

How to run a weekend away for international students

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Why run a Weekend Away?

What are your aims for the weekend away? This is very important as it will influence all the other decisions you make about the programme, place, etc.

There are several things you may aim to achieve:

- To have time to study the Bible/explore Christianity without the distractions of daily life, and for a whole weekend instead of just once a week (Christians or non-Christians). A weekend away provides an unrivalled opportunity to proclaim Christ and to have personal chats about him with students, and perhaps to challenge them about “where they’re at”.
- To have more time together with students to build friendships and model the Christian life (to Christians or non-Christians). For Christians, this will involve fellowship and examples to follow in the Christian life; for non-Christians, this will aid evangelism as they get to know Christians better and see more of their daily lives. It is difficult spending “ordinary time” with students whom we only see once a week; a weekend away can provide a chance for both Christians and non-Christians to see how knowing Jesus affects everything we do. For instance, how do we cope when a problem comes up? Is our priority during games to make sure everyone else has a good time? How do we behave when sharing a room with people?
- To provide potentially lonely students with a welcoming and enjoyable time, eg at Christmas or Easter when many other students may have gone home.
- To enable people from a supporting church(s) to be more actively involved in IS work and so get a better understanding of the ministry and be able to pray more specifically.
- Some groups have aimed to have a separate track to train volunteers during the weekend

Think also about follow-up or longer-term aims: do you want one result to be that more people come to your Bible study group or Christianity Explained course; or could you start a course or group as a result of the weekend? The weekend away could also be part of a Visa or Christianity Explored course.

Who is the weekend away for?

The kind of students you have will affect your decision on the purpose of the weekend; or your decision on the purpose of the weekend may affect who it is aimed at. These might be:

- Christians – young / mature?
- Or non-Christians – non-seekers / seekers - what stage of seeking are they at?
- Is it a new group? Have you had some contact / no contact? – a time for beginning & building friendships & trust
- Or established group – part of a regular course (e.g. Visa/Christianity Explored/International Cell/Bible study)
- Deeper sharing, prayer support, accountability/challenging
- Postgraduates / undergraduates
- University students / language students / au pairs
- Mainly Europeans / East Asians / a complete mixture of nationalities
- How good is their English?
- What age range?
- Do they have spouses and children?

These factors may affect your decisions about when to have the weekend, what sort of programme to do, etc.

How many people?

- A very small group (5 or 6 people):
 - Could stay in somebody's home; Can save money; Very easy to arrange transport
- A small group (e.g. who can all fit in one minibus):
 - Could all stay in a large house / very small conference centre,
 - or stay with several host families and have a base during the day.
- A larger group:
 - About 30-40 feels small enough for everyone to meet everyone else over the weekend
 - Break into small groups (e.g. for discussion, washing up etc) so they can get to know a few people better. You can arrange the groupings in advance, placing people strategically – eg if a leader wants to get to know a particular student better, put them in the same group.
 - Larger groups of about 60 people will give the weekend a different feel.
- In the USA they run some very big weekends away, with hundreds of people! However, the bigger the group, the easier it is for individuals to “opt out” of the spiritual programme, or to feel unwelcomed, as students are more likely to form cliques or just talk to people they already know. The aim on a really large weekend away can be for personal evangelism on a large scale; ie the speaker gives a short, formal presentation of the gospel, which will get the non-Christians thinking, and provide Christians with an opportunity to chat to them about it. See Appendix D for an extract from a briefing for Christians on how they can serve internationals whom they bring.

Helpers - Who will help? How many helpers?

How many helpers will you need in relation to the numbers of students? This will depend on the aims of the weekend but it is good to a good ratio (eg 1:2 or 3) of helpers to build friendships with the students.

Who would be the most appropriate people to help? It is helpful, where possible, to use helpers who already have some friendship or contact with the students who will be coming. For example: Visa course group leaders with Visa course students, café team with café students, university Christian Union students with University international students. However, weekends away are also a good opportunity to involve other Christians who would not usually have contact with international students. For example asking a member of a local church to come to do the catering / drive the minibus may help them to catch the vision for international student work.

Two approaches for bringing a group together:***The “core group drawing others in” approach:***

If you have a Christian group, the weekend may provide an easy opportunity for them to invite friends (Christian or not) to meet other Christians/hear about Jesus, and the friends may then get involved with the group or another group subsequently. In one city, a couple of Christian students invited a non-Christian friend to the weekend away; he subsequently started going to the evangelistic Bible studies and to church, and professed faith soon after.

Similarly, a “core” group of non-Christians who are involved in your social group or explorers’ course may also be able to draw friends in, who may then join the group or course afterwards.

The “drawing a group together” approach:

It may be that you don’t have a “core” group, and a weekend away may be a good way of drawing together various students who will then form a core group, by feeling more committed to your social group, or by joining a course / Bible study group which you decide to start.

Children

If any of your students are under 18 or have children who are under 18, this could have legal implications. Take advice from somebody who is familiar with the issues involved eg a childrens’ worker at your church, a Diocesan Youth Advisor, etc. In any case, with children you need to be extra careful to be above reproach in every area, and not give anyone cause for complaint.

Combining groups

You could combine groups from different cities or different groups from the same city, e.g. a church group, international café group, etc. This can be useful if you feel your group is too small to go away on their own; and it can spread the organisational load (or make it more complicated!). It’s probably best for one group to do the bulk of the organising; another group could oversee Bible studies etc.

Planning

Start planning as far in advance as possible (approx 6-12 months before!). Apart from the fact that it does take a lot of organisation to put on a weekend away, advanced planning means that you can take the weekend away into consideration when you plan international student events for the rest of the year. Do delegate – involving others will be good for them as well as you!

When?

Think about when your students will be free: obviously, don't plan it for exam week, dissertation deadline, Chinese New Year or mid-week if your students still have lectures/jobs to go to. After the end of term, European students are more likely to go home than students who live further away, therefore, plan the weekend for just after the end of term (and advertise early, before they book their flights). If most of your students are staying around during the vacation, it may be better to have it later when everyone has gone home and they have nothing else to do!

- Before Christmas is a good time, being at the end of the first term, and could really help to consolidate or establish your group after the first term when people are still settling down.
- Between Christmas and New Year is also good, as it is a very quiet time when there is often nothing at all for international students to do, as even many shops and services, as well as regular events, are closed.
- Pre-Easter is another good time, as you may have got to know students better by then than by Christmas, so you may get more takers.

NB Christmas and Easter obviously give excellent opportunities to talk about the meaning of these festivals!

- The end of the summer term is also a possibility; although some students may have left or have plans to travel, they may well be free from studies and really appreciate a good end to their academic year. The disadvantage with this is that if they are only staying for a year, there is no time for follow-up in the UK.

Plan well in advance, as venues get booked up quite quickly, and students also make plans and book flights and holidays.

How long?

Most people find that a weekend is long enough in terms of organisation, energy levels, cost, and time that students (and others!) can spare; but others have successful 5-day or week-long trips. This will obviously affect the programme (a weekend can feel very rushed) and also the choice of location: for a longer time away you would probably want to choose a place where there are lots of interesting things to do.

Cost

This will obviously depend on several factors:

- *Accommodation*: If you are not staying in a borrowed house or with host families, conference centres can vary enormously in price.
- *Food*: Self-catering is a much cheaper option (from approx £10 per person for a weekend), whereas conference centres who provide food may charge £20 or more.

- *Transport:* Minibuses are quite costly to hire and taking your own or borrowed cars can be much cheaper. Taking the train is usually far more expensive. If borrowing a church mini-bus is an option – book it early!
- *Subsidising:* Can you get people from your church/team to subsidise or sponsor students? Generally, students are always looking for a bargain, even if they are relatively rich, and it's important not to put people off by the cost, so if you can subsidise or be frugal (while still providing a good quality weekend), it will be worthwhile.
- Get students to pay a good-sized deposit up-front; this will commit them to coming!

Publicity

This is obviously affected by who you are aiming the weekend at. Make it clear what will happen on the weekend; for instance, if you are having talks from the Bible that you expect everyone to listen to, you could put something like “We shall listen together to talks from the Bible, as well as making new friends, etc....”.

State all the details (venue, cost, time, who is organising it,) clearly, and make sure that on the reply slip you ask for their phone number / email (useful for sending out last-minute information!); and find out if they are male or female; vegetarian or other; allergic to anything, or with any medical problems. Do ask for a good-sized deposit! You can send out a confirmation letter later with specific details about what time to meet and what to bring, etc. Many international students don't have much experience of camping/outdoor activities/roughing it, so clarify the need for waterproofs, walking boots, sleeping bags, etc if these are called for.

If you have a speaker who has special experience or interest, include this on the publicity. For instance, at a particular weekend away in Canada, more Chinese students agreed to come because the speaker was knowledgeable about China. Even if the speaker doesn't have a particular speciality like this, it may be worth putting a few interesting details about them, so that people can see they are real, not just a faceless speaker. However, we want people to be drawn to Jesus, not the speaker; and ultimately we rely on God, not good publicity, to bring people along.

Think about where and how to advertise. This will depend on who you are aiming at. Advertise quite far in advance to give students time to take time off work (many have weekend jobs). Inviting students personally is a good way to encourage them to come.

See Appendix B for sample publicity.

Venues

You'll probably need to book a venue several months in advance, so do your research early.

A useful website for finding suitable venues is venuefinder.cci.org.uk. Type in details such as dates, area, etc., and Christian conference centres from all over the UK will send you brochures through the post. This saves a lot of time. The website also provides information and advice about planning for a weekend away, e.g. self-catering plans, minibus permits, health and safety issues, etc.

Conference centres do differ as to their terms: Some want definite numbers weeks in advance (difficult with unreliable students!) and most have a minimum number which you must pay for, even if fewer people come.

Some larger conference centres also offer the option of sharing the site with other groups. This may work well, but if you have to mix in quite a lot with the other groups, it can confuse students and undermine dynamics and friendship-building.

Think about what kind of people will come: e.g. do you have married couples, families, a big range of ages? Some venues only have dormitory accommodation or a limited number of double rooms. If you have a lot of children coming, you probably need to make sure there will be a room that you can use as a crèche or playroom. Check out high chairs, cots, etc.

Another option is to go for a more informal venue such as a friend's house, or even to split students up among host families. This last option does have disadvantages in not having everyone all together, and may have less potential in terms of lifestyle witness (or it may have more, through the hosts themselves). It is almost certainly cheaper.

Another issue which may come up with non-Christians is if you have people who are living together but not married, but expecting a double room. Think through beforehand how you will handle this, and make it clear before you go.

Food

Some conferences centres can provide all meals for you. This is much easier for you than self-catered but is often significantly more expensive and may be less flexible. Most conference centres will do the catering for you. Inform them in advance of any special dietary requirements.

The other option is to go self-catering. This is cheaper and more flexible but can be very time consuming. Smaller conference centres may provide catering facilities for you to use. To save time the team could take turns to cook in pairs, or appoint a volunteer who would be happy to be caterer for the weekend. Plan menus in advance; decide when to buy the food: before you go (is there room in the cars?) or after you arrive (will there be time?). Some venues offer to buy food for you before you arrive, which is ideal; or you could order a Tesco Direct delivery over the internet, to be delivered when you arrive. Find out if you need to take things like tea cloths, washing up liquid and loo rolls.

Recipes and quantities: If you have large numbers of people, find some mass-catering recipes. It usually doesn't work just to scale-up normal recipes, as quantities and cooking times are often different! Ask for recipes from people who have done mass catering at church, on a camp, etc. They may also have other useful information, e.g. how many pints of milk you would need for a weekend. Don't be TOO frugal with food: good food and lots of it can really help make for a good time, but bad food and not enough to eat can leave people quite disappointed.

Washing up: Depending on your programme, it may be good to get the students to help wash up; it can be fun when done with friends, and helps them feel part of the weekend: it's not just us doing something for them.

Medical Issues

Find out from people if they have any allergies (food, bedding, animals, medicines); or if they have a medical condition or an injury which could be an issue over the weekend. It's also a good idea to know if anyone is taking regular medication, in case they have an accident and their medication might affect what treatment they are given.

Any conference centre should have a first aid kit: find out where it is as soon as you arrive. If you have a first-aider, make sure everyone knows who it is. Take plasters and paracetamol. Know where the nearest hospital is: in some cases driving there may be quicker than calling an ambulance.

If any accident does occur, or even if you give someone a paracetamol, write it down clearly as soon as possible, including the time and what sort of state the person is in and who was involved. Hopefully of course bad situations won't occur, but if they do, such information could be useful to doctors, or if someone decides to complain about the way the accident was handled. The conference centre should have an incident book where accidents or near-accidents should be reported.

Insurance: All conference centres will be insured against public liability, but it may be worth advising the students that they are not covered for luggage and health etc. unless their travel insurance already covers them.

A word about cults

As in all our work, we need to beware of behaving like a cult, or seeming to do so. This is especially true of weekends away. One university website has warnings about groups who take students away for the weekend!

Some areas to watch:

- *One-to-one chats:* beware of being shut away in a room with somebody for an intense spiritual chat. It may be better to walk round outside, if you can; or just leave the door open and don't be too intense! Don't "corner" people in cars. If you are in a group talking informally about Christian things in conversation, try to gauge whether everyone wants to talk about it: some may, while others may feel uncomfortable: so make sure they feel they can walk away: or postpone the conversation. Always let people feel they can get away, and that there are other people around. Having said this, don't feel that you can't talk to students one-to-one or challenge them about Christian things. Pray for lots of natural opportunities.
- *Venue:* If it is in the middle of nowhere, make sure you try to get back into civilisation for an afternoon, eg visit a town or a public place where there are members of the public around. Make sure everyone has access to a phone, and buy newspapers or take a radio so they know what's going on in the world.
- *Sleep and food:* provide lots of it! Make sure you provide a balanced diet. Give nobody any cause for complaint. If you are having Christian talks and Bible studies, make sure there plenty of breaks to relax, get fresh air, eat cake, etc.

Putting the programme together

Decide what you want the focus of the weekend to be. In most cases this will be the Christian teaching/Bible studies, but this doesn't mean that they have to take up the majority of the time: they will probably be more effective if people have time to think over and discuss what they have heard; and it should be combined with fun and a chance to make and deepen friendships. However, it is quite easy to have a talk morning and evening and go out for the whole of the rest of the day. Or have an "on-site" focus, where you combine talks and Bible studies with on-site activities: this may give you more time to fit more in.

If you have quite a structured timetable, it's good to give people a copy, so they know what is going on over the weekend. On the other hand for a smaller group it may feel more natural just to tell them verbally what the plan is.

Some ideas of things to include in your programme:

- If you have both Christians and non-Christians, you could do talks on topics of interest to both, eg Genesis 1-3, a Bible overview, Aspects of the Cross, etc., with discussion groups on related passages.
- Interactive Bible Studies
- Grill-a-Christian (explain this jargon!); warn them in advance so they come with questions prepared
- Testimonies from Christian international students
- Apologetics seminars
- Seminars on more "secular" topics e.g., Returning to your own Country (but this could still include Christian content, ie are you going to leave Christianity behind as well?)
- An "open" Quiet Time, one Christian explaining why and how they read the Bible and pray regularly

- On a Sunday morning, have a mini service, explain what church is and why we sing, listen to sermons, etc.
- Act out the Christmas story or a Bible passage.
- Video and discussion (difficult to find a video which presents a thought-provoking angle on Christianity without too much violence/sex, and in which the dialogue is clear for those with poorer English)
- Go to local attractions, eg cultural or historical things, walks, sports facilities on-site. Have some wet-weather options up your sleeve. Take lots of board games and think up some half-hour games to fill spare moments. Make sure they are culturally appropriate, and easy to understand for those whose English isn't so good. Take group games and games for just 2 players.
- Get the students to teach you their own games (e.g. card games).
- Cultural / talent evening: this can really help students feel included and that they are contributing something to the weekend. Warn them before you go, so they can bring anything they need. Contributions can be small and informal, e.g. teaching us all a song in Cantonese; reading a poem in their own language. Or they can be more formal e.g. a dance, a judo demonstration, a puppet show.

Leaders' meetings: Meet together at least once a day (early in the morning?) for about 20 minutes, to pray and mention any issues or individuals who need special attention - e.g. is anyone looking left out, has any student brought up a spiritual issue which needs discussing? It can really help just to touch base with the other leaders and be unified in purpose, and encourage one another to make the most of opportunities.

Don't forget to plan in advance with other leaders for the Bible studies etc.: it may help to have a "prep" session all together. You may also want to "brief" Christians who are coming as to the aims of the weekend and how they can serve the students, even though it may seem obvious to them. If leaders are looking out for particular students, there is much they can do e.g., sit with them during the talk/discussion, which may provide an opportunity to talk about it afterwards; as well as joining in games with them.

See Appendix A for examples of what various groups have done and programmes they have tried.

Appendix A: Examples of weekends away and programme ideas

Newcastle:

WCB course Weekend Away in November and March. WCB is an evangelistic course (What Christians Believe). The weekend away is half way through the course and is a night away somewhere local (equivalent to the Alpha course weekend away).

Globe Christmas and Easter Weekends Away (December and March/April), for the Globe Café students. Mainly fun and touristy stuff with 2 Bible studies on Christmas/Easter.

Jesmond Parish Church International Students' Weekend Away (January), a Bible teaching conference for Christian students at the church.

Cambridge:

Harry's Coffee Bar Weekend Away. CICCU (the Cambridge CU) runs this, on the weekend immediately following the end of term in March. Aimed at language students and some postgraduates. There are usually about 30 people, half team and half students. See sample programme below.

Christian Graduate Society Weekend Away. Second Week of December, aimed at postgraduates. There are usually about 40-50 people, half and half Christians and non-Christians. See sample programme below.

Barn Trip to Devon, for students from the Barn Coffee Bar. Aimed at language students and some postgraduates. There are usually about 13-14 people, including 5-6 team members. See sample programme below.

St Andrew the Great Church Weekend Away, in March/April, for language students and international postgraduates. Often subsidised by church members.

Sheffield:

Easter Weekend Away. In the past this has been done jointly with 30 people from Sheffield, 10 from Cambridge and 10 from Guildford. All international students who come have contact with Christians, and have probably done an explorers' course. Christians come only if they bring at least one international. The aim is evangelistic.

Norwich:

Small group trips for about 12 people, staying in friends' farmhouse, with host families, in a youth hostel or small conference centre. Aims are deepened friendships and witness through lifestyle, talks and discussions.

Oxford:

St Ebbe's Church International Weekend Away, in December, just after the end of term. Mainly aimed at students who have been coming to Bible study groups (a mixture of Christians and non-Christians, undergrads, postgrads, language students, au pairs), but they are encouraged to bring their friends along. Also open to students from other international groups/Cafes in Oxford. See sample programme below.

Dublin:

Christmas Weekend Away. 4 International Café teams partner together to organize an evangelistic weekend away for the students who come to their Cafes. The weekend takes place mid-Dec and about 25-50 students go each year. As it's Christmas, activities include singing carols, making Christmas cake/cards/Christingles, a traditional Christmas dinner, bible studies on the Christmas story, nativity plays, a carol service (and talk), walks in the cold ending with hot chocolate, etc.

Easter "Dig Deeper" Weekend Away. The same Café teams partner to organize a weekend away for Christian international students wanting to dig deeper into the bible. Apart from games and walks etc, the students learn inductive bible study methods and study a book of the bible together. Serious seekers are welcome too, as long as they're happy to join all the bible studies.

Sample Programmes

Harry's Coffee Bar

Friday:

4pm Caterers and advance party leave
 5:15pm Everyone else leaves
 8pm Arrive; Welcome and notices
 Dinner
 Short talk: Who Jesus claimed to be
 Free time/bed

Saturday:

8am Prayer meeting
 9am Breakfast
 10am Bible study: Jesus appears to his disciples (John 20:19-31)
 Activities, depending on weather: walks, football, frisbee, visits to steam trains, etc.
 1pm Picnic lunch. Warn people about talent night.
 Activities and prepare for talent night.
 7pm Dinner
 Talent night
 Free time/bed

Sunday:

9am Breakfast
 10:30am Service:
 Brief explanation (importance of meeting together as church body, fellowship, learning from God's word)
 2 testimonies (1 team member, 1 Christian international)
 Reading from Bible (team member)
 Talk
 Songs (English and international?)
 1pm Lunch
 Clear up
 3pm Leave

Christian Graduate Society

Friday:

5pm Leave
 6:30 Arrive and settle in
 7:30 Dinner/Orientation/Announcements
 9pm Games and Folkdance

Saturday:

8am Prayer for those who would like
 8:30 Breakfast
 9:15 Devotion/reflection time for those who would like to learn more about this
 9:45 Go-karting
 11am Sightseeing/village tour
 4pm Free time
 5pm Bible study
 6pm Free time
 7pm Dinner
 8:30 Cultural/entertainment programme

Sunday:

8am Prayer for those who would like
 8:30 Breakfast
 10am Service (singing, prayer, talk on Christianity)

- 11am Outdoor activity (walk around the woods, football, etc.)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Picture-taking, final announcements
- 1:45 Cleaning up
- 2:45 Leave

Barn Trip to Devon (Saturday to Thursday)

Daily routine (very flexible):

- 9am Breakfast
- 10am Testimony, short Bible reading and comment/explanation (on parables of the kingdom, to tie in with evening programme)
Out for various visits and activities, including church on Sunday
Lunch will often be a picnic, prepared by all of us
- 6:30 Supper
- 8pm Talks and studies for up to an hour, followed by time for games, chat etc.
This leaves plenty of unstructured time as well for indoor games, short walks, etc.

Evening programme:

- Saturday: Just getting to know each other, plus a short talk
- Sunday: Qualities of the kingdom I: Discussion group on Acts 17: "Who is the King of the Kingdom?"
- Monday: Qualities of the Kingdom II: discussion group on Matthew 20: "Fairness or Generosity?"
- Tuesday: The cost of entering the Kingdom I: Talk on "A Life for a Life"
- Wednesday: The cost of entering the Kingdom II: A celebration evening, question time and final thoughts, with a short talk.

St Ebbe's Weekend Away:

Friday:

- 2pm As many as possible leave to avoid traffic jams
Later departures at 4pm and 6pm
- 5-9pm Arrive, settle in, cup of tea
- 7pm Supper (some kept for latecomers)
- 7:45 Washing up (group 1)
- 8:30 Welcome, 5 minute talk on Jesus as focus of weekend, "getting to know you" game
- 10pm Hot chocolate

Saturday:

- 8am Leaders' prayer meeting
- 8:30 Breakfast
- 9:15 Washing up (group 2)
- 10am Talk 1: "Where did we come from?" (Genesis 1)
- 11am Coffee
- 11:45 Bible study/discussion groups (Colossians 1)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:15 Washing up (group 3)
- 1:45 Offsite for walk, sightseeing etc.
- 4pm Tea, preparation for cultural evening
- 5pm Talk 2: "Who are we?" (Genesis 1 and 2)
- 6pm Free time
- 6:30 Supper
- 7:15 Washing up (group 4)
- 8:30 Cultural evening
- 10pm Hot chocolate

Sunday:

- 8am Leaders' prayer meeting

- 8:30 Cooked breakfast
- 9:15 Washing up (group 5)
- 10am Songs, prayers, Talk 3: "What has gone wrong? Is there any hope?"
(Genesis 3)
- 11am Coffee
- 11:45 Bible study/discussion groups (Colossians 1)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:30 Washing up and clearing up
- 2:30 Leave

Appendix B: Sample text for publicity

The Barn Trip to Devon

You are warmly invited to join us for a six-day holiday in Devon in beautiful south-west England. All friends of the Barn and the Kairos Trust are welcome, so come and enjoy yourself. Devon is full of interesting places to visit – there will be an exciting programme of activities as well as time simply to relax and get to know each other better, and the chance to learn more about Jesus and the Christian faith.

The programme will include (depending on the weather):

- The beach and the sea (sports, swimming)
- Walking in the hills (including Dartmoor), along the cliffs...
- Beautiful countryside and interesting wildlife
- Visits to local places of interest (some may have an admission charge)
- Games and just enjoying being together
- Group discussions and Bible studies

St Ebbe's International Students Weekend Away

Where?

Pentrenant Hall was built over 200 years ago and is situated in beautiful Welsh countryside, about 3 hours' drive from Oxford. Transport will be provided.

What?

An opportunity to relax, have fun, eat good food and meet new people. We'll listen together to talks from the Bible, about God's plan for the world; and we'll look at the Bible together in small groups as well. The weekend should be both thought-provoking and fun!

Who?

All International students are welcome to come. This weekend is both for Christians and for those interested in finding out what the Bible says.

Appendix C: A sample checklist of things to take with you

Food, washing up liquid etc.	Pens and paper
Football, frisbee etc.	Board games, pack of cards
Stereo and CDs	Bibles
Christian books, tracts, Bible reading notes	Emergency phone numbers
Maps of the area, road maps	Camera for a group photo
Tea towels	Song books/acetates
OHP?	Lists for discussion groups etc.
Spare warm jackets or sleeping bags	

Appendix D: Extract from a briefing for Christians attending an international weekend away

Your major duty: to serve non-Christians

Weekends Away provide an exhaustingly extensive opportunity for service. Please study the following suggestions to see the nature and extent of this service.

- a. On arrival, help your friend find a bed, get unpacked, get registered, etc.
- b. Spearhead introductions for them. Don't abandon him. They are your responsibility for the whole conference. If you want to spend time with someone else, find another Christian to help your friend.
- c. If your friend isn't socially inclined, help them to get into games, conversations, etc.
- d. Be orderly in the bedrooms. Don't force the International Student in the next bed to live next to a pig pen (even if they are messy themselves!). Observe reasonable sleeping hours too.
- e. When appropriate, suggest Christian books from the bookstall that they might like to read. Some of these may be related to the speaker's topic or an area of interest you have discussed with your international friend.
- f. Be willing to play a particular game with them simply to serve the student who likes to play it.
- g. If possible, put your friend in touch with a Christian who speaks his native tongue. Such a Christian can often interpret the talks to him.
- h. Help international students to make purchases in town if needed – eg film, post cards.
- i. Be ready to see the conference as a whole. Look for jobs to do. If the kitchen team is running behind schedule, help them out. If milk/tea is getting low, go & get some. Tidy away games after playing them.
- j. Do not leave the conference until all the work is done.
- k. Watch out for the international student at the table, making sure they have all they want.
- l. Sit with your international friend at meetings. Then you can help them find the right page in the hymn book or Bible; and you can answer questions they may have after the talk. Be ready to continue conversation with your friend after discussions. Possible opening questions are: "I was interested in you comment that... Could you explain a little more what you were thinking?" or "Have you ever thought much about this before?"
- m. Do NOT look sleepy at the meetings. This requires self-discipline but is absolutely essential. Your attentiveness prompts their attentiveness to the speaker.
- n. PRAY for the speaker when they are having trouble in phrasing a difficult point or in discovering the answer to a difficult question. Pray for the international students when they look weary at meetings.
- o. Create outlets for the international students' special talents: music, decorating, etc.
- p. Do things with them as well as for them.

This is obviously not supposed to be an exhaustive guide, but hopefully it will encourage an attitude of service in Christians who come. Older Christians can also try to look out for younger Christians & encourage them in these attitudes. In this way, weekends away can be an excellent training place for Christian character and ministry.