

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



Volunteer Placements in Rural Development in Ecuador 2013



Nutrition education program in Jilimbi school
Photo thanks to Corentin Denys



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



Collecting eco-construction materials
Photo thanks to Global Routes volunteers



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



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



Planting a tree nursery for reforestation
Photo thanks to Junko Tomae



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 volunteer also plants a tree seedling as a living reminder to local people of their work here – in this photo by Nick Ohde, volunteer Cary Kelly is seen planting an avocado seedling.



Checking the quality of organic alcohol

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. 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. You could be volunteering in any of various communities in central Ecuador, including those 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 cross-cultural understanding by facilitating interaction between rural farming communities in a developing country and interested volunteers from other countries.



Unloading construction materials. Photo: Roz Gordon



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. We will try find ways for you to apply any skills and experience you have to help local communities. 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.

Volunteer Estefania Gamarra, researching ecotourism sites

Location

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



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.



Science education program with local children



Volunteer Tanya Conover washing organic sugar cane.

You might help one or more of our interns on their sustainable rural development projects as well as participating in CRACYP's current activities. If you have particular skills or experience, for example in photography, teaching, horticulture, healthcare or carpentry, 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.



Photo by volunteer Corentin Denys

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

- 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
- 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 on reforestation projects or organising recycling and waste management.
- 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, nutrition 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
- Excavating a "cava" for maturing organic rum
- Helping in the volunteer vegetable plot to grow some of your own food
- 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
- Working to develop and encourage organic agriculture, and installing irrigation systems to produce more crops from the same area of land, thus avoiding the need for more deforestation



Photo by volunteer Tanya Conover



Nutrition education program at Jilimbi school, Photo: Corentin Denys



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



Work Schedule

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 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. Taking a flexible approach will help you to enjoy your time here and make the most of unexpected opportunities.



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, if you are volunteering for at least 6 weeks. At least one volunteer needs to go with the volunteer coordinator to the local market each week to bring back supplies for the house.

Volunteer Coordinator

Our sustainable development coordinator, Nick Ohde, will supervise your time with us and facilitate your progress. See the Costa information pack for more details about him. 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 volunteer work.



Duration	2012 Volunteer Contribution US\$
1 week	\$210
2 weeks	\$415
3 weeks	\$610
4 weeks	\$730
5 weeks	\$915
6 weeks	\$1065
7 weeks	\$1240
8 weeks	\$1410

Duration and Costs

Start dates are TUESDAYS. Volunteers starting on the first or third Tuesday of the month will be assisted with travel from Quevedo to the project site, on other Tuesdays 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. Email us for more information about opportunities for groups.

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 volunteer placement and we may have turned away other potential volunteers. 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 volunteer.



Surveying forest for wildlife inventory



The balance of the Volunteer 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).

Picking oranges.

Note: We do not offer a refund if you change your mind about the length of time you wish to spend with us.



Children's book club. Photo: Tanya Conover

What's Included

- Travel from Quevedo to the project site if starting on the 1st or 3rd Tuesday of the month
- Accommodation in a pretty rural village in Ecuador
- Three locally sourced, healthy meals per day (see below)
- Orientation Day and introduction to local community as appropriate
- Ongoing supervision as appropriate by native English-speaker
- Training on an ongoing basis as required for each task
- Participation in sustainable development activities in local farming communities and village schools, as available at the time of your volunteer placement and depending on local conditions
- Letter of reference (on request) if staying 2 weeks or more
- A tree seedling to plant as a living reminder of your volunteer work



Not Included

- Visa (if required from your country)
- Travel to the meeting point in Quevedo, or return transport there (easy on local buses, only \$2.50)
- 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 insurance covering medical costs and cancellation (you **must** have this)
- Meals on your days off if you are not at the volunteer house at meal times

Accommodation



See the Costa information pack (available to download in PDF from www.progresoverde.org/volunteer_ecuador.html) for more details about accommodation and the local area. Accommodation is usually in a small house with 2 shared bedrooms. At times you may camp out if you are working in a different community for a few days. Volunteers may occasionally stay with a local family if required by CRACYP.



The location is beautiful with striking biodiversity and spectacular landscapes, where we are piloting ecotourism / community tourism projects. You may get to try out excursions and activities, test new hiking routes, search for the best birdwatching spots, review traditional cooking, photograph wildlife and scenery or evaluate accommodation in the new cabañas.

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

Meals



We provide three meals a day of locally sourced food, but with 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. We try to support small producers by shopping for fresh fruits and vegetables in the local markets. We grow some of our own vegetables in our organic vegetable plot and you will help to weed and harvest these.

Photo by volunteer photographer Corentin Denys

Supporting good nutrition education in the area is a high priority for us, so we try to set a good example by eating healthily at the volunteer house. Everyone living in the house pitches in to fix healthy meals and clean up afterwards. Our food is usually simple but tasty, and we have easy access to tropical fruits and other ingredients that are great luxuries in other parts of the world.



Breakfast: quail eggs, tree cucumber, passion fruit smoothies & toast, by Tanya Conover

Requirements



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. 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. Whilst we hope to include the occasional visit to other projects or local events, the focus is on the volunteer work and this is not a holiday camp. The minimum age is 18.

Photo by Tanya Conover

It will be helpful if you can speak a little Spanish – this is a great opportunity to practise and improve. Fluency is not necessary, but a cheerful willingness to try goes a long way. If you do not speak any Spanish at all, we may still be able to accept you on the program, although obviously this may limit the range of tasks you can help with and your communication with local people. Our coordinator speaks English so you will be able to communicate with him.



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. Be aware that we have a cat in the volunteer house.

Namibia, our pest control officer



Unloading sugar cane ready for milling

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



Volunteer Corentin Denys planting a tree

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, tourists from most countries 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. Remember you will need to arrive in Ecuador at least the day before you start your volunteer placement, in order to meet us on the Tuesday.

Ecuador

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



Community event in Jilimbi. Photo: Sarah Clifford

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.



Photo: Chestnut-Mandibled Toucan, by Corentin Denys

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, supervision 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 speaks the language and 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.



Grinding chocolate beans in the volunteer house

Depending how long you stay, the costs involved are between approximately \$25 and \$30 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.

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 don't 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.



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. If you are looking for group volunteer opportunities, get in touch with us for more details.

Photo: Maya Cross

When is the best time to volunteer?

Our work continues almost all year round 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 teaching, office work or maintenance. 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 allow for staff vacations and avoid the worst of the rainy season.



Helping at a literacy club for village children

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

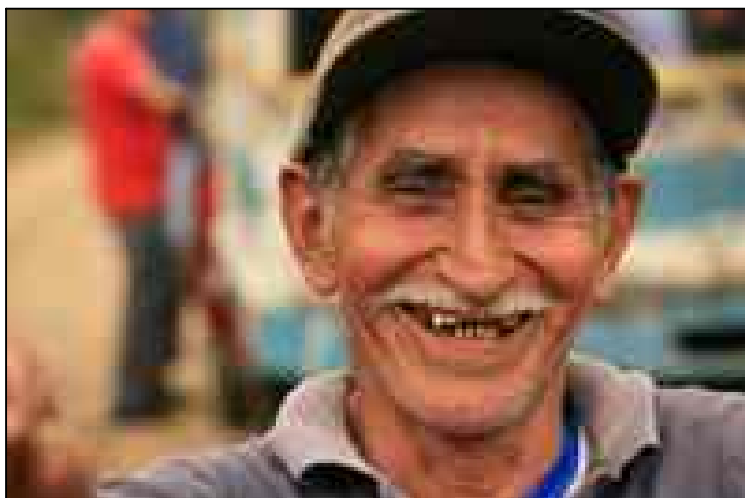
Volunteer	Internship
1 to 8 weeks	4 to 12 weeks
No qualifications or studies needed	Relevant studies needed (past, present or accepted on future course)
Standard letter of reference available if you volunteer for 2 weeks or more. Individual reports or forms for educational establishments NOT available.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

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

You can still volunteer with us if you don't speak Spanish. Our Volunteer Coordinator speaks English and Spanish. 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 if you wish.

How do I apply?

To apply for a volunteer placement with us, send your CV including a photo of yourself 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, and any other skills or experience you think you could use here. 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 Tuesdays. People here are waiting to welcome you.



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