



## Conservation volunteering in New Zealand



We invite you to join a project that aims to teach you about the ecosystem of the New Zealand rainforest and about the animals that live in it. You will learn about the conservation challenges that we face and due to the extensive training that we provide, you will be able to start making a difference within a week.

You will be contributing to the biodiversity protection of four different forests, each of them having unique properties, be it thousand year old trees or endangered birds such as the kiwi or the kokako.

While with us you will have the opportunity to learn about all the stages involved in the conservation process from planning and preparation to implementation and monitoring. Of course, you will also celebrate our success through the sightings of the rare species that we are trying to protect.

Due to our location at the edge of the forest, a stay at the sanctuary is also an opportunity for reconnecting with our natural surroundings. Away from the distractions of modern life, we learn to observe and listen to the forest, hear the songs of birds, or notice the gradual movement of stars along the night sky.

## Tasks

Our conservation volunteer program is quite unique because it has been designed to integrate the teachings about nature with opportunities for enjoying it. When you join our team you get the opportunity to see the big picture of how conservation, sustainability, and tourism fit together while having the time to experience and enjoy each of these components. There are three main parts to our program:

- the conservation work that we do in the forest,
- the manual work that we do around the sanctuary
- the sightseeing that we do around the region

The conservation tasks that we perform in our sanctuary and on the behalf of the Department of Conservation are performed at a professional level, and you will receive the extensive training necessary to reach the required high standard.

Throughout your stay you will learn and practice the basic navigational skills required to operate in the dense rainforest (using the map, compass, and markers). You will also learn to use a radio for communication or emergencies. You will learn to plan, prepare, and execute a number of conservation activities. While working with us, you will realize the vast amount of work that happens behind the scenes to ensure that the New Zealand forest stays healthy. You will also learn the meaning of sustainability through observation and practice. The opportunities to learn are endless and we are keen to teach those that show interest.

Some of the tasks that you will complete are:

- cutting and marking tracks
- installing, refilling, and monitoring bait stations
- installing and monitoring traps
- kiwi, kokako, and rodent monitoring
- seed collection
- weed control and planting of native plants
- data entry

We recommend that you read the following introduction to conservation on New Zealand's Department of Conservation's website.

The manual work part of the program refers mostly to the activities that we have to perform to maintain and enhance our operational base. It is very likely that most of the tasks will be new to you but you will receive training or instructions.

Tasks include:

- weeding and maintaining the herb garden
- building maintenance tasks (i.e. painting walls, setting up fences)
- landscaping

- chopping wood
- general help around the place

Previous volunteers helped us paint the accommodation buildings, start a herb garden, paved a patio area, built sheds, erected fences, and built an outdoor bath.

Every month has its own target tasks to complete be it monitoring, track cutting, or some facility improvement.

The third component of the program consists of the relaxation activities that are so important to recharge one's batteries. We believe that it is important for each volunteer to see the extent of their contribution in the wider context of the Kauri Coast region. We are also proud of the beauty of this land and it will be our pleasure to share it with you.

Once a week we go on a night safari looking for wild kiwi, these three hour night walks are an amazing opportunity to hear the sounds of the forest and to let the stars guide us. Sometimes we also go deep in our forest to visit the glowworms that live near one of the waterfalls. There is nothing as magic as sitting in the dark by the creek and watching the tiny blue lights of these amazing creatures. One day a week we head to the lakes for some swimming or SUP practice, or we head for a long beach walk (or mountain climb), or we visit the amazing two thousand year old Tane Mahuta - the oldest and biggest tree in New Zealand.

## **Weekly Schedule**

Our schedule is influenced more by the weather (New Zealand is an island with changing climate) than by the conventional days of the week.

In general, one day a week we go on a sightseeing excursion, one day a week we work around the camp, one day is free (mostly Mondays), and for the rest we head to one of the four forests that we work in. In addition, once night a week we head for a three hour walk to look for kiwi and other creatures.

If a storm passes by, we sit by the fire reading a book and catching up on our diaries.

## **Daily Schedule**

Each working morning, depending on the weather, we clarify which tasks will be performed for the day. Depending on the task's difficulty, volunteers' knowledge, ability, or interests, we then organize the teams for the day. Teams are always rotated giving you the chance to interact and get to know all the other volunteers.

A typical day's schedule looks similar to the one below:

8am - 9am breakfast  
9am - 9:30am communal area clean-up  
10am - 12pm morning working activity  
12pm - 1pm lunch/picnic  
1pm - 4pm afternoon working activity  
4pm - 6pm leisure activities (free time)  
6pm - 8pm dinner  
8pm - 10pm leisure activities (sunset watching, soccer, dusk bird chorus)

## **Practical Information**

The sanctuary can accommodate up to eight volunteers at a time. Due to the remote location and the basic training required, the volunteer assignments have a minimum duration of two weeks (starting on a Monday and ending on a Monday).

### **Minimum Age Requirement**

- Male participants must be 20 years old before the start of the program.
- Female participants must be 18 years old before the start of the program.

### **Maximum Age Requirement**

If you are in good physical shape, able to walk comfortably 10 kilometers every day, and you finish reading these pages wishing that you were here, you have not reached the maximum age requirement yet.

### **English Language Skills**

You will need good English language skills to be able to participate in programs that last longer than one week. We don't expect you to be fully fluent, but you have to have enough knowledge to be able to understand the instructions that need to be followed and to be able to communicate clearly via radio with your colleagues, rangers, or with emergency services.

Keep in mind that most of our participants have English as their second language, however if you are unsure of whether your English level is sufficient, we can have a quick Skype/WhatsApp call about the program and at the end of it, we would be able to confirm on whether or not you will be able to join us.

### **Who Should Join This Program**

Based on our experience and observations we list below the types of people that seem to have enjoyed our program the most:

- those that are interested in learning and experiencing more about nature
- those that are travelling and are interested in contributing to this planet during their journey
- those that are looking for a place where they can learn more about themselves
- those that are interested in pushing their boundaries
- those interested in sustainability and off grid living
- those that are considering studying biology or environmental sciences

- students that are looking for practical experience for their university credit or for themselves
- those that are interested in becoming a biodiversity ranger
- those that have worked with us before
- those that want to see a kiwi in the wild
- those that read this website or the Facebook reviews and just know that they have to join us

### **What Should You Expect**

Expect your boundaries to be challenged on a daily basis: we live on a philosophy of "we can do with what we have" and that requires patience, adaptability and innovation. It will not be easy but you will learn a lot if you persevere.

1. Expect to learn a lot and to be ready to apply your learnings.
2. Expect to be involved; it is participants like you that make this project a reality.
3. Expect to learn that while individual choices are acknowledged, the well being of the team is more important. When you are out there in the middle of the forest, it is going to be the whole team that has to deal with a problem and find a solution.
4. Expect to have the type of experiences that others only dream about. The more open to change you are, the more opportunities you have to see things in a different light: kiwi, kokako, snails, ferns, moss, impenetrable rainforest, giant trees, glow worms, waterfalls, there is a whole universe out there!

### **What We Expect**

1. Together with your teammates, we expect you to treat the sanctuary as your own home. Keep it clean, put everything that you use back, fix what needs to be fixed, and propose ways of improvement.
2. Together with your teammates, we expect you to behave with maturity and to participate in the well being of the team. Learn, care, and share your experiences with the others.

### **Volunteer And Intern Fee**

The time that our volunteers and interns donate is very important to the preservation of the forest and to the continuous improvement of the sanctuary. We are grateful for it and we try to reward that contribution with comfortable accommodation, delicious food, knowledge sharing, conservation training, and tourism activities.

Our sanctuary does not receive any government funding and it is funded solely by the participants' fees.

The reality is that our nature sanctuary is far away from "civilization" and anything that needs to be brought in or taken out, travels a minimum of 100km. To be able to continue with our conservation efforts, we ask our volunteers and interns to pay a fee that covers the cost of food, fuel, and safety equipment for that person's stay. The fee is less than what an independent backpacker would spend while travelling cheaply in New Zealand for the same amount of time.

Our organization spends no money on administration costs and 100% of the proceeds go back into conservation, infrastructure improvement, or operating costs. We created an environment in which you receive training and learn valuable skills while contributing towards our common goal of protecting the forest and the birds. In addition, you will have experiences that many people visiting or living in New Zealand never get to have: accessing amazing forests closed to the public, seeing kiwi in the wild, working in a forest where the rare kokako lives, or bonding with the locals in an area off the beaten track.

### **Meals**

Meals will be provided three times a day. After a long day in the forest, there is nothing better than a delicious meal savoured while watching the sunset. The menu includes muesli in the morning, sandwiches/wraps or leftovers for lunch, and for dinner: stir-fry, homemade hummus and falafel, organic burgers, rösti, tika masala, dahl, couscous, chili con carne, pancakes, and the occasional blackberry crumble.

If you do not know how to cook, you will learn. Everyone contributes to the meal preparation and by the end of your stay you would be able to cook a delicious dinner for ten people.

We cater to most dietary requirements (vegetarian, gluten free) if we are told beforehand. Black tea, hot chocolate, and instant coffee are included and available throughout the day. For snacking outside of the scheduled meals, please bring your own snacks, special food, or drinks. We will not be able to keep them in the fridge, but we could store them in the pantry for you.

The cleaning of the kitchen, washing of the dishes, etc... is part of the daily tasks that each participant has to complete.

### **Vegan Diet**

Our daily activities are very intense and very energy consuming. Based on our experience and observations, participants that are on a vegan diet do not accumulate enough calories to comfortably complete the tasks assigned. In addition, most of our tasks take us deep in the forest where the opportunities to replenish the energy stores are minimal. Therefore, unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate participants that are on a vegan diet.

We are able to accommodate any other type of diet like vegetarian, gluten free, etc...

### **Facilities**

Our facilities are basic but functional. One of the principles behind our sanctuary is to be as kind to the environment as possible. We are off-the-grid and we try to use as few resources as possible. The main facilities (kitchen, showers, dining room) are housed in recycled shipping containers. We reuse as much second hand material or furniture as we can find. The accommodation is in a small cabin and consists of bunk beds. For a small additional fee, you may upgrade your accommodation to one of our fantastic tree tents.

Small items can be washed in the sinks and we do a load of washing once a week.

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### **Electricity And Water**

Please note that we are off the grid and do not have electricity or running water. Depending on the rainfall, hot showers are available daily or every other day when we return from the forest.

We have a small solar panel that can be used for the charging of mobile phones on the sunny days.

### **Phone And Internet**

Strong mobile phone signal on the Telecom, Vodafone, Skinny, and 2degrees networks is available in the common area for both Internet and voice. There is no phone signal in the forest. There is no free wifi at the sanctuary, you will have to buy your own mobile broadband plan (we recommend Skinny, good signal and cheaper plans).

### **Health And Safety**

We often work in groups and we do not perform any dangerous activities. Each volunteer will receive training on how to use the compass/radio thus ensuring continuous contact and positioning. Staff is trained in first aid and first aid kits are available.

The New Zealand forest is very safe and it has no animals and no reptiles that can harm you.

The closest medical clinic is in Dargaville, about 50 minutes and 50 km away. The closest hospital with an emergency room is in Whangarei, about 100 minutes and 100km away.

### **Vaccinations**

The CDC and WHO recommend the following vaccinations for New Zealand: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, meningitis, polio, measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis), chickenpox, shingles.

Please double-check your measles vaccination records as there are currently high numbers of measles cases in the Auckland area.

### **Insurance**

You need to have medical travel insurance to be able to work with us. An example of a company that offers affordable travel insurance can be found [here](#).

### **What To Bring**

The weather can be quite chilly and wet even in the middle of summer. Here is the minimum that you will need to bring with you:

- wet weather gear (rain pants, rain jacket, solid hiking shoes and rubber boots)
- warm clothes for the chilly nights
- enough socks/underwear to last you for at least two weeks
- hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen
- warm sleeping bag (not just a summer one!)

You might also consider bringing:

- insect repellent for the occasional sandfly
- swimming gear
- some snacks or drinks
- It would be best if you bring some used clothes so as not to ruin your best outfit.

### **Transportation And Pick-Up**

If you do not have your own wheels we will pick you up in the closest town (Dargaville) on Monday at 5:30pm. This time is chosen to coincide with the arrival of the public bus from Whangarei. To get to Whangarei, you can use Intercity departing from Auckland early in the morning .

We will also drop you off in Dargaville on Monday morning at 7am to connect with the bus to Whangarei.

More detailed information about pick-up times, meals, clothing required will be provided after you make a reservation.

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