

European Solidarity Corps volunteering at Naturkindergruppe am Himmel “Gatschhüpfen”

Volunteer at Gatschhüpfen – A Forest Kindergarten in the Hills of Vienna

Are you passionate about nature, curious about respectful and child-centered pedagogy, and love spending time with young children? Join us for a unique and enriching experience as a volunteer at Naturkindergruppe am Himmel – Gatschhüpfen, a small outdoor kindergarten nestled in the beautiful hills surrounding Vienna.

Who We Are

Gatschhüpfen is a non-profit, parent-led forest kindergarten where children between the ages of 2.5 and 6 explore the world through play, imagination, and connection with nature. We believe in **humanistic values**, embracing diversity, inclusivity, and openness to all families – including different cultures, religions, and rainbow families.



At the heart of our philosophy is **respect for each child as an individual**. We accompany children on their journey, supporting them when needed, without lecturing or imposing. Our aim is to nurture self-awareness, self-confidence, and a strong sense of community.

Life at Gatschhüpfen

Nature-based learning is our foundation. The children spend most of their day outdoors in the forest, fields, and gardens. Rain or shine, nature is our classroom.

We have two main locations on the west hill above the city of Vienna:

- A garden with a cozy Mongolian yurt, fireplace, sandbox, and a workbench for crafts and creativity.
- A warm indoor space in a nearby school building, where we cook lunch, rest in the afternoons, and hold indoor activities when the weather is too severe.

Up to 14 children attend each day, guided and cared for by two experienced teachers. Our days are full of laughter, muddy pies, storytelling, song, and discovery.

Our kindergarten is open from **Monday to Friday** from **8:00 to 16:00**. A typical day can look like this:

8:00-8:45 the kids are arriving at the kindergarten at the yurt place,

9:00-9:30 time for snacks (kids have their own snack with them) and morning ring,

9:30 leaving the yurt place and walking to the kindergarten building (minimum 15 minutes to 4 hours, depending on the route and the plan of the day, discover nature, do activities together, etc.),

11:00-12:00 arriving in the indoor space,

12:00 lunchtime (there is always a vegan option),

12:30 after lunch the kids will relax, read, play silently, or are picked up by their parents (especially the smaller ones),

13:30/14:00 possibility to stay inside or go outside, play, read, do handcrafts,

14:30/15:00 have a snack,

16:00 closing time, everybody will leave.

We would like you to participate as a volunteer in our daily routine from 9:00 to maximum 16:00. However, the exact schedule is due to a mutual agreement decided upon arrival, and it can be changed during the project, so all sides (teachers, children and volunteer) feel comfortable. The goal is that the volunteer feels energized to be a helping hand to teachers and a buddy to the children.

You will be accommodated in the apartment arranged by coordinating organization. Traveling to the kindergarten is possible by car or by bus with the nearest bus stop ~ 15 min walk away. The commuting by bus takes ca. 50 min – 1,5 h depending on the exact location of the accommodation which will be arranged upon arrival. However, there is a possibility of arranging rides by car by the parents from the city which can shorten the travelling time.

What You Will Do as a Volunteer

As a volunteer, you'll support our teachers in daily activities and have the freedom to bring your own ideas, energy, and interests to the group. You don't need to be a childcare expert - just someone who enjoys the company of children, values nature, and is open to learning.

Some of your possible tasks:

- Join the children in play, songs, crafts, and storytelling.
- Help children with dressing, packing their backpacks and other stuff.
- Accompany walks and nature explorations.
- Help children with basic hygiene (e.g. washing hands, helping with getting to the toilet).
- Help prepare and serve lunch (once per week the teachers with the help of a volunteer prepare lunch) and afternoon snacks.
- Participate in the trip to a nearby swimming pool in summer.

- Share your own ideas and lead small projects or activities (upon discussion with the teachers).
- Assist with simple gardening and caring for the yurt.
- Participate in regular meetings with a mentor and/or teacher(s) and reflect on your learning.

What You Will Learn

Through your experience, you'll grow both personally and professionally. You'll learn how to:

- Observe and support children's self-directed play.
- Foster independence without lecturing.
- Help resolve conflicts with empathy and respect.
- Understand and respond to children's emotional needs.
- Practice non-violent communication.
- See children as individuals and learn more about their different personalities.

You'll also gain insight into:

- Running a self-managed, democratic organization.
- Collaboration and shared responsibility in a parent-run setting.
- Nature-based education and respectful pedagogy.
- Life in Austria — its culture, food, language, and landscapes.
- Different ways of living and thinking.
- What kind of plants are growing and what animals are living in the hills around Vienna.

And, of course, you'll become a pro at dressing for every kind of weather!

Who We Are Looking For


You might be the right fit if you:

- Enjoy spending time with children and are patient and kind.
- Love the outdoors and don't mind getting wet, cold, or muddy.
- Are open-minded and curious about different cultures, people, and ways of thinking.
- Want to learn about respectful pedagogy and support children's development.
- Are motivated to be part of a collaborative team.
- Are motivated to learn new languages, especially German. If you speak English, you can teach children a little bit of English but for daily communication with children, basics of German is necessary! (ESC can provide financial support for intensive language course before the project in home country or non-intensive language course during the project in host country)

We welcome all people regardless of gender, origin, religion, or background. What matters most is your willingness to show up with warmth, openness, and a sense of adventure.

Very important!

Before applying, please take a moment to check what the weather in Vienna is like throughout the year — and make sure you're ready for snowy paths, rainy days, and sunny forest picnics!

 You can see more of our daily life and activities on our Instagram page:

<https://www.instagram.com/diegatschhuepfer/>

Recruitment process

This European Solidarity Corps (ESC) project in Vienna is coordinated by the association *Grenzenlos* within the MELANGE program.

If you want to apply for this project, please fill in the **Melange application form** and send it together with your **CV** (curriculum vitae) and **motivation letter** to application@melange.wien

Please state the name of the ESC project (host organization), that you would like to apply for, in the subject of your e-mail. Grenzenlos will forward your documents to us, the hosting project, where the selection will be made.

Important! Your application will only be accepted if it is complete and if you already have a supporting (sending) organization.

All ESC placements coordinated by Grenzenlos are generally available to everyone between the age of 18 and 30 who is residing in an ESC program or partner country. However, in the selection procedure a **preference is shown for candidates with fewer opportunities**. You will be informed about the outcome of the recruitment process after the application deadline. For more information, please visit www.melange.wien and European Youth Portal