

LONG TERM VOLUNTEERING 2024

GAIA KOSOVO

BOZEVCE VILLAGE

ABOUT GAIA

GAIA is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the culture of peace, social and environmental justice and sustainable living. The main activities of GAIA are international volunteer programs (workcamps, long-term volunteering), non-formal education (trainings, seminars, workshops, youth exchanges) and permanent community building programs, in places which are facing different social or environmental challenges such as systemic discrimination, social isolation and ethnicity based division. Since 2014 GAIA has been the official branch of Service Civil International.



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THE PROGRAM IN BOZEVCE

Bozevce is a tiny village community situated in the Eastern part of Kosovo, in the Municipality of Ranilug. The village used to be inhabited by 600 people, but nowadays that number has been reduced to only 50. It is hidden behind hills, between forest, rocks, streams and meadows. It is divided in three neighbourhoods which stretch along a total of 3 km. People still living in the village nowadays are mostly elders who still preserve the knowledge of simple and sustainable living in remote peaceful areas.



In this remote village, with help of friends and volunteers, GAIA has been developing a project which serves as a place for education and practices of sustainable living, natural building, organic food production, communal living, etc. The program includes different activities in the fields of natural building, mainly with local materials such as earth and straw, food production and permaculture education.

From spring till autumn we host several youth exchanges, volunteer groups, scouts, workshops and similar. More than 100 people go through our educational program every year.

Our goal is to show by example that another way, simpler, in community and nature-friendly is possible.

GAIA's mission is to work towards peace, social and environmental justice by being an example for alternative and regenerative ways of living.





VOLUNTEERS' TASKS & ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, volunteers work on various tasks which are following the rhythm of seasons. Here are some typical tasks:

In Spring, volunteers usually work on:

- finishing the interior work (examples: plastering, furniture, fine work)
- support the building of new objects (examples: summer kitchen, green roofs, greenhouse)
- gardening and helping with its maintenance
- supporting organization of activities such as workshops, meetings, workcamps
- collecting herbs and mushrooms around the village

In Summer we work a lot and it's usually socially more interesting and intense, so volunteers usually help with:

- coordination of international volunteer groups (possibly in other locations), scout groups and youth exchanges
- construction work, carpentry, plastering
- gardening (sowing, harvesting, maintaining)

In Autumn the work is mostly related to preparation for winter:

- preparing wood for the season
- collecting and preserving fruits and mushroom
- lots of gardening and food conservation
- construction work
- helping neighbours with various activities (spreading cow manure, last harvests)

In Winter there is not much work outside but it consists in:

- small woodwork
- finalising indoor constructions
- wildlife observation (camera traps, pictures)
- preparing activities for the next year to come
- visiting neighbours
- reflection and learning

We understand
voluntary
engagement as
an approach
and opportunity
to work towards
essential
change in
society.





LIFESTYLE - SUSTAINABLE IT IS!

In the organization, but especially in projects related to the environmental issues, nature conservation and sustainable living, we practise and respect certain principles.

In Boževce, we respect the following principles and values:

- buying local as much as possible
- eating seasonal, organic and vegetarian
- growing our vegetables, harvesting wild plants and mushrooms
- avoiding products from multinational corporations such as coca-cola, nestle, etc...
- using biodegradable soaps, detergents, toothpastes etc
- using compost toilets
- rational use of resources, such as wood, electricity, gas, tools, materials, time etc.
- travelling with environmental friendly way

In addition to these principles, we agreed upon some basic schedule and agreements, such as:

winter schedule / summer schedule

morning briefing

9.00 – 9.15 / 8 – 8.15

working time

9.15 – 12:00 / 8.30 – 12.30

lunch time

12.00 – 14.00 / 12.30 – 16.00

afternoon work

14.00 – 17.00 / 16.00 – 19.00

dinner

18.00 – 19.00 / 19.00 – 20.00

Every Saturday morning, we have a clean-up action of the whole property (kitchens, bathroom, living room, yard etc).

Besides above mentioned, all volunteers participate in everyday household activities which are not part of working hours.

We are working
on a local,
grassroot level
to restore
communities
based on earth
care, people
care and fair
share.





SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

The volunteer should be:

- interested in sustainable and simpler living, environmental topics and holistic approach to social and environmental problems
- ready and willing to live in a small remote village, but also in a small community with other volunteers, members of GAIA and animals.
- ready to work in a team
- communicate in open and direct way, and to accept feedback
- to be willing to learn, adapt and to respect local customs
- be willing to learn local languages: Serbian and/or Albanian.
- comfortable with animals, have no serious allergy and
- respect the program's protocols for working with them.

There are several dogs and cats, as well as chickens, geese, goats and bees. Sense of initiative and self-motivation is more than welcome.

In GAIA we do not tolerate use of drugs or any illegal substances. We particularly do not tolerate hate speech, discrimination, racism, homophobia, sexism, nationalism or any form of aggression.



Our activities are open for people no matter the background, age, gender, beliefs and local and international volunteers, with the aim of creating new links.



CHALLENGES & LEARNING

Food is vegetarian and vegan, mostly made with local products from the surrounding villages. Part of the food will be grown and collected by volunteers themselves.

There is no public transport to the village, but only to the nearby towns of Kamenica and Ranilug. Therefore, the volunteer should expect limited travelling options, but when needed and agreed they will be taken by the car to the nearest bus stop.

The volunteer will share living and working space with other volunteers, surrounded by lots of unspoiled nature, peaceful time for themselves.



The volunteers will have plenty of opportunities for learning, reflecting, questioning and critical thinking. These are some of the possible learning opportunities:

- basics of traditional carpentry & natural building
- permaculture ethics and principles
- cooking vegan and vegetarian, and for bigger groups
- basics of no dig gardening
- logistical aspects of organising youth exchanges, volunteer camps and basics of coordination
- how to be rational with resources
- how to share and live together with other people

Please note that learning will be inevitable and that sometimes we cannot prioritise this aspect of volunteering. Help and support to the project is in most of the cases the priority.

We envision to restore and create new relationships not only between people but also between people and nature.

