

EVS call for short-term EVS in Kuterevo, Croatia

Mountain spirit – Strategic EVS for Nature Conservation

About the project

Mountain spirit is a project involving several EVS short and long-term volunteer exchanges in Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia and Bulgaria. It aims at combining efforts of international volunteers and local people from mountainous/rural areas for nature conservation activities in protected areas or species.

*The idea is to uncover **invisible links** between places and their inhabitant creatures, to take our responsibilities as humans towards all forms of life without forgetting to listen and learn from nature within and around.*

*To discover the **spirits of mountains in the Balkans** with preserved nature where bears and wolves roam through the wilderness, where there are still waters running freely, where people are resilient.*

The spirits of Velebit mountain, Croatia; Sharr mountain, Kosovo; Frushka gora, Serbia and Pirin mountain, Bulgaria. The spirit of the Bears....

Spirits which are also exposed to threats of destruction, exploitation and loss of the invisible connections that link all of us into one living system.

We believe that with small but consistent efforts another way is possible where people are not on the top, but rather live a peaceful co-existence with nature and themselves.

About the volunteer exchanges

Short-term volunteer exchanges in 2018:

- Croatia – Kuterevo Bear Refuge, Velebit Mountain (12 volunteers for 59 days) – July-August
- Kosovo – National Park Sharr Mountain (12 volunteers for 30 days) – July-August
- Kosovo – Prishtina Bear Sanctuary (14 volunteers for 15 days) – September
- Serbia – National Park Frushka Gora (12 volunteers for 15 days) - July
- Bulgaria – Nature School Vlahi, Pirin mountain (10 volunteers for 20 days) – June

Long-term volunteer exchanges in 2018 and 2019

- Croatia – Kuterevo Bear Refuge (3 volunteers for 8 months, German speaking volunteers preferred)
- Kosovo - National Park Sharr Mountain (2 volunteers for 6 months)
- Bulgaria – Nature School Vlahi, Pirin mountain (2 volunteers for 8 months in 2019)

About us

The project involves activities in mountains spread from West to East in the Balkans. [Velebit Association](#) [Kuterevo, Croatia](#); [GAIA Kosovo](#); [Vlahi Nature School](#) and [Cooperation for Voluntary Service](#) [Bulgaria](#) have been working together for some years now, aiming at making strong connections between people through learning from and acting for nature in the Balkans.

The Spirit of Kuterevo Refuge for Bears and People served as inspiration for the current project which involves new partners such as [Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia](#) and [Four Paws, Kosovo](#). For 40 years now Kuterevo has been a place where young people can learn and volunteer by being close to nature, bears, local people and their traditions. Thus experiencing and creating the [Kuterevo Spirit](#). We believe each place has its uniqueness and its messages to be listened to and respected, therefore exploring and developing its own spirit.



Kuterevo bear charisma

Short-term EVS in Kuterevo Bear Refuge, Croatia

20 July –16 September 2018



About Velebit Association Kuterevo, Croatia

VUK (Velebit Association Kuterevo) is a local organization that is situated in the Velebit mountain. A group of young enthusiasts started making changes in the village in 1978 by bringing international groups in Kuterevo. The aim of these gatherings was to get young people explore life outside of a city, to learn about and from nature, to experience simple and traditional lifestyle and to learn about themselves. Today, VUK mainly works on preservation of cultural and natural heritage and protection of bears habitat, which includes sustainable lifestyle.

Kuterevo is a small village, with around 550 inhabitants, where local lifestyle still depends on seasons and they know how to coexist with wilderness. Since the village is on 559 m altitude and is surrounded by forest, most local have experienced close encounter with wild animals.

Since 2002, Velebit Association Kuterevo has been running a Bear Refuge for orphan bears who have lost their mothers too early in their life. Due to this unusual Refuge, Kuterevo has become very popular in Croatia, but also worldwide. These bears are attracting visitors from all around the world and through presenting Refuge to them, we also present volunteering and messages of kindness, peace and coexisting between people and nature.

VUK has been hosting various voluntary activities though years, some of them more focused on hard work, while others had put emphasis on education. Every year there are more than 200 volunteers passing through this small, hard-to-reach village, where they invest their time and energy for the common idea of volunteers, which is creating a better society step by step. Along individual volunteering, VUK is hosting EVS volunteers (both long- and short-term), SCI workcamps, Youth Exchanges, German Red Cross, scouts groups...

About Velebit mountain

Velebit is a mysterious mountain, with vast landscapes and many endemic species. In the mountain there are 2 national parks, and the whole mountain was proclaimed a nature park and is under UNESCO Man and Biosphere programme. It is home to 3 (and only) large carnivores in Croatia – brown bear, wolf and lynx.

The current short-term group EVS will gather 12 volunteers for 59 days to support the work of VUK and to explore and document Velebit mountain natural biodiversity. Volunteers will be working with other volunteers on maintaining the facilities of the Refuge, but they will also be exploring the mountain and data for creation of 40 years of Velebit Association Kuterevo publication.

The short-term EVS will contribute to creating more nature conservation educational activities for local and international people in cooperation with the respective institutions in Velebit mountain. Moreover, it will bring forward and promote the idea of individual responsibility towards preserved and respected nature.



Examples of Tasks/Activities during the Service

- Support the work of Velebit Association Kuterevo:
 - Maintaining and fixing the facilities (paths, enclosures, constructions)
 - Taking care of animals
 - Working with other volunteers
- Creating and setting up exhibition (about Velebit, nature conservation and Refuge) for 40 year celebration
- Support the publication of 40 years of Velebit Association Kuterevo
- Organizing clean-up actions in the surrounding forest
- Exploring UNESCO Man and Biosphere program, Velebit Nature Park; 2 National Parks in Velebit
- Creating educational activities and implementing them
- Documenting natural biodiversity in Velebit mountain:
 - Wildlife and landscape research and documenting
 - Searching for tracks and traces of animal life



Learning opportunities:

- About Man and Biosphere Program of UNESCO
- About bears biology, mythology, ecology and protection
- about deep interconnectedness among all living beings and role of bears in the web of life
- Living in a small mountain community
- sustainable and simple living in an international community of volunteers with diverse background
- Facilitating workshops/educational activities
- How to deal with problems and finding solutions

What to expect	What not to expect
Active, challenging, inspiring 59 days Simple living conditions Sharing space with other volunteers Discovering local way of life, food, customs Vegan and vegetarian food Self-initiative Learning Inspiration	Tourism 2 month vacation Living in a big city Unlimited access to resources (shopping centers, unseasonal food, internet...)

Practicalities:



Duration: 20 July –16 September 2018 (59 days)

Arrival day: 20 July 2018

Departure day: 16 September 2018

Age: between 18 and 30 years

Country of residence: [Erasmus+ program countries](#)

Accommodation: In Kuterevo village, in houses of local people, in shared rooms (2-3 people per room).

Food: The EVS volunteers will cook for themselves in small teams; all volunteers in Kuterevo share meals together.

Pocket money: 118 EUR per month (4 EUR per day), received in the beginning of each month

Insurance: Volunteers will be insured by CIGNA. It is advised to make European Health Insurance (valid in all EU countries; free to make).

Travel to the EVS venue: Reimburse of the travel tickets will be done according to the rules of the Erasmus+ program based on distance calculation and at **receipt of original documents**. The environmental

way of travelling (train, bus, etc.) is strongly encouraged.

(Distance band calculator: 100-499 km = 180 euro, 500-1999 km = 275 euro, 2000-2999 km = 360 euro, 3000-3999 km = 530 euro, 4000-7999 km = 820 euro)



Profile of the volunteer:

We can imagine that interested volunteers are:

- volunteers should be ready for simple and communal way of living with dozen of other
- volunteers, interested in nature/bear conservation and coexistence with wilderness.
- hard working and flexible to the needs of Velebit Association Kuterevo
- previous experience with activities, related to nature protection is welcomed but not obligatory
- some skills in writting, photography and video could contribute to documenting the activities
- experience in running workshops or educational activities with international groups is a plus
- should be able to communicate openly, take over responsibilities and tasks agreed on and is flexible towards needs and priorities of the project.

How to apply?

Fill in the google form ([link here](#)) choosing “2-month long group EVS in Kuterevo Bear Refuge (Croatia)” and send your CV and specific motivation letter to kuterevo.evs@gmail.com.

Deadline: April 13th 2018