

WWOOF

NEWS

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The Cultural Exchange



WWOOF
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Update From WWOOF Headquarters

Hello from Jane and Andrew at WWOOF headquarters. Whether you're weeding in Wanganui, milking in Maruia, Raising Beds in Riverton or Cooking Kai in Kaitia we hope your WWOOF exchanges have been enriching.

Thanks to those members who have written to us this year, letting us know what's going on around the country. One host wrote,

"We've had 10 WWOOFers so far this year. We feel we've made at least this number of new friends and a few intend to come back again. Our visitor's book is quite varied with a wide range of countries they are from. I intend putting a map of the world on the wall and mark the towns they come from".

Nele from Germany wrote the following in her letter,

"...I've heard of your organisation from a friend who spent six months by WWOOFing in New Zealand. The expressions she described to me made my interest arise. Encouraged by her and my sister who spent three months in your beautiful country I came to the conclusion that it will be a greatful experience for me to get in contact with other cultures, another human behaviour, another way of living and to learn the language perfectly. In my opinion, working with people is the best way to cross borders to get a real feeling for their way of thinking and living..."

Members share many stories of good, and not so good, experiences. We have also received a number of suggestions for improving the scheme which is helpful. As always, we ask that if you find that you have any problems or concerns about other members of WWOOF then you must let us know. Only then are we able to take steps to help the situation.

The latest edition of the WWOOF Book is now out (at last). The new membership fee for all members, starting with this edition, is \$20 (up from \$15).

Jane and Andrew Strange
WWOOF New Zealand

WWOOFING IN ENGLAND

I did my first WWOOF in Ryedale, North Yorkshire, England and thoroughly enjoyed myself!

Pasture House, Marton near Pickering is a smallholding run by Elaine and Keith Dowell. It is located on the valley floor near the River Derwent. They have the usual managerie of farm animals from goats to bees. During my stay I helped whitewash the goatshed, build a new hen house roof and pick leeks amongst other tasks. Keith and Elaine are former WWOOFers so appreciate the need for clear instructions and organisation. The evenings are spent as a family with their three children and numerous cats.

Hallgarth, Leavening near Malton sits on the edge of the North Yorkshire Wolds, so is quite hilly and picturesque. The hosts are Meint and Johnson Tam Lit. They have two delightful young children who contribute to the chaotic but cosy atmosphere. Jobs included woodcutting, fencing and feeding up. Meint usually aims at a project a weekend. Meint and Johnson have travelled extensively and love having WWOOFers. They made me feel thoroughly at home - even including me on an evening trip into York to see the Viking Festival! Ryedale is not that much of a detour, especially if you are heading North to Scotland by train. Good weather may not be a certainty but a warm welcome definitely is!

Yours WWOOFingly
Helen Reynolds - World Wide WWOOFer

TOTAL ORGANICNESS?

I particularly enjoyed Seager Mason's letter in the last WWOOF News. We do not get enough WWOOFers ringing us looking for a place to stay. Could someone tell me why people like us with a commitment to organic growing should suffer a lack of help because there are WWOOF Hosts who are not totally organic.

Mark Austin
Host
Motueka

ORGANICS - THE CONTINUING DEBATE

(In reply to Seager Mason's letter - WWOOF News No1 1996)

If I don't spray my gorse, especially my boundaries I will be persecuted by noxious weeds officers on grounds of complaints laid by boundary farmers.

Lynne Alexander
Host

-Seager Mason replies:

The best solution I know of in this case is to plant trees along the fence line, so achieving several things at once. The trees will crowd out and stunt or kill the gorse, and they will provide environmental enhancement, shade, shelter, profit, etc.

Organics involves observation, information, sharing and some lateral thinking. It is all about finding long term sustainable growing methods rather than buying yet another container of toxic chemicals.

I respect my assertion that WWOOFers should leave hosts farms talking about the organic alternatives they have been involved in.

Seager Mason

Host

Nelson

COMPETITION?

In the last newsletter we talked about the need for WWOOF to become competitive. In reply to this we were asked by a host to respond to the following comments:

"I enjoyed my last newsletter, but I'd be interested to hear more about the statement that WWOOF "must.....be competitive.....". Considering WWOOF Hosts are the only places travellers can stay for no money, and because of its very nature, I can't understand, firstly, why WWOOF must be competitive, and secondly, with whom WWOOF is competing".

Firstly, we have had one of our hosts set up an organisation run on the same basis as WWOOF but not specifically for organic farms. This host has since withdrawn from WWOOF membership. We have also had a host decide to start producing his own WWOOF list of hosts and distribute it. This was of course seen by us to contravene the Fair Trading Act and the host was persuaded to stop.

There has also been growth in the field of eco-tourism - farm stays, homestays and any other cultural experience you can think of. These organisations would love to lure away our valued WWOOFers.

Apart from these specific cases, WWOOF needs to "be competitive" in the sense that it needs to maintain an efficient and useful service, for example, regular updates, newsletters, good quality hosts and WWOOFers etc.

Andrew Strange
WWOOF New Zealand

WHAT TO ASK A WWOOFER ON THE PHONE

Averil Bateman sent in the following questions to ask a prospective WWOOFer when they first phone. Hosts may like to make up their own list from this and keep it by the phone:

Introduction - "Tell me something about yourself"

Some Questions :

1. Name?
2. Nationality?
3. Age?
4. When did you arrive in NZ?
5. When do you leave NZ?
6. When do you want to come to our place?
7. How long do you want to stay?
8. Are you travelling alone or with a companion?
9. Do you have friends in NZ?
10. Do you have transport?
11. Are you vegetarian?
12. Do you smoke?

FEEDBACK FROM A WWOOFER

WWOOFing is a fantastic way to travel throughout New Zealand. Despite the jokes of "you're a WWOOFer - wwoof wwoof", I continue to meet wonderful people, eat delicious food and live in spectacular places.

In my experiences WWOOF stands for Willing Weeders or Washers - I've washed more dishes in this country than I have eat home, but with joy and a smile. I have stayed on biodynamic farms, retreat centres and a resort. In my 18 weeks here I have some advice for you and the hosts and guests! Long term stays work best to establish a relationship between host and guest. Shorter term is difficult, it depends on the situation. It is important to be clear about the guidelines and work required. For travellers, I say do it because you want to be part of the community, learn more about farming, spirituality, or environmental issues. The food and accommodation are a bonus, but shouldn't be the only reason. Flexibility is the key - willingness to try different tasks.

The connections I have made with other WWOOFers has been special. It is wonderful to travel on the South Island and see friends I made in the North Island.

I am thankful to the hosts who have shared their homes, time, energy, love of this country with me. I feel each host who has done so has planted a seed that will continue to bloom and grow!

An enthusiastic promoter of WWOOF,

Alona Jasik

WWOOFer

-the following article was written by Travel Writer Stanley C. Sutherland. It is included here as Stanley shares some interesting experiences from his visit to New Zealand.

WWOOF WWOOF

Today as the popularity of New Zealand gains momentum among world travellers, there is a new breed of traveller rushing to our shores. They've got a whiff that something is going on in our green and pastoral lands. From the colleges of Chicago, the polytechs of Pretoria and the confinements of a kibbutz, the word is out - New Zealand is a lifestyle place where you can experience different lifestyles and one of these is 'Wwoofing'.

According to a recent business announcement, Heinze nee Watties Foods can't get enough of organically grown foods to satisfy the world demand for wholesome food grown in New Zealand and the Wwoofers of the world are uniting to come and give us a hand as well as helping themselves to a new experience in a new country.

Andrew and Jane Strange, the Wwoof co-ordinators for New Zealand list the following ground rules for obtaining a Wwoofer passport.

"In return for your conscientious work on their land, property owners provide adequate meals, accommodation and experience in organic farming methods".

To the foreigner most times struggling to come to terms with the English language, words such as bio-gro, permaculture and biodynamics don't come easy but the laid back lifestyle of Wwoof hosts means they have time to explain the science and messages of organic farming.

"The way we treat this planet, anyone would think we owned it" is an oft quoted expression.

Sandie, another Wwoof Host, of "Sandie's Place" situated inches from the wild west coast surf has taken the organic message one step further by offering her (synthetic) chemical-free, natural ingredients recipe for "Bug Off" - as an answer to the repellent for the ferocious fangs of the notorious west coast sandflies. And for a few dollars more the unsuspecting traveller, like myself, can get involved in her less aggressive but somewhat frightening recipe for good health - her yoga classess. According to Sandie "we are not only neglecting the planet, we are neglecting ourselves. We must learn to shape up or run the risk of being shipped

has since left the West Coast to travel the great divide and now resides on the East Coast).

Jeremy Fisher of Chicago on sabbatical from McAllister University also learned there are other ways to earn a crust of bread when he arrived at 'Te Nikau Retreat'; nestled among the winter flowering Southern Rata peppered with bright red flowers. Digging trenches, painting camouflage on all too previously conspicuous drainpipes and putting pedal to a different kind of metal; roading metal, filled Jeremy's day. A day so different to his cerebral college curriculum, yet all part of the growing range of activities now being carried out under the umbrella of WWOOFing.

Like any organism or growing organisation, WWOOF is expanding to meet the needs of the planet and of those making efforts to ensure its survival, especially the young people from overseas who see New Zealand as a clean country, far enough away to have survived the despoilation and ravages of industrial Europe and North America. Most of them have taken some real time out to experience the Kiwi lifestyle and not for them the: "If this is Tuesday it must be Rotorua" travelling scenario. Experiences, not seeing the sights, is what they're looking for as they linger longer in remote parts of New Zealand, 12000 miles away from the UK and even farther away in terms of lifestyle.

"It's the ultimate win-win" says Alexis, the Ivy League Lady from Boston. "I win by having an experience, the WWOOF Hosts win by having our labour, and the planet wins by having a group of people whose interests go beyond making a buck".

The traditional New Zealand farmer would have us believe there's no money or future in organic farming; a fringe activity sought by those on the freaky fringes of the New Age, but in spite of their protestations the Heinze conglomerate still can't get enough produce; farmers remain unconvinced it's a viable financial option and are determined it's not the way to go to make a living.

"But it's the only way to go" says Reinhold, one of the many hundreds of young Germans flying to New Zealand and fleeing, alas only temporarily, the horrors of the Chernobyl fall-out and overcrowded, polluted cities.

"WWOOF. WWOOF!" They've got the scent of some winds of change blowing over New Zealand and it makes sense and saves them cents and dollars to go for the WWOOFing experience.

Since it's inception in the UK in 1971 and its introduction to New Zealand in 1974 it's

continued to grow to the extent that there are now over 13 countries with WWOOFing networks.

Luke, the frizzy haired Pom, sometimes fruit picker, sometimes painter/decorator and most times concerned for the future of our planet has the last word.

"Please tell your readers WWOOFing is not about getting a free lunch for minimum effort, its all about learning new skills and sharing knowledge with people who are concerned about the future of our planet.

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