



## American Conservation Experience

American Conservation Experience is a non-profit conservation corps offering opportunities for both American and International volunteers to take part in challenging outdoor projects in many of the most beautiful National Parks, National Forests and wilderness areas in the Western United States. We are an affiliate member of The CorpsNetwork.

With housing based in Flagstaff, Arizona, and Santa Cruz, California, ACE crews attract energetic long term volunteers dedicated to spending 8 -12 weeks helping to restore America's natural treasures.

ACE is designed to offer extremely inexpensive volunteering opportunities for participants eager to contribute 40 hours of determined effort each week in exchange for housing and food on projects.

Volunteers seeking a standard eco-tourism experience or mostly interested in learning English should look elsewhere. Those seeking a challenging position among positive, diverse, like-minded volunteers serving in the United States' only international conservation corps are encouraged to read on and apply.

### Philosophy

ACE operates under the philosophy that physically demanding projects in inspiring locations such as Grand Canyon National Park, Yosemite National Park, the red rocks of Sedona, and the soaring mountains throughout Arizona and California have the power to unite people in a common cause.

ACE volunteers come from many nations around the world to volunteer in small teams on direct service projects for the United States Forest Service, National Park Service and other public and private land management agencies throughout the United States. Typical projects include trail construction and maintenance, native plant revegetation, exotic species removal, fence construction, erosion control, and wilderness restoration.

Volunteers contribute their energy and enthusiasm in a production-oriented atmosphere in which participants are encouraged to take pride in their team's accomplishments.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

Participation in ACE represents a unique opportunity to share new learning experiences with people from other cultures while contributing substantially to the restoration of America's natural treasures. Please read the following list of frequently asked questions carefully to ensure that you understand the program well enough to take full advantage of the experience of volunteering with ACE.

### What do I need to bring ?

These are items you **MUST** bring on every project:

- Sleeping bag (rated to WELL below the freezing point)
- Medium-large sized backpack (50 liters or larger)
- Thermarest or comparable sleeping pad
- Hiking boots or work boots (they must end above your ankles)
- Long pants (blue jeans or Carhartts)
- Water resistant rain jacket and rain pants (you **MUST** bring this on every project)
- TRAVELER'S HEALTH INSURANCE (You will not be permitted to volunteer without traveler's insurance)
- Pullover, sweatshirt and other warm clothing. Do not make the mistake of bringing only summer clothing unless you intend to buy warm clothes in Flagstaff
- Daypack (this means a smaller backpack to bring during your work days. You'll put your lunch, water and whatever else you'll need during the day in it)



Recommended Items:

- Polarized sunglasses
- Sports sandals (very reasonably priced in Flagstaff and invaluable on hiking excursions in canyons)
- Swimsuit
- Running shoes or tennis shoes
- Headlamp (makes camping at night much easier)
- Lunchbox (keeps your food fresh and intact)

Please keep in mind that you will have free time on the afternoon the day after your arrival to shop for camping supplies and personal items in Flagstaff. As a destination for outdoors enthusiasts, Flagstaff has several excellent stores selling camping equipment at very reasonable prices and it may be cheaper and easier for you to buy many of your camping supplies after your arrival in Arizona.



### **How much money should I bring ?**

This is our most common question and a difficult one to answer because most people have different spending habits. If you plan to cook in the house, don't spend a lot of time buying drinks for friends in pubs, and don't plan on taking a lot of road trips, you can easily get by on \$50 per week. If you will rent cars and take road trips to places like Vegas, LA, San Diego, or San Francisco most off periods, count on spending closer to \$150 per week. And if you spend a lot of times in bars, plan on at least \$200 per week. This does not include initially purchasing your sleeping bag, backpacks, sleeping pad, work boots, etc.

### **How many days per week are the projects ?**

Projects typically last for 4 days a week, up to 10 hours a day. This schedule allows for 3 days off per week for exploration at the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas (4.5 hours away by bus), Lake Mead, Lake Powell, San Francisco, relaxation and participation in cultural events. Please note that some projects involve a great deal of travel, in which case volunteers will participate for 8 consecutive days and then enjoy 6 days off before the next project. There may occasionally be projects that last from 3-6 weeks, where you will enjoy your days off on a different location than Flagstaff or Santa Cruz. ACE will help organize outings, lead group hikes in remote canyons, and organize cultural and educational events in order to help participants make the most of their time in Arizona and California.

### **What to do during your free time ?**

ACE volunteers enjoy 3 days off every week. One of the benefits of ACE is the ability to use this time to travel with new friends, explore endless beautiful areas, and to socialize with other volunteers from the US and from around the world. However, it is very important to understand that the legal age to drink alcohol in the USA is 21 years. This law is strictly enforced so that nobody under the age of 21 may even enter a pub or bar, even if they are not drinking alcohol. We understand that the USA is perhaps the only country in the world with such strict rules about alcohol and that this fact can be shocking to foreign volunteers. If you are under 21 and do not want to spend 3 months without drinking alcohol, unfortunately you will not be able to participate in ACE. But we fully expect that the type person interested in volunteering for the National Parks will enjoy plenty of recreational activities not involving alcohol.

### **What are the accommodations between projects ?**

Volunteers stay in either student apartments or one of the volunteer houses in Flagstaff or Santa Cruz, on days when they are not taking part in projects. The apartments have washer/dryer, and the houses have a laundromat just a few blocks away. Housing is communal, with up to 3 bunk beds per room and shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. This is where volunteers store the luggage they're not bringing on projects, such as suitcases and sport bags. There's also a safe in the office for passports, tickets and other smaller valuables.



### **What are the accommodations during projects ?**

Most projects are in remote locations and virtually all involve camping. Volunteers should bring warm sleeping bags and sleeping pads to use during projects. Most projects are in remote locations without any developed facilities such as showers or toilets. However, occasionally we stay at developed campgrounds with warm showers and pit toilets.

### **Is food provided ?**

Food is only provided on projects. When ACE volunteers are on projects they shop and cook with their teams, taking turns preparing meals for the group from their respective countries (this alone represents a sometimes comical, always rewarding, cultural exchange).

### **Is there an age limit ?**

Yes, we do not accept anyone under the age of 18.

### **Can I choose my projects ?**

Not exactly. ACE will assign volunteers to rotating projects each week. ACE offers a wide range of projects and volunteers will be rotated every 4 weeks, but you cannot choose your project. Since all ACE projects are outdoors and the weather can be unpredictable at any time of the year, project descriptions are always subject to change. Projects are dependent on weather, nesting and migrating seasons of native wildlife, immediate needs of project partners, etc. ACE volunteers should study the list of future projects to get a GENERAL idea of the type of situation they will be encountering, but should not expect these to be the exact projects. Friends and couples that come to ACE together should keep in mind that they cannot count on ending up on the same projects, or even have their days off at the same time. (back to top)

### **Are there any physical requirements ?**

Projects will be in the outdoors in all types of weather. Extensive hiking is often involved, sometimes in extreme conditions such as elevations above 9,000 feet (3,000 meters), 100 degree heat, freezing temperatures, steep terrain, rainstorms, high winds, etc. Volunteers should be generally fit, comfortable with living outdoors and flexible enough to enjoy the challenges presented by fickle weather conditions. There is no upper age limit for ACE volunteers although reasonable fitness is definitely a necessity. Due to the high elevations and the rigor of the tasks involved, ACE is NOT recommended for individuals with respiratory problems such as asthma. (back to top)

### **Do I need any previous conservation experience ?**

Volunteers need no experience in practical conservation. The only requirements are a sense of adventure, a desire to make a difference, and a willingness to remain flexible and positive through ever changing project work, locations, and weather conditions.



## Project examples

Below you find a sample of projects that have run in the past and projects that will run in the future. Please note that this is only examples and that there might be different projects running when you volunteer.

### Grand Canyon Trails

With over 500 miles of trails subject to floods, landslides, and damage inflicted by mules, maintenance of the Grand Canyon Trails system is a constantly challenging effort. Over the past three years ACE crews have been a valuable resource to the Grand Canyon Trails crew, participating in a variety of trail reconstruction efforts both on the Rim and below the Rim. Throughout 2007 ACE crews are scheduled to install erosion control structures, replace walking tread, and construct retaining walls while hiking up to 17 miles to reach remote worksites. Expect difficult daily hikes and all the challenges associated with working in extreme weather conditions while enjoying the friendship and support of the National Park Service trail crew workers.

### Grand Canyon Planting

The fragile high desert ecosystems of the Grand Canyon are especially vulnerable to the invasion of non-native plant species. With the constant impact of hundreds of thousands of tourists trampling native plants and carrying the seeds of dozens of species of weed, native ecosystems are in constant peril. Working alongside the Grand Canyon Revegetation team, ACE crews minimize the impact of stampeding tourists by collecting native seed, spreading mulch to prevent weeds from germinating, planting and transplanting native species, constructing wooden fences to protect newly planted areas, surveying and pulling weeds, and caring for the native plant nursery. Work can be as simple as walking along the rim collecting grass seed or as demanding as operating jackhammers to drill fence post holes into solid Grand Canyon limestone.

### White Mountains Apache Trout Restoration (Eastern Arizona)

All of the fish native to the state of Arizona are endangered, with many on the brink of extinction. The introduction of exotic sport fish such as the Brown and Rainbow Trout has jeopardized the survival of native species that cannot compete for habitat. The Apache Trout is endemic to only 13 small streams and rivers in the remote mountains of Eastern Arizona. ACE will partners with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, National Forest Service and with conservationists from Trout Unlimited to preserve habitat by building creek barriers to prevent exotic species from migrating upstream and thus competing with the native Apache. ACE will participate in a variety of projects associated with this restoration effort, including hauling endless loads of rock for use in the barriers, surveying creek habitat to count frogs and insects, setting up water temperature monitoring stations, and taking fin samples for genetic testing. While much of the tasks will be physically and mentally exhausting as well as repetitive, volunteers will gain the satisfaction of contributing directly to the effort to prevent one of the rarest fish species in the world from disappearing into extinction. (back to top)



### **Prescott National Forest Trails: (Arizona)**

The Prescott National Forest maintains dozens of miles of multi-use trail in ecosystems ranging from pinyon and juniper forests to high elevation ponderosa pine and mixed conifer in the mountains. ACE will partner with the US Forest Service in to accomplish preventative maintenance such as removal of encroaching brush and basic erosion control in a variety of locations and trails within the system. This project will provide an excellent overview of trail maintenance techniques common to Arizona public land management agencies while introducing ACE participants to more beautiful forested scenery in central Arizona.

### **Yosemite Revegetation**

Yosemite offers challenging and diverse reveg projects, including cutting down encroaching lodgepole pine trees with with hand saws, building fences, planting trees, spread mulch, cutting blackberry bushes, and of course planting. Yosemite Trails One of the premier trails programs in the USA , Yosemite crews are famous for their skills in rockwork Expect production oriented projects in breathtaking front and backcountry environments. Spend up to 6 weeks camping in remote high elevation mountain environments.

### **King's Canyon/ Sequoia National Park**

Home to the world's largest trees growing in lush forests in the soaring Sierra Nevada Mountains, Sequoia N.P.'s unique habitat is hreatened by invasion from exotic species. ACE crews will help eliminate one such species, reed canarygrass by running mowers and weed eaters, and laying black fabric down and anchoring it with blanket pins.

### **Lake Mead National Recreation Area**

The Desert Tortoise is native to the Mojave Desert surrounding Las Vegas, Nevada, the fastest growing city in the United States over the last 10 years. Urbanization brings intense pressures on the fragile habitat of the Desert Tortoise, as off high vehicle activities, collection by humans, vandalism, and predation by ravens has conspired to endanger the survival of this officially threatened species. ACE crews partner with restoration biologists from Lake Mead National Recreation Area in an effort to close and replant illegal roads, preventing jeeps and all terrain vehicles from rampaging through fragile tortoise habitat. The project will involve transplanting native desert plants and constructing fences to block access to critical habitat. As is true with many ACE projects, the task will demand patience and a positive attitude, while affording the opportunity to contribute to the protection of a threatened species in a uniquely beautiful desert environment. Volunteers should be prepared to camp in temperatures at or just below the freezing point in order to take part in this winter project.



### **Gila National Forest Trails**

The Gila National Forest has spectacular scenery ranging from high cool mountains with aspen and douglas fir to warm semi-arid lowlands with juniper, oak and cactus. It is one of the more remote and least developed National Forests in the southwest. Covering 3.3 million acres of publicly owned forest and range land, the Forest is the sixth largest National Forest in the continental United States. The Forest is also home to the first designated Wilderness area in the United States. For the past three years and continuing in the summer and fall of 2007, ACE crews have partnered US Forest Service professionals reconstructing trails damaged by fire and/or years of neglect. The project will take place in a remote section of the Gila Wilderness, requiring a difficult 12 mile hike to reach base camp. Expect cold nighttime conditions, spectacular scenery, and limitless opportunity to challenge yourself in a truly isolated environment. In many senses, Gila National Forest Trails may be ACE's most demanding and most appreciated projects, with hikes of up to 35 KM to the project site. Gila projects are intended for corpsmembers endowed with a sense of adventure, a spirit of determination, and strong set of legs and lungs!

### **Bryce Canyon National Park Trails**

The surreal forest of rock towers for which Bryce is famous were created by a combination of highly erosive rock and extreme weather conditions. Located at nearly 3,000 meters in elevation, Bryce receives heavy winter snowfall and dramatic summer monsoon rains, both of which result in a rapidly eroding hiking trail system. With limited staffing, Bryce Canyon National Park calls upon ACE crews to rebuild and stabilize trails throughout their entire backcountry system. ACE has been asked to design a trails maintenance plan for the Park, which our crews will implement through the summer and fall months of 2007. Projecys almost always involve long, strenuous hikes into steep canyons.

### **Bryce Canyon Revegetation**

Just as the unique soils of Bryce erode to create spectacular rock spires, so also does the ecosystem of Bryce support a large number of endemic plants, or plants that exist only in the immediate area surrounding the National Park. ACE crews play a large role in protecting those plants by pulling the competing weeds and replanting native species.

### **Arches National Park Trails**

As its name suggests, Arches is known for soaring red rock arches as well as the sweeping red sandstone high desert landscape. Over the past year, ACE crews have enhanced visitor safety by using natural rock to create stabile staircases that will endure both sudden summer rainstorms and the pounding of thousands of tourist feet. ACE crews are projected to continue stabilizing the trails at Arches National Park in a series of projects requiring a high level of skill in dry stone masonry. Projecst take place throughout the spring, summer and fall months and almost always involves much exertion in temperatures ranging from cold and windy to hot and sunny. ACE corps members pause between the difficult tasks to take in the soaring scenery of one of America's hidden treasures.



### **Canyonlands National Park**

Before the Colorado River descends into the depths of the Grand Canyon, it enters Utah in a dramatic maze of canyons encompassed in Canyonlands National Park. Much larger than nearby Arches N.P. Canyonlands consists of dozens of miles of backcountry trails crossing hundreds of small, steep drainages. For the past two years, ACE crews have been called upon to construct complex rock structures to provide safe hiking passage across the network of red rock canyons. Trail projects at Canyonlands almost always involves hiking long distances across very rough terrain carrying up to 40 pounds of food, water, tools and camping gear. It also involves camping in some of the most unique and inspiring landscapes in the United States.

### **Santa Clara River Reserve Trails and Fencing**

Located near St. George, Utah, the gateway to Zion National Park, the Santa Clara River Reserve offers spectacular views of an arid, untouched landscape and contains a lush riparian zone along the Santa Clara River where visitors enjoy shade and cooler temperatures, even in summer. Other valleys and washes in the reserve support wondrous desert microclimates. In the summer of 2006 and projected through the winter and spring of 2007 ACE crews constructed the first mountain biking trails within the reserve. Designed to provide local inhabitants with access to the natural beauty surrounding their rapidly growing city, the river reserve represents a little known but truly beautiful opportunity to explore classic Utah desert.

### **How to Apply**

Please read all information below before proceeding with your registration.

I understand the following important points:

- I will not be paid to participate in American Conservation Experience projects
- The airfare and travel to the commencement point at American Conservation Experience offices in Flagstaff, AZ or Santa Cruz, CA, are not included
- ACE provides food during project days, hostel-style accommodation, and project related transport
- I will not be able to choose the exact projects I participate in
- I have personal medical insurance (you are also advised to have travel insurance for personal items while in America)
- Drugs and alcohol are not permitted on American Conservation Experience projects
- American Conservation Experience does not supply or administer medications

To register contact contact our Swedish representative:

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