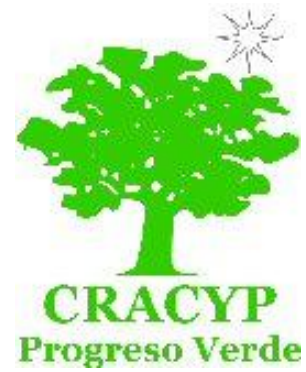


Volunteering with CRACYP for Progreso Verde ("Green Progress")

Volunteer Placements in Rural Development in Ecuador 2010



Helping with a community construction project
Photo thanks to Global Routes volunteers



Volunteer Paul Bamford using his photography skills
Photo thanks to Sarah Clifford



Tree seedlings ready to be planted
Photo thanks to volunteer Roz Gordon



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



This rural area is poor but picturesque
Photo thanks to Sarah Clifford



Collecting eco-construction materials
Photo thanks to Global Routes volunteers



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 including over 200 communities in the foothills of the Western Andes in Ecuador.

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.

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 their future depends.

Read through the website www.progresoverde.org for more information about us and what we do. You will be volunteering mostly in the communities where CADO, the sugarcane alcohol project, operates. Our approach is holistic so the projects you will work on involve not only the sugarcane farmers but also other stakeholders and different aspects of development.

Objectives

This Volunteer Program helps CRACYP implement small development projects, or phases of larger projects, in a rural area of extreme poverty. Without volunteers, these projects might not happen at all, or would take much longer. We also hope to increase understanding by facilitating interaction between rural farming communities in a developing country and interested volunteers from other countries.

Volunteering with us is a chance to make a difference, to practise your Spanish, to experience a different way of life, to learn new skills and to help people and the environment in an area of extreme poverty. A volunteer placement with CRACYP can serve as a "try-out" prior to university studies to see whether sustainable development, ecotourism or organic agriculture might be the right career for you. For those already studying a relevant subject, we also offer internships in sustainable development.

Location

You will be based in the picturesque little village of Jilimbí in Bolivar Province, close to the border with Cotopaxi Province. The nearest town you might find on a map is Moraspungo, about an hour's journey up into the mountains from the main road between Quevedo and Ventanas. You may work in Jilimbí itself or in any of several nearby villages or member communities of the CADO sugar cane project. The climate in Jilimbí is usually comfortably warm to hot in the dry season, slightly cooler in the wet season. At times you may be working or camping in communities at higher altitudes where it is cooler and can be quite chilly at night, so you should be prepared for all eventualities. There are a few remaining fragments of native forest in the area and the sugarcane farmers, who need running water to distill their alcohol, are conscious of the need to conserve and extend the forested areas and water sources.

The programme location is fairly remote and you will not be easily contactable, other than in cases of emergency. There are mobile phones in the local communities but few fixed phone lines, other than in Moraspungo. There is (slow) internet access available in Moraspungo, which is reached by a 45 minute walk followed by a short bus ride. There is a bus from Jilimbí to Moraspungo on Saturdays (market day).

Volunteer Activities

Volunteer 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 volunteers and local people. That's the reality of sustainable development in the field.

You might help one or more of our interns on their development projects as well as participating in CRACYP's current activities. If you have particular skills or experience, for example in photography, writing business plans, or teaching, we may be able to make use of these, especially if you are here for several weeks. If there are skills you wish to develop further whilst you are here, let us know.

At the time of writing, volunteer activities are likely to include:

- Health and safety improvements to organic sugarcane farms, working with the farming families to improve hygiene in the distilleries and safety features on the mills. This could include painting, laying concrete flooring or constructing basic wooden shuttering in addition to training people about health and safety (depending on the level of your Spanish skills)
- Education – teaching or helping as a teacher's assistant in local primary schools. You might be teaching English, sports, art, environmental education or computing. Depending on your skills, experience and interests, you could perhaps run after-school workshops on themes such as drama, football, music or other topics
- Environmental outreach work with schools and other groups – organising or helping with activities such as making compost, planting an organic vegetable plot, planting and watering tree seedlings
- Helping to develop an ecotourism project in the area – this could include researching excursions, clearing trails, surveying the local area to inventory wildlife, developing educational and promotional materials, working with local families to develop menus and standards
- Excavating a "cava" for maturing organic rum
- Developing productive projects with local families to create additional income sources by adding value to local raw materials
- Helping in the volunteer vegetable plot to produce some of your own food
- Training our office staff, if your computing, business or accounting knowledge is more than theirs and your Spanish skills are up to it



Unloading construction materials



Attending a community meeting

Photos thanks to volunteer Roz Gordon

Having said all that, it could change completely and we need flexible, adaptable volunteers who will make the most of whatever challenges and opportunities arise.

We usually expect volunteers to work 5 or 6 days a week, depending on the current situation. A working day might involve perhaps 6 or 7 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 local conditions at the time.

On your days off you can choose to stay and rest at the volunteer 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 volunteer coordinator a few free days in a row in the middle of a few weeks volunteering, subject to the needs of the project.

Duration and Costs

Start dates are THURSDAYS. Volunteers starting on the first or third Thursday of the month will be accompanied to the project site, on other Thursdays you may need to make your own way to the site. We prefer volunteers to stay for 2 - 6 weeks, and usually accept volunteers for a maximum of 8 weeks.

Once your application has been accepted and we have established that we have a vacancy for your chosen dates, you will be invited to pay a deposit of \$60 in order to reserve your place. The deposit is non-refundable – it takes time and money to organize your volunteer placement and we may have turned away other potential volunteers. If your situation changes and you are no longer able to volunteer, 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 volunteer.

Duration	Volunteer Contribution in US\$
1 week	\$190
2 weeks	\$360
3 weeks	\$540
4 weeks	\$600
5 weeks	\$750
6 weeks	\$900
7 weeks	\$1050
8 weeks	\$1200

The balance of the Volunteer Contribution must be paid 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 only accept cash).

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

- Accommodation and meals (see below)
- Supervision as appropriate
- Training on an ongoing basis as required for each task
- Participation in sustainable development activities as available at the time
- Letter of reference (on request) if staying four weeks or more
- Accompanied travel from Quito to the project site if starting on the 1st or 3rd Thursday of the month
- A tree seedling to plant as a living reminder to local people of the work you do here

Not Included

- Passport / Visa (if required from your country)
- Return transportation to Quito
- Local transport costs (usually no more than US\$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)
- Travel and cancellation insurance (all volunteers **must** have both)
- Medical expenses
- Personal expenses such as snacks, souvenirs, internet use, phone calls and personal excursions
- Meals on your days off if you are not at the volunteer house at meal times

Accommodation

Accommodation is usually in a shared house beside the village square. The house is basic but has everything we need, with two dormitories, a living room, kitchen facilities and an indoor toilet and (cold) shower. (The weather is warm, so a cold shower is no hardship). At times you may camp out if you are working in a different community for a few days. Sometimes volunteers might stay with a local family.



The Volunteer & Intern House



The swimming hole is just a short walk away

Photos thanks to Sarah Clifford

Meals

We provide three meals a day of local-style food, though we do try to 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 cater for a completely vegan diet. Imported luxuries, snacks, sweets, fizzy drinks, etc. are not included.

Requirements

Volunteers 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 will also involve manual labour at times. We need enthusiastic, patient, resourceful and adaptable volunteers 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 the occasional visit to other projects or local attractions, the focus is on the volunteer work and this is not a holiday camp. The minimum age is 18.

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 this remote area with very little infrastructure. But do apply anyway – we will accommodate you if we can.

Ideally you need to speak a little Spanish – this is a great opportunity to practise and improve your Spanish. Total fluency is not necessary. If you do not speak any Spanish at all we may still be able to accept you on the programme provided that we have bookings from other volunteers who are willing and able to translate for you – ask us when you apply.



Meeting local families
Photo thanks to Global Routes volunteers



The route to Jilimbi
Photo thanks to Sarah Clifford

Insurance

You **MUST** have travel insurance covering cancellation and medical costs. We cannot accept you as a volunteer without this. We cannot accept any liability for you, it is your responsibility to purchase suitable insurance covering any eventualities.

Visa

You can help us as a volunteer 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, all tourists now automatically receive a free 90 day tourist visa upon entry once in every 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

Ecuador is a fascinating country. Find out more including practical details about currency, travel and visas at www.ecuadortravelsite.org

FAQs

Why should I have to pay to volunteer?

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

Volunteer Contributions allow us to provide 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 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 volunteers (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 project. Volunteers gain valuable experience and learn useful skills on the project, 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 approximately \$21 and \$27 a day. This would be good value just for accommodation and food, but also includes 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 in sustainable rural development in a developing country. It's probably cheaper than staying at home, and much more rewarding.



Repairing an alcohol distillation tank with banana pulp



Unloading sugar cane ready for milling

Photos thanks to Sarah Clifford

Do I have to have studied sustainable development to volunteer?

No. Although this project 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 this field. This is an ideal opportunity to see whether sustainable development is the career for you, or to gain some practical experience, but is equally suitable for those who want to practise their Spanish language skills whilst doing something worthwhile with their holidays. If you are studying sustainable development, ecotourism, organic agriculture or similar subjects, email intern@progresoverde.org to ask about our internship program.

Do I need to bring a tent?

We have some tents available for volunteers to share. If you want a tent to yourself you will need to bring your own. You definitely need a sleeping bag and camping mat.

For how long should I volunteer?

The minimum is one week, maximum 8 weeks. If volunteering with us is a holiday, rather than career-related, most people enjoy 2 - 5 weeks. If you are volunteering in order to gain experience for a career in sustainable rural development, we suggest you consider our internship program which is available from 4 to 12 weeks.

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

Volunteer	Internship
1 to 8 weeks	4 to 12 weeks
No qualifications or studies needed	Relevant studies needed (past, present or accepted on future course)
Standard letter of reference available if you volunteer for 4 weeks or more. Individual reports or forms for educational establishments NOT available.	We will complete any forms or reports about you required for your course
-	Monthly One-Day Development Workshop
Volunteers may assist interns, but do not need to run their own project or write project reports.	Intern responsible for mini development project. Project report required detailing outcome, learning points & recommendations.
Spanish language skills not compulsory (though recommended)	At least basic Spanish required, or an intensive course in Quito prior to internship
1 week = \$190	-
2 weeks = \$360	-
3 weeks = \$540	-
4 weeks = \$600	4 weeks = \$720
5 weeks = \$750	5 weeks = \$870
6 weeks = \$900	6 weeks = \$1020
7 weeks = \$1050	7 weeks = \$1170
8 weeks = \$1200	8 weeks = \$1320
-	9 weeks = \$1460
-	10 weeks = \$1600
-	11 weeks = \$1740
-	12 weeks = \$1880



Community event in Jilimbí
Photo thanks to Sarah Clifford

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

If you are traveling with a friend who does speak Spanish, or we have other volunteers who speak some Spanish and are willing to help translate, you are welcome to participate in the project. We try to include some basic Spanish lessons when we can. Obviously your experience will be different to those who understand more, but we don't expect any of our volunteers to be fluent so you will all be learning and improving at different levels. Quito is one of the best places to learn Spanish, the locals speak relatively slowly and clearly and Spanish classes are widely available. We can help you arrange Spanish lessons at your own expense in Quito before you start volunteering with us or locally during your volunteer placement if you wish.

When is the best time to volunteer?

Our work continues all year round and there is always something to do. The dry season in this area is usually from around June to December, although this varies from year to year. The wet season, from around January to late May, can cause travel delays at times, but there is always some indoor or sheltered

work to do such as teaching, office work or maintenance. University holidays (June to September for Europe, December to February for Australia) can book up quite early, so do apply as soon as possible.

How do I apply?

To apply for a volunteer placement with us, send your c.v. and a brief explanation of why you want to volunteer, why you think you would be a good volunteer and what you expect to gain from the experience. Make sure you tell us the level of your Spanish language skills. Email this to the address from which you received this document or to volunteer@progresoverde.org. Let us know when you want to volunteer and for how long. Note that start dates are Thursdays.

People here are waiting to welcome you.



A warm welcome awaits you in the rural communities of Ecuador
Photo thanks to volunteer Paul Bamford