

# Volunteering at Braziers Park

## Braziers Park School of Integrative Social Research

We love having volunteers here to help us keep the place running and share ideas, interests, culture and skills.

**Volunteers must be over 18 years old.** Please read this information carefully so you know what to expect!

**How do I apply?** Email the application form fully completed with referee and an optional photo to [volunteers@braziers.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@braziers.org.uk)

**Is there a cost?** No - there is no charge. You exchange 30 hours a week for your bed and all meals as provided.

**Are there rules of behaviour?** We require a high standard of personal conduct and if this is not respected you will be asked to leave. Our 'code of conduct' is on the notice boards, when you sign the application you are agreeing to abide by it. Our community will not tolerate insulting, discriminatory or aggressive behaviour nor drug taking or excessive alcohol consumption. We have a duty of care to everyone here. We encourage everyone to **speak out** if they feel at all uncomfortable or worried about any behaviour during their stay, please help us create harmony through mindfulness and listening.

**How can I get there?** We suggest you aim to arrive between 10am and 4pm – let us know if that is not possible and what time you are planning to arrive. Read the travel info <http://www.braziers.org.uk/how-to-find-us/>

**What is the daily schedule?** Volunteers are asked to contribute usually between 9am – 4pm over 5 days including either Saturday or Sunday. Sometimes you'll need to contribute both Saturday and Sunday and have two days off in the week instead. All volunteers help in housekeeping on Mondays and Fridays. Some tasks require evening contribution. There is a meeting each morning at 9 am, after breakfast. We gather to connect with each other and decide how to share the tasks for the day. There is usually a separate volunteers meeting each week. It is essential that your contribution days and days off are completed on the rota. Please ask if you need to vary your hours or days. **It is important to be ready to carry out tasks by 9am.** We start tasks immediately after the meeting. There is a 30 minute tea break at 11am and 1 hour lunch break from 1pm – 2pm. Please ensure you are available to contribute during core hours – if you are not sure what to do next ask a resident. Several tasks have explanatory briefing sheets on the board by the dining room, always ask if you need guidance.

**What will I do?** Tasks include; cleaning the house, bathrooms, toilets, guest rooms, changing beds, supervised by the Housekeeper. After kitchen induction you will help with cooking and perhaps cook by yourself. Wednesday and Thursday are outdoor days in the organic gardens, smallholding and estate and campsite. There is also office tasks, hosting visitors and maintenance projects. We do try to ensure all our volunteers get at least one day a week helping outside but it is different to many WWOOF hosts as there is more indoor tasks. You will be given training and supervision as needed. If you have concerns with any task please speak to a resident or volunteer co-ordinator. Safety wear must be used as appropriate. If you notice a health and safety risk please take action to remove the danger and report it.

**Do I need good English?** Yes- you need a good grasp of spoken English in order to be able to stay here, you will need to be able to read recipes, provide assistance to our guests and understand work and safety instructions as well as contribute to community life. If English is not your first language you will find plenty of opportunity to develop and improve.

**What kind of people will I meet?** We encourage diversity and everyone is to be made welcome here. Living here is an opportunity to experience community life and to exchange skills and cultural experiences with a wide range of people. It is an opportunity to experience change and growth as an individual, and as part of a group. We have residents and members from a variety of backgrounds and volunteers from around the world. We encourage you to share your knowledge, experience and interests e.g. a film, music, a talk or workshop.

**Where will I stay?** You may be in the main house, Garden Cottage or outbuildings, often sharing with one or two others (same gender). Bed linen is provided – **at the end of your stay please clean the room** and bring a set of fresh linen for the next volunteer. Please bring your own towel or borrow one from the volunteer linen cupboard on the top floor. In the summer we can accommodate extra volunteers camping. Sometimes it is necessary to move to a different room during your stay. The main house is locked up around 10 pm– there is a code lock on the back door. Ask for the code if you will need access. There is a bell at the front door.

**What is the food like?** We grow some of our own food (fruit, herbs and vegetables). Our garden is run on organic principles; we have a large greenhouse, polytunnel and a smallholding area. We often make our own bread, yoghurt, cider and preserves. Several residents are vegetarian and most days we do not have meat at all. Our meals are home cooked. Please say if you have any food allergies or need a special diet. If you will be out at a meal time cross yourself off the meal list in the kitchen cooks can reduce quantities.

**Are there rules about drinking & smoking?** Yes. There is no smoking in the house or any other buildings; you may smoke outside but please do not drop cigarette ends anywhere, even out of sight, and don't inconvenience others with smoke. Illegal drugs are not permitted at all and we ask that alcohol is consumed in moderation only, drunkenness is not welcome.

**Where does Energy & Water come from?** Our water is from the mains and is metered – please don't waste it. Sewerage is into a Victorian septic tank which needs a delicate balance of bacteria for its anaerobic digestion to function and discharge naturally purified water into the surrounding land. This process is disrupted by the chemicals in most toiletries and detergents. We try to live in an ecologically sustainable way, so if you can bring eco soap, shampoo, toothpaste etc. organic/biodegradable that is much appreciated- we do have some for sale. Our Electricity is supplied by Ecotricity - renewable energy. Please help us reduce bills by turning off lights, heaters and appliances not in use. A wood pellet district heating system provides hot water and heating, we also have some electric heaters. Cooking is on an oil fired Aga and/or an electric oven.

**What clothes will I need?** It is often cold in England from mid-September to late May. Bring something warm and suitable for outdoor working. There are some spare outdoor jackets, sweaters and boots for volunteer use. There are work boots, work gloves, hard hats and overalls if needed. Please return them clean. Slippers or indoor shoes and raincoat are useful.

**What is there to do during time off?** There may be camp fires and celebrations, participating in courses, films, discussions, board games and occasional outings. We hope volunteers will contribute their ideas and enthusiasm and feel free to suggest and organise activities, share your interests, games, cuisine and skills with us all. There is a grand piano to play.

There is a lounge with a TV, DVDs, board games and musical instruments. A separate computer room and WiFi. There is a quiet meditation/yoga/therapy/craft room on the top floor. Please keep these rooms clean and welcoming.

We are on the edge of the Chilterns, an area of outstanding natural beauty and close to The Ridgeway, one of the oldest pathways in the country, The River Thames is close by and there is an outdoor swimming pool in Wallingford in summer and indoor pool in Reading.

There are two pubs within walking distance, The Black Horse (40mins) and The King William (25mins), the Village Store and Post Office is about 15 minutes' walk – there is a local map in the corridor. There are bicycles available which must be looked after by users. It's your responsibility to check they are roadworthy and you are advised to wear a reflective jacket and a helmet which are available to borrow.

There is a telephone room– please always time your call and pay the correct amount into the honesty box – use an appropriate cheap call service for international and don't call mobiles. Braziers cannot afford to pay for your calls.

**Quiet down time is 11pm - please be respectful of people sleeping in nearby rooms.**

**Can I have friends or family to visit during my stay?** At the discretion of the community, volunteers who are here for 4 weeks or more may be able to have up to 2 friends or relations to stay for up to 4 nights at a special rate. Ask in the office for a booking form and full details. You are responsible for making up their room again to our guest standard. Your visitors will need to agree to abide by our code of conduct before they arrive and you should send them our guest information.

**How does the community work?** The volunteers coordinator (or a link person) will show you around, introduce you and explain our systems – if you have any problems speak to any resident you feel comfortable with. We all eat together and share cooking and cleaning, different teams have different responsibilities. You are welcome to attend our 'Open Sensory' community meeting Tuesdays at 7.45pm. The feelings aired in this meeting inform the weekly 'SubEx' decision making meeting, where we attempt to use consensus. Morning meetings are also a time for sharing thoughts and feelings. We often have 'a round' where everyone can speak without interruption or comment.

There is always much to be done and it's essential to do your share of communal jobs such as drying up dishes and cutlery, sweeping the floor and emptying bins. Please leave bathrooms clean and dry, wash up all your crockery and put it away, wipe up your crumbs etc. The more people who do a bit extra, the happier we all are. At the same time you need to take time off when you've done your share and not feel you have to do everything there is to be done - This is the challenge!

**Where is Braziers?** Braziers is a 29 hectare/55 acre estate and organic farm in the heart of the countryside in South Oxfordshire which is in the South East region of UK, the nearest small town is Wallingford (8km). The nearest large town is Reading (15km) and Oxford city is 30km. There is a good bus service between Reading and Oxford (X39 and X40), the bus stop is 5-10 minutes' walk along a single track lane (you will need a torch at night for safety). London Paddington is 25 mins from Reading. Travel directions are on our website – please advise your arrival time.

**Is my booking flexible ?** We have a fully booked volunteer programme all year round. Occasionally there are cancellations, check with the volunteer co-ordinator if you want to extend your stay (1 up to 3 months). If you need to leave early please try to give us time to find a replacement. After 2 weeks you will have a review and the chance to give and receive feedback. We welcome all feedback at any time.