacking, etc)
- Depart for Single Tree Heritage Kitchen for a group lunch
- Post lunch, head to the Grove Arcade to explore the local small businesses
- A drive-by tour of the areas impacted by Hurricane Helene
- Group dinner: One group cooks and one group cleans. Dinner: Pasta, sauce, meatballs, salad, and garlic bread
- Reflection at 8pm

Sunday:

- Breakfast (on Naz groceries) and make bagged lunches for our excursion
- Depart for the Great Smoky Mountains at 10am (About a 1 hour drive)
- Hike the Alum Cave Trail
- Bagged lunches at the end
- Drive back to base
- Group dinner: one group cooks and one group cleans. Dinner: Grilled Cheese and Tomato Soup
- Reflection at 8pm

Monday:

- Breakfast at 7:15am (Provided by All Hands and Heart) and make bagged lunches for the work day
- 9-4:30pm work day with an hour lunch break
- 4:30pm volunteer meeting back at base
- Dinner with the volunteers on base
- Reflection and downtime on base

Tuesday:

- Breakfast at 7:15am (Provided by All Hands and Heart) and make bagged lunches for the work day
- 9-4:30pm work day with an hour lunch break
- 4:30pm volunteer meeting back at base
- Dinner with the volunteers on base
- A fun activity at night provided by the All Hands and Heart staff
- Reflection and downtime on base

Wednesday:

- Breakfast at 7:15am (Provided by AHaH) and make bagged lunches for the work day
- 9-4:30pm work day with an hour lunch break
- 4:30pm volunteer meeting back at base
- Dinner with the volunteers on base
- A sweet treat with the Naz Alternative Breaks group: Ice Cream!
- Reflection and downtime on base

Thursday:

- Breakfast at 7:15am (Provided by All Hands and Heart) and make bagged lunches for the work day
- 9-4:30pm work day with an hour lunch break
- 4:30pm volunteer meeting back at base
- Dinner with the volunteers on base
- A group walk together
- Reflection and downtime on base

Friday:

- Breakfast at 7:15am (Provided by All Hands and Heart) and make bagged lunches for the work day
- 9-4:30pm work day with an hour lunch break
- 4:30pm volunteer meeting back at base
- Dinner with the volunteers on base
- Reflection and downtime on base

Saturday:

- Sweet treat breakfast from the Naz Alternative Breaks leaders
- Head to the airport around 10:15am, and arrive back in Rochester around 4:30pm