



WWOOFing around the world: cheap travel, good fun

By [Tyme](#)

One need not be a student to travel the globe on a shoe-string budget. For those who are physically fit and willing to get their hands dirty, WWOOFing just might be the ticket.

World-wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF), is a non-profit network "to link volunteers with organic farmers, promote an educational exchange, and build a global community conscious of ecological farming practices," according to WWOOF-USA.

Through the program, volunteers get an opportunity to travel cheaply, while learning about sustainable practices. Hosts appreciate help around the farm.

"The fact that we have been WWOOF hosts for so long says plenty about the system," said Tony Edwards, a host in France. "It's really interesting



Sample host listing

Merlin's Organic Farm
Region: Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

Hi WWOOFers. We've got space now for 2-3 people.... There is plenty of outside/farm stuff to do including chainsawing and tractor driving.... We are a friendly family of four and offer fantastic food and cosy self-contained accommodation separate from the house. Meals are with the family. We've got cows, baby twin calves and free ranging chickens. We're across the road from a huge nature reserve and 20 mins away from kayaking, beaches and Tauranga. We're looking for stays of 2 weeks and over. Looking forward to hearing from you.

[More sample listings...](#)

Tips for WWOOFing

- Make arrangements with hosts in advance. Do not show up unexpected. Do honor your visit schedule. Contact your host as soon as possible if you are unable to

and educational meeting so many different people from diverse cultures."

How WWOOF works

A volunteer stays with a WWOOF host and works as family for room and board. Work time expected varies according to the needs of the host and the accommodation offered. A typical arrangement would be four to six hours of work each day, with at least one full day off per week, in exchange for room and meals. While most hosts are family farms, other types can include non-farm facilities such as an educational retreat, cooperative community, or non-profit organization that practices sustainable living.

The host families themselves tend to live by self-sufficiency and simplicity. Volunteers should expect to do likewise. The accommodations range from tent camping to in-home stay, but generally fall in the category of rustic RV living. Count on the food being consistently home-grown fresh, healthy and delicious, and the company diverse and delightful.

A WWOOFer's daily activities

WWOOFers daily chores can include milking goats, feeding livestock, weeding gardens, clearing land, or harvesting produce. Hosts often use volunteers for special, larger projects such as building barns and rainwater catchment systems, establishing compost bins, erecting livestock fences, or creating raised vegetable beds. These projects provide golden opportunities for hands-on learning about alternative energy, straw bale construction, organic growing, bio-dynamics, and permaculture.



"I've WWOOFed about five times in the last few years, in Costa Rica and Hawaii," said Orlando resident Tiare Meer. "I've learned new kinds of plants, new uses of plants, how to use soil amendments, and how to take care of farm animals. I am always interested to learn [more about] edible plants and to



- come. (Most hosts have both email and phone access.)
- Check with hosts in advance about bringing children.
- Have all travel documentation prepared before traveling. Only a travel visa is required, as you are volunteering not officially working.
- Have adequate health and accident insurance in place before departing.
- Learn and use some phrases of the host country's language. Even if your hosts speak English, the locals who you interact with might not.
- Respect your hosts, and live as they do. Your long American shower won't do in a home that operates only on collected rainwater.
- Pack basic supplies: work boots, walking shoes, rain gear, work gloves, a flash light, and a translation dictionary.
- Bring a full supply of medications.
- Have access to an adequate amount of money to fund your trip: transportation, outside meals, hotels, and emergencies.
- Be open minded.

WWOOF organizations

National organizations

Joining a WWOOF National organization gives a participant



see alternative energy systems like solar, wind, or rainwater catchment."

The WWOOF community is unique and a refreshing change of pace. WWOOF hosts have a pioneer spirit that is inspiring, and WWOOFers exude an infectious love of adventure.

"Based on our own WWOOFers and those I have met on other farms, I think they are a special breed of people — willing to take on new experiences and comfortable adapting to new situations," said Shirley Silvasy, of [Econ Farm \(aka Simple Living Institute\)](#). "They are definitely gaining important skills and discovering new pathways into the world. Most are not 'avid' farmers or gardeners — more like avid travellers and explorers."

Simple Living Institute, Inc. is a group of Central Floridians who strive to create a stronger community that values the environment, personal health, and has a vision for a more self-sufficient lifestyle. From their sustainable organic farm along the Econolockhatchee River, in East Orlando, they offer free [workshops](#) on such topics as worm composting, Spring planting, soil amendments, container crops, mulching and composting.

The benefits of WWOOFing

The cultural exchange of WWOOFing exposes travelers to new places, new faces and new challenges. It is an experience enjoyed by people of all ages and backgrounds. During a typical experience, volunteers work alongside the host family as well as other volunteers from around the world. You will find that your hosts are gracious in sharing what they have and what they know, and your fellow volunteers delight in sharing the journey with you.

Where to WWOOF



La Pierre Qui Chante, S. France

"We get a lot of enquiries from the United States, and have had WWOOFers from New York; Wisconsin; and [two very strange girls from North Carolina](#)," said Marjie Edwards, France host. "Quite a few from Canada, also New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Brazil, Japan, England, Ireland, France. In these days of computers and Internet we get enquiries from all over. Egypt, Turkey and the Eastern block countries are the latest to contact us, as well as South America. Originally it was done through land post and took much longer to arrange."

access to hosts for the individual organization only.

- [Australia](#)
- [Austria](#)
- [Bulgaria](#)
- [Canada](#)
- [China](#)
- [Costa Rica](#)
- [Czech Republic](#)
- [Denmark](#)
- [Germany](#)
- Ghana
- [Hawaii](#)
- Ireland (northern)
- [Italy](#)
- [Japan](#)
- [Korea](#)
- [Mexico](#)
- [Nepal](#)
- [New Zealand](#)
- Slovenia
- [Sweden](#)
- [Switzerland](#)
- [Turkey](#)
- Uganda
- [United Kingdom](#)
- [USA](#)

Independent organizations

Joining WWOOF Independents gives a participant access to hosts in all of these countries.

- Argentina
- Bahamas
- Belgium
- Belize
- Brazil
- Cameroon
- Chile
- Commonwealth of Dominica
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- Finland
- France

To date, 25 countries have a [national organization](#), and 51 other countries are listed as "[independents](#)". Each organization manages its own application process and membership fees (between \$25 and \$50), and set guidelines for hosts. The WWOOF organization provides volunteers with a list of participating hosts; WWOOFers make their own arrangements directly with hosts. Additional services of the national organizations vary, but can include temporary insurance or other assistance. See [examples of WWOOF opportunities](#).

The history of WWOOF

WWOOF was established in 1971 by Sue Coppard, a secretary in London. Coppard wanted to create an opportunity for herself and others, who would not otherwise have the means, to experience rural life. The organization initially was called Working Weekends on Organic Farms. The name later was changed to Willing Workers on Organic Farms as demand grew for longer than weekend-only stays. Presently, the organization goes by the name World-wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, to better represent its international breadth and to avoid confusion about the program being strictly for volunteers.

The original program began with one host and four volunteers. Today, the world-wide hosts number in the tens of thousands. The program is much larger in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand — New Zealand alone list more than 1,000 hosts. The smaller WWOOF-USA contingent lists [10 hosts throughout Florida](#), three of which are in Central Florida. For more information about WWOOF, and links to individual WWOOF organizations, visit WWOOF.org.

[Read an account](#) of Tyme's personal WWOOF experience in South of France.

- French Polynesia
- Georgia
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Guinea, West Africa
- Holland
- Honduras
- Hungary
- Iceland
- India
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kenya
- Lebanon
- Malaysia
- Moldova
- Morocco
- Nicaragua
- Nigeria
- Norway
- Panama
- Peru
- Philippines
- Poland
- Portugal
- Republic of Ireland
- Romania
- Russia
- Serbia
- Singapore
- South Africa
- Spain
- Tanzania
- Thailand
- Togo
- Tonga
- Uganda
- Uruguay
- West Indies
- Zambia

For more information about WWOOF, visit WWOOF.org.