

SALEM ECUADOR – Volunteer Service in Ecuador

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Who we are

SALEM Ecuador is a community centre for vulnerable children, young people and families in Mindo, a lively small town in the cloud forest of Ecuador. In our children and youth centre, we work every afternoon with around 40 children and young people between the ages of 5 and 16. Here they can discover and develop their abilities and creativity, put their ideas into practice and simply enjoy being children.

Our work includes play-based and emotional support, practical life skills, theatre and nature education, as well as music and sewing workshops. In addition, our psychosocial team accompanies victims of gender-based violence and works intensively on prevention.

Our pedagogy is inspired by Montessori and Waldorf (emergency pedagogy). Our work is grounded in non-violence, respect for people, animals and nature, and openness to new ideas. We live these values holistically in the project – including a vegetarian diet and refraining from alcohol and cigarettes on the premises.

Your role at SALEM

As a volunteer, you will support our educational team and contribute your own ideas. Your tasks will include:

- Supporting our educators in the daily care of children and young people
- Preparing and running your own activities and workshops
- Helping in the kitchen
- Preparing and cleaning materials and spaces
- Supporting communications and public relations
- Minor maintenance and gardening work

Depending on your age and previous experience, you may also support the accompaniment of teenagers. Your ideas and projects are welcome – many previous volunteers have introduced their own workshops, music groups or other initiatives that have left a lasting mark.

Working hours

The working day is 8 hours, Monday to Friday. Core hours are 10:00 to 17:00. Weekends are your own time.

What we are looking for

- Minimum age: 20 years
- Intermediate Spanish (level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
- Experience with children and genuine enjoyment of working with them
- A background or work experience in social or educational fields is desirable – students of education or social sciences may count the placement as a practical semester
- Independence, initiative and social competence
- Ability to work in a team, reliability and a sense of responsibility
- Enhanced criminal record check (child and youth protection) – required after acceptance

Duration and costs

The volunteer placement lasts a minimum of five months; longer stays of up to 12 months are strongly encouraged. All placements begin with a 3-month probationary period. Travel and living costs are your own responsibility. On working days, you receive lunch at SALEM.

For funding opportunities and support with preparation and accompaniment, we work with the following sending organisations:

Germany: Welthaus Bielefeld e.V. (weltwärts programme) – <https://www.welthaus.de/weltwaerts/start/>

Austria: Internationale Freiwilligeneinsätze CÖ gGmbH (foreign service under §27 FreiwG; also recognised as civilian service) – <https://www.ife-austria.at>

Self-organised placements and internships as part of a university semester are also possible.

Accommodation

Volunteers usually stay with host families. SALEM helps with the arrangements.

Visa and entry

You will need a passport valid for at least 6 months beyond your planned return date. Before travelling, you must apply online for a paid volunteer visa. SALEM or your sending organisation will support you with the process.

Health and insurance

We strongly recommend taking out private health, accident and liability insurance for your stay abroad. Volunteers travel at their own risk.

To our knowledge, there is no risk of malaria, dengue or yellow fever in Mindo and Quito. These diseases are more prevalent in tropical regions of Ecuador, particularly in the coastal lowlands. Please consult your doctor or a travel medicine specialist about recommended vaccinations and other precautions.

Mindo – your new home

Mindo is a lively small town of around 3,500 inhabitants at the heart of the Chocó Andino Biosphere Reserve – one of the most biodiverse regions in the world. The local economy is driven largely by tourism.

Climate: Mindo lies in the cloud forest at an altitude of 1,250 m above sea level, with high humidity and heavy rainfall (approx. 2,700 mm/year), especially from December to April. Average temperatures range between 18 and 24°C.

Getting there: Direct buses run several times a day between Quito and Mindo. The journey takes approximately 2.5 hours.

What to expect

A time that will give you a great deal: the joy of working with children, deep human connections, a dedicated team and the extraordinary nature of Ecuador. You will learn a lot about yourself – and take home memories that will last.

What you should not expect: a luxury holiday.

How to apply

You can find currently available positions and application windows on our website:

<https://www.saleminternational.org/index.php?seite=freiwilligendienst-ecuador>

If you are genuinely interested, please send your application – a detailed letter of motivation and a CV – by email to:

info@salem-ecuador.org

Please don't forget to include your preferred dates. We will then be happy to invite you to a virtual introductory meeting. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Contact

SALEM Ecuador

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