



Your Guide to Planning Your Best Ever Church Weekend Away

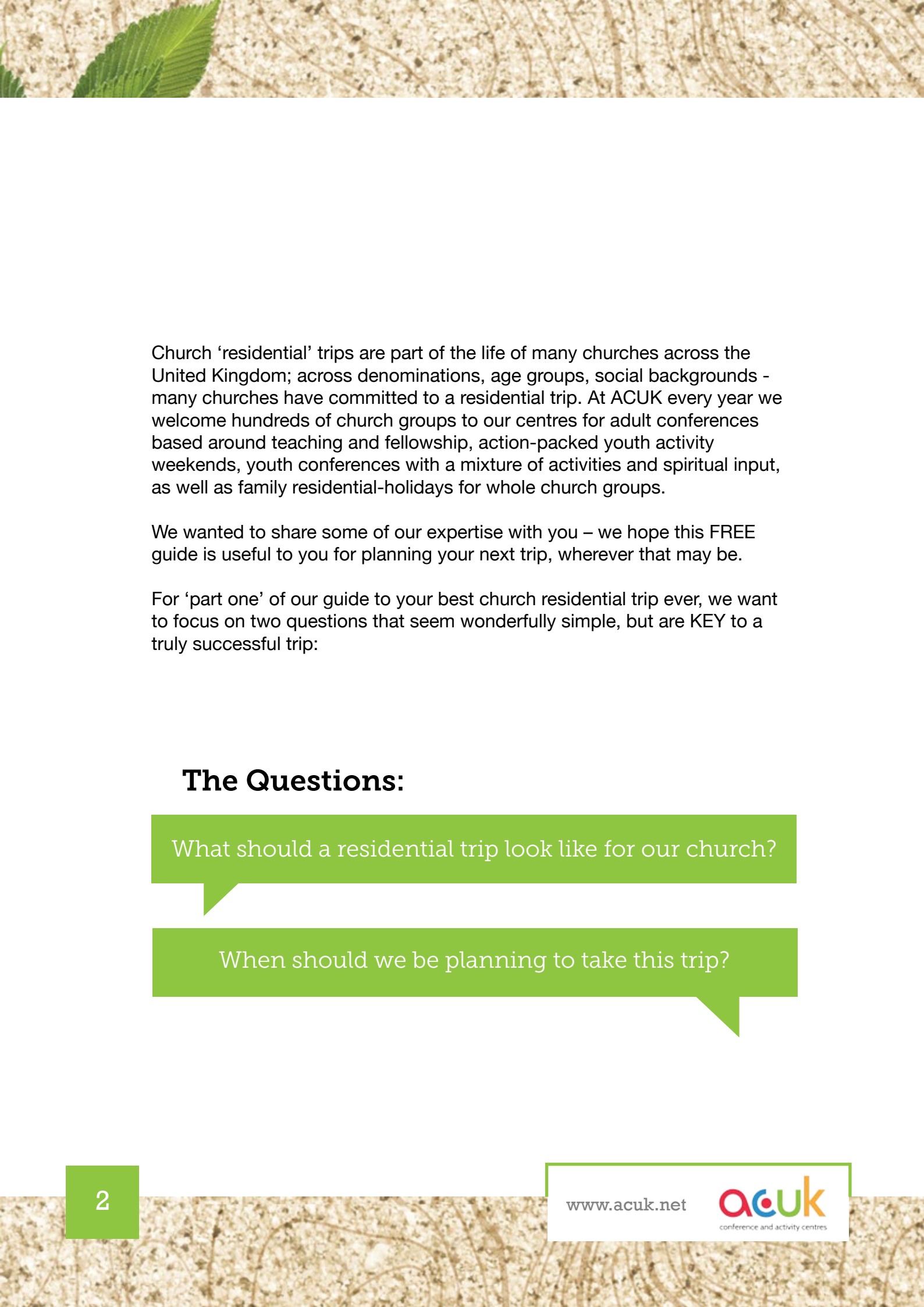
Part 1: What and When?



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Church 'residential' trips are part of the life of many churches across the United Kingdom; across denominations, age groups, social backgrounds - many churches have committed to a residential trip. At ACUK every year we welcome hundreds of church groups to our centres for adult conferences based around teaching and fellowship, action-packed youth activity weekends, youth conferences with a mixture of activities and spiritual input, as well as family residential-holidays for whole church groups.

We wanted to share some of our expertise with you – we hope this FREE guide is useful to you for planning your next trip, wherever that may be.

For 'part one' of our guide to your best church residential trip ever, we want to focus on two questions that seem wonderfully simple, but are KEY to a truly successful trip:

The Questions:

What should a residential trip look like for our church?

When should we be planning to take this trip?

Question One:

What should a residential trip look like for our church?

You may know the answer to this. You may have no idea where to start! But establishing what type of residential trip you should be planning is paramount to it being both a wise investment of time (and potentially finance) and a trip that will have lasting positive impact.

Who is the trip for?

"Everyone is not your customer"

Seth Godin
Best selling author and marketer

The first thing we recommend establishing is this... WHO is the trip for? Is it purely for your youth group? Maybe the whole church? Possibly a men's getaway? Women's retreat?

Consider your church's own congregation in this. If your congregation is mostly adults and the elderly, you may not want to consider an activity weekend. But time away from home in the countryside might be just what's needed! If your church is made up of young families, might we suggest that activities are vital to giving the parents a break if needed... but also for encouraging a growing relationship between parents and their children!

You can relax a little though... we think it's difficult to try and find a trip that's right for everyone... so don't try! Our advice is this - decide upon the main 'target audience' of the trip and aim for them!

We'll leave the decisions on this in your well-capable hands!

There are lots of 'reasons' you may go away with your church group. But in terms of **getting the most out of a trip**, it's important to decide what you want the main **OUTCOME** of the trip to be. Here are a few typical outcomes:

What is it's purpose?

1. To get together as a group of people on mission (team building).
2. To get to know each other better.
3. A spiritual retreat – time to focus on God away from the busy-ness of life.
4. Time to recover and re-invigorate to be ready for the next season.
5. To provide a low cost holiday-space for people in your group.
6. To have a fun time!

Question Two:

When should we be planning to take this trip?

Planning when to host the trip can sometimes be as important as planning what to do! People live increasingly busy lives, and they invest their 'rest' and their 'play' time more shrewdly. Here are a few tips for planning a trip - including a few money saving suggestions!

When suits your target group?

People have all sorts of considerations to make when they decide to opt-in for a residential trip! Some people love to just 'pack-up-and-go', whilst others take a little more planning and convincing.

Here are few things to consider:

If taking a youth group away mid-week, when are the school holidays? Most parents can't get permission from schools to take children out of the classroom, even if they wanted to! However, a short weekend break might work well during term time.

If you're planning on bringing the mums away from your church for a weekend, it may be wise to avoid Mothering Sunday!

Other considerations:

- School exam timetables
- Nationally-recognised dates (Father's Day, Mother's Day, Remembrance Sunday)
- Family holiday plans
- Events taking place in your denomination
- Public holidays and bank holidays
- Religious holidays (e.g. Easter, Christmas)

You don't necessarily need to shy away from these dates! You might find that these are the ideal time to go away!

Finding the right venue is tough - but when you do find it, there's a few things you can do to ensure you get what you want from them!

Tip 1: Book well in advance!

There is nothing worse than finding the perfect venue only to discover there's no availability for when you want it!

Of course, it is ALWAYS worth trying to book late anyway - some venues may even offer last-minute discounts to get you booked in. However, we wouldn't depend on this - especially if booking at a popular time of year. We recommend a minimum of 6 months booking prior to the event, if not 12-18 months!

On a practical note, the more time you give your congregation/group to book up, the more likely it is to succeed!

Tip 2: Be a bit flexible on dates

Often venues who can't fit you in on a certain date will be able to fit you in elsewhere - be ready for this and explore options with them. If you're booking at a popular time of year with a small budget, consider going at different times of the year - often the 'low season' (or cold months in the UK) is much cheaper than the summer - from our research, sometimes you'll be paying three-times as much during the summer! (Booking well in advance will help you have this flexibility too)

Tips for Getting the Best Deal from your trip venue!

Top Tip:

Be flexible on dates and realistic about budget. The winter months can sometimes cost as little as 30% of the summer prices!

Preview the Venue:

We suggest viewing your chosen venue before any deals are made! This lets you really get a feel for the place and how the space will work for



Large Meeting Spaces Available



"I felt that communication was excellent and first rate. We were always aware that nothing was too small to assist with. All instructors were top notch and brilliant!"
Ashbourne Elim



"We are delighted to say that everyone had a great time and enjoyed themselves; the food was amazing... the staff very hospitable and friendly and the accommodation was superb"
Bristol City Church



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