

Interning with CRACYP
for Progreso Verde ("Green Progress")



Sustainable Development Internships in Rural Ecuador
2013



Installing appropriate technology on an organic farm
Photo from the CADO archives



Planting a tree nursery for reforestation
Photo thanks to Junko Tomae



Business planning in rural Ecuador
Photo thanks to volunteer Roz Gordon



Providing running water to a remote rural community
Photo thanks to Carlos Cabrera



Nutrition education program in Jilimbí school
Photo thanks to Corentin Denys



Photographing flora and fauna
Photo thanks to Sarah Clifford

Introduction

CRACYP (which stands for Rural Forestation and Progress Network Corporation, in Spanish) is a non profit organisation facilitating reforestation and sustainable rural development in an agricultural area of extreme poverty. We work with over 200 communities in the subtropical foothills of the Western Andes in Ecuador, and more recently also with a few indigenous communities in the highlands in the north of the country.



Our mission is "Progreso Verde" or "Green Progress" - that is, social and economic development, but in a way which protects the environment. We build environmental awareness and motivate and assist local communities to take practical conservation action. Our sustainable development projects help to increase incomes to the point where people are able to think further ahead than the next meal and can afford to care about the environment.

The 'price' of our help is that they must use a small percentage of the extra income to plant trees - which stabilize and enrich their land and provide them with fruits or other useful products. Each intern also plants a tree seedling as a living reminder to local people of their work here.



CRACYP's "Green Progress" projects are long-term. We train people in techniques for sustainable agriculture and appropriate technology to add value to their crops by processing them locally rather than selling them as raw materials, and provide ongoing support. We advise on and assist with the reforestation process. In this way the communities improve their quality of life and preserve the environment on which they depend. CRACYP is recognised as a leader in sustainable development and Executive Secretary Carlos Cabrera acts as an advisor to the Ecuadorian government.

Read through the website www.progresoverde.org for more information about us and what we do. Our approach is holistic so the projects you will work on involve not only farmers but also other stakeholders and different aspects of development.

Objectives

This Internship Program helps CRACYP implement small development projects, or phases of larger projects, in a rural area of extreme poverty. Without interns and volunteers, these projects might not happen at all, or would take much longer. The program is designed to bring interns with skills, knowledge, education and/or expertise not available locally to gain practical experience by working with local communities experienced in the reality of rural life in a developing country. Together, interns and local people can learn, develop and create workable solutions for "green progress". We also hope to increase cross-cultural understanding by facilitating interaction between rural farming communities in a developing country and interested volunteers from other countries.



Photo by intern Beth Leonhardt

We understand the frustrating chicken-and-egg situation of trying to gain experience in order to get a job in sustainable development in order to gain experience. We have designed this intern program so that students and graduates can gain relevant, useful, practical experience as a stepping stone to starting or extending a career in sustainable development. An internship or volunteer placement with us can also serve as a "try-out" prior to university studies to see if sustainable development really is right for you. Internships in other disciplines, (e.g. engineering, healthcare or education) are also available.

Location

The intern program operates in warm, sub-tropical foothills (known as the "costa") with lush vegetation and abundant wildlife. Download the Costa information pack from www.progresoverde.org/internship.html to learn more about the location, accommodation, culture, climate and intern coordinator. The program location is fairly remote. There are mobile phones in the local communities but few fixed phone lines, and internet access usually requires a bus journey of half an hour or more.



Intern Activities

Intern activities vary according to what is needed, the weather and other local conditions. This is real rural development, warts and all, and it is not always predictable. There may be times when progress is slow or limited by conditions beyond our control, or when the work is repetitive and not particularly interesting. On the other hand, you might be here for an inauguration or celebration of success due to the hard work of previous interns, volunteers and local people. That's the reality of sustainable development in the field.



As well as helping with current activities, each intern also undertakes an individual development project. This might be a stand-alone project, or a small phase of a larger ongoing project. Either way you will have the support of staff, and perhaps volunteers as well. You'll be responsible for the results and write a report of your project, its objectives, challenges and outcome, what you learned and your recommendations for the future. If you have particular skills, e.g. photography, writing business plans, or teaching, we may be able to make use of these. If there are skills you wish to develop further whilst you are here, let us know. We'll agree an outline of your project with you before you arrive, so you can research and prepare before your arrival in order to make your internship most effective for both you and us.



Appropriate technology: extracting essential oils.

At the time of writing, intern activities and projects are likely to include one or more of:

- Developing an ecotourism/community tourism project in the area – this could include developing a financial management system, marketing strategy, training scheme for local guides, or educational & promotional materials, eco-construction, working with local families to develop menus & standards, etc.
- Environmental outreach work with schools and other groups – develop and implement plans for community projects: compost, an organic school/community vegetable plot, tree seedling nurseries, etc.
- Health & safety improvements to organic sugarcane farms, working with farming families to improve hygiene in the distilleries and safety features on the mills. This could include health and safety training (depending on the level of your Spanish) or developing a monitoring system, for example.
- Facilitating compliance with fair trade and organic certifications, which could include training workshops, alternative pest management strategies, reforestation, control of soil erosion & watershed management
- Education – teaching in schools or working with community groups. Depending on your skills, you might run workshops on themes such as environmental education, waste management, health & safety, nutrition, etc.
- Social and public health education and development – e.g. women's rights, dental hygiene, etc.
- Developing productive projects with local families to create additional income sources by adding value to local raw materials
- Training our office staff and local community members, if your computing, business or accounting knowledge is more than theirs and your Spanish skills are up to it
- Developing a marketing strategy for organic products from the area
- Helping in the volunteer vegetable plot to produce some of your own food
- Maintaining and improving volunteer accommodation

To give you an idea of what's possible, previous intern projects have included:

- Engineering student - produced plan and costing to repair a neglected local road, a remote community's route to get produce to market. The plan was used to pressure the local council into implementing it.
- Business studies student - documented business processes for our organic alcohol project, extended that to a general outline of business processes for small rural community enterprises for her thesis
- Environmental governance graduate – produced rural agricultural community ecotourism development plan
- Microfinance graduate – developed plan and figures for a new community bank, now being implemented
- Spanish language students – developed and taught environmental education modules in local schools



Having said all that, situations can change completely due to conditions beyond our control so we need flexible, adaptable interns who will cheerfully make the most of whatever challenges and opportunities arise.

Development Workshops

Interns participate in a monthly development workshop to enhance practical work experience through interaction with local people working in the field. The workshops help interns and local actors benefit from exchange of ideas: you have theoretical university education; they have years of practical experience. Together, both groups augment their understanding of issues, methods, theories, and concepts in development. Combining theory and experience helps create workable solutions to real current challenges.



Development workshops are tailored to participants and the current situation, so each is unique. They usually include an introduction of the theme and vocabulary, a series of presentations or a panel with local practitioners, an interactive discussion between presenters and interns, and a group project. The group (interns and local participants) will take the information and knowledge gained during the day and apply it to a real local problem and design a solution. That solution will be implemented over the following days or weeks, to see how it works in practice and learn from its level of success and local reaction.

One of the workshop presenters will probably be Carlos Cabrera, CRACYP's executive secretary and an expert in sustainable rural development, agricultural commodities and conservation, with over 25 years' experience. Depending on the theme, other presenters could be local community leaders, members of the local Council on Children's Affairs, local government officials, health workers, teachers, or the producer of the local radio station. These are opportunities to interact with people who are essential to the development process but to whom you would rarely have access in a university setting.



Work Schedule

We usually expect interns to work 5 or 6 days a week, depending on the current situation. A working day might involve perhaps 6 to 8 hours of work, but this varies – sometimes you might have to make an early start to avoid the heat or to reach a more distant community. Some working days might be longer, at other times you might unexpectedly have free time due to current local conditions.



On your days off you can choose to stay and rest at the intern house where meals will be provided, or you can travel to see more of Ecuador. These personal excursions will be at your own expense. Depending on the current situation, you may be able to arrange with the coordinator a few free days in a row in the middle of a few weeks internship, subject to the needs of the project, if your internship is at least 8 weeks.

Duration and Costs

Internships are available for 4 to 12 weeks. Start dates are TUESDAYS and we strongly suggest that you start on the first Tuesday of the month in order to benefit from the Orientation Day, which is usually the following day. Interns starting on the first or third Tuesday of the month will be assisted with travel to the project site, on other Tuesdays you may need to make your own way to the site.

Duration in weeks	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2013 Intern Contribution, US\$	\$840	\$1020	\$1165	\$1345	\$1520	\$1645	\$1820	\$1995	\$2160

Once your application has been accepted and we have established that we have a vacancy for your chosen dates, you'll be invited to pay a non-refundable deposit of \$200 to reserve your place - it takes time and money to organize your internship and we may have turned away other potential interns. If your situation changes, please get in touch as soon as possible to see if we can transfer your booking to another date without losing your deposit (subject to availability) or at least offer the place to another intern.

The balance of the Intern Contribution must be paid in advance by bank transfer or in cash on arrival. (Once you've tried to carry out transactions in an Ecuadorian bank, you will understand why, like many organisations in Ecuador, we don't accept credit card payments or cheques). Note: We do not offer a refund if you change your mind about the length of time you wish to spend with us.

What's Included

- Travel from Quevedo to project site if starting on the 1st or 3rd Tuesday of month
- Accommodation and meals (see below)
- Orientation, and ongoing supervision as appropriate
- Training on an ongoing basis as required for each task
- Participation in sustainable development activities
- An individual development project as available at the time
- Completion of forms or reports as required by your university or college
- 1 day Development Workshop each month (usually the 3rd week)
- A tree seedling to plant



Not Included

- Visa (if required from your country)
- Travel to the meeting point in Quevedo, or return transport there (easy on local buses for \$3 or less)
- Local transport costs (usually no more than \$10 per month, for bus fares, hire of horses, etc., rather than walking when there is the chance – this is optional & therefore at your own expense)
- Personal expenses such as snacks, souvenirs, internet use, phone calls and personal excursions
- Medical expenses, or travel, medical and cancellation insurance (you **must** have this)
- Meals on your days off if you are not at the intern house at meal times

Accommodation



See the Costa information sheet for more details about accommodation. It is usually basic, in shared dormitories. At times you may camp out if you are working in a different community for a few days, or stay with a local family if required by CRACYP. Accommodation is usually in a small house with 2 shared bedrooms, indoor bathroom, living room and kitchen.



Camping out for early-morning bird identification, by Corentin Denys

Meals

We provide three meals a day of mostly locally-sourced food, though we do include more vegetables than is normal in Ecuador. The food is mostly vegetarian with occasional meat, so vegetarians should be fine as long as they eat eggs and dairy products. For logistical reasons, we cannot accept vegans. Imported luxuries, snacks, sweets, fizzy drinks, etc. are not included.



Intern Coordinator



Our regional sustainable development coordinator, Nick Ohde will supervise your time with us and facilitate your progress with your intern project. Nick's background and education encompasses communication, agriculture and ecology, so he is well-equipped to help interns make the most of the many development opportunities available. See the Costa information sheet for more details about Nick.

Interns have a formal meeting with Nick each week to report on progress and discuss issues, challenges, learning points and goals for the coming week. You are expected to prepare for these meetings so that Nick can most effectively mentor your progress. Nick can introduce you to relevant people and help you navigate local culture and an unfamiliar way of doing things. He is not a trained language teacher, but can offer help with Spanish vocabulary, grammar, etc. in the context of your project.



Requirements

Interns should have relevant skills or studies for the project they will be working on, will be required to do some preparatory research before arrival, and should approach the internship in a committed and professional manner. This is not the kind of internship where you just fetch coffee for the boss – you will be taking responsibility for your project and achieving meaningful results. The minimum age is 18.



We need enthusiastic, patient, resourceful and adaptable interns who will cheerfully cope with the unpredictability of working in sustainable development in a developing country and have a go at whatever tasks are required. Whilst we hope to include occasional visits to other projects or local events, the focus is on the work and this is not a holiday camp. Interns must be reasonably fit and healthy. There is little public transport in the area so you will often need to walk from one location to another. The work may also involve manual labour at times.



If you have any kind of medical condition, physical impairment or other special needs, you **must** let us know when you apply so that we can establish whether or not we have the facilities to accommodate you in these remote areas with very little infrastructure. But do apply anyway, we will accommodate you if we can. Be aware that we have a cat in the house.

Namibia, our pest control officer

Spanish Language

Ideally you need to speak at least basic Spanish – this is a great opportunity to practise and improve your Spanish. Total fluency is not necessary for most internships but you must be willing to make an effort. The level of Spanish needed depends on how much “people contact” your particular intern project requires. If you are serious about working in development in Central or South America, you will need to learn Spanish anyway.



The coordinator speaks Spanish and English and will be able to help you communicate, but does not have time to translate every word for every intern. You will get much more out of the experience if you can communicate with local people, especially in the development workshops, where guest speakers will present in Spanish. If you do not yet speak any Spanish, you need to include in your application details of how you plan to learn before your arrival.

Insurance

You **MUST** have travel insurance to cover cancellation and medical costs. We cannot accept you as an intern without it. We cannot accept any liability for you, it is your responsibility to buy suitable insurance covering any eventualities.

Visa

You can intern with us on a normal tourist visa (you don't need a special volunteer visa or working visa, because you are not paid). As far as we know, tourists from most countries now automatically receive a free 90 day tourist visa upon entry once in each 12 month period, though you should check with your local Ecuadorian consulate before booking your flight. This visa does not seem to be extendable in Ecuador or neighbouring countries the way it used to be, so if you want to spend more time in Ecuador you will need to talk with the consulate in your home country well before you leave.

Ecuador

More Ecuador information, including details about currency, climate, volunteering, travel and visas at www.ecuadortravelsite.org.



FAQs

Why should I have to pay to intern?

We very much appreciate the hard work and enthusiasm of our interns. However, we don't have the funds to subsidise you, so we need your Intern Contributions to cover the costs involved.

Intern Contributions allow us to provide paid work for local people, in a poor rural area where there are virtually no salaried jobs available. The Contributions are needed for the cost of some of the materials used on the projects, as well as administration, supervision, the development workshops, time spent filling in reports for your educational establishment, and of course your food and accommodation. All the money stays in Ecuador; you are not paying for fancy advertising or international agencies.

Even if we had funds available to subsidise interns (which we don't), it would be far more sustainable to use them to provide a salary for a local person, who would stay in the area and use their developing skills and experience as part of the program. Interns gain valuable experience and learn useful skills on the program, but then leave to take those skills & experience elsewhere and profit from them in their future careers.



Depending how long you stay, the costs involved are between about \$25 to \$30 a day. This would be good value just for accommodation and food, but also includes the valuable practical experience that you need for your degree and your future career. Plus the satisfaction of knowing you've made a difference in an area of extreme poverty. You get the chance to see a little-visited part of Ecuador, experience a very different way of life and gain a real understanding of what it's like to work with local people in sustainable rural development in a developing country. It's probably cheaper than staying at home, and much more rewarding.

Do I have to have studied sustainable development to intern?

Not necessarily. Although this program is a great way to gain experience with a respected organisation for a career in sustainable rural development, you do not need to be a graduate in development. This is an ideal opportunity to see whether sustainable development is the career for you before you start your degree, or to gain some practical experience, if you are studying or planning to study sustainable development, organic agriculture, rural development, ecotourism, community development or similar subjects. Also, we occasionally have opportunities for biologists, engineers, healthcare professionals and more – get in touch!

If you have no career aims in this field but just want to practise your Spanish language skills whilst doing something worthwhile with your holidays, our volunteer program has less of an academic focus and may be more suitable. It operates in the same locations, but you don't run your own project, write reports or participate in the development workshops. Also you can volunteer for fewer than four weeks. Email volunteer@progresoverde.org to request an information pack.



When is the best time to intern?



Our work continues most of the year and there is always something to do. The weather can cause travel delays at times, but there is always some indoor or sheltered work to do such as project planning, training, teaching or implementing indoor projects. University holidays can book up quite early, so do apply as soon as possible. The project is closed from mid December to late January, to avoid the worst of the rainy season and allow for staff vacations.

Grinding chocolate beans in the intern house



For how long should I intern?

The minimum is four weeks, maximum 12 weeks. If you want to be here for fewer than 4 weeks, ask us for the Volunteer Information Pack – volunteer opportunities are available for 1 to 8 weeks.

Photo: Chestnut-Mandibled Toucan, by Corentin Denys

What is the difference between the Internship Program and the Volunteer Program?

Internship	Volunteer
4 to 12 weeks	1 to 8 weeks
Relevant studies or skills needed (past, present or accepted on future course)	No qualifications or studies needed
We will complete any forms or reports about you required for your course	Standard letter of reference available if you volunteer for 2 weeks or more. Individual reports or forms for educational establishments NOT available.
Monthly One-Day Development Workshop	-
Intern responsible for individual development project. Project report required detailing outcome, learning points & recommendations.	Volunteers may assist interns, but no report is required.
At least basic Spanish, or details of learning plan required.	Spanish language skills not compulsory (though recommended)
-	1 week = \$210
-	2 weeks = \$415
-	3 weeks = \$610
4 weeks = \$840	4 weeks = \$730
5 weeks = \$1020	5 weeks = \$915
6 weeks = \$1165	6 weeks = \$1065
7 weeks = \$1345	7 weeks = \$1240
8 weeks = \$1520	8 weeks = \$1410
9 weeks = \$1645	-
10 weeks = \$1820	-
11 weeks = \$1995	-
12 weeks = \$2160	-

What if I don't speak any Spanish at all?

The level of Spanish needed depends on your project and the other skills you have to offer. If you don't yet speak Spanish, you will need to study before arrival, and must be willing to continue studying Spanish, practicing and talking with people every day throughout your internship. If you intend to work in development in Latin America, you will need to learn Spanish anyway. Quito is one of the best places to learn Spanish, the locals speak relatively slowly and clearly, and Spanish classes are widely available and inexpensive. We can help you arrange Spanish lessons in Quito at your own expense before you start your internship.

How do I apply?

To apply for an internship, send your detailed CV including a photo of yourself and a cover letter explaining why you want to intern, highlighting the relevant skills you can bring to our communities and what you expect to gain from the experience. Note any special requirements from your university or college about what your internship must cover. Make sure you tell us the level of your Spanish language skills, and your learning plan (if necessary). If you are applying for a specific project (as advertised), let us know which one. If you are not applying for a specific project, tell us your areas of interest and any project ideas you have or fields which interest you and we will suggest a suitable project for you. Email your application to the address from which you received this document or to intern@progresoverde.org. Let us know when you want to intern and for how long. Note that start dates are Tuesdays. People here are waiting to welcome you.



A warm welcome awaits you in the rural communities of Ecuador.

Photos thanks Sarah Clifford, Nick Ohde, Margot Conover, to Paul Bamford, Corentin Denys, Tanya Conover, Cary Kelly and other volunteers who have contributed to our photo archives