

INFO SHEET: EXPERIENCE AUSTRIA

Project: Kindergruppe Gatschhüpfer (mood jumper)

■ WHAT IS IT?

The Kindergruppe Gatschhüpfer (the German word for mood jumper) is a nature Kindergarten where children are outside in the nature the whole year.

In May 2009 a group of parents got sick of the normal kindergarten where the children spend most of the day inside assuming that milk is growing in the supermarket.

So we founded the "Gatschhüpfer" (Austrian for mud hopper). In this nature kindergarten, our children play outside during most of the day and discover grassland and forest. They learn a lot about the animals around them, plant their own flowers and trees and watch them grow.

The group currently consists of 14 children and always 2 kindergarten teachers, so our children spend their day in a very familiar and cosy atmosphere. In total there are three kindergarten teachers (Alexandra, Peter and Amadeo) who alternately take care of the children. One day a week, heimo, a zoologist from the University of Vienna spends his day with the children and discovers with them the flora and fauna.

In case of bad weather conditions the children have the possibility to warm up or get dry inside a large mongolian nomad tent (a yurt) or their nearby kindergarten room.

Due to the fact that the children have the possibility to run when and where they want, the aggression level is very low in our group. The kindergarten teachers have studied the pedagogy of Montessori, Motopedagogy and Naturepedagogy. All three forms of pedagogy aim at developing the autonomy and independence of the child. The children learn self respect and respect for others and the nature around them. In and with the group they learn to cope with conflicts and to establish relationships.

The kindergarten teachers offer various project activities to the children along the seasons. A good example is the winter project: how do survive men and animal during tough winter times? The children learn how to dress properly during cold times and what different sorts of material we can use to warm us (wool, leather etc). They also got to know how

other nations survive in winter, e.g. the Inuit. And because the children have been very enthusiastic about this, they have built themselves a big iglu.

It was also very interesting for the group to discover the tracks of the animals in the snow and to watch the birds at their feeding station. The children wanted to know everything about winter sleep and they were quite surprised to hear that some birds leave for holiday and don't come back before spring.

■ WHERE IS IT?

The Project is located in Vienna, capital of Austria. Vienna has 1,6 million inhabitants. Located in the centre of the new Europe and heavily influenced by it's history as the capital of the Austrian Hungarian Empire, it builds a bridge between east and west. Many historical buildings offer loads of sight seeing opportunities, but fortunately Vienna is also influenced by modern times: it has a lively night life, many opportunities to practice sport and a large cultural programme.

The kindergarten itself is located on a big grassland area in the Vienna Forest. On the way to the kindergarten, the children pass by forest and grassland and stop here and there to take a brief look for special stones or animals. When they have arrived on their grassland, they are free to climb on trees or to play hide and seek in the forest. I

■ WHAT IS GRENZENLOS DOING?

Grenzenlos is a Vienna-based NGO different from the project. We are supporting the project and the intern/volunteer before and during her/his stay, and we are organizing the logistics.

Grenzenlos identifies and prepares hosting projects, organises the accommodation, offers a basic introduction and orientation for the participant after arrival, helps with finding language courses if needed, offers a mentoring program, helps with all administrative matters and conducts the evaluation meeting at the end of stay.



■ JOB DESCRIPTION

Your day starts at around 8.30. You meet the group at the metro station Heiligenstadt and together with the two kindergarten teachers you take the children up by bus to the Vienna Forest. At bus station Cobenzl everybody leaves the bus.

Enjoying the beautiful view on Vienna, the children sing their morning song and welcome everybody. Then the group takes a walk through the grassland and the nearby forest. For sure you will find some interesting stones or animals to watch on your way and maybe there is still enough time to play on one of the beautiful playgrounds. If the walk takes a long time, everybody arrives hungry. So it's time to have a picnic.

The walk ends at the kindergarten grassland. One of the team starts the fire to heat the Mongolian yurt while the others discover the huge grassland area together with the children. There is enough time for the children to find their own games. If they want to, they can also stay around the tent area, where you can help them building a big sand castle or cooking a magic pot for witches.

Around 12 o'clock it's time for lunch. One of the team prepares the kindergarten room for lunch (arrange tables and chairs and set the table, then fetch the meals from the canteen), while the other ones take a small walk with the children towards the room. There you help the children washing their hands and support the team during lunch time.

After lunch one of the team cleans the playroom kitchen, while the other ones read a book to the children or tell them small exciting stories.

Then you leave again for the kindergarten grassland. While the group takes a longer walk or stops at the big playground area, one of the team takes the younger children with him back to the tent, so they can have a nap.

Round 14.30 or 15.00, the first parents arrive to take their children home. Also for you, it's time to leave the magical Vienna Forest.

Because you are an international volunteer, the children will be very interested in where you come from and how is the daily living in your country. For sure they will ask you about animals and plants at home. Perhaps you want to start a country project. You can tell the children small stories, take some photos with you to create a big collage together with the children, or maybe you can teach the children some words or even songs in your language.

■ FACTS & NUMBERS

Employees: 4 Part-Time: Alexandra 4 days, Peter 3 days, Amadeo 2 Days, Heimo 1 day

Experience with international volunteers: 0

Support for volunteers: All our interns have training days, where they stay with the group and watch. Bit by bit they learn about the needs of the children, so the interns can start to support the team.

There is time for debrief with a staff member once a day to discuss the work with the children.

There is a monthly team meeting to discuss the status of ongoing activities or to prepare new projects.

There is also a supervision meeting, where the team meets with a psychologist to discuss potential issues and to develop solutions.

Also once a month there is a parents reunion, where the team presents current activities and how the children are developing in the group.

Volunteering duration: 10 month (September to June)

■ REQUESTED SKILLS

The volunteer should love to play with children

enjoy outdoor life regardless of weather conditions
She or He should be a good team player and support the team during the day.

It would be perfect, if the volunteer has already experience in working with children (babysitting, younger brother or sister, internship in a kindergarten etc)

■ HOW TO APPLY?

Send your Volunteers Motivation letter together with your CV to grenzenlos: austria@grenzenlos.or.at
The selection will be made by the Hosting project itself.

■ CONTACT

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For infos, see also: www.volunteering.at