

Organic Farming Grows as a Form of Tourism



Travelers who want to give back to the communities that they visit, while also saving money, are increasingly signing up to work on organic farms throughout the world.

One organization that helps match travelers with host farms is World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms or WWOOF. Founded in Britain in 1971, WWOOF has attracted travelers to work on farms in exchange for food, accommodation and lessons in organic farming.

How does it work? WWOOF regularly publishes information that lists farms that agree to take volunteers. Travelers sign up with specific host farms in order to find out more about the farm and what they will be doing while there. It is becoming a popular method of travel for many with a recorded 15,700 “WWOOFers” scattered across Europe alone in 2009, compared to 6,400 in 2004. According to hosts from WWOOF Argentina, the experience of having travelers work on their farms allows them to share the culture with people from different countries while learning about other cultures as well.



“Working with people of different nationalities, we learn first hand what their culture is like, the way they communicate, listen, and even treat others.” They also said that although living together can be challenging at times, they found the WWOOFers to be “happy helpers.”

For the farms in Argentina that participate in the WWOOF project, which are mostly concentrated in the El Bolson area, hosts say that they keep most of the produce for themselves or as barter for goods that they need. One of the hosts said that he also provides produce for a small local market.

Aside from Europe and South America, the WWOOF organizations also offer farm stays in the Americas, Africa, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. As the Salt Lake Tribune reported, volunteers work a few hours a day doing chores that include milking goats, collecting honey and making compost. Most of the accommodations are very modest, some include sleeping in metal trailers or tents, but for WWOOFers, what they get in exchange is worth it.



The demographics of the volunteers consist mostly of recent college graduates and college students, but that doesn't mean that others won't join in as well. For instance even a 42-year-old mother of two and slow-food advocate, brought her 10 and 13-year-old children to do a volunteer farming in Italy over the summer and enjoyed it immensely.

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Date: 2010-01-25

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-organic-farming-grows-as-a-form-of-tourism-article1104>