

EVS call for long-term EVS in Kuterevo Bear Refuge , Croatia

Mountain spirit – Strategic EVS for Nature Conservation

About the project

Mountain spirit – Strategic EVS for Nature Conservation 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.

The project aims at evaluating existing and creating new volunteer programs where volunteers' feedback and suggestions will be expected. Involvement from the EVS will be as well encouraged into performing a critical review on the effectiveness and impact from volunteer activities performed so far for protection of endangered species and habitats.

About the volunteer exchanges

Short-term volunteer exchanges in 2018:

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

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)

Mountain spirit – Strategic EVS
in Nature Conservation is
co-funded by Erasmus+



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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 - CVS 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 **Birds Protection and Study Society, 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.

About Kuterevo refuge for bears and people



Velebit Association Kuterevo (in Croatian, Velebitska udruga Kuterevo) is a local non-governmental organization that was founded in 1995 and works on **preservation of natural and cultural heritage in the region**. The main activities of the organization are the care of resident bears and the bear facilities within the Bear Refuge, informative and educational work with visitors and running the Volunteers' Station.

In 2018 it will be 40 years since Velebit has been proclaimed as UNESCO Man and Biosphere reserve and also 40 years since Kuterevo community started hosting international youth groups.

The **Bear Refuge** was founded in 2002 as a local initiative supported by experts in the field of nature conservation. Its mission is to provide a **refuge for orphaned bear cubs**, to **protect the bear' habitat** and to **promote sustainable lifestyles** and living **traditions** of the local

mountains community which have coexisted with bears and wilderness for centuries. Since then, volunteers from all around the world started coming to help and learn, as well as thousands of visitors who wanted to get more information on issues related to bears and nature. This constant, but healthy dynamic has influenced livelihoods, but also cultural exchange in the local community and the wider region, and resulted as unique local, small, but strong initiative which became a brand. Kuterevo became symbol for bear protection, volunteering for nature and preserved tradition.

Working closely with the Bear Refuge, the project of **Volunteers' Station** has been initiated in 2004. The Refuge became a place of gathering and learning for volunteers, families, schools, and other guests, as well as a shelter for people who want to (re)discover life with nature. During spring and summer the Refuge hosts many local and international short-term and long-term volunteers.

Three EVS volunteers will be focused on celebration of 40 years of Kuterevo Spirit and 40 years since Velebit Mountain has been proclaimed as UNESCO MAB reserve. The volunteers will also support creation of publication which will include stories from volunteers, and especially EVS which were one of the main foundation of the volunteering program in Kuterevo in the last 10 years.

Profile of the volunteer:

- It is more than welcome, but not obligatory, that the volunteer has some previous experience in coordination of groups or workcamps and different types of outdoor work and activities.
- should have interest or experience in photo, video or story documenting
- 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.
- volunteers should be ready for a very intensive summer,
- should be able to communicate openly, take over responsibilities and tasks agreed on and is flexible towards needs and priorities of the project.



Examples of Tasks/Activities

In relation to the main activity, the volunteers will:

- research about UNESCO MAB, Velebit and Kuterevo refuge
- collect stories from previous EVS and other volunteers
- support creation of the publication

Some of the general tasks during their service will include:

- maintaining facilities in Bear Refuge (physical work)
- support coordination of short-term volunteers and international summer groups
- taking care of animals
- welcoming visitors, families and groups
- working with local community
- creating small personal projects

Learning possibilities:

- to communicate in Croatian language
- about bear biology, ecology, mythology, conservation aspects
- about deep interconnectedness among all living beings and role of bears in the web of life
- sustainable and simple living in an international community of volunteers
- living with other people with very diverse backgrounds
- how to deal with problems and solutions

Additional information

Experience of previous volunteers in Kuterevo:

Short term EVS in summer 2017: at [beginning](#), [middle](#) and the [end](#) of their service. More about volunteering and EVS in Kuterevo can be also found on [kuterevo](#) blog. On [Kuterevo volunteers YouTube channel](#) you can watch some of the videos made by volunteers.

What to expect	What not to expect
Simple living conditions	Living in a big city
Sharing space with other volunteers	Unlimited access to resources (shopping centers)
Discovering local way of life, food, customs	Tourism
Walking, hiking even in bad weather	
Vegetarian food	
Self-initiative	
Inspiration	

Practicalities:

Duration: March or April – October or November 2018 (8 months)

Accommodation: In a shared house with other volunteers in Kuterevo

Food: is prepared together with other volunteers in the Volunteers' station (vegetarian, seasonal)

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

Insurance: The volunteer will be insured by the CIGNA insurance plan

Local transport: public transport

Language support: books provided, classes with local teacher

Travel to the EVS venue: up to 290 EUR (depending on the country of origin of the volunteer), the environmental way of traveling (train, bus, etc.) is strongly encouraged. Visa costs will be fully covered.

Interested volunteers should fill in the [online application form](#) and send their specific motivation letter and CV to kuterevo.evs@gmail.com ideally before **15th of February**.