



# WAWAZONIA VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

#SHUAR & KICHWA CULTURE



## Volunteer work and cultural exchange

If you want to learn about other cultures and protect the Amazon rainforests, an adventure waits for you with the Wawazonia project. We offer volunteer placements all year round to people who actively want to engage in community development, conservation, and experience the Amazon, as well as learn about the life of the Shuar and Kichwa people.

For us, volunteering is not just about the work. It is also a cultural exchange and an opportunity to learn about indigenous culture, and volunteers are invited to participate in all community activities. You will also be allowed to visit other Shuar and Kichwa communities in the surrounding forest and explore the amazing rainforest located right next to the community.

Wawazonia differs from many other volunteer projects by being managed entirely by the local indigenous Shuar and Kichwa. Our boards of directors and staff are from the local communities. The vision is to achieve long-term sustainability of the projects by securing full ownership to the indigenous communities and gaining the capacity from administrating the projects. However, building sufficient managerial skills is a long-term process for subsistence farmers. In this process, volunteers are considered a crucial part of exchanging ideas and knowledge with the villagers and providing suggestions for improving the projects and general development of the indigenous communities. The purpose of the volunteer program is to strengthen the projects with personnel, ideas, and new ways to create community development in our partnering communities of Pastaza based on the sustainable use of biological resources and cultural norms.

**Travel tips:** We can also help you organize your trip to Ecuador if you contact us well in advance. We can help with transfers from the airport, book hotel in Quito, Spanish classes in Quito and transport to Puyo and the project. Please contact us for more information.



## THE CHALLENGE

Besides the continued struggle for lands and indigenous rights, the Shuar and Kichwa's biggest task is to find a way of living off the land that provides the cultural and modern necessities and, at the same time, doesn't take away the same possibilities for future generations. Although most indigenous people today are self-sufficient in food production, there still exists a need to earn money for their children's education, health services, transportation, clothes, and other consumer goods. Until now, the only possibility for the indigenous peoples to obtain the money they need has been through selling their timber, raising cattle, or growing non-native export crops.

This has had some negative consequences for the forest since clearing the rainforest is a prerequisite for these activities. Even those who sell their timber know it is wrong and are worried about what they will leave behind for their children, but many feel they have little choice. Often they don't have the knowledge and the resources to start up sustainable alternatives, and if nothing else happens, they have to choose cattle ranching.

Based on the visions and experiences of the villagers in our partnering communities, the Wawazonia project was started in 2021 as a platform to address the problems facing the villagers and surrounding communities. With support from the volunteers, the activities and projects of Wawazonia aim to stop the negative development and deforestation in the area and create a development path that can serve as a model for other communities.

The volunteer program is for people who want to actively engage in community and grass root development and conservation, get hands-on experience with the Amazon, and learn about the Shuar and Kichwa cultures. The program will not only let you travel to a new country, visit wonderful places and live with people from different cultures. You will also develop new skills, gain field experience and participate in activities to preserve the forests and improve the indigenous families' quality of life. All volunteers will live in one of our five communities with a local host family.

For us, volunteering is not just about the work. It is also a cultural exchange and an opportunity to learn about the culture, and volunteers will be living and sharing meals with local families and are invited to participate in all community activities. You will also be given the opportunity to visit other Shuar and Kichwa communities in the surrounding forest as well as explore the amazing 2600 acre reserve situated right next to the communities.

Volunteers are expected to arrange and finance their own airfares, transfer costs to the community, and take out travel insurance for medical and personal effects.

There are no application fees, but volunteers pay a program fee according to the number of weeks they will stay. The program fee includes accommodation, three meals a day, coordination, organization, and total support during the volunteer program.

# VOLUNTEER ARRANGEMENTS



## ACCOMMODATION

Volunteers live in one of the five Shuar and Kichwa communities that form the Wawazonia project. Volunteers are accommodated with a local host family in the community. The host family houses has private rooms, bathroom, toilet, etc. The host family prepares the meals, but volunteers are invited to help with the cooking.

## FOOD

Volunteers will be provided with three meals per day and free drinking water. Furthermore biscuits, sweets, beers and soft drinks can be purchased in a small shop in the community. Meals consist of a traditional Shuar diet supplemented with rice, pasta and vegetables. The main staples are manioc, plantain, sweet yam, rice, pasta, vegetables, chili and meat. Another staple part of the diet is the chicha. Vegetarians can be accommodated.

## REQUIREMENTS

There are no specific skills required to participate in the program. Those who have a passion to assist others, a flexible and positive attitude as well as capability to live under basic conditions can join the project. There are no age restrictions but young and elder volunteers should note that they will be living in tropical conditions with basic facilities. Volunteers under 15 years have to be accompanied by their parents.

## LANGUAGE SKILLS

There are no Spanish-level requirements for volunteering. We receive volunteers without any previous Spanish skills to volunteers with advanced Spanish skills and native Spanish speakers. Basic Spanish skills and active effort to learn will, however, improve your experience as the working language is Spanish and villagers speak little English. That way the project is also a great way of enhancing your Spanish skills.

Villagers are bilingual with Shuar as their first language and Spanish as the second - some understand basic English. All villagers are both fluent in Shuar and Spanish. The working language is Spanish, but villagers will often talk Shuar among each other. Villagers are very keen on teaching Shuar to any volunteers interested.



**NO AGENCIES  
NO APPLICATION FEES**



## **Project availability and commitment**

There are no set arrival/departure dates for the project. When you apply, you just inform us about your proposed participation dates. The project is available all year round. Although we accept volunteers for short periods of time (2 weeks minimum), we encourage volunteers to make a commitment for 4 weeks to gain more thorough insight and knowledge about the project and the Shuar. The arrival date is also flexible, and your stay first starts once you arrive in the community.



# PRICES

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There are no application fees, but volunteers pay a program fee according to the number of weeks they will stay. The program fee includes accommodation in the community, three meals a day, the coordination, organization, and support during the volunteer program. There are no mandatory expenditures besides the program fee. There might be smaller costs associated with trips to other communities. However, such trips are optional and normally arranged during weekends participation is not required. There is also a small shop in the community where it's possible to buy beers, coca-colas, biscuits and candy etc.

Weeks	Total cost
2 weeks	250 USD
3 weeks	300 USD
4 weeks	350 USD

Hereafter each additional week is 75 USD

## HOW TO APPLY

Find our application form [www.wawazonia.org/apply](http://www.wawazonia.org/apply)

Or simply send us an email to [info@shbnature.com](mailto:info@shbnature.com) with your name, age, country, when, and how long you wish to stay.

## HOW TO PAY

You pay once you arrive at the community to the coordinator in charge. If you wish to pay in advance, this can also be arranged

For more information, also download our **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS & TOURISTS**



