



Newsletter 81 Spring 2011

WWOOF Australia

Celebrating 30 years of WWOOFing in 2011

Greetings from WWOOF HQ

WWOOF Australia is 30 Years Young!

Way back in 1981, when WWOOF Australia began, we had 45 hosts and 45 WWOOFers.

I started at the WWOOF office in 1997. I remember when life in the WWOOF office was much simpler:- there were no credit card machines, email or website facilities, and it was a 44 km return trip to the nearest photocopier. The data base wasn't networked and if you wanted to use it you had to queue up. The phone had a cord and there were no mobile phones. The office was a very small room in Lionel and Valerie's house (founders of WWOOF Australia) where you had to ask the person behind you to pull their chair in if you wanted to stand up from your desk.

In the 1997/98 financial year there were 6424 WWOOFers and 669 Hosts; the WWOOF Book was 174 pages and was printed on conventional paper using standard ink. We had various Host regions within each state; however Hosts were not sorted geographically, they were placed in their region in the order in which they joined and there was no index .

Today, with modern technology, we charge WWOOFers in their own currency, have email, a web site, an online Bulletin Board, Face book, Google Maps and Translations. The phone system seeks out an appropriate line to use and has headsets for hands free use. I have a mobile phone and a mobile modem so I have internet wherever I have phone coverage.

We now have two banks of networked computers and six dedicated people working tirelessly in a stand alone mud brick building, with a floor area at least ten times the size of our original "office".

In the 2010/11 financial year there were 12,150 WWOOFers and 2287 Hosts, the WWOOF Book is now over 420 pages and is printed on recycled paper with soy based ink on presses using solar power. Hosts are sorted into various regions and by postcode to ensure Hosts geographically "next" to each other are next to each other in the book, and this is indexed by town names. I could go on, but I think you have got the picture; there have been massive changes in the office over the last 14 years.

We have wonderful Hosts who have been in the program since the very early beginnings who have experienced the changes in their WWOOFers over the years, and have made many lifelong friendships along the way. Many Hosts tell us they could not have achieved what they have without the help of their WWOOFers. We thank and congratulate all of our Hosts for their ongoing contributions to the WWOOF Program, we understand how difficult it can be to be a WWOOF Host, and without our excellent WWOOF Hosts we would not have a program.

Our fantastic WWOOFers have contributed in so many ways, more than the cultural exchange and the daily practical help they give to our Hosts. Thirty years ago 'organics' was not commonplace, but with their help it has become mainstream. WWOOFers have taken the knowledge and practical experience they have gained while WWOOFing home with them. Many tell us how this experience has changed the direction of their lives. WWOOFers take with them the spirit of WWOOF and some have been inspired to initiate or work in WWOOF Groups in their own country, some have started or joined organisations such as Organic Growers groups, Community Gardens, Permacult groups and one WWOOFer even began a Donkey Sanctuary.

WWOOF Australia has consistently worked with WWOOF groups all over the world, assisting fledgling WWOOF groups to get on their feet and grow into solid organisations in their own right. We continue to be part of a network of over 50 WWOOF Groups supporting each other and helping to grow the concept of WWOOF world wide.

WWOOF Membership

\$65.00 single

****Hosts receive a \$10 commission for each WWOOFer that they call us to sign up! (collect \$65.00, pay us \$55.00)****

Host Membership

New Host \$60.00
Annual Renewal \$50.00
Concession \$35.00
Certified Organic FREE*

***Host Registration & Renewal are free on receipt of a copy of your current certificate from an AQIS Certifying Body**

WWOOF

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www.wwoof.com.au**

News, Notices and Interesting Bits

The Early Days of WWOOF Australia

I lived in Melbourne until 1987, and was involved in various Organic and Alternative things during the eighties. I read lots of Alternative magazines from overseas, and it was in an early copy of Resurgence that I first read about the English Wwoof scheme.

WWOOF (Working Weekends on Organic Farms) started in England in 1971 when the first WWOOFers spent a weekend helping on an organic farm in exchange for their keep. The organization was initially called Working Weekends on Organic Farms, but we changed the Aussie one to Willing Workers on Organic Farms in 1982 after people in Australia asked "why only weekends?"

In the late 1970s I talked to quite a few people about the WWOOFing idea, but no-one seemed to want to take up the ball and run with it. One day at the end of 1980 I was reading the Tasmanian Organic Grower, and there was a story from a young lass who had been WWOOFing in the UK and was praising the whole idea to heaven. She ended with a plea for someone to start a WWOOF scheme here in Australia. Fed up waiting for someone else to do it I made room in my busy schedule, and wrote there and then to that magazine saying WWOOF Australia now existed. It is no surprise that our first hosts were in Tasmania, but so widely popular was that magazine in 1981 that within a few weeks we had hosts in many parts of Australia, and WWOOFers by the dozen.

(More next newsletter)

Lionel Pollard, Founder of WWOOF Australia

Why do WWOOFers Join WWOOF?

WWOOF has started asking WWOOFers why they joined WWOOF. Here is what some had to say:

- To understand how farmers grow their organic plant.
Hung-Jung, i11/82405 Taiwan
- Experience in Organic Farming, particularly Permaculture.
Sarah, i11/81605 Australia
- Experience sustainability in food production & meet friendlies.
Dominique, i11/82841 Germany
- New experiences – learning about Australian farming methods. Love of outdoors.
Peter, i11/81590 UK
- I want to do something more Australian, be part of something real.
Markus, i11/80153 Sweden
- To meet people and share experiences with us, to work in the country, to learn the language, to travel easier & cheaper, learn how to better live with nature, to enjoy the time and live with a person of another culture and to do different tasks and learn something different from what I know.
Christine, i11/4264 France
- I am joining WWOOF to combine my love of travel with my interest in sustainability issues. I would love to gain hands-on experience through farm work and sustainable living now that I have completed an undergraduate degree in environmental science. Additional important reasons include the opportunity to go surfing, to enjoy a year of budget travel in a beautiful country, to meet local Australians, and to explore the unique flora & fauna. It also allows me to partake in a rewarding experience while considering my options for future career directions and graduate studies.
Kim, i11/3869 Canada
- A great opportunity to travel and support the right thing!
Nina, i11/82559 Germany
- I wish to learn about the real Australia and not just the side that tourists usually see. I feel that the help I can provide will leave a mark, as small as it may be, and that my experience will not only benefit the host & myself, but bring a lasting effect through word of mouth that I shall surely spread.
Michael, i11/3770 Canada
- I like to go places and do new stuff with lovely people. I am in love with nature. I like WWOOF. **This will be my fourth WWOOF book.**
Rachel i11/3817 Australia

- I would like to join WWOOF because I feel it will afford me a unique volunteer opportunity. WWOOF provides a combination of learning experiences, travel & volunteering, which I find extremely appealing. It provides volunteers, such as myself, with a chance to become familiar with some of the techniques employed by organic farmers in planting, growing & harvesting crops. Experience in agriculture is a skill which translates well from one geographic area to another, & as such, I believe will be an invaluable tool as I continue to volunteer in the future. As rewarding as volunteering is, in and of itself, it would be less than honest of me to pretend that the chance to travel, not just to another country, but to another continent, is not also very attractive. I have travelled in the USA, and Mexico as part of the volunteer construction project, but I have never had the opportunity to travel so far, for so long, to do something which I feel is so worthwhile. Finally, the volunteering aspect of the organisation is also very appealing to me. There are innumerable places at which one can acquire agricultural knowledge, but I feel the opportunity to gain such knowledge as a volunteer offers its own unique benefits. I have been volunteering in my own community for some time and have found the work I have done, the camaraderie. I have shared, and the gratitude of those I have helped to be enormously rewarding, in ways that a paid position does not offer. I am very much looking forward to expanding my volunteer experience in a radically new setting, and the opportunity to share that experience with people from half a world away.
Marco, i11/3839 Finland
- One of my life long goals is to live on a farm. I love the smell of the earth, the sound of the animals in the morning and the close relationship I can have with nature. All my life I have lived in big cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles; however as I get older, I'm inching toward settling in a more peaceful place. Currently, I live Kauai, Hawaii, one of the most rural islands in the Hawaiian island chain.
Vee i11/3572 USA
- Based on great past WWOOFing experience for 2nd Visa extension.
Tom, i11/91202 UK
- I see WWOOF as a perfect way to know the real Australia and Australian people, and get some experiences I can't ever get by living on hostels etc. I backpacked with friends in SE Asia and the best experiences... was where we were close to the local people and felt like we were experiencing the real culture... I can't wait to spend 4 months in your beautiful country with your awesome people.
Karina, i11/4847 Denmark
- Tried it unofficially and liked it
Daniel i11/90377 Canada

Feedback from WWOOF Hosts and WWOOFers

This first one is from one of our original SA Hosts!

I enjoy being a WWOOF Host. I do find it a lucky dip where personality & connection make the difference between having a great participation in the household or just a worker. Mostly I get lucky. In 2009 a WWOOFer injured his hand resulting in \$5000 of surgery & hospital care. I was really impressed with the responsiveness of the WWOOF insurance scheme, something I considered 'Mickey Mouse' until I needed it. And was even more impressed & reassured by the support of the WWOOF office staff.

SA036

Our WWOOFing experience has been great. We always seem to get good workers and enjoy showing them a bit of Australian life. As we get older and less able to do heavy work, some of the young people are of invaluable assistance. The longer we are hosts the more experienced we get at managing our introductions so that arrangements are clear, there are no misunderstandings and everyone is comfortable & relaxed. Thanks for a great organisation!

WW102

I had a Japanese guy who wanted to stay for 3 months but spoke little English. Combined with his continual smoking, loud snorting, inability to cook and keeping himself locked in his room on the internet, it made for a much shorter stay. I had to laugh when I asked him to wash dishes & he used the spray bottle of surface cleaner. The plates were very shiny!!

VM155

WWOOFing is the best thing in the planet! I love it and couldn't think of travelling any other way!

Ximena, i11/4266

I have had such a great time with my WWOOFers these last couple of years. It has meant the difference between me keeping my land or losing it. I am so grateful!

VG074

After 10 years, 118 WWOOFers and 2 trips overseas visiting 24 of my WWOOFer friends, I thank my lucky stars for the day I joined the WWOOF family!

QN175

We enjoy the program very much & believe that you get back what you put into it. To get the most from our WWOOFers we must be prepared to share just as much of ourselves and our lifestyle as we expect back from them. They are not caretakers, they are here for cultural exchange, to learn & to experience Australian family life. Keep up the good work.

NT054

This is my first year as a host and I really enjoyed the 7 WWOOFers who stayed. My children and I were able to expand our minds to the lives & cultures of others. We had a ball & I know our WWOOFers did, too as they are still in touch. Looking forward to the year & the WWOOFers it brings.

NT123

First of all, when we are WWOOFer, it takes a long time to get their answers when we contact farms. The time we wait can be more than 2 weeks or maybe no answer at all. That is why we have to start searching hosts at least 1 month because we have to wait for answers! Before I found a farm I contacted about 40 hosts but only a few answered.

Mayuka, i11/83965

We had a great mother & daughter 'WWOOF team' from Tasmania who worked tirelessly in the garden, clearing paddocks and generally being part of the family. I was very impressed when they wove a vegetable collecting basket out of the native vines which we have been removing from the paddocks. I remember them always when I use the basket!

NM129

My German WWOOFers often get their sentences back to front. Being a German speaker I could understand them. Instead of saying 'what do the cows eat?', Sandra asked "What eats the cows?" My response in a growling voice was "Lions & Tigers!" We all burst into fits of laughter! I actually went to Peru with Sandra & her family- a great experience and a lifelong friendship was made.

NB088

Our favourite WWOOFer was an 18 year old German, Isabelle who was invaluable to us when I was ill. She stayed about 2 months, came on holidays with us, and was really part of the family. She was an extremely fast learner, mastered power tools, drove our truck, designed & built our grey water irrigation

system AND was beautiful with our girls to boot.

VM191

I think WWOOF is a wonderful, benevolent & an important organisation of so many healthy & happy links between people. That we can manage relationships without involving money is very empowering. I have been either a WWOOFer or a host for over 25 years on and off. It has brought so much good experience and help/fun/challenge. Yesterday, 2 WWOOFers helped in the teeming rain to cement some wobbly hardwood posts. with goats running amuck this was just great. Tonight we are planning a lovely meal before they go to Sydney.

QN130

My excellent French WWOOFer went up to feed the horses one morning, but came back and asked me why I had blind folded the horses? The were wearing their fly veils, which they definitely could see out of!

WP120

I'm 64 yet have made a lifelong friend, probably the type of son I wished I had had. He has been here 3 times over 14 months after staying 2 months the first time. A 22 year old French man named Tony. I also believe I have helped him a lot with his issue of "what do I do with my life". I have not had a bad WWOOFer yet.

TN134

Another year with a great bunch of WWOOFers. Hard to choose but Charlie Chuckles from Taiwan has to be in the leaders group. He learnt to play the mandolin while with us and his determination was most inspirational. He sat under the gum trees strumming his 3 chords over and over for hours. He is a graphic designer and sent us a brilliant page of his work with rainbows, music and a magnificent mandolin tree. Thank you for the opportunity to once again meet the many & varied young travellers who visit our shores.

VB046

Many thanks to a fantastic organisation. I have met so many gorgeous young people and made long lasting friendships. Several return regularly to visit and I am still in contact with my French WWOOFer of 4 years ago. My WWOOFers have made it possible for me to continue farming my organic avocado, soft fruit & Feijoa orchards, my veggie gardens, even though I am an older woman living on my own. My deepest appreciation to them and WWOOF

WS094

We have been hosts for 15 years now. Our 2 children have grown up with WWOOFers and it has been a way of life for our family. We have enjoyed all the cultural exchange and made many friends over the years. I couldn't tell you how many nationalities we have hosted! To date we have had 1000 WWOOFers, as we have a collection of guests books telling amazing stories.

SA023

I have returned to my home in China after a very happy first time WWOOFing experience in Australia. Thank you for organizing it & helping with individual requests. My Australian experience was infinitely enriched by living and working with local people, hearing their stories and telling them mine... Thank you for everything. I hope to return for more!

Weiwei, i11/82065

I have had 3 great WWOOFers this last summer and none of them have wanted to leave. Each one staying for several weeks. It has been a great help to me and they have enjoyed themselves too. Thankyou!

NA116

We had 2 Chinese WWOOFers, very concerned about health & safety, they had come from living in Hong Kong high rise apartments & knew nothing about farms or bush. We read them the usual lecture about barbed wire, thistles, sunburn, spiders & snakes. A red-bellied black snake shed it's skin near the compost so I picked it up as I thought the girls would be interested & gave it to them. They didn't know what it was, so I explained. As they realised what it was, a look of terror covered their faces, they screamed, dropped the skin & left the room. I explained it was not harmful but they didn't want to come into the same room & refused to touch it. Some weeks later we had 2 girls from Denmark. They thought the skin very interesting & took it with them to show their friends!

NH123

Continued from page 1

The committed Staff at the WWOOF Office have shown an unshakable dedication to the concept of WWOOF and of excellent personal service to Hosts and WWOOFers alike. They have faced the challenges of changing technology and have implemented changes to keep pace with this fast changing world, all the while keeping in mind that many of our Hosts do not use this technology and nor do they want to. The staff are the backbone of WWOOF and I thank them for their passion and hard work.

It has been a fantastic 30 years, we have all enjoyed the journey and look forward to the next 30 years with great anticipation.

Garry Ainsworth, Managing Director

A Message from Margo Lipman

Margo Lipman, from James Cook University, has researched WWOOFing in Australia since 2009. A draft version of her chapter entitled: "Make haste slowly: Environmental Sustainability & Willing Workers on Organic Farms" is for a book to be published by Channel View Publications with a working title: "Slow Mobilities: Experiencing Slow Travel & Tourism", edited by Simone Fullagar, Kevin Markwell & Erica Wilson. To view her publication see: http://wwooof.com.au/images/Make_Haste_Slowly.pdf

Climate change has been a popular topic recently and being "green" seems to be in vogue. More and more people are becoming aware of environmental issues and seeking to reduce their negative impacts on the earth. Nevertheless, the question remains as to how we move beyond the rhetoric, paying more than just lip-service to the concept of sustainability. I believe that the WWOOF program has an important role to play in turning environmental awareness into action, by allowing travellers to explore new ways of living and new ways of thinking about how they inhabit this world. WWOOFers are often young people at critical junctions of their lives: our future leaders at a time when they are most open to new ideas and change. For those already interested in sustainable lifestyles, WWOOFing is often used as a way to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and self-confidence. The opportunity for the greatest impact, however, lies with those who are not already committed to the environment. For these travellers, the WWOOF experience can truly be life-changing. As was incisively summed-up by one former WWOOFer, "I have become a better person, to myself, to others, and to the planet in general".

How Can Hosts Sign Up WWOOFers?

When hosts have an unregistered WWOOFer wanting to visit, the hosts can join them up simply by checking their photo ID and contacting our office. We will arrange a membership for that person while giving the host a \$10 commission for taking the trouble to join new members, Hosts collect \$65 & pay us \$55. A WWOOF book will be sent to the host property for the WWOOFer.

WWOOF Membership Cards

We have recently begun issuing WWOOF Membership cards to some WWOOF members if they are travelling with a friend who has a current book. The card is their proof of membership and should be presented to Hosts on arrival. We issue the next edition of the book, when it has been printed, to the card holder. Feel free to call during office hours or e-mail us any time to confirm a WWOOF membership if you are unsure. WWOOF membership cards are only available directly from the WWOOF Office.

Second Working Holiday Visas

Check the Host Resources page on our website for information about how to work out the number of days to sign for and other information about eligible postcodes and specified work required. Hosts need to be diligent in recording the WWOOFers visits in their Guestbooks as DIAC does contact many hosts to verify the number of days signed for. Hosts no longer need an ABN to sign.

WWOOF Host Gathering, Kyabram 2011

During March, I got busy arranging a WWOOF host gathering for the VG region hosts. This was to be held in early April at the Memorial Gardens in Kyabram. After collating all the emails, info and answers, the date was set and I got busy gathering all the essentials to make the BBQ run smoothly. On the day we were very blessed to have Garry and Marie come all the way from W Tree to attend. Thank you both for being so gracious. Although host numbers were low (due to prior commitments) we had a beautiful day, enjoyed great conversations and shared stories of our hosting experiences. At this stage I am planning a second VG region gathering for November 2011 and hope that it is as enjoyable as the last. **Best Wishes, Annette Morris VG091**

Back To Basics Expo, Kyabram 2011

During April, 2011 Kyabram held it's Back2Basics Expo. By way of giving a little back to the WWOOF Australia organisation, I offered to man a stall for them. I set about making posters with photos of WWOOFers I have hosted, during the 4 years I have been a host, put together some displays and waited for the onslaught of people.

I was kept busy answering questions and explaining what being a host has meant to me and how much I have grown as a person for my experiences. By the end of the 2 day event, I had spoken to large groups of people and found that awareness of WWOOFing was wider than I had been aware. **Annette Morris VG091**

If undeliverable, please return to:

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