

Sicily Volunteering Frieda



I started my trip to Sicily by train. This gave me many different impressions of Italy. The sea and the mountains, cities and the countryside.

The changing fauna gave us a taste of warm Sicily. After a long journey through the night, on the ferry and by bus, we finally arrived exhausted in Bronte. A cosy town on the slopes of Mount Etna, with a view of a large valley.

For me personally the first time was the most difficult. New impressions of all kinds came flooding in. A completely new daily routine, new people, a new house, away from all things I know and a language barrier.

But all this got better, as more and more volunteers came to the house. It no longer felt so empty and you could do a lot as a group. Be it walks, poker and games evenings, cooking together or watching films. We were always able to fill the evenings and our free time with activities. We could share our thoughts, our fears, all in all our whole experience. In a house with nine people you really get to know each other. And in that way I found a few friends that I will keep for a long time.

In general, life here in Sicily is characterised by a certain calm and slowness. You approach everything 'piano piano', both work and free time. As a result, we first had to learn what to do during long breaks in the field or in the office.

Even in the long term, our year was not as filled as previous years. We didn't have the olive and pistachio harvests, and the school phase was also shortened due to bureaucratic problems. But we made the most out of it!

We spent the first few months in the office. Our occupation there was to learn Italian. We also worked on a few researches and prepared for the schools.

On the fields we harvested almonds and later got an insight into the olive harvest.

The boys were then allowed to go out in the fields more and more often to carry out various tasks. Over time, I also demanded this right and was allowed out in the fields more often.

The jobs were varied, whether it was pruning trees, harvesting or sowing plants, making terra preta or tidying up the neighbouring house.



I probably enjoyed the field work the most of all the activities here. Simply being in nature, observing the changes in the fields over the seasons, acquiring new manual skills. Swimming in the river, exploring the surrounding nature and eating paninis every day. All of this enriched me and gave me little moments of happiness. At the end of the day, we usually got into our little vehicle, the panda, completely exhausted. He then carried us back to Bronte and we fell into our beds.



We spent most of our time in the field with Alessio, Gino and Gabriel. All three of them only speak Italian, so we were able to test our Italian language skills there. They also taught us about local plants, which ones to eat and which ones to avoid.



Another important part of our work took place in schools. It was divided into two parts. This year's theme was 'Farfalle per la biosfera'. In the first part, we presented the butterfly and its environment in schools. In the second part, the original plan was to take the children to the fields and play interactive games there. But as there are no buses to get there, we were unable to realise this project. Instead, we went to the schools again, this time with utensils from the fields, be it dead animals, plants or an insect house. The great thing

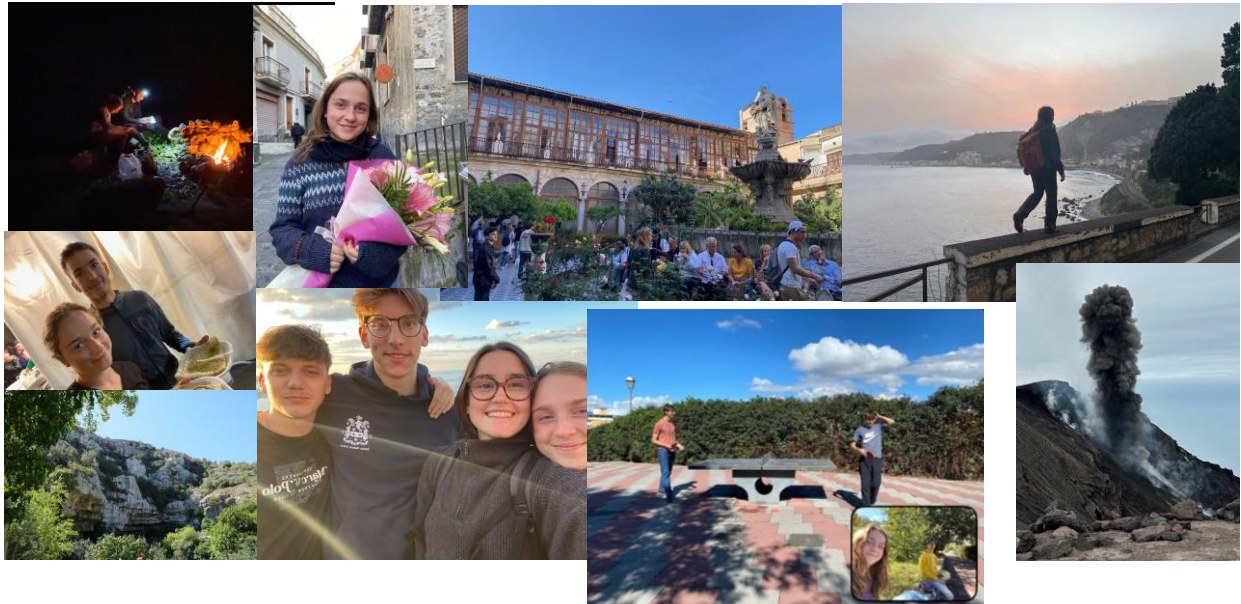
about the second part was that we volunteers were allowed to speak here. By now our Italian was quite respectable and we were able to talk to the children. Andrea and Lidia were always at our side to support or help us.

At the end of the school phase, around 60 children and 40 parents came to the fields and we were able to inaugurate our nature trail on a small scale. For several months, we worked on a nature trail in the office, which was later extended to the fields.



But it was above all the time in the house and with my flatmates that shaped me. Living alone for the first time, running the household. I learnt so much about myself: being more independent, communicating more openly, thinking more about myself, getting to know my boundaries and pursuing my hobbies. In my free time, which seemed to know no bounds, I also tried out lots of new things. I regularly went to the gym, to Zumba, sometimes to the swimming pool. As a group, we sometimes went to the park, played table tennis, football or badminton. The garden was also a welcome activity, where we tended and looked after the vegetables. Unfortunately, we won't be here to see the harvest, but hopefully the next volunteers will.

As a group we also made a lot of experiences on the weekends to explore Sicily and her nature. Here some impressions from that:



The time here offers great scope to get to know yourself, to really take time for you. I will miss this serenity in everyday life in Germany. And also the general willingness to help, which everyone here has within them, will probably be lost a little in Germany.

In the end I am really grateful for this experience. I got to know myself a lot better and will carry a lot of this experience for a long time with me. The people, the house, the island, nature and a lot of other things.

I can look back with a smile on my face. On all the funny and happy moments, but naturally also the moments where I had to struggle and was sad. And these difficult moments made me appreciate others even more.

Thank you all for being part of my experience here.

Giacche verdi with Gino, Andrea, Lidia, Alessio,
the Manfred Hermsen Stiftung with Stefanie and Birte,
the other volunteers, my family and Friends.