

Introduction

CRACYP (which stands for Rural Forestation and Progress Network Corporation, in Spanish) is a non-profit organisation facilitating reforestation, conservation and sustainable rural development in sensitive ecosystems, including the island of San Cristóbal in the Galapagos archipelago, a province of 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. 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 eradication of invasive species and the reforestation process. In this way the communities improve their quality of life and preserve the environment on which their future depends.

The delicate and unique ecosystem of the Galapagos Archipelago is under threat from several invasive plant species. Among the most aggressive are mora (black raspberry) and guayaba (guava), which thrive in the islands' soil and climate and are propagated widely by native bird species that eat the fruit. There are several existing projects working on eradicating the species from the islands, but most of these operate only in the Galapagos National Park, which makes up 97% of the islands' land mass. Additionally, the National Park's projects involve spraying herbicides, further endangering the fragile ecosystem.



Mora, an invasive introduced species



Section of cut guava tree

CRACYP's program of invasive species eradication focuses on their removal through organic, environmentally friendly processes on private land. After removal, parts of the invasive plant will be used, providing raw materials for handicrafts, food products, and cosmetics. The farmers participating in the project will receive technology and training for organic cultivation of alternative crops (they must plant something once the land is cleared, or the mora and guayaba will just return). They will also devote part of the reclaimed land to reforestation with native species.

Alternative crops can include sugarcane, a non-aggressive species, and processing it into organic alcohol, which can be used as an eco-friendly fuel. In time, we hope to convert all project equipment to use alcohol as fuel. Until we can produce our own fuel, we will use certified organic fair trade alcohol from another CRACYP project.

Other crop options might include organic pasture for dairy cattle, organic vegetables for local consumption, or organic fruit orchards. CRACYP's support to the farmers will include help with marketing. By ensuring the farmers have an environmentally-friendly, sustainable means to make a living, we hope to boost the local economy and so reduce dependence on less suitable activities, such as illegal fishing.

The 'price' of our help to farmers in the Galapagos to eradicate aggressive exotic species on their own lands is that they must also plant, between their crops, buffer zones of native plants to provide habitats for native animal and bird species, many of which are threatened or endangered.



CRACYP is recognized as a leader in sustainable development and conservation, and Executive Secretary Carlos Cabrera (who developed this project) acts as an advisor to the Ecuadorian government. Read through the website www.progresoverde.org for more information about us and what we do.

Project Location



The project is based on the island of San Cristobal, one of the oldest islands in the Galapagos archipelago, and the furthest east. It is also known as Chatham Island. The Galapagos Islands are volcanic in origin and lie almost 1000km off the western coast of continental Ecuador, on and around the Equator. The islands were formed by volcanic activity over a "hotspot" but as the plates beneath them move, the islands drift off the hotspot and gradually become eroded. The older islands are more eroded and have more developed ecosystems.

Volunteers will be based on a beautiful farm called Finca Guadalupe on hills overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The finca is located in south central San Cristóbal Island, about 20km from the town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno, the capital of the Province of Galapagos. You may work on the finca (farm) itself, or on other participating fincas around the island. Only 3% of the land in the Galapagos is privately owned, so you will always be close to Galapagos National Park.



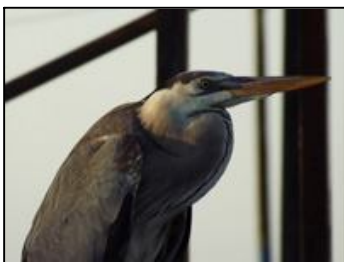
Waterfall in the highlands of Finca Guadalupe

The Galapagos Islands



The Galapagos Islands are a popular tourist destination, and for good reason. The animals here really are not afraid of humans and it is a wonderful experience for photographers, birdwatchers and anyone with an interest in wildlife. Add in the dramatic scenery, and interesting human history, including Charles Darwin's visit and the role the islands played in helping him develop his theory of evolution, and the islands are a fascinating place to spend time.

The island of San Cristóbal has some beautiful beaches, where you can sunbathe with sealions, snorkel with turtles or dive with rays. There is an Interpretation Centre where you can learn more about the human history of the Galapagos Islands, and trails to walk where you are pretty much guaranteed to see some of the amazing wildlife here, for example marine iguanas, pelicans and the famous blue-footed boobies.



The pretty, sleepy little harbour town of Puerto Baquerizo Moreno is the capital of the Galapagos Islands Province. The town has restaurants and bars, internet cafes, laundries and souvenir shops and is a pleasant place to wander. There are dive agencies, tour operators and a tourist information office here too.

You'll probably have to step around sealions on your walks along the seafront or around the harbour, and as you photograph the colourful sally lightfoot crabs or the soaring frigatebirds, the herons and pelicans may be watching you...

There is the "galapaguera" or giant tortoise breeding centre and sanctuary to visit, where you can see the work being done to protect the Galapagos Islands' most famous species. (Galapagos is the Spanish word for these huge tortoises).



After a hike up to the freshwater crater lake, El Junco, surrounded by native Miconia vegetation, you can watch the frigate birds swooping over the water. There are beautiful views over the Pacific Ocean to enjoy from up here. Off the coast of San Cristóbal, you can see Kicker Rock, (also known as Leon Dormido, or sleeping lion), home to many seabirds. It's one of various popular dive sites around the island which you could visit on your days off.

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.

At the time of writing, volunteer activities may include:

- Participation in the identification, harvest and removal of invasive mora and guayaba plants and sorting them for processing into cosmetics, handicrafts, gourmet foods and liqueurs
- Reforestation by planting native trees and shrubs in buffer zones between small plots of crops to provide living and traveling space for native fauna
- Planting organic crops such as sugarcane or pasture, to prevent the return of the invasive species
- Installation of environmentally-friendly, donkey-powered trapiches (sugarcane mills) and distillation systems so the farmers can process their sugarcane into organic alcohol to use as environmentally-friendly fuel.
- 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)
- Developing productive projects with local families to create additional income sources by adding value to local raw materials
- Helping in the volunteers' organic vegetable plot to produce some of your own food, collecting eggs from the hens, or milking the cows and helping to make cheese
- Promoting the project, encouraging tourists to take transport using organic alcohol as fuel, for example explaining the concept to arriving passengers.
- Fair Trade – depending on your area of expertise, this could include: develop marketing strategies for CRACYP products; evaluate compliance with fair trade/organic regulations and recommend improvements; design & implement a health and safety review; design systems for monitoring compliance in areas such as health & safety, hygiene, recordkeeping, etc.; evaluate and improve quality control
- Environmental outreach work with children, families and other groups – organising or helping with activities such as making compost, planting an organic vegetable plot, planting and watering tree seedlings



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.

Duration and Costs

Volunteer placements on the Galapagos Organic Rescue project are available for 1 – 6 weeks. See below for the Volunteer Contribution required. Start dates are WEDNESDAYS. Volunteers will be met at San Cristóbal Airport and taken to the project site.

Duration in weeks	1	2	3	4	5	6
Volunteer Contribution Required, US\$	\$470	\$830	\$1190	\$1480	\$1830	\$2050



Once your application has been accepted and we have established that we have a vacancy for your chosen dates, we will hold that vacancy for you for a maximum of one week while you reserve your flights. Once you have assured that you will be able to arrive on San Cristóbal on or before your start date, you will be invited to pay a deposit of \$200 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.

The balance of the Volunteer Contribution must be paid in advance by bank transfer or in cash on arrival (or a mixture of the two). (Once you've tried to carry out transactions in an Ecuadorian bank, you will understand why, like many organisations in Ecuador, we do not accept cheques or credit cards). Note that there are only very limited banking facilities in the Galapagos Islands.

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

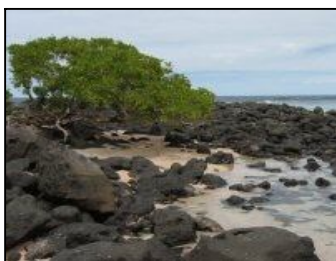
What's Included

- Accommodation on the beautiful island of San Cristóbal (see below)
- Meals (see below)
- Participation in sustainable development and conservation activities as available at the time on the Galapagos Organic Rescue project
- Supervision as appropriate
- Training on an ongoing basis as required for each task
- Letter of reference (on request) if staying two weeks or more
- Transfer from the airport to the project site at the start of your placement, and back again at the end
- A tree seedling to plant as a living reminder to local people of the work you do here



Not Included

- Visa (if required from your country)
- Airfare from your home country to Ecuador and on to the Galapagos Islands
- Entry to the Galapagos National Park area (obligatory to enter the islands; \$100 for foreigners)
- The Transit Control Card required by the authorities here, which costs \$10
- Local transport costs for activities in your free time, personal expenses such as snacks, souvenirs, internet use, phone calls and personal excursions
- Medical expenses, or travel, medical and cancellation insurance (all volunteers **must** have these)
- Meals on your days off if you are not at the volunteer house at meal times



The rocky coast of San Cristóbal island



Sally lightfoot crabs, a common sight on the seafront



Snoozing on the harbour wall, just a few feet from the road



Sunset over the ocean, from the volunteer house balcony

Accommodation

Accommodation is usually in a shared house or cabaña at Finca Guadalupe; both are on a hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean with unobstructed views of Española Island, sunrises and sunsets, the Milky Way, and the passing of humpback whales during whale season. From the balcony, you can see the spot where the fresh water streams running through the farm meet the sea. The first known visitor to the Galapagos Islands, Tomas de Berlanga, stopped at the bay there, and Charles Darwin also came ashore there to collect fresh water.



Each dormitory has a bathroom with warm shower. Dormitories are usually for up to 4 or 5 people, and are single-sex when possible, but this cannot be guaranteed as it will depend on the number of volunteers. At times you may camp out if you are working in a different community for a few days. Sometimes volunteers may stay with a local family, if required by CRACYP.

Volunteers usually eat and socialise in the large dining room at the farm. There is ample space for relaxing in hammocks and lounge chairs. You can use the volleyball court in your spare time. There is no internet access or television at the finca, though there is a DVD player, so volunteers usually spend their evenings reading, watching films, studying Spanish or chatting.



Meals



We provide three meals a day of mostly local-style food, though we do try to include more vegetables than is normal in Ecuador. 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 produce as many of the ingredients as we can from our organic vegetable plot. The chickens provide us with fresh eggs, and we also make cheese. You can help with milking the cows, collecting eggs, picking fruit, and making cheese, fresh fruit juices and jam.

Requirements

Volunteers must be reasonably fit and healthy and have some experience with physically challenging environments. There is little public transport in the area so **you will often need to walk from one location to another**. The work will also often involve manual labour. The minimum age is 18.



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 you enjoy your time here and will try to help you arrange excursions in your free time, the focus is on work and this is not a holiday camp.

It will be helpful if you can 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 this does not prevent you from participating in the programme, although obviously it will limit your communication with local people. In the Galapagos Islands many people speak some English, and the project's coordinators will be able to communicate with you.



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.

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 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 worksite. Some working days might be longer, at other times you might unexpectedly have free time due to local conditions at the time.



Sugarcane mill overlooking the ocean



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 the Galapagos Islands and their unique wildlife. These personal excursions will be at your own expense, but we can help you with recommendations and contacts for quality and cost-effective activities.

The Galapagos Organic Rescue project helps CRACYP implement an important conservation project in an area of great environmental sensitivity. Our approach is holistic so the work may involve not only the farmers but also other stakeholders and different aspects of development and conservation, such as raising awareness, promoting the use of eco-friendly fuels or promoting organic cultivation. Without volunteers, this project might not happen at all, or would take much longer. We hope to increase international understanding by facilitating friendships between farming communities in a developing country and interested volunteers from overseas that go deeper than the typical interactions between tourists and Galapagos residents.



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 volunteer with CRACYP 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 to Ecuador 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.ecuadortravelite.org



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FAQs

Why should I have to pay to volunteer?

We really appreciate the hard work and enthusiasm of our volunteers. However, we don't have the funds to subsidise you, so we need your Volunteer Contributions to cover the costs involved. They allow us to provide work for local people, and purchase some of the materials used on the project, as well as administration and of course your food and accommodation. The money stays in Ecuador; you're 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 pay 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.

Depending how long you stay, the costs are between approximately \$49 and \$67 a day. This would be good value just for accommodation and food in the Galapagos Islands, but also includes the satisfaction of knowing you've made a difference in an area of great ecological importance. You get the chance to see a world-famous 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 and environmental conservation in a developing country.

For how long should I volunteer?

The minimum is 1 week, maximum 6 weeks. We expect you to work 5 days a week, not necessarily weekdays. There is sightseeing to be done here on the island, but if you want to travel further afield and see other islands, you'll need several days. You might be able to "save up" your days off if you are here for several weeks, but this is not guaranteed as it depends on project needs at the time. Your volunteer contribution includes board and lodging, so if you go away for several days you will actually be paying twice for accommodation. We strongly suggest that you think carefully about your Galapagos travel plans and consider including a week or so before or after your time with us, to allow for a cruise or excursions to other islands, so that while you are with us you can be fully focused on your work here.



When is the best time to volunteer?

Our work continues all year and there is always something to do. The wonderful Galapagos wildlife is here year-round! University holidays (June to September for Europe, December to February for Australia) can book up quite early, so apply as soon as possible. Bearing in mind that in recent years the weather has been quite unpredictable, San Cristóbal weather tends to be cooler from approximately May to November, and warmer from December through to May. You can expect some rain at any time of year.



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

You can still volunteer with us on this project without Spanish language skills. We recommend trying to learn a little before you arrive, so that you can interact more with local people, but many people in the Galapagos Islands who work in the tourist trade do speak some English.

How do I apply?

Send your CV, including your birthdate and recent 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. Tell us the level of your Spanish language skills. Email your application to galapagos.volunteer@yahoo.co.uk. Let us know when you want to volunteer and for how long. Note that start dates are Wednesdays. People here are waiting to welcome you.

