

# Introduction to Middlebury Alternative Break Trips (MAlt)

## Student-Led Service Trips, 2013-2014

### Frequently Asked Questions

**What is Middlebury Alternative Break (MAlt)?** MAlt is Middlebury's alternative break program. We provide affordable, service-oriented alternatives to traditional February break activities. We offer opportunities for students to help others and to expand their own experiences and perspectives by serving on local, domestic, and international trips. The trips are drug- and alcohol-free and provide a great chance to do a type of community service that is very different from the work that can be done while school is in session.

**Why February break?** MAlt trips run during Feb break because students do not have any schoolwork at this point, and we have free time to prepare for the trips during winter term.

**Where do trips go?** MAlt generally includes at least two domestic and two international trips each year. Past destinations include New York City, San Francisco, New Orleans, Cherokee Nation, Mexico, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic. There are also October and spring break "mini MAlts," which involve three or four days of service here in Vermont.

**Where will I stay?** Depending on the trip, groups typically stay at hostels, hotels, schools, or campgrounds, or participate in home-stays.

**Who is in each group?** Each MAlt trip typically has a total of 10-12 participants, including two well-qualified and trained leaders, all Middlebury students.

**What if I can't afford it?** MAlt trips are heavily subsidized by the MAlt student organization budget and private donors. Fundraising throughout the year also ensures that anyone who needs financial assistance can participate.

**Who serves as the campus advisor for MAlt?** Ashley Calkins, Associate Director, Community Engagement, 118 South Main Street. Contact information: [jcalkins@middlebury.edu](mailto:jcalkins@middlebury.edu), 802-443-3099.

### Key Components of MAlt Trips

**Strong Direct Service:** Trips should provide an opportunity for participants to engage in direct or "hands on" activities that address unmet needs as determined by the host community. Community interaction is highly encouraged during the break.

**Alcohol- and Drug-Free:** Issues of legality, liability, personal safety, and group cohesion are at risk when alcohol and other drugs are consumed on an alternative break; therefore, MAlt trips are alcohol- and drug-free, no exceptions.

**Diversity:** Strong alternative break trips include participants representing the diversity of the Middlebury student body. The application process is name-blind, but age, year, gender, major, and experience are reviewed to create balance within each trip.

**Orientation:** Prior to departure, participants will be oriented to the mission and objectives of MAlt, the trip, and the host agency or organizations with which they will be working. This orientation will occur through regular meetings throughout the fall and winter semesters.

**Education:** Trips will include educational sessions that participants attend prior to and during their alternative break. These sessions will provide participants with a sense of the history of both the region they will be working in and the problems they will be working on during the break.

**Reflection:** During the trip, participants will reflect upon their experience, synthesizing the direct service, education, and community interaction components of the trip. Time will be set aside for this activity to take place both individually and as a group on a daily basis.

**Reorientation:** Upon returning to campus, reorientation activities are held that enable all participants to share their break experiences and translate these experiences into a lifelong commitment to active citizenship.

## **MAlt Policies**

**Accessibility:** MAlt is committed to making alternative break trips available to all students and therefore subsidizes trip costs through SGA Finance Committee Funding, donor gifts, and fundraising. Participants are required to pay the minimum trip fee (\$150 for regional trips, \$250 for domestic trips, \$300 for international trips), which is only approximately **25% of the actual trip cost**. Every participant is expected to participate in the fundraising efforts of the group. In the event that a trip exceeds its fundraising goal, each group will donate the funds to the host organization or donate them to the MAlt general fund for future MAlt scholarships. If a participant has extreme financial need, they can contact Ashley Calkins to set-up a payment plan. *Please note: does not apply to October and March "mini MAlt" trips.*

**Fundraising:** Each trip will be responsible for raising the money needed to fund the trip costs. Fundraisers must be approved by the tri-chairs in accordance with campus policies. Groups may work together on fundraisers, and all groups may do the same fundraiser when appropriate (e.g., brochures to family and friends). Soliciting local businesses is prohibited, and soliciting Middlebury College organizations, offices, and the Commons must be approved by the tri-chairs and Ashley Calkins. *Please note: does not apply to October and March "mini MAlt" trips.*

**Participant Withdrawal:** If a confirmed participant decides not to go on a trip, he/she may receive a refund if they withdraw prior to **November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013**. If a participant withdraws after November 19<sup>th</sup>, they are responsible for paying the full trip cost (up to \$1200), which will be charged to your student account if prompt payment is not received.

**Trip Cancellations:** Trip leaders are responsible for meeting deadlines for budgets and itineraries and for attending leader-training sessions. If these deadlines and obligations are not met, the trip may be canceled. The trip may also be canceled if the cost of the trip cannot be covered by fundraising efforts and participant payments. As the MAlt advisor, Community Engagement may also take steps to cancel a trip if leaders and/or participants do not demonstrate strong commitment to MAlt principles.

**International Trips:** All participants are responsible for holding adequate health coverage for the trip. Confirmed participants will receive information about purchasing health coverage for the duration of trip (approximately \$49).

**Questions? E-mail MAlt tri-chairs Ali Lewis, Charlotte Zelle, or Rod Abhari at [middalt@middlebury.edu](mailto:middalt@middlebury.edu) – or stop by to see Ashley Calkins, [jcalkins@middlebury.edu](mailto:jcalkins@middlebury.edu), in Community Engagement at 118 South Main Street**