

AUTOCHTHONOUS PLANT GARDENING IN THE ISLAND OF MENORCA



Proposed activities for EVS volunteers:

This volunteer project in Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa de Menorca (GOB Menorca) combines variety of different projects regarding nursery garden, in which European volunteer can take part mostly with a team of professionals and volunteers who have already spent time working in this area. The volunteer will work under the tutelage of the person responsible for nursery garden project, and thus be able to get to understand the complete variety of work undertaken by the organisation in the vivarium of autochthonous plants. Also once a week, it is possible to help at the Centre for Recuperation for Wild Animals. An important part of volunteers tasks will be helping in the management and reinvigoration of volunteer programmes which already exist in the organisation.

The volunteer will have at his or her disposal all of the organisations locations: the central office in Maó, which is in a converted windmill originally for grinding flour in the 18th century (a point of interest for tourists); the nursery garden Es Viver for autochthonous plants situated near the industrial estate of Maó; the Recuperation Centre for Wild Animals in Ciutadella; and the market garden in Es Migjorn, allowed to GOB for projects for both training purposes and for developing local horticultural varieties, etc. The volunteer will have training session on arrival bearing in mind the tasks to be carried out.

The project would like the volunteer to take part for approximately 35 hours per week (which here includes the language courses) within the organisation. These will be mostly in the mornings, but on some days or at certain times of the year, the activity will take place more in the evenings. A language course is offered at the Official School for Adults (Spanish for anyone who does not speak it) of three hours per week during two evenings. Equally, there is the possibility of learning Catalan or improving Spanish with someone from the "Bank Time", a very common way of learning languages in the Minorcan community.

The person responsible for nursery garden will be in charge of coordinating the work of the volunteer in the organisation. The volunteer will be able to seek advice from a mentor who is not an employee but a volunteer in the organisation and who knows it from the inside.

The work in the nursery garden Es Viver is principally in the sphere of sustainable gardening, encouraging the use of indigenous plants. We produce and sell kitchen garden plants of local varieties. This line of work is a part of the preservation of a cultural and genetic inheritance having a considerable economic potential and we

offer them to the public in order that they do not die out. In addition, we do landscaping of public and private spaces, with the aim of making the areas more sustainable, with little maintenance cost and little water consumption. In this way we also aim to stop the introduction of invasive species and new plagues and to contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity. Also, bespoke services for the creation of gardens or changing areas into gardens, as well as producing plants for various purposes, are offered. Lastly, we build and maintain the so called green filters that are one of the innovative products of Es Viver garden centre. They are a system of aquatic plants for purification of waste water. These filters are used to try to reduce the problem of waste water contaminating the aquifers in urbanizations on the island not connected to the main drains.

We would like the volunteer to help at the nursery garden Es Viver for autochthonous plants and once a week at the Recuperation Centre for Wild Animals. In Es Viver the different types of work vary depending on the time of the year. The daily tasks include watering the sprouts in the greenhouse, the plants for sale, the garden and the compost. The weekly tasks also include weeding the plants in the pots and in the garden, and cleaning the pathways and the garden house. As well, the volunteers are working in plant production, in which the main tasks include seeding and transplanting, weeding and fertilizing plants. In addition, the volunteer will be able to help with landscaping and maintaining the public and private spaces, and building and maintaining green filters for the purification of waste water. The volunteers are encouraged to assist in different workshops concerning sustainable gardening and plant production, and to collaborate to improve the nursery garden. In the Recuperation Centre for Wild Animals the main tasks include feeding animals (birds, turtles), as well as cleaning and maintaining the facilities of the centre.

Through this method of involvement for obtaining environmental technical knowledge (botanical, nursery garden, veterinary, biodiversity, environmental education, etc), the volunteer will be able to develop his or her social skills such as initiative, self-sufficiency, creativity (for developing activities of his or her own design and execution), the ability to adapt to new situations, working with an organisation, leadership (of other volunteers), etc. Also, the volunteer will be able to increase his or her language competency as much with Spanish (weekly classes) as with Catalan (a form of exchange at Minorcan's Bank Time).

Description of the organisation:

Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa (GOB) is a non-profit making organisation which works in the Balearic Islands. The section in Minorca was created in 1977 and has become established as an important part of Minorcan society (with more than 1,200 members on the island). Its basic objective is to help the conservation of environmental values while balancing human activity with nature.

The institution is politically and economically independent. Its aim is to participate within civil society to enforce the democratic right of people to voice their opinions and for them to engage with all matters and discourses concerning environmental issues. An environmental policy: to influence the use made of land and its natural resources; to analyse the consequences of human activity and promote alternatives orientated towards sustainability.

Project Environment:

The island of Minorca is advantageous to the project for European Volunteer work. Minorca is situated at the northeast of the Balearic archipelago in the Mediterranean. It was declared a Reserve of the Biosphere in 1993; it is an island of important natural value distinct in character from the rest of the Balearic islands. Though hardly 700 square kilometres with 220 kilometres of coast, it has a very diversified countryside.

The head office of GOB Menorca is in Maó and although there is an office in Ciutadella it is used much less. The Wild Animal Recuperation Centre which is managed by GOB is in Ciutadella in some quarries now being used for cultural entity. GOB has a nursery garden specialising in autochthonous plants close to Maó. GOB organises many activities all over the island (excursions, volunteer work, courses etc). The European volunteers will live in the town of Maó, where the main office is situated, but will be able to travel around the island in order to carry out their tasks.

The two GOB volunteers will be lodged in an apartment together. There are bicycles for short distances and for getting to know the country lanes in free time. The volunteers will have at one's disposal pocket money each month for their personal expenses (leisure, personal purchases not directly related with feeding facilities, etc.), and also food and hosting expenses will be covered.

The project will have a duration of 12 months, starting from October.

Number of volunteers hosted:

This nursery garden project is for one volunteer. The same association hosts a second volunteer and the volunteers will live together.

Volunteer profiles:

The volunteer who wishes to participate in the project must demonstrate a high level of motivation in order to do the work which is carried out by the organisation on the island. The person must be keen on environmental matters with a philosophy of life similar to that which is promoted by the organisation. What is most important is for the volunteer to have the enthusiasm for working in a team and for being an active citizen. It would be valuable if the volunteer has participated in volunteer

work previously. It is not necessary to have a high level of knowledge of environmental matters, but it is important to be interested. We are looking for an independent person with initiative who can adapt to the frequent changes of work situations which take place within the organisation.

The person should be open minded with no rigid views and be able to accept new ways of working together when necessary. We would appreciate that the person has a driving licence which will be very useful for the activities of the organisation (and facilitate the volunteer's own mobility around the island). It is also necessary that they like animals and be able to be near them (for tasks in the Recuperation Centre), and though their confidence will increase it is important not to feel any initial repugnance with the creatures. The volunteer should have the ability to work outside in the countryside and although the work is not hard they should be physically able to do it.

A minimum of English or Spanish is required for to be able to communicate with the supervisors and the organisation staff.

Selection will take place from written applications sent by the volunteers. There will be a selection committee who will evaluate the covering letters and curriculum vitae of the candidates. This group will consist of the person in charge of volunteers, the coordinator of the organisation and the coach.