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IRS Tax Tips

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Do you plan to donate your time to charity this summer? If you travel for it, you may be able to lower your taxes. Here are some tax tips that you should know about deducting charity-related travel expenses:

- **Qualified Charities.** To deduct your costs, you must volunteer for a qualified charity. Most groups must apply to the IRS to become qualified. Churches and governments are generally qualified, and do not need to apply to the IRS. Ask the group about its status before you donate. You can also use the [Select Check tool](#) on IRS.gov to check a group's status.
- **Out-of-Pocket Expenses.** You may be able to deduct some of your costs including travel. They must be necessary while you are away from home. All costs must be:
  - o Unreimbursed,
  - o Directly connected with the services,
  - o Expenses you had only because of the services you gave, and
  - o Not personal, living or family expenses.
- **Genuine and Substantial Duty.** Your charity work has to be real and substantial throughout the trip. You can't deduct expenses if you only have nominal duties or do not have any duties for significant parts of the trip.
- **Value of Time or Service.** You can't deduct the value of your time or services that you give to charity. This includes income lost while you serve as an unpaid volunteer for a qualified charity.
- **Travel You Can Deduct.** The types of expenses that you may be able to deduct include:
  - o Air, rail and bus transportation,
  - o Car expenses,
  - o Lodging costs,
  - o Cost of meals, and
  - o Taxi or other transportation costs between the airport or station and your hotel.

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- **Travel You Can't Deduct.** Some types of travel do not qualify for a tax deduction. For example, you can't deduct your costs if a significant part of the trip involves recreation or vacation.

For more on these rules, see [Publication 526](#), Charitable Contributions. You can get it on [IRS.gov/forms](#) at any time.

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