

Come to Catalonia



Merlyn Peter

South London Permaculture



A message from South London Permaculture

My family own a 3-hectare *finca* a little inland from the sea in the area of L'Amet'lla de Mar. These olives are grown amongst almond and carob in particular, and many natural herbs that colonise the arid landscape. We use no chemicals but simple mechanical means. I personally have worked on every tree on the land and have introduced indigenous methods of cultivation, including pruning and cropping at the same time. Both my family and volunteers hand-pick every olive as we are adverse to the effects of power machinery on the trees. The oil is a blend of at least 4 types of olive, in particular the Arbequina, the Morrut, the Farga, and the Sevillenca within the region of the Baix Ebre-Montsià in Catalonia. These olives are cold pressed and, being the first extraction, require a few days to settle into clear, green-golden oil with a fruity, sometimes pepperish, flavour and a hint of almonds, a characteristic of this province. Variations in colour, taste and viscosity occur due to season. Green oil tends to be less acidic and more aromatic, a matter of technique in cultivation.

Of the 2,000 known varieties of olives Spain cultivates just a few. The Arbequina olive gets its name from the town of Arbeca in Lleida where it was originally cultivated. The Arbequina olive is small and the trees are usually planted on hilly, inaccessible ground in some of the most stunning scenery in Catalonia. Gastronomically it produces superior oil preferably consumed raw with salads and vegetables, or used as a dip for tomato-coated bread.

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The Carob Pod
An Anthropological Guide to Permaculture
Volume 1



Merlyn Peter, M.A.

Petriarchy
The Law of the Land
Volume 2



Merlyn Peter, M.A.

The Golden Møn
Building Revolutions
Volume 3



Merlyn Peter, M.A.

Come to Catalonia

Volunteer opportunities for one or two members to help work the land in a beautiful part of Spain. Access to the sea and neighbouring towns, and a shared caravan. Self-catering but many benefits include trips to regional mountainous and valley beauty spots, as well as direct rail services to Valencia, Tarragona and Barcelona. Cycling is also a must in this country. The project is the beginnings of an eco-settlement illustrated in the above books. The first phase building the large cistern has already progressed as has the dry-composting toilet and outdoor kitchen space. Other learning experiences include dry-stone walling, eco-build, walking and mountaineering, animal husbandry, olive and carob cultivation, and horticulture. The main period of production is between October and May. Only companions are sort and must be of a spiritual disposition. Please contact the editor for further details.



South London Permaculture

– *working for sustainable education*

Dear so and so,

Your booking has been received and I extend my warmest thanks to you. I hope you will enjoy your temporary stay and endeavour to learn new skills on our permaculture farm. To confirm your requirements and dates see below:

Recommended period of stay is 10 days with optional availability to vocate longer

Camping and partial self-catering

Vegan/Vegetarian with occasional meat diet

Any medical conditions notified including allergies

No insurance policy committed

Options to drive a vehicle are available with a valid driving license

Please be advised we are 6km from L'Ametlla de Mar and 5km from El Perelló. A bicycle will be made available. You are expected to participate as fully as is possible with a desire to work at least 4 hours a day. This includes food preparation and eating. You will be taught a number of crafts and sustainable practice and given much freedom to explore as needs be. Weekends are free and visiting local beauty spots and tourist sites are optional.

How to get here:

Cheap flights are available all year round flying to Reus airport, Tarragona. Other optional destinations include Girona (Barcelona) and El Prat (Barcelona)

Flixbus and Eurolines operate lengthy coach trips across France and will stop at Barcelona. Most journeys require a change at Paris or Lyon terminals. Some waiting times can be all night. The journeys on European bus operators tend to be more comfortable with more leg room, internet facilities, television and onboard toilet. Occasionally some of the coaches are double-deckers. Generally the ride is between 25 and 30 hours long so take provisions with you as service stops tend to be very expensive.

Train services run from Kings Cross (Eurostar) and arrive to Paris very quickly.

If you are driving, options include the Eurotunnel or Brittany and P&O ferry services. Destinations include Le Havre, Cherbourg, Roscoff, St. Malo, Dieppe, Calais and Caen in northern France, Bilbao and Santander in Spain.

Other options include Blablacar and Liftshare.

Once you arrive to Catalonia our nearest train station is L'Ametlla de Mar. From Barcelona you will need to take the Tortosa train. Aternatively you can stop at Tarragona (ancient Tarraco) which is provided by more train, and do some sightseeing to then continue at a later time. They run frequently during the day except for mid-afternoon (siesta time). From either the train or bus station at L'Ametlla de Mar or Reus airport you will be picked up. Please feel free to put some fuel in the tank.

List of useful items to bring:

Walking boots, waterproofs, warm clothing and swim wear, sleeping mats and bags, sunglasses, gloves and hats, flashlight, your own eating utensils, a flask, snacks, skin protection, soap and shampoos (must be 100% ecological), washing implements and sanitary towels, medication and food supplements (as pre-notified), a book, recording devices and 12v charging equipment.

Also note that all volunteers are required to engage with the animals and to explore the natural wildlife. Frequently stray dogs, wild pigs, boar, rabbits, occasional foxes and badgers, rodents, geckos, various insects including ants, bees, wasps, flies, mosquitoes, midges, millipedes, and locusts can invade the farm at various times in the year and at various moments. Your host will advise you, suffice to say you must also have a liking for domesticated species too including dogs and cats, chickens, geese and goats which provide their own deterrent to wild species. In terms of any real threat it is very low. However, in season hunters shoot during the weekend around the dry river beds which are best avoided then. Occasionally they will enter the farm.

The nearest shops are in the the local towns, but there are gasoline stations and hypermarkets near by too. A number of working bicycles are available.

Conditions for stay:

We recommend that you use your free time to study, meditate and explore. Other opportunities will arise to take the dogs for long walks along the dry river beds, the beaches, and the mountains. There are good jogging routes also.

Some of the daily tasks that you will need to familiarise yourself with include caring for plants, touring the farm for damage mitigation, meal preparation, food cropping, and water management.

Under no conditions are you to make open fires outside fire zones and on very windy days. Likewise smoking is only allowed in these outdoor zones. It can get very windy in Catalonia and weather patterns can be extreme. Very hot days are sometimes folowed by cold nights. As such camping is undesirable from December to March.

When using the caravans please ensure no gas hobs are left on. Close the doors at night and respect other wildlife. It is prohibited to kill wild species unless you are a licensed hunter.

The house is a no-go zone as this is a private residence. On rare occasions that you may need a hot shower or use the internet then this can be arranged. It is recommended that mobile phones are turned off for a duration during the day as this is a constant distraction to the atmosphere that your host is trying to achieve. During working hours they are strictly inhibited. For charging up equipment there is a small solar panel and battery supply. This also runs the outdoor shower and is limited in its power. As a volunteer your skills and abilities will be observed providing opportunity in the future to come back again.

There are opportunities to earn money on other farms. This must be done in your own time. Likewise feel free to chat with the local neighbourhood as this may open up other windows of opportunity.

For local maps and routes it is suggested that you accompany your host on various rides and walks.

Please feel free to communicate with your host on all matters. Once again I extend my thanks for joining me and learning together.

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