

Foundation Newsletter



February 2014

General Update

A productive month has seen us complete a few tasks we have been wanting to do for a while. In February we installed a fence to protect the chickens after the previous group was killed by dogs, the current batch are a lot safer. We've carried out some other maintenance in the kitchen so everything should be tidier and easier to clean for volunteers. As usual we've been working with the children and also trying to integrate all the new volunteers to how things work.

New children

We have recently begun to work with new group from a school in town. Every Wednesday morning we are now hosting around 5 children with disabilities. Marilyn the former Spanish teacher works in the school so accompanies them and helps the volunteers who are learning how to work in a slightly different way than they are normally used to. The results have been incredibly positive.



New Coordinator

We are very happy to welcome Itzi to the role of our new coordinator. From Madrid, Spain Itzi will take over the Spanish classes from Marilyn as well as the other organizational duties in the foundation. Itzi has been involved with NGO work for many years, working in organizations which range from helping children to aiding refugees. She's previously worked abroad in Kenya and Portugal and speaks several languages so the adjustment and integration to a new country should be less tough. "It's a lovely place to be, I'm happy I'm finally here after reading about it and looking at pictures online. It's living up to my expectations. It has been quite easy making the change. The only thing I miss is my dog Renfe!"



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[A helper from town](#)

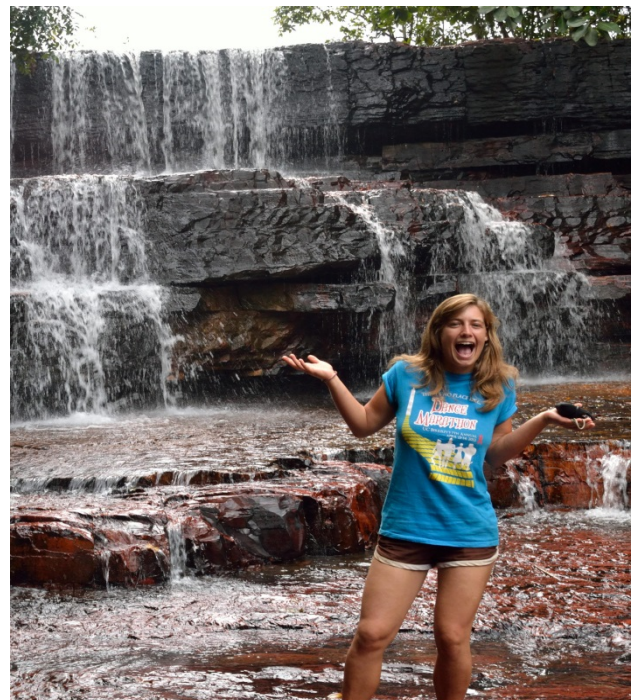
For the past few weeks Jenna Westendorf, a raft instructor from California, has been volunteering with us. She has been living in town working for rafting company Ruta Salvaje for several months. When there were no tours she decided to help us. We want to give her a huge thanks for her hard work which we truly appreciated especially considering she could have been relaxing in the Grand Sabana instead.

During a time when Venezuela has been in the news for all the wrong news, Jenna travelled around the country and it was good to hear her positive story about travel around Venezuela.

Spending some of her time in larger cities and out in the wild she faced no problems with her safety following all the usual travel advice for careful travel.

Before even arriving in Venezuela Jenna suffered a few mishaps with losing her wallet and missing flights on entering the country. Eventually she made it and to her rafting job. Leading expeditions on the river Yurani near Santa Elena, she would spend several weeks camping out by the waters only receiving food and new tourists every few days. Improving her Spanish skills and becoming an expert on the whirlpools and waters of the Yurani became part of daily life.

A true girl of the outdoors Jenna travelled between Puerto Ordaz and Mérida exploring hikes and treks across all the nature with climbs up Venezuela's second highest mountain Pico Humboldt to camping with local strangers near Pico Espejo and spending nights sleeping under the stars near Los Nevados.



[Arrivals and Departures](#)

A super busy February has seen lots of new volunteers join us in Santa Elena.

Deep breath... Stephan Lang (Germany) Julia Konegger (Austria) Manuel von der Muehlen (Germany) Suzy Krisch (USA) and Sara (Austria).

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[The political Situation in Venezuela](#)

Over the past few weeks the international press has been reporting on Venezuela as a result of re-newed political unrests. At Fundación Aldeas de Paz the political situation is carefully observed and events taking place constantly updated. If the situation should become more tense and any kind of safety issue arise for our volunteers, this information will be provided in our newsletter and on our website. While safety issues have become a concern for some parts of the big cities, the entire Gran Sabana – including Santa Elena de Uàiren – are not affected at all by the events taking place. In this newsletter a short overview of the current political situation is provided.

Venezuela has recently regained renewed media attention because of student riots taking place, mainly in the country's capital Caracas, but also in other big cities.

These riots are a result of a general sense of disagreement with the current socialist government led by Chavez-successor Nicolás Maduro. Venezuela is divided into Maduro-supporters on the one hand and those demanding his resignation on the other hand. Several protestors, including the opposition leader Leopoldo López have temporarily been imprisoned.

In Caracas and other major cities protests are taking place almost every day. While this may sound intimidating, it should be emphasized that the lifestyle of the volunteers in Santa Elena de Uàiren is not affected by what is going on in the big cities in any way. Santa Elena de Uàiren is a small town several driving hours away from any major Venezuelan city. Our volunteers can walk freely around in town and the surrounding area. This is a privilege not just in Venezuela, but in all of Latin America.

Entry requirements

Future volunteers should be aware that their passport should be valid at least six more months after the return to their home country. In case you intend to stay longer than three months, you can renew your tourist entry stamp here on the Brazilian border town of Pacaraima about a 15 minutes drive from Santa Elena, the Peace Villages foundations home base. Make sure you carefully read the information provided on the website and to contact us, so that we can offer you the best advise possible.

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