

Volunteer at Ride Andes

A different way to experience Ecuador

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to step away from the rush everyday life for a while and live somewhere remote, quiet and closely connected to nature?

Single, couple or two good friends welcome.

At Ride Andes, you can spend time on our small horse farm in the Ecuadorian Andes, surrounded by horses, dogs, wide open spaces and beautiful mountain views. It is a simple way of life, with fresh air, plenty of outdoor work and a close connection to the animals and the land.

Location: set in rolling hills, the nearest neighbour is 350metres down the hill, the village is 3.5km away - some people find this remote, others not so. We have good cell phone coverage and internet connection.

Life on the farm

Our farm is just outside Cayambe, around an hour and a half north of Quito and is home to our 13 horses and three dogs. The days are varied. There are animals to care for, fences to move, fields to maintain and always something that needs doing. Some jobs are routine; others depend on the weather, the animals or whatever project happens to be underway.

You will be working alongside our two local team members, Guido and Andres. You might spend part of the morning feeding the horses and walking the dogs, and later find yourself repairing a fence, watering plants or cleaning tack.

Your actual job will be adapted depending on skill sets; full training/explanations will be given when you get here.

In return, you get to live in a beautiful part of Ecuador with beautiful mountain views, get to know the animals and the people who work here, disconnect, slow down and experience the rhythm of life on a small Andean farm.

Two ways to join us

We currently offer two different volunteer opportunities at Ride Andes:

Farm & animal care

This is the right position if you enjoy animals, outdoor work and a varied day. You will help with the everyday running of the farm, working alongside Guido and Andres. This can include caring for the horses and dogs, helping with fences and fields, keeping things tidy and organised, and taking on small maintenance jobs. You may also help with cooking or preparing meals from time to time. We can adapt the tasks to your interests, experience and skills. Some people enjoy spending more time with the horses and dogs, while others prefer practical maintenance, gardening, eco or hands-on projects around the farm.

You do not need to be an experienced horse rider. In fact, riding is not part of the volunteer position. If you are a very experienced and confident rider, trained in 'English style' riding and competent at schooling horses on then there will be an opportunity to ride, depending on the time of the year. But if your main reason for volunteering is to ride horses every day, this is probably not the right experience for you, unless you have the necessary riding skills.

What matters most to us is that you have a genuine interest in horses' welfare, are reliable, practical, don't mind getting your hands dirty and genuinely enjoy being around animals and living in the countryside.

We are always looking for ways to make the farm more sustainable and self-sufficient. If you have experience or an interest in permaculture, gardening or eco projects, there may be opportunities to put your ideas into practice. For example, we are hoping to set up a medicinal/native plant garden, organic fruit and vegetable greenhouse, rain collecting system, compost etc. The sky's the limit!

House & dog sitting

If you are looking for a quieter way to experience life at Ride Andes, house sitting could be a good fit.

The main responsibility is looking after three very friendly dogs – Erika, Dora and Stanley. This includes taking them for walks, feeding them twice a day, brushing them and giving them plenty of company.

There are also a few things to look after around the property, including watering the plants. From time to time, you may also help with feeding the horses, but you will not be responsible for looking after the horses and fields on your own. One of our long-term, trusted team members lives on the property and takes care of the horses and the farm.

The house-sitting position therefore offers a more independent and relaxed experience, while still giving you the chance to live surrounded by horses, dogs and the mountains of the Ecuadorian Andes. It is particularly suited to someone who enjoys animals, appreciates a peaceful rural setting and is comfortable taking responsibility for a property while its owner is away.

Your home in the Andes

Volunteers stay in our separate volunteer house on the farm. You will have your own private bedroom or share a twin room (to be confirmed at time of inquiry), with access to a bathroom, kitchen, Wi-Fi and a washing machine. There is plenty of outdoor space to enjoy.

For both positions, we provide food for three meals a day. You can prepare your own meals in the volunteer house, so you have the freedom to cook for yourself and settle into your own routine.

When you're not working

There is plenty to discover beyond the farm. Cayambe is a lively Andean town, and the better-known town of Otavalo, with its famous indigenous market is also within reach.

Volunteers have one and a half days off per week, which can be accumulated if you would like to take a longer break and explore more of Ecuador. The surrounding area is ideal for walking and exploring, with mountain landscapes, waterfalls and small communities to discover. Or you can simply stay at the farm. Take a walk with the dogs, sit in the garden with a book, enjoy the mountain views or do absolutely nothing for a while. For many people, that slower pace is part of the appeal.

A chance to experience everyday Ecuador

Volunteering at Ride Andes is not about ticking off tourist attractions. It is about spending enough time in one place to get a feel for how people live and work here. You will work alongside local team members, practice your Spanish every day and have the chance to learn about horses, dogs, farming and rural life in the Andes.

Is it right for you?

If you are comfortable around horses and dogs, enjoy being outdoors and are curious about life in another part of the world, it can be a very rewarding experience. You don't have to be an experienced rider. You simply need to be willing to get involved.

We have found Spanish speaking volunteers find the experience even more enriching.

We especially enjoy hosting mature and older volunteers, who often bring plenty of life experience, practical skills and wonderful stories to share. We also welcome couples and friends who would like to experience farm life together. This is not a holiday on horseback. It is an opportunity to become part of everyday life on a working horse farm and experience a side of Ecuador that most visitors never see.

Interested in volunteering with Ride Andes?

If the idea of spending some time in the Ecuadorian Andes appeals to you, we'd love to hear from you. Tell us a little about yourself, your experience with animals or practical work, when you would like to come and which of the two opportunities interests you.

Get in touch at: volunteer@rideandes.com

Requirements

We are looking for volunteers who are independent, reliable and happy to take responsibility. You don't need to have professional experience with horses or farming, but you should be willing to learn new skills, comfortable around animals and willing to get involved in practical, outdoor work.

For the farm & animal care position, we ask that you:

- Are preferably 25 or older. Occasionally exceptions made depending on your experience. We enjoy hosting mature volunteers, couples and friends.
- Speak fluent English. Basic conversational Spanish is a real advantage, as you will be working alongside our local team and need to be able to communicate about everyday tasks.
- Can stay for at least one month. Longer stays are particularly welcome, as it takes time to settle into the rhythm of the farm and become familiar with the animals and daily routines.

If you are staying for several months and have skills that could be useful to Ride Andes beyond the volunteer position, there may also be opportunities to discuss longer-term paid work. This depends on your experience, the needs of the business and a mutual agreement.