

# 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.*



# CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Purpose and Rationale	6
Indigenous Immersions	8
International Immersions	9
Pilgrimages	10
Three Phases of Immersions	11
Security, Safety and Risk	12
Facilitators	13
Frequently Asked Questions	14
Testimonials	15

*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 (Immersion 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



# INTRODUCTION

A Catholic Mission Immersion is where a small group of adults or students visit church and school communities in an Australian Indigenous context or an overseas country 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.



- Lombadina
- Beagle Bay
- Broome
- Pilbara
- Warralong
- Darwin
- Kununurra
- Warmun
- Balgo Hills
- Alice Springs
- NSW Southern Highlands
- Royal National Park, Sydney

**INDIGENOUS  
LOCATIONS:**



● Mongolia

**INTERNATIONAL  
LOCATIONS:**

Vietnam  
Cambodia  
Philippines  
Timor-Leste  
Fiji

**INTERNATIONAL  
PILGRIMAGE:**



*Camino de Santiago de Compostela, Spain*



**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
- Individuals: Adult immersion (minimum ten participants required)
- Alternative 'Schoolies': Year 12 students and teachers after their final exams.

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

Our 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 logistics and planning while still empowering each group to share in the vision for the trip.



# PURPOSE AND RATIONALE



*“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 AND IMMERSION:

Immersion is a powerful strategy in helping us understand and involve ourselves in Jesus' mission. Through the immersion experience we come face to face with local people and recognise them as our brothers and sisters. We empathise with them and share their daily joys and sorrows, celebrating their richness and gifts, and feeling for their pain. We learn as much from them, possibly more, as they learn from us.

Guided throughout the experience by critical and prayerful questioning, we recognise that we are involved in and partly responsible for their reality in this global society.

Catholic Mission immersions highlight how the Reign of God is becoming present in each community, at the pace of the local people through their own efforts and supported by the universal Church.



As Pope Francis is challenging each of us to live the 'Joy of the Gospel', participants' learning and experience continues long after they have returned home. They return with newfound friends and a broader vision of God's family and their responsibility: to continue the mission of Jesus in the world. The hope is that participants will carry out in their own lives what they learned from the immersion experience.



Catholic Mission is the official mission agency of the Catholic Church in Australia. Our goal 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. Immersion is first and foremost an experience of being with others. Just as God the Father, through Jesus, came to be with us; as Jesus sat at the table of the poor, the outcast and vulnerable.



# INDIGENOUS IMMERSIONS



The Indigenous Immersion programs offer participants a privileged insight into the daily lives of Aboriginal communities in either **Remote, Rural, Outback** or **Urban** environments.

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 classrooms, community engagement, health clinics, micro-financing initiatives, church based services, NGO projects and other activities specific to the location. They will also have an opportunity to explore the region guided by local elders possibly engaging with fishing, hunting, gathering bush tucker and painting with the 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 an understanding of DADIRRI.



## POSSIBLE INDIGENOUS LOCATIONS:

### Western Australia

- Beagle Bay, Kimberley
- Lombadina/Djarindjin, Kimberley
- Kununurra, Eastern Kimberley
- Warmum, Eastern Kimberley
- Balgo, Kimberley
- Warralong, Pilbara

### Northern Territory

- Darwin & surrounds
- Alice Springs, Santa Teresa and Uluru

### Queensland

- Palm Island off Townsville

### New South Wales

- Southern Highlands based out of Tallong
- Lake Mungo on the VIC/NSW border
- **“Outback”** destinations in the Diocese of Wilcannia Forbes





# INTERNATIONAL IMMERSIONS



## INTERNATIONAL LOCATIONS:

- Cambodia
- Fiji
- Mongolia
- Philippines
- Timor-Leste
- Vietnam



Catholic Mission provides an opportunity for participants to immerse themselves in the faith, culture and daily life of communities in Asia and the Pacific Islands. Catholic Mission's existing extensive mission network provides privileged access to the people in parishes and school communities and those working in projects in these developing nations.

Our intent is to travel lightly and with purpose. Our immersion group consists of a relatively small team, comprising 10 - 15 people, to enable us to interact in an appropriate manner with our host communities. A Catholic Mission facilitator will guide the group, manage all interactions with host communities and facilitate daily prayer and reflection. In all cases the needs and sensitivities of the host communities will be recognised as a priority in our planning and interactions on immersion.

The immersion experience will touch your heart, engage your mind and nourish your spirit. We will spend time connecting with the local community, sharing stories and *being with* people. In many

locations we will be welcomed like family and be blessed in appreciating their warm welcome and simple hospitality. Our time will include rich experiences such as sharing cultural traditions and stories. We will have the opportunity to walk in their shoes for a brief time. We will spend time visiting those who care for the sick and disabled through the programs run by our mission partners. Come and experience prayer, community, music and Eucharist like no other!

Meet local missionaries including lay people and religious sisters and brothers, who live and work within the communities. The purpose of the immersion is to develop an understanding and appreciation of the host community culture while learning about ourselves.

Whether it's assisting in the Lavalla Disability Centre in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, practising conversational English with Timorese students in Maliana, visiting a school for the blind in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, or celebrating the Eucharist in a parish in Mongolia, your experience will open your eyes and your heart.



# PILGRIMAGES



## WHY THE CAMINO?

- Slow down and pay attention
- Acknowledge personal strengths & welcome places for growth
- Engage in the art of letting go. Let go, let God!
- See the holy in the ordinary
- A less-is-more existence
- Increase our sense of gratitude for what we have
- The journey is the destination



Catholic Mission offers a Camino – walking the way of St James – in the true spirit of ancient Christian pilgrimage. Its unique beauty and power lies within **the experience of walking** (we will help you prepare!) a pilgrimage to the sacred inner regions of the heart and spirit.

This is a special time to enter into and deepen our understanding and participation in God’s mission along the ancient way to Santiago de Compostela. It is a reflective pilgrimage for those seeking contemplative spaces to nurture mind, heart and spirit.

Our focus is on *the way* we travel, entering into a comfortable personal, contemplative rhythm of daily walking (choose a spring or autumn Camino), appreciating simple hospitality in accommodation and food, with strangers as our fellow travellers. Catholic Mission’s pilgrimage balances walking with times for silence, personal reflection and prayer, in the companionship of a small group led by an experienced, multilingual guide. We offer the first-time walker the

support of fellowship with pilgrims as well as independence.

Groups consist of usually no more than eight people led by an experienced facilitator. The 19-day pilgrimage is offered twice each year—in June and September.

Currently the Camino is the only pilgrimage Catholic Mission is offering, although other options are in the early stages of development and hopefully will be ready to launch in the near future.

*“All walking is a blessing, a prayer – learning the wisdom of one step at a time, and then daring to take another and still another! Gradually discovering that we are walking not alone, but together!”*

*Celtic Meditations, Ed. Farrell*





## THREE

PHASES OF  
IMMERSION

Catholic Mission's immersion experience is a complete three-phase process. Each phase is designed as part of a holistic formation program to meet the many needs of participants, care for the host communities and achieve the outcomes.



PHASE 1

## Preparation

The Phase 1 process prepares the participant for the in-country experience by:

- Examining the history, culture and faith of the people in the host country
- 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 practicalities such as what to pack, and health and hygiene considerations

Preparation is vital as it allows participants the time and space to be more aware of what lies ahead. It also demystifies any inappropriate or unrealistic expectations, fears and stereotypes, while affirming and informing participants of the unique experiences they will encounter.



PHASE 2

## In-Country Experience

In Phase 2 the journey comes to life in-country as we journey together and 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 so that each immersion is a completely personal experience, though enjoyed in a group dynamic. This creates greater awareness of the host communities and the impact of the immersion on each.

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, at all times respecting their circumstances, needs and wishes. Relationships developed between Catholic Mission and these communities endure and are based on mutuality and respect. This is why Phase 1 is so important; to prepare participants to enter into this special relationship and are required at all times to respect it.



PHASE 3

## Debriefing, Action and Follow-up

Most participants only fully appreciate the effect of the immersion upon returning home. Catholic Mission has an established program to assist participants as they debrief, act upon and integrate their experience at every possible level within their own communities.

Participants identify areas of personal growth. They name major learnings and new understandings from a broader perspective of mission and justice. Depending on each individual, they identify concrete actions on many levels, (the personal, communal and even global) that they can undertake to build a world as our Creator God intended, where all may have life, and live life to the full.



# SECURITY, SAFETY AND RISK

The security and safety of all participants in immersions are 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. Immersions will only proceed where risks can be managed to a satisfactory level.

Listed below are key features of our security, safety and risk management:



## INTERNATIONAL SOS

Catholic Mission has engaged corporate risk managers “International SOS” to manage the oversight and support of all international immersions. Their service includes 24/7 alerts and backup support covering all types of unexpected emergencies and advice on medical, security, evacuation, flight and property issues.



## RISK ASSESSMENT

Based on best practice from a number of safety and security agencies, our risk assessment is thoroughly applied throughout each immersion program, taking into consideration the areas of risk specific to each trip. A ‘risk impact and likelihood’ scale is applied to potential scenarios across each stage of the immersion, including at the airport, during in-country transportation, and throughout the destination itinerary.



## CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN

A critical incident is one that involves serious injury, trauma or distress, which requires immediate qualified medical attention. Such incidents include, but are not limited to, severe illness or injuries, violent assault, severe psychological distress, or any life-threatening condition. In the event of such incidents, the facilitator and group leaders have a strict process and plan to follow to ensure the best care possible for the injured person/s and the remaining group.



## TRAVEL INSURANCE

All immersion participants are covered by Catholic Mission’s travel insurance policy. Pilgrimage participants are required to purchase their own travel insurance.



## TRAVEL ADVICE

Participants are advised to read the travel advice for the country they are visiting, which can be found on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website: [www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au). It is important to note that the travel advice is written to cover a wide range of circumstances in various contexts across the whole country from small settlements and remote village communities to larger towns and cities.



## DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

To ensure consular protection and assistance while overseas, Catholic Mission registers every immersion pilgrimage, participant and facilitator with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



# FACILITATORS



*“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**  
Immersions 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 leaving from Australia has undergone necessary working with children and criminal history checks, and is trained in up-to-date first aid and CPR. Wherever possible, facilitators will meet with their group before they travel to their destination.



## FAQS

### **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 7823 or 02 9919 7824 or email [jkerrigan@catholicmission.org.au](mailto: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
- International SOS 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 10-12 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 preparation is required?**

Preparation of participants is essential and will be guided in part by Catholic Mission. Preparation addresses the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the

participant. For more information on immersion preparation, please see the Three Phases of Immersion on page 11.

### **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 12.

### **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.

### **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.





# 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 was deeply moved ... There are some extraordinary projects we were exposed to..."*

**Veronica Rosier OP**  
Immersion facilitator

*"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 (Immersion 2012-2014)

*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 is extremely rewarding being a facilitator ... Catholic Mission has an excellent training program and a world-class product, so I really love taking groups to Timor-Leste."*

**Luke Keighery**  
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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