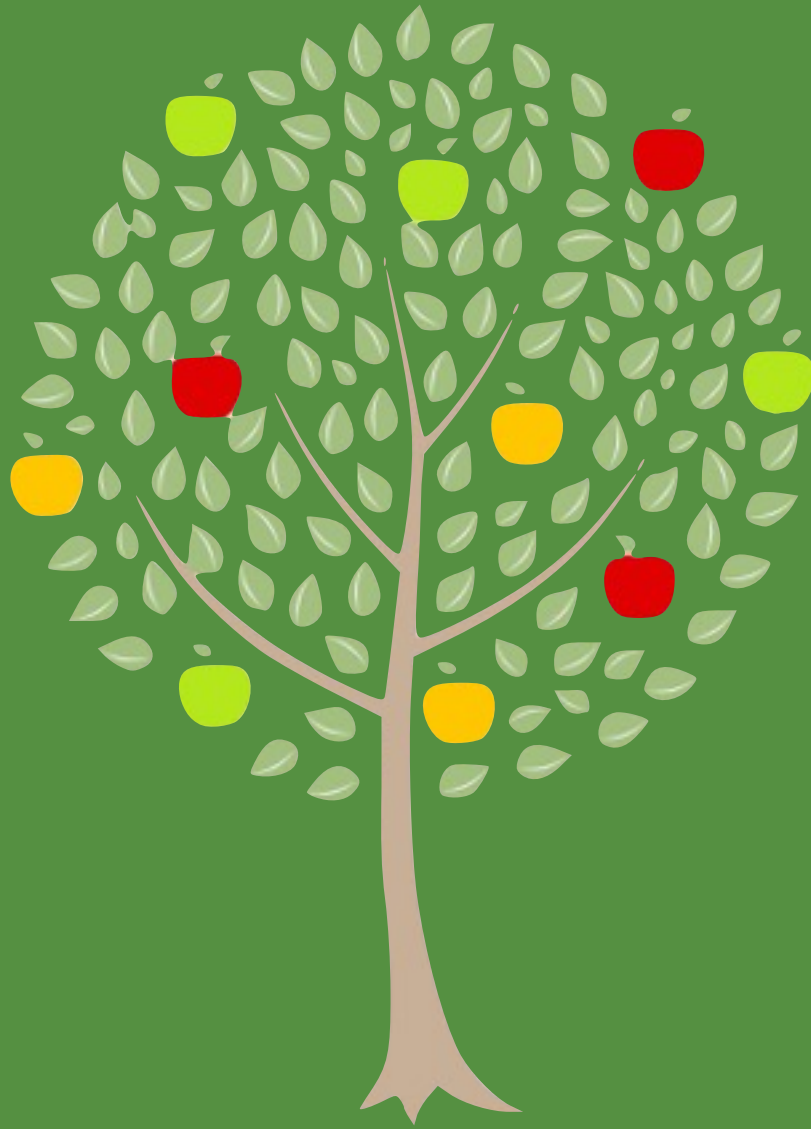


# *Things I wish I told my WWOOFer ...*



A WWOOF NZ Publication based on stories collected by

Thomas Tutzer and Stefanie Gruber

*"Everytime you see a person, you judge. But you always have to be prepared to change your mind"*

Bob L deBerry

*"You have to be kind, but strict as a host"*

Robert Guyton

*"I treat my WWOOFers the way I'd hope my daughter would be treated, if she was WWOOFing"*

Joan Spiller

*"WWOOFing has to be a symbiotic relationship"*

Tom O'Brien

*"WWOOFers should be interested, but also interesting"*

Jeff Griffith



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# 1. Tom and Stefanie's Story

## Photos Tom and Stefanie

“Do you drink coffee or tea?” the host asks looking towards us. We are sitting in a lovely decorated living room. The farm dog is laying under the table and observing every one of our movements. Paper and pencil are ready and the recording device is on. “Before I start telling you my stories with WWOOFers, I would like to hear yours,” the host shouts from the kitchen, while putting on the kettle.

Tom starts, “Seven years ago, I have been already in New Zealand and I did a lot of WWOOFing. Wherever I went, the hosts told me some amazing experiences and the most hilarious stories about their WWOOFers. When it was time to go home to South Tyrol in Italy, I made the promise to myself to come back before I turn 30. It was harvest time in September 2015 and my girlfriend Stefanie and I were picking apples for the whole day on the family farm. We both just finished studying Agricultural Science at University and talked about our upcoming trip to New Zealand. All of a sudden, the moment of clarity arrived: Let's collect funny WWOOF stories and publish them, so that everyone can enjoy these hilarious incidents. We emailed WWOOF New Zealand and they liked the idea, but also wanted to create a guidebook at the same time. We combined the two things and are now writing a guide book with a short story section”

Stefanie continues in the host's living room, “Over the past two months we met some real characters, it felt like “Speed WWOOFing”: The old hippie, who build his own coffin or the guy who watches TV with his chicken on his shoulder every night. The host that forgot our appointment and showed up after we were sitting for one hour with her WWOOFer in the living room. Not to forget the senior couple that invited us to quiz night, with all their hopes on our knowledge. We met people and saw places where we would like to stay for weeks in a heartbeat. Our old Mitsubishi was not just a home for three months, but also our “moving office”. We now know most libraries throughout the country. (By the way, the New Brighton library near Christchurch is our favorite).

The biggest challenge was finding a place to sleep after hours of interviewing people. Most of the time we got it right and found campgrounds or accommodation. One evening though, we got lost, parked on a carpark, did



some research where to spend the night, when we suddenly witnessed a burglary just meters away.

Most of the time the hosts entertained us with stories, but sometimes it was our turn to give them a laugh. Like when the host told us the cottage was constructed in 1896 and Tom asked her, if she built it. On another occasion, Stefanie asked the vegetarian host if she would eat the Angus cows grazing in her paddock.”

The making of: 'Things I wish I told my WWOOFer ...'



Happy after the final four days of intense working!



It has been an inspiring journey with lots of laughter, good conversations and many things we learned, but could also teach.

For us, that is what WWOOFing is all about.

Best of luck with your WWOOFing experience

Thomas Tutzer and Stefanie Gruber

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## 2. About WWOOF New Zealand

A bit of history: in Autumn 1971 Sue Coppard, a secretary living and working in London, recognised a need for people like herself, who did not have the means or the opportunity, to access the countryside and support the organic movement. She came up with the concept that in exchange for room and board people, like herself could spend Working Weekends On Organic Farms. The news spread, the concept grew and now there are over 50 WWOOF Organisations world wide.

In 1973 a Nelson farmer started advertising in the UK WWOOF publication for volunteers to help on his organic farm. After several years, Jane, mum to a new born baby, started managing the by then 100 hosts in 1987. The hosts' details were given to her on some sheets of paper. Passionate about all things Organic, she completely embraced the challenge. At that time her husband Andrew who was already a qualified carpenter was changing his career and studying to become a secondary school science teacher, so WWOOF was very much Jane's baby! Many hours were spent photocopying, folding and stapling and posting host details. About 50 letters per week had to be picked up at the Post office, replied to by hand, all information collated and then posted back! With an inquisitive toddler this sometimes proved difficult and Jane remembers getting in the play pen to keep her works safe from little hands!





Many years later, now with 8 children and 1 grandbaby WWOOF NZ has around 2,000 hosts and 10,000 WWOOFers! Andrew gave up his teaching career long ago and they decided they needed extra help to keep up with the administration, e-mails, books, newsletters, technical queries and such that were coming in. So 5 years ago Katrin, who emigrated from Germany to England to New Zealand joined the team. After being a townie all her life she now lives with her husband and two kids on 10 acres 40kms outside Nelson and is as happy as 'a pig 'n mud'!



We now have a website with online messaging system, images, maps, hotlist and feedback system. We think it's interesting to see how things have changed from hands on paper based to online profiles with images and e-mails and instant communication possibilities.

For better or worse and due to new laws and legislations - we also have to deal with Government Agencies regarding tax, labour and immigration laws. Sadly they are not exactly supportive and can't understand the wonderful concept of WWOOF.

We are listing WWOOFers from all over the world, who introduce a foreign culture and language to us in exchange for a kiwi living and learning experience. We love hearing stories about lifelong friendships between WWOOFers and hosts. Many times they result in visits abroad and invitation to weddings. There are also life changing experiences, where WWOOFers have returned home and embraced an organic lifestyle or career.

So there have been many changes with how WWOOF operates but the heart of the matter hasn't changed one bit. We are still a team passionate about Organics and sustainable living and the learning and experiences WWOOF provides.



# 3. How to use this book

WWOOFing is getting more and more popular and the numbers of WWOOFers and hosts is increasing every year. With the working holiday visa in particular, many young people from overseas take a gap year in New Zealand and join WWOOF.

The aim of this book is to provide answers to questions WWOOFers and hosts may have - presented in a lighthearted way with lots of practical examples.

For two months Tom and Stefanie travelled around New Zealand and conducted interviews with more than 40 hosts and WWOOFers around the North- and South Island. They gathered a huge amount of information which they filtered and wrote in this book.

They talked to people, listened to stories and what suggestions they may have to improve the WWOOFing experience. This book contains more than 100 short stories based on true incidents.

**The aim of this book is to educate, entertain and inspire present and future hosts and WWOOFers.**

“Things I wish I told my WWOOFer” should provide suggestions and creative approaches to challenges, which hosts and WWOOFers discover arise.

Names, locations and details of the stories may have been changed. The pictures provided, taken by Thomas Tutzer, do not necessarily link to the host's place. Nationalities are mentioned to add depth to the stories and not to offend any countries and their citizens. The writer of the stories are European and this may affect the storytelling.

Different colours were used to provide examples and highlight outcomes of possible situations and incidents.

Red paragraphs show the possible outcome, if the situation is managed badly.





Green paragraphs show the possible outcome of the same situation managed differently.

Blue paragraphs provide a useful hint or information for hosts or WWOOFers.

## 4. Your Profile

### 4.1 Host

Your profile is the first step to attract the right WWOOFer for your property and your requirements. It is important to provide as much detailed information as possible.

Only uploading photos of your WWOOFers is confusing. One photo of yourself with a small description is enough to let WWOOFers know, who the host is.

#### Information you could include in your Introduction

- Details about you and your property
- The current project
- Why you like having WWOOFers
- WWOOFer tasks
- Animals you have
- Preferred length of stay



Below an example of an Introduction:

*We are a young couple in our thirties and our current project involves setting up a 4 acre bamboo plantation. We enjoy laughing and working alongside WWOOFers from all over the world and treat them as part of our family. Depending on the season your tasks may include potting bamboo, using the weedeater and harvesting. We also need help building our second hand glass house. Its is still in the box and if you like jigsaw puzzles this is the right place for you! Occasionally you also need to feed our 20 chickens and our two big dobermans Shadow and Roxi. We prefer a minimum stay of 10 in order to teach you but also learn from you.*

## **Writing the general information**

This is where you expand on your introduction and provide more information about yourself, your property and your requirements and expectations from your WWOOFer. Get into as much detail as possible - the more details your provide the more likely you are to find a WWOOFer to match your requirements. This can also include more personal details like what you enjoy doing in your free time.

- More details about you and your property
- Work arrangements and hours for WWOOFers
- Expectations for example help with meal preparation
- Interests and hobbies and what kind of people you like to meet
- Diet
- How to get in touch (message or phone)
- WWOOFer accommodation
- Meals
- Availability for example seasonal
- Is the calendar active or not

Below an example of General Information:

*Tom works mainly on the property while Stefanie works for the local newspaper. Our 15 acres of bamboo just started two years ago after a holiday on a bamboo farm in Australia. Tom will be working alongside you from 8.30am until 13.30pm and we also expect you to help us with meal preparation. Occasionally Tom will be busy with other things and you will have to work by yourself. Stefanie loves playing the piano -*



*Musicians are very welcome! Tom is passionate about outdoor activities like mountain biking and kayaking. You are welcome to join anytime. He also like hunting, therefore we enjoy the occasional venison. As a vegetarian or vegan you would most likely not fit in with our diet.*

*With our past hosting experience we find it works best if send us a request and then call us on the same day between 7 and 8pm. Your accommodation will be separate from the main house in a small cottage. All meals are shared in the main house. You need to be ready to be part of our family, not someone who likes to hide in their room all the time.*

*From May until July there is not a lot of work so we don't have any WWOOFers. Please have a look at our calendar for vacancy. We update frequently.*

*Looking forward to hearing from you!*

**A good answer to a WWOOF request: "You can come to my place on (date), please confirm within three days. If not I will offer it to someone else."**

## **4.2 WWOOFer**

This is the first bit of information potential hosts will read about you, so maybe treat this a little like resume for a job application. Tell your potential host your skills and interests and keep in mind, that most hosts have about five to ten requests a day during summertime. Make sure you have a profile picture of yourself. Ideally, you choose one that clearly shows your face and the rest could be a variety of your interests and hobbies.

**When contacting potential hosts, writing the same message and just changing the host's name won't get you anywhere - read the host's profile carefully and mention something specific to the host in your original message.**



## Information you could include in your Introduction

- Reason for coming to New Zealand
- Why do you WWOOF
- About you - what makes you special
- Work experience, school, university, project
- What can you offer
- What would you like to learn
- Preferred length of stay
- How often do you update your location?

**“I am open minded” can be interpreted in New Zealand as being sexually open.**

Below and example of an Introduction:

*Hi, I am Paul from France and I am 26 year old. I worked as a chef for the past seven years in several countries: France, Italy and UK. My English skill is sufficient but I would like to improve. I also would like to learn how to grow organic food, and I am especially interested in growing exotic vegetables, which I can add to my recipes. My recipe of life is a tablespoon of humour, mixed with hard work and in the end you add some persistence. I would like to stay for at least 10 days with a host so I have enough time to get to know you and to gain as much knowledge as possible. In return I would like to bring the French and Italian cuisine into your house.*

## Writing the general information

This is where you really sell yourself and provide details about your skills and what you have to offer. This could include:

- Skills, like milking or fencing
- If you mention carpentry, please specify what you have built in the past
- Non work related skills like playing the guitar or drawing

**Statements like “I like nature and animals” do not provide any information about your skills or experience.**



It is also a good idea to include new skills you would like to learn, for example beekeeping. This will help the host and you to work out if your expectations match. It is important to provide a lot of details about yourself in this section. So you could include information such as:

- Your visa type like “Working Holiday Visa”
- Allergies to animals and food
- Smoker or nonsmoker
- Diet: vegetarian or vegan
- Transport: car, bus or train
- Personal habits like ‘I am a morning person’
- Further interests like movies, books etc.

Below an example of General Information:

*Things I understand:*

*Cooking, bread making, knife sharpening, milking cows, crafting, repairing bicycles. Carpentry: I built a friend's henhouse. I also draw cartoons, if you like - you could be my next portrait.*

*Things I would like to learn or experience:*

*I would like to learn how to grow organic fruit, including meat, vegetables and fruit.*

*I plan to open a restaurant and putty overseas knowledge into practice. I am very social person and like to spend time with my hosts. I am likely to ask a lot of questions and will write down notes from time to time.*

*I was hoping to do some outdoor experiences like kayaking and mountain biking.*



# 5. What Visa and Insurance

## 5.1 Host Insurance

It is strongly recommended that hosts have insurance for their property, including public liability.

## 5.2 WWOOFer Insurance and VISAs

You must make sure that you are not only adequately insured for WWOOFing activities but also that you have health and travel cover that includes any damages you may be liable for. Also, be realistic and do not take part in activities that seem dangerous (engine powered machinery) or outside your capabilities. Contact your insurance broker to check your cover. If needed, explain what WWOOFing is (voluntary work) and direct them to the WWOOF NZ website. We recommend WorldNomads, there is a link on the WWOOF NZ website, but please do your own research

VISAs: We are neither qualified nor authorised to answer questions on this matter. To WWOOF in NZ a Working Holiday Visa is required, please go to [www.immigration.govt.nz](http://www.immigration.govt.nz) for more information. It is your responsibility to obtain the necessary documents and/or visas for your trip. Neither the hosts nor WWOOF NZ can help you with this. Furthermore, membership with WWOOF NZ does not give you any right of entry to a country. Never prepare a trip abroad without being certain of your right of entry and that you have in your possession all the necessary administrative documents.

*Source: WWOOF France*





# 6. Health & Safety

We simply cannot stress the importance of Health & Safety enough. Please make sure you read all the information we provide on the website and do your own research. The following website [www.saferfarms.org.nz](http://www.saferfarms.org.nz) provides guidelines produced by WorkSafe NZ.

As a WWOOFer you are an independent traveller. Please research where you are going and the safest way to get there. Neither WWOOF NZ nor hosts are responsible for your travel arrangements. If you get sick, it is not your host's responsibility to look after you, please see the chapter on Insurance.

It is the host's responsibility to ensure the workplace is safe, adequate safety gear (if needed) and instruction are provided. Furthermore the host needs to create an atmosphere where the WWOOFer feels comfortable to raise concerns or worries they may have.

It is the the WWOOFer's responsibility to be honest and realistic about the experience and knowledge they have. For example the use of machinery. It is not a good idea to state you have extensive knowledge and experience in using a chainsaw because it's more 'fun' using it than weeding! It is the WWOOFers responsibility to work in a safe manner for themselves and others around them.

This is not the place (and it would be impossible) to list all possible Heath & Safety hazards and concerns - but please be safe and sensible!

A ficticious example of an unsafe situation:

WWOOFer Paul arrives at the farm. Hosts Tom and Stefanie are busy and do not instruct the young man on any chainsaw safety rules or give him any safety equipment. Paul is timid and does not admit that he has never used the dangerous piece of equipment before. The WWOOFer's task is to cut down some small trees. To arrive at the designated area, Paul has to use the quad bike, which he has never driven before. There is no helmet available, so he rides without it.



Arriving at the trees, he is not sure about his job and wants to call Tom, but his cellphone is in the house.

A fictitious example of a safer situation:

WWOOFer Paul's task is to use the weed eater to clear the area around the trees. Tom instructs him on the provided safety equipment and explains to Paul how to use the tool properly. The host shows him hazards nearby and how the machine works and supervises the WWOOFer for the first ten minutes to make sure that he know how to use it safely. Tom asks Paul about his cellphone in case anything happens, but he will try to work nearby.

Below some real life examples which could have ended badly ...

### **The Wrestling Dinosaur**

Young WWOOFer Lola is supposed to feed the bulls in the shed. Host Jim is off to another job on the farm and cannot join her. The girl is shocked seeing the size of the bulls for the first time. When she tries to feed them, one of the animals bites her. Lola runs into the house crying and screaming, "They look like dinosaurs!" After the girl calms down, she plucks up courage and promises herself, "Tomorrow, I will try again! I will go wrestling with the dinosaurs." The next morning it is the same story. Once more, she comes crying out of the stable. The host feels very sorry for her, because he could not imagine how hard it is to feed these big animals, if you have never done it before. Jim says to Lola, "Common, tomorrow we will feed the dinosaurs together."

### **The Incapable Arborist**

In host's Max paddock is a big tree, which leans towards one side. WWOOFer Georg claims to be an experienced arborist and is up for the challenge to prune it. Max suggests starting from the top to the bottom, because it could be dangerous otherwise. "If we cut off the big branches on one side, the tree will then grow straight," the wwoofer talks shop and starts with the job. George sits on the biggest branch close to the trunk and is halfway through cutting, when suddenly the branch falls off and the whole weight is gone. The stub, where the



arborist is sitting, works like a catapult and throws him a meter in the air before landing with spread legs on the branch again. Max is observing the scene from the ground, leans over to Georg's girlfriend and whispers, "I think that's it with children."

**WWOOFers should not use machinery like chainsaws or log splitters!**

### **The Stop Bank**

WWOOFer Theodor's task is to pull out thistles and then collect them with the quad bike towing the trailer. The host explains which area to weed, "All this down here and the one on the stop bank. Please don't drive up there. It's too steep, just walk up, pull them out and bring them back to the trailer." The host leaves for a job but said that he will be back in a couple of hours. Theodor thinks it will be much better if he does it a different way: He disconnects the trailer before driving on the stop bank with the quad bike. He moves along the 1.5 meters wide bank and grabs all the thistles on each side. Arriving at the end, he realizes there is no way down. His new plan to get off the stop bank is to turn around and drive back the same way he came from. Turning around the motorbike on 1.5 meters is an impossible task for the WWOOFer. Trying to move it back and forth, suddenly the rear wheels start sliding downhill. Theodor pushes full throttle but the area is too steep for the wheels to find any grip. The motorbike keeps moving along the slope and ends up in the electric fence, which luckily is not on. For the next two hours, Theodor tries to get the bike untangled from the wires, but at the end the host has to lift it out with the crane.

**850 people are injured per year in NZ riding quad bikes - 5 die!**

### **The Ride to the Dark Side**

The WWOOFer Britany is hitching a ride. A car stops and the driver asks her where she would like to go. "Doesn't matter too much, just somewhere around Dunedin," she says. He agrees to give her a ride and when they come into town, it is already night. The man drives her to the darkest side of Dunedin and parks the car into a small alley. Britany gets scared and does not know how to react. Only now, the man explains that he is an off duty police officer. "I am sick of rescuing young girls like you. If you go hitchhiking, make sure you tell the driver an exact address and claim to be expected at a precise time."



Quote from the police: “..If you go hitchhiking, make sure you tell the driver an exact address and claim to be expected at a precise time.”  
We think it is also a good idea to txt the licence plate number to a friend as well!

## 7. The importance of Communication or lost in translation ...

Communication is a vital part of WWOOFing and can have a strong influence on your WWOOFing experience. WWOOFers' different levels of English can be challenging for the hosts at times but may also result in humorous anecdotes.

The red box describes an invented story with minimal communication, while the green one offers a different solution.

Tom and Stefanie get a request and accept a young WWOOFer, but did not mention what time he should arrive. When Paul finally comes to the farm, nobody is at home. He waits for two hours when the hosts return. Tom shows him the accommodation and tells Paul to unpack. It is dinnertime and the WWOOFer is getting hungry, but since he just arrived, he does not dare to ask about food. Paul goes to the toilet without knowing about the necessary repair of the unit. When he flushes, the toilet overflows. Tom and Stefanie are not amused about this incident and clean the floor in silence. Paul is getting more nervous, feels highly uncomfortable and therefore disappears in his room. At nine o'clock in the evening, Stefanie wonders and knocks at his door. She asks why he has not come to the dinner table.

Tom and Stefanie get a request and accept the young WWOOFer Paul. Arriving at the property, Stefanie gives him a sheet of paper with the most important house rules, which she explains further while preparing dinner. After a nice meal, Paul and the hosts discuss the workload for the next morning and what time to start.



Some anecdotes of mis-communication:

### **The Misleading Bus Stop**

WWOOFer Irene is supposed to arrive at five o'clock in the morning. Host Joseph agrees to pick her up at the bus stop to give her a ride home. When the host arrives, nobody is there. Having no contact number of Irene, he waits for one hour. Joseph thinks, "I must have got the time wrong." Waiting until eight o'clock, he then decides to go to the authorities. The police finds out the girls phone number and calls her. She is already waiting for hours. Turns out there are two bus stops in town. The old one, which is not being used anymore, and a new one. The new bus stop is just around the corner and Joseph was waiting four hours just meters apart from Irene.

### **Large or Small?**

Michael and Sabine sit in the living room and have a pleasant conversation. Host Bob is sitting next to them reading. Suddenly there is a power cut and the living room turns black. Michael shouts out, "Do you have any condoms?" "Are you sure you need some now?" Bob asks. The WWOOFer replies, "Yes, yes." Bob walks into his son's room and shouts towards the living room: "Large or small?" No reply. The host comes back with the whole package and puts it on the sofa next to Michael. The boy turns red and just realizes his mistake, "No! No! I meant candles," he says while his girlfriend Sabine roars with laughter.



## **VIP**

Host Sydney invites his neighbour over to have a chat. German WWOOFer Christina sits beside them at the table but is very much ignored by the neighbor. Leaving the place in a very arrogant manner, the WWOOFer asks Sydney, “So, is he a very impotent man?” “No”, the host replies, “I think he is doing fine. He has two children.” What Christina really meant is “important”.

## **Slow Joe**

Librarian Joe has to weed for the first time in his life. Sitting on his bum, he grabs every single piece of grass and puts it painfully slow on a pile. The host decides to change system and shows him a paddock, which he has to finish within the day. The night approaches and Slow Joe is still working. The last evening, the young man wants to thank the host and asks if he could play the piano. He improvises and plays a sonata like an angel. The host is a piano teacher and yells out, “How could you not mention your talent. You could have been our musical entertainment, instead of weeding all day.”

## **The Freezer**

It is wintertime. WWOOFer Chang goes for a seven-day hiking trip into the mountains. He does not take a cellphone or a tent with him. The host begs him to reconsider. “No, me not”, Chang replies and walks out into the cold weather. The host goes to the door and calls at him, “If you are not here in seven days, I will call the police to look for you.” The days goes by. No sign of Chang and no call. At the seventh day in the evening Chang limps through the door. “It was cold” Chang says and crawls into bed. It takes the WWOOFer three days to recover and to get back to work at the farm.

## **Self-Sufficient Marketing**

French WWOOFer Claire is in her mid-50s and does not speak English very well. She is especially interested in marketing primary industry products. Claire arrives late in the evening at Robert’s farm and the host quickly explains to her the work for the following days. The next morning the woman looks distraught. Robert asks her, “Are





you not feeling well?” “Not much sleep”, the WWOOFer replies, “because I think I not good here. My interest is marketing, you don’t do marketing.” “No, we don’t do marketing around here,” the host replies, “Why would you think otherwise?” “Self-sufficiency no means marketing?” the woman asks just before she packs her bags.

### **Colorblind**

The WWOOFer is supposed to get a big, dark stallion from the paddock. 20 minutes later, he comes back with a small, brown mare and presents it to the host proudly.

### **Beatrice and the Black Cross**

City girl Beatrice has to collect eggs from the chicken house. Host Lucas marked already all the eggs, he wants to hatch with a big black cross. “Don’t take those ones”, he says to the WWOOFer. The girl walks out in the garden and brings back all the eggs she could find. When Lucas asks, if she saw the crossed eggs, Beatrice says, “Oh, you meant this cross.”



## **The Proposal**

Host Lynn checks her emails and reads in the subject, “I am proposing to you.” She opens the email and is relieved reading, “I am proposing to you to work on your farm.”

**Calling your potential WWOOFers after they send you a request helps to get an idea of their English language skill.**

## **The Birds Feast**

Lucia and Richard have trouble with the English Language. Host Gregory does not mind and explains every task slow and usually repeats it several times. The next job involves harvesting the kohlrabi on the field down the road. Gregory explains to the WWOOFers, “Cut off the root part of the kohlrabi and save the top part in a wheelbarrow. The rest can go to the birds on the field.” In the evening Lucia and Richard present proudly the job of the day: a wheelbarrow full of roots, while the top part of the kohlrabi is out in the field.

## **Last Words**

Host Patrice had a minor injury and is now stationary in the hospital for some days. The group of WWOOFers visits the host. They have a great conversation and share some laughs. The WWOOFer Andreas decides to let Patrice have some rest and suggests returning to the farm with his friends. He translates the question directly from German into English, “Guys, should we let Patrice rest in peace?” They all crack up laughing.

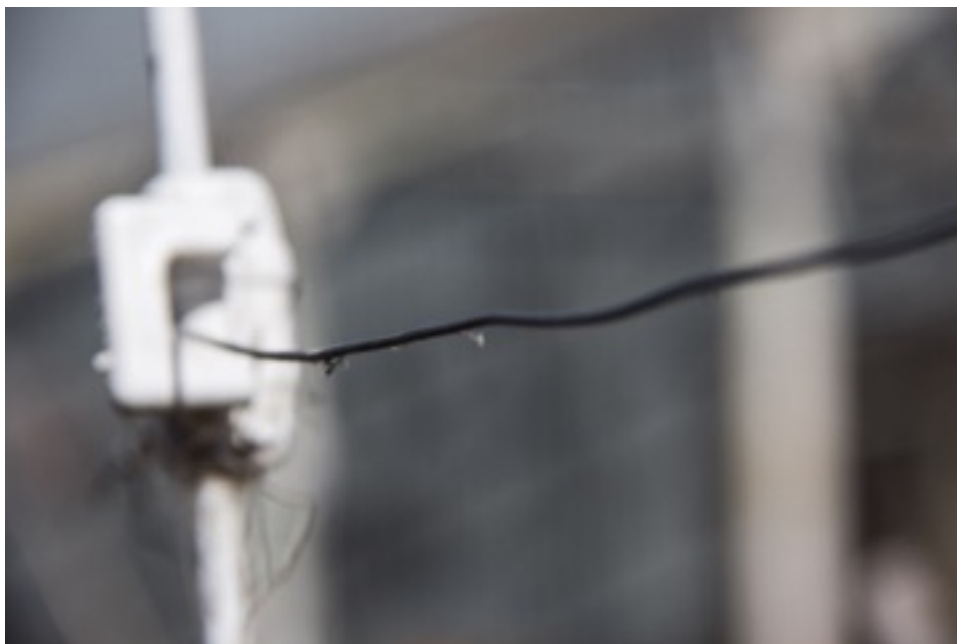


## 8. Living and learning

WWOOFer's different professional backgrounds and talents influence speed and outcome of their work. Some of the short stories in this chapter show the humorous side working alongside WWOOFers, others proof that there can be a certain risk involved.

### **The Battle against the Electric Fence**

WWOOFer Michael's task is to pull out thistles, while host Craig sets up an electric fence nearby. The host says to Michael, "Time for a trial." Craig walks off to find the power switch for the electric fence. It takes a while to get there and Michael decides to make the most out of the spare time and pull out the last thistles around the fence. He puts his forehead between the electric wires to reach the plant. Just at this moment, Craig turns on the power and shouts from behind the shed, "Is it working?" Lying flat at the grass from the shock, the WWOOFer replies, "Working!"



**To keep up the WWOOFers motivation let them play their favourite music when working.**



## The Old Man and the Pig

WWOOFer Rupert is 70 years old. When he comes to the WWOOF place, his task is to remake the floor in the cottage with tiles. The host is very happy with his work until Rupert comes back to the house and explains he cannot continue. The host asks, "What's wrong?" Rupert answers, "Your pig ate my glasses!"

**It is a good idea for hosts to provide WWOOFers with an empty 'back up tool box'. If WWOOFer can't remember where to put the tools - this is where they go!**

## The Strawberry Invitation

Working in the garden, WWOOFer Rene's task is to cover the strawberries with a net to protect the fruits from the birds. Host Diane explains, "Please drive these poles in the ground. Mind, that there has to be a gap of half a meter between the plants and the end of the poles. On top of this, goes the net." Lukas nods and starts the job. After he finishes, he proudly presents his creation: The net is flat at the strawberries and the poles are as far as they will go in the ground. Diane says, "That isn't the task I asked you to do." "Yeah, it's better!" he answers. "Well no, now the birds will sit on the net and help themselves to the strawberries." The next four hours Rene spends pulling the poles back out.



## The Kitchen Cleaner

WWOOFer Maria arrives at the farm and host Gloria says, “I am so sorry, but I have to go to work for a couple of hours. When I come back, I will show you everything. In the meantime, just make yourself at home.” When the host returns, the WWOOFer has rearranged her kitchen: All the usual positions of her plates, glasses, plants and cutlery have changed. Gloria is almost having a tantrum. Suddenly she thinks about her best friend Kira. “She is such an outdoors person and doesn’t want to spend time indoors. She actually needs someone to rearrange her kitchen,” Gloria thinks. She refers Maria to her friend and apparently, the WWOOFer and Kira are still friends until this day.

## 9. When two worlds collide

■ ■ ■

For the WWOOF exchange to be successful it is important that both, WWOOFers and hosts have a genuine desire to learn more about people. Both will need to be sensitive of other people, avoiding what might be offensive behaviour on your part.

As a host, you are opening up your home to people from all over the world, which is rewarding but we know it is not always easy, it requires an open mind, tolerance and understanding to accommodate the many different cultures, ideas and personalities that will arrive at your door.

As a WWOOFer, realize that your hosts may have time concepts and thought patterns that are different from your own. Acquaint yourself with local customs and be flexible - people will be happy to help you.





Below a selection of stories, some may be described as Culture shocks ...

### **The WWOOFer and the Shotgun**

WWOOFer Junco is working indoors while host Jason gets ready for a big hunting trip with his friend. There is a knock at the door and the Japanese WWOOFer answers it. Ron, a tall guy stands in full hunting clothes, with his army boots and with his rifle over the shoulder in the door. Before the man can say anything, Junco immediately lifts her arms and shouts "Please don't shoot!"

### **Do You Have Your Own Blanket?**

"The house could be a bit cold, is that ok for you?" writes host Peter to WWOOFer Andrea. The girl is Canadian and has already heard about the cold houses in New Zealand. "I can handle that," she answers. Arriving at the farm, the host leads her to the accommodation. She cannot believe her eyes: All the windows are missing and the wind is blowing through the building. "The new windows should be here any day now," George says.



### **The Vegetable Chef**

Host Anna plants some exotic vegetables in her garden, but does not know how to prepare this food. The solution comes with the Japanese WWOOFer Anzu: She recognizes the vegetables from back home and prepares over 30 different meals during her stay.





## **The Sunbather of Mosgiel**

Mexican WWOOFer Juan arrives at the farm during winter. When the host shows him his accommodation, he is astonished how cold it is and suggests heating it more. The host explains that this is the normal temperature in New Zealand's houses. "You could put on some more clothes, since you are just wearing shorts and a T-shirt," the host advises. Juan looks at her confused and replies, "But I really like wearing my shorts!"

## **Different Countries – Different Customs**

Hyun-Shik's morning ritual: Going into the kitchen, spitting into the sink and with a big smile on his face, greeting the hosts. After the third day, they cannot take it anymore. The hosts explain to the WWOOFer that spitting in the sink is not part of the Kiwi culture.



## **Internet issues**

Diana explains to her WWOOFers the limited internet data supply on the farm, "Please don't download full movies." The couple agrees and wanders off to their room. The next day the host would like to check her emails. No data left. She confronts the WWOOFers and they admit, "We don't load down big movie, we just watching short videos on YouTube."



**WWOOFers coming directly from the airport to a host's place won't know much about Kiwi culture and the way of life in NZ. It is better if they have been in the country for at least a week before they go WWOOFing.**

### **The Flush**

Host Allison has only rainwater tank on her farm and explains to every WWOOFer, "Five minutes shower every day is the maximum we can have this time of the year." WWOOFer Vanessa stays on the farm for one week. After the girl left, Allison cleans the WWOOFer's accommodation and sees the mess: The toilet is broken and flushes continuously. This is the start of Allison's daily visits to a friend's house to have a shower.

### **Flour for You**

18-year-old Florian has been New Zealand for ten days. During his stay at the farm, the bell rings and the host answers the door. "Here is a big box for Florian Müller", the mail courier says. At this moment, Florian appears from his room and runs towards the entrance. "This is for me, this is for me!" he shouts excited. The WWOOFer signs the delivery papers and drags the 16 kg box into his accommodation. The host gets curious and asks the WWOOFer what it is. Florian answers, "I don't like the bread in this country. My Mama sent me all the ingredients to make good German bread."

## **10. Food glorious food!**

If you need anything that is not widely available or have any particular dietary requirements (for example, no gluten), remember to take it with you or ask your host if they eat it as well! Furthermore, if you cannot go without certain «extras» (for example, soft drinks), it is better to buy them yourself. More often than not meals are family-style rather than gastronomic.



Avoid helping yourself or snacking between meals without asking first, since although meals are included in the WWOOFing experience that does not mean everything is unlimited. If you feel like putting on an apron and cooking, bear in mind that certain foods can be expensive for your hosts, so should be used sparingly. Sometimes hosts keep «special» ones for their own personal usage on a shelf or in a separate cupboard, so be respectful.

Although hosts would like to provide only 100% organic meals, it depends on their means and their financial situation; so you might not eat 100% organic (which is 40% more expensive in general).

Paul is about to go WWOOFing at Tom and Stefanie's farm. He is vegetarian and has to eat gluten free. Every time he mentions this in a request, no host would take him. This time he wants to be smart and arrives without letting his hosts know. Prior to his arrival, Stefanie went shopping and bought many groceries, which he would not eat. The surprise comes at the dinner table.

Prior to his arrival, WWOOFer Paul mentions his diet in the WWOOF request: He is vegetarian and has to eat gluten free. It is impossible to find a host for the 18-year-old WWOOFer. Paul now changes his tactic: He looks up only vegetarian hosts and writes, that he will provide his own gluten free bread and muesli for breakfast.

### **The Pastry Chef**

Hosts Brendan and Christine have health issues and change their profile, "We are looking for someone who can cook dinner every night." One girl agrees and arrives at the farm. The first evening, the hosts are waiting for dinner and they cannot believe what the girl serves: The WWOOFer "cooked" cake and cookies for dinner. The host Christine points out this fact and the girl turns red and stumbles, "But... but cookies and cakes are the only thing I can cook!"





### **A Hard Nut to Crack**

The young vegan Verena comes to the hosts' place without mentioning her eating habits. Scott bought the wrong groceries to fit a vegan diet. "No problem", Verena says, "I just eat what's in the pantry." From now on Verena climbs into the pantry, digging for treasures, whenever she feels hungry. Her favorites are the most expensive ones like macadamia-, hazel- or walnuts. After four days, the host cannot take it anymore and asks her to leave the following day. "Better look for a host that is prepared to cook vegan meals." In the evening, Scott bakes a nice cake out of eggs and chocolate. Everything is ready for his son's birthday the next day. Feeling very hungry, "vegan" Verena gets up late at night, sneaks into the kitchen and eats the whole cake.

### **The Muesli Make Up**

WWOOFer Lara's task is to make muesli out of expensive ingredients like nuts and dried fruits. Host Carl asks, if she would understand the recipe in the book. "Yes of course I do," she answers. The host disappears in the garden. Minutes later, black smoke and a burned smell comes out of the kitchen window. The girl did not put the tray in the oven, but "cooked" the muesli in the pot until it was burned. Lara feels so sorry, that she insists to eat all the burned muesli for the rest of her stay, although the host tells her not to.



## **The Garden of Vegans**

Sharon gets a request from a couple of vegans. She replies that she is sorry, but does not want to cook separate dinners. The WWOOFers answer, “Don’t worry about us, we are easy going and will just eat whatever is growing in your garden.” Laughing out, the host replies, “It’s spring here in New Zealand, the only thing big enough to eat is grass.”

## **Is There Anything You don’t Eat?**

Host Hannah has written on her profile that she has a big veggie garden. She belongs to the local Veggie Club and quit her previous job to dedicate her life to the garden. When WWOOFer Alejandra comes into her house, the host asks her, “Is there anything you don’t eat?” Alejandra answers without thinking for a second, “vegetables.”

**The second evening is the perfect time ask your WWOOFers how they feel about the place.**

## **The Skinny Vegetarian**

Host Cedrick accepts the request of vegetarian Karen. The first evening, the host serves her one single potato on a plate. The rest of the family, all meat eaters, enjoy their steak. Mentioning her poor food, the host replied, “We had a look at your profile and you looked so skinny, that we thought you didn’t need more than that.”



WWOOFer Donghae is sitting at the breakfast table and waiting for the host to join. Jeff is busy and yells from outside, “Just help yourself and begin with breakfast.” After ten minutes, the host walks into the kitchen and sees the WWOOFer eating toast with meat on top. “Where did you find the meat?” the host asks. The young Korean points to the dog food in the fridge. The host bursts out laughing when Donghae explains, “I thought it’s ham.” From now on Jeff calls the dog sausage “Korean ham”.

### **The Rosemary Roast**

WWOOFer Momoko is a botanist and loves cooking. Together with the host, she is preparing the roast for dinner. “Momoko, could you please bring me some rosemary?” the host asks. The WWOOFer comes back, sprinkles the herb over the roast, and sticks it in the oven. Momoko serves dinner and the family starts eating. It takes the woman only one bite to understand that it was not rosemary but lavender.

### **The Graveyard**

Sebastian comes to a vegetarian WWOOF farm. He does not appreciate the meat less lifestyle, but agrees not to have any meat while he stays on the farm. After some days, he cannot resist the temptation of meat or fish anymore and works out a cunning plan. From now on, every afternoon Sebastian goes to the river and fishes. After attending dinner with his hosts, he sneaks to a hidden corner on the farm, reassembles his homemade barbecue and sizzles the secret fish. A long time after Sebastian left, the hosts discover all the fish bones in the hidden corner and call it “The Graveyard”.





# 11. WWOOFing Etiquette - basic manners

This chapter is very closely connected to chapter 8 where we are addressing the issues that can occur due to different cultures and background. Certain behaviour may be perfectly acceptable in one country and is considered rude in NZ. The key is for both, WWOOFers and hosts, to be open minded and understanding.

When it comes to basic manners, be respectful and remember what your mama told you! The golden rule may be: Hosts treat your WWOOFers how you would like to be treated, and WWOOFers treat your hosts as you would like to be treated!

## **Expensive Shoes**

WWOOFer Sarah calls her former host, “Hi Dan, I forgot my expensive trekking shoes at your place. Can you please send them to Motueka? I will pick them up next week.” Dan agrees, brings the shoes to the post office and sends Sarah an email. No reply! After some more emails with no replies, the New Zealand Post sends the shoes back to the delivery address. Until this day, four years later, the shoes are still there waiting for Sarah.

## **Servants Please**

WWOOFer Neil writes on his profile that he is a farmer in South Africa. Because of his agricultural background, host Tod invites him on his farm. After the first day of work, it is obvious that he would not have done a lot of manual labor in his life. In addition, Neil would not contribute to any household duties. Clearing the table or filling the dishwasher is an impossible job for him. At some point, Tod demands an explanation. Neil replies, “You know, back at home on the farm I have servants that work for me.”



## **The Plum Chutney**

At the end of their WWOOF week, a young couple asks host Olivia if they could make chutney with the plums of her tree. The host agrees and even offers them her kitchen. Olivia has to leave for work and when she comes back the couple is gone, so were all the plums on her tree, all the jars, all the sugar and the kitchen is a mess. However, they left one small jar with a thank you note on top of the lid.



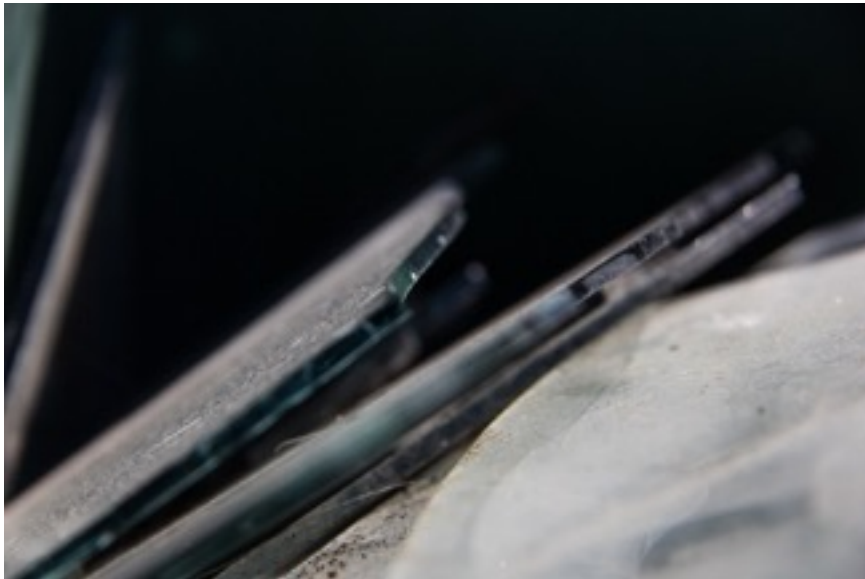
## **The Whisky WWOOFer**

It is host Peter's birthday and he is enjoying a nice evening with friends. Everyone brings some presents and his best friend offers a high-class bottle of Whiskey. WWOOFer Boris joins the social drinking and after some quite drinks he starts on the heavy liquor like there is no tomorrow. He even stands up, grabs the Whiskey bottle and asks Peter's friends, if they want some more of the precious drink. Being shocked about this disturbing behaviour, everyone declines. Boris is now the only one drinking and talking as well. Halfway through the evening and three quarters through the bottle, he excuses himself and walks casually towards the door through to the kitchen. Next thing you hear is Boris vomiting into the kitchen sink.



## The Hideaway

It is the WWOOFers' last day. They are about to leave the farm when host Bryan asks them if everything in the WWOOFers accommodation is cleaned up. "Everything ok", is the response. After they leave, Bryan goes into their cabin and discovers that a glass shelf is missing. For two days, he looks for it and finally finds it in the recycling bin, perfectly wrapped in newspaper so no one would find it.



## Busy Times

Because of a sudden change of plan, WWOOFer Christian calls some hosts in the area and asks if they need someone on the farm the following day. One host sounds very friendly and promises Christian, to ring him back soon after he talks to his wife. The young WWOOFer waits for the call and eventually makes other arrangements. Two weeks later, he gets a text, "We are busy at the moment, thank you."

**Communicate Yes or No as quickly as possible so that people are not left waiting and wondering.**



## **Breasts on Fire**

WWOOFer Chantal is constantly chatting up the married host. “That cannot be right,” thinks Mike, but he is quite sure about it after starting the fire at the chimney: While his wife is preparing dinner in the kitchen, the girl sneaks behind him and rubs her breasts up and down his back. That is it! The host asks the girl to leave that night without having dinner.

## **An Icy Dinner**

WWOOFer Kevin joins the first dinner at the hosts place. In the dining room is a big table and on one side sits the wife, about five meters apart on the other side her husband. Kevin joins the dinner, but the constant silence in the room makes him soon feel uncomfortable. He tries very hard to keep up small talk, but the silence would remain. The days move on and the wife would join them only at the dinner table. On Kevin’s last day, the host explains the whole situation: Four weeks ago, the couple was divorced after a 20-year marriage. They still live in the same house, because they run the business together, but they would not talk to each other.

**If hosts are going through a difficult or stressful time (divorce, bankruptcy, illness) they should not be hosting WWOOFers!**

**The same is true vice versa, sick or unwell WWOOFers should not be WWOOFing!**

## **The Beer Treasure**

Host Simon runs a Motel next to Christchurch airport. Sometimes the guests leave beer or wine behind in the fridge, because they have to fly out and cannot take it with them. Simon offers these to WWOOFers to help themselves. WWOOFer Jack cannot get enough from the alcoholic drinks and is about to empty the fridge by himself. This is too much for the host and Simon and his wife have a cunning plan how to stop the daily celebration. One night they are watching TV and Jack wonders through the door with a beer in his hand. Simon casually says, “You must have already reached the back of the fridge where we



keep all the expired beers.” Jack leaves the living room without saying a word. This is the last time the hosts see him drinking a beer.



## Pinot Noir

Host Theona likes to share a glass of wine with WWOOFers in the evening. After the third day, WWOOFer Simon and Lucille decide that the social drinking at the end of the day is not enough. They start to help themselves to the host's wines whenever they feel like it. Theona stops offering the alcoholic drinks, when she finds the second empty bottle of wine in her fridge. From now on every evening, the two WWOOFers disappear to their vehicle for twenty minutes. One day, on her way home, Theona comes across the WWOOFers car and sneaks a peek of their activity: They hold two glasses in their hands and enjoy a nice bottle of wine while smiling and cheering to each other.

**Exchanging or leaving gifts when WWOOFers are leaving is a nice touch and appreciated by both sides. This may be a bookmark with a picture of your region or a handwritten note. It is not about the monetary value - it's the thought that counts!**



# 12. Common Sense

WWOOFing is about learning new skills, connecting with other people and applying what you already know and have learned. We all make mistakes and may find some things easier than others - but it is important that common sense is applied at all times!

## **The Killer**

Bob asks the newly arrived WWOOFer, "So what do you want to learn today?" The WWOOFer replies in an instant, "I want to kill something." "Seems a bit odd to me," Bob replies. The American boy explains, "I have never killed an animal in my life, but I eat meat daily. It's time to prepare my own food for once." This is a reasonable explanation for the host and they go off shooting rabbits

## **The Melter**

WWOOFer Oliver has ice cream for dessert. "If you want to have a warm whip cream with it, you need to put it in the microwave first," host Shannon explains. Without thinking, Oliver puts the whip cream on top of the ice cream and sticks the whole bowl in the microwave.

## **The Hunter**

Host John's wife is stationary in the hospital. He would like to be with her all the time. Unfortunately, he has to drive back to his farm to milk his cow once a day. John finds a WWOOFer and asks him to look after his place and do the milking, while he stays with his wife. Leonardo, a big tall guy arrives at John's farm and the host briefly shows him around and leaves quickly towards the hospital. One week later, John and his wife come back. Leonardo proudly presents the work that he has done. As a special surprise, he even shot 15 ducks, plucked them and put them in the freezer. "No problem, for next winter you have eating a lot. I am good hunter!" John does not have the heart to tell him, that the ducks were actually his pets.







### **The Tidy Regime**

Host Susan has a big veggie garden. Studying her books every evening, she accumulated a big bookshelf over the years. Susan drives to town, but will be back in a couple of hours. Meanwhile, the WWOOFer Noemi starts cleaning the host's house as a surprise. When Susan comes home, every book in her bookshelf is sorted by size and all the bookmarks have been removed. Noemi welcomes her smiling and says, "It looks very clean now, doesn't it?"

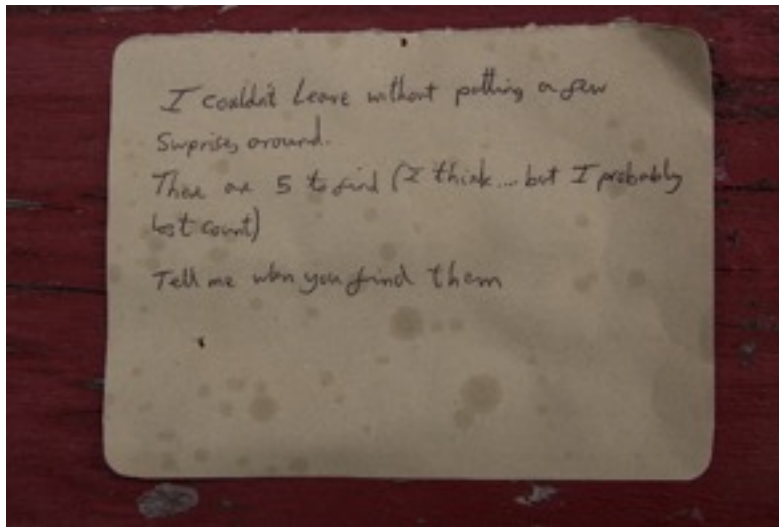
**If WWOOFers arrive around lunch time on the first day, they can do some work in the afternoon.**

### **The Walk of Shame**

WWOOFer Matthew has on his profile that he studies Math at University. Host Barbara has a suitable project: She needs a new shed and invites Matthew to calculate the statics of the building. After days of calculating, he and some more WWOOFers start building the shed. Two weeks later, they finish and Barbara cannot believe what she sees: The roof is much higher on one side than on the other. The host calls her son in law to come over with his chainsaw. Quickly he gets up at the roof and cuts off parts of the one side that is too high. Every day in the morning, Matthew passes his shed on the way from the WWOOFers' accommodation to the house. The host loves to tell this



story to newly arriving WWOOFers and calls the pathway “Matthew, the math genius walk of shame”.



### **Cleaner's Advice**

The host asks WWOOFer Amadeus to clean the toilet. With an arrogant attitude, Amadeus says, “What do you mean with cleaning the toilet? It flushes!”

**If WWOOFers don't understand your instructions it may help to write them down and show them what to do, rather than repeating them several times.**

### **The Smart Girl**

WWOOFer Britney has to clean the house. “Please start with the floor. First sweeping and then clean it wet,” the host Margaret says to the girl. After sweeping, Britney puts the cleaning mop in the bucket and lifts it to let the water slowly dribble off. She waits until it is dry enough to start mobbing the floor. When Margaret comes through the door and sees her waiting, the host shows her, “You should do it like this,” and squeezes the mop with her hands so all the water comes out fast. “Britney, I wonder if you have ever cleaned before.” The girl replies, “My mum always told me, if I start cleaning once, I have to do it for the rest of my life!”



# 13. Seeing the funny side

Meeting people from different cultures can lead to funny stories. Some of them will accompany you for the rest of your life and will make you smile years later.

## **The Waver of Central Otago**

Bob is a very friendly man, who waves to everyone on the street. One day, he waves to a police car during an emergency. A few weeks later, a man approaches him and says, "That must have been you, who gave the police guy the finger."

## **The Bicycle Helmet**

A woman with a bicycle helmet on stands in front of host Noah's house. The host yells out to the front gate, "Who is the person under this bicycle helmet? She replies, "I am the one who painted your house 33 years ago." Noah remembers her well.

## **The Party Surprise**

WWOOFer Pierre-Alexandre is doing a good job and gets along very well with the host family in Auckland. On a Friday night, there is big party on a yacht and the hosts invite Pierre Alexandre to come with them. He enjoys himself a lot and has casual conversations with people drinking and partying. At some point, a woman comes over and starts a conversation. She asks, "So what are you doing?" He starts telling her about WWOOFing and his experiences and asks her the same question. "Well", the woman replies, "I am the Prime Minister of New Zealand".

## **The Slave of the Farmers Market**

When host Andrea is working on the farmers market, she always wears a special hat so that everyone can recognize her easily. She goes and orders coffee for her morning teatime and jokes, "I will send my slave, to pick it up." The woman at the bar is shocked and replies, "These are WWOOFers and not slaves!" Sometime later, the



WWOOFer picks up the coffee, wearing the host's hat. Lifting the hat a bit, he continues Andrea's joke, "I am the slave!"

### **Kiwi Experience**

WWOOFer Rupert has a collection of tattoos spread all over his body. He tells the host, "I would like to remember my experiences in New Zealand. What do you think about having a tattoo of a Kiwi on my foot?" The hosts like the idea and Rupert goes into town the next day. The hosts cannot believe their eyes: Instead of the expected Kiwi bird, the WWOOFer got a tattoo saying, "KIWI, sweet as".



### **The Irish Bulldozers**

Ryan and Rowan from Ireland arrive at the farm. From day one, it is obvious that whatever they touch it will get broken. In the morning, the Irish boys have to pull out thistles using the hoe. One small water pipe crosses the 48 acres paddocks but they manage to hit it. Thousands of litres of rainwater are lost. In the evening, the hosts Susan and Chris decide to forget about it and have a barbecue with the boys. The WWOOFers offer to grill the food at the brand new barbecue. Ryan turns the Starter button in the wrong direction and breaks it. The barbecue is canceled. To make up for it Ryan offers to take all the raw food, cutlery and plates inside. When Ryan takes the sauces into the house, he drops the Ketchup in the living room and the red sauce spills all over the white curtains. Some weeks after Ryan and Rowan left, they want to come back for a visit. The hosts pretended to be on holiday.



## **Host vs. WWOOFer**

Host Tom has the project to build a mountain bike track on his high range sheep farm. He needs someone strong to help him digging the track. French WWOOFer Jacky is a boxer by profession and is ready to work hard on Tom's farm. One day, Jacky holds the heavy pick with one hand in the air above his head and shouts to Tom, "Can you do that, Tommy boy?" The host is already tired from working all day but he takes the challenge on. He can do it easily and even lifts the second pick with the other hand. Holding both picks high up at the same time, he shouts: "Jacqui boy, can you do that?" He cannot! This is the last time, Jacky calls the host "Tommy boy".

## **The Electric Fence**

WWOOFer Tom works alongside the host. Every morning he is very sleepy and dozy. One day he touches the electric fence by mistake. After the shock, he is wide awake. This is the start of Tom's morning ritual to grab hold of the electric wire to wake himself up.

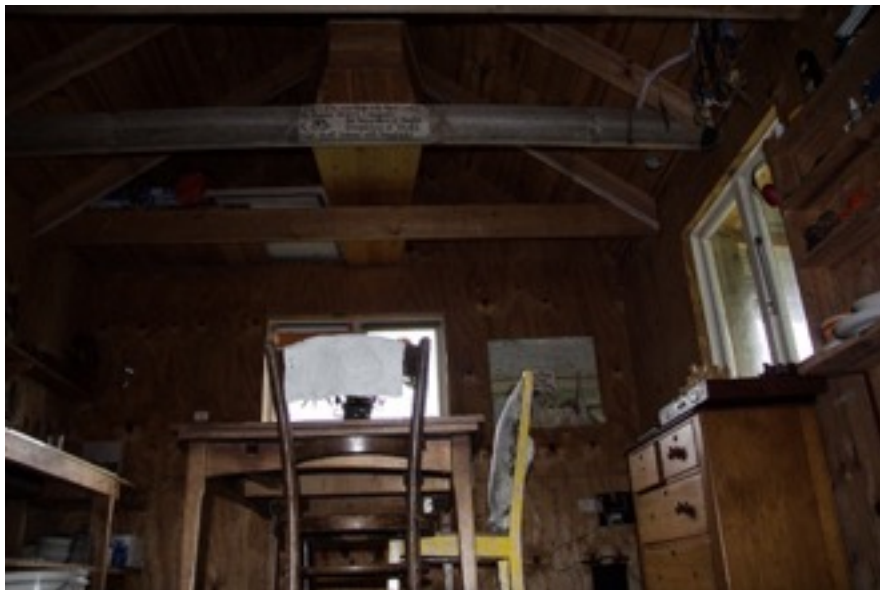
## **The English Gentleman and the French Beauties**

Host Joseph is in his 70's and has some lovely French WWOOFer girls staying with him. Tall and pretty, what they need to do is cleaning the house, cook dinner and occasionally listen to his speeches. The girls like it a lot and after the first week, they agree on staying for at least one month. Joseph asks, "I am not very good with computers; can you please change my WWOOF status on the calendar of the website?" The girls decide that this is the perfect opportunity not to have any competition in the house and they switch off Joseph's WWOOF profile without telling him.



## Something Useful

The police notifies host Bob about having a place to put his rifle and store it securely. He signs on to a wood workshop to create a box. After two weeks, he is already finished with his box for the rifle and is now looking for something to do for the rest of the three month workshop. Bob thinks, "I better build something I will use for sure" and builds his own coffin. Now it is safely tucked away in the WWOOFers accommodation, just above their dining table.



## The Corkscrew

Host Clarence has ducks on her place. Once a year she kills, plucks and puts them in the freezer. Korean WWOOFer James cannot wait to help her. After plucking the ducks, Clarence cuts up the meat. James asks her, "What do you do with this part?" pointing to the corkscrew of the drake. Clarence responds, "We only keep the good part of the meat. This one we throw away." The WWOOFer looks at her with big eyes and says, "No, I want to eat this part. It's good for man." Clarence understands that James thinks eating the corkscrew of the drake boosts his virility. The host hands the twenty corkscrews to James and the WWOOFer walks off to wash them. James starts cleaning the first corkscrew. He smells it and carries on washing. This goes on for twenty minutes. Suddenly he turns to Clarence





disappointed. “Maybe I don’t eat”, and asks, “You eat?” “No James, I don’t eat.”

### **Sleep Talking**

WWOOFer Thomas comes from Northern Italy, but his mother tongue is German. After living in Australia for some time, it is now difficult to recognize his German accent. Staying at the WWOOF farm in New Zealand for some month, some other WWOOFers would come and go. Thomas always introduces himself as an Italian and tries to avoid speaking German. One day, Hermann from Germany arrives at the farm. Again, Thomas hides his German language skills and just talks in English to the WWOOFer. Sharing the same room, Hermann witnesses Thomas sleep talking. Too bad, that it is in German! This is the start of Hermann chattering on in German for the rest of his stay.

### **Déjà Vu**

...and then there was the van that turned up twice with two different WWOOFers at the same host’s place years apart.

### **The Vegemite Chooks**

It is Amelie’s first day at the farm. Her task is to feed the chickens with a bucket full of goodies. Just when Amelie wants to grab the bucket, host Hugh explains, “You forgot the Vegemite on the bread. The chooks love Vegemite!” The WWOOFer knows that Hugh likes to make fun of people and does not believe him. She turns around and asks Keira, the other WWOOFer, who stayed here already for a week. “Do they really like Vegemite?” Keira agrees and Amelie pulls out the Vegemite of the cupboard, ready to spread. Just when she is about to open the lid, Hugh and Keira burst out laughing.



## Eeling

Lee wears thick glasses, because he cannot see very well. After a week, host Robert invites the WWOOFer to go eeling. He explains, “The animals are nocturnal so we leave after dark to the river. I will spear the eels and when I got one you take it off and place it in the bucket full of water as a fast as you can.” Later on, the host holds the spear and the WWOOFer the spotlight right behind him. Suddenly the host spears an eel and flicks it behind him towards Lee. It is dark and Lee cannot see the eel coming. He is shocked being hit in the face. The WWOOFer starts to run away from the host and overlooks the electric fence just ahead of him. From this day on, Lee goes eeling only in the supermarket.

## The Old Man and the Young Chick

During a biodynamics workshop, one participant stands out, because he brings a particular nice looking girl with him. People started to whisper, “Who is this girl?” “This is a WWOOFer”, one of the members explains. After the workshop, eight new hosts from the same town sign on to WWOOF.

**When your WWOOFer arrives, be friendly but firm about your expectations, like working hours.**

## The Relay Race

Host Arianne takes WWOOFer Hangul with her to the local running club. This weekend is a big relay race from Picton to Havelock. The first five kilometers, the participants run over hills, the rest is quite flat. Hangul volunteers to do the hilly part in the men team. Before they start, Arianne advices, “Just go the pace of the fastest woman.” Hangul looks at her disgusted and says, “No woman running!” Hangul starts the race and runs like a lighting. He manages to overtake all the women and by coincidence, Arianne stands at Hangul’s finish line awaiting her female team member. She recognizes the WWOOFer stumbling over the finish line with the last of his



energy, falling down on the back and breathing heavily. She asks, “Are you doing ok?” Hangul lifts his arms, spreads his fingers and whispers, “Sky turn little bit yellow.”

### **Rebirth**

Every morning Yulius walks out of his room very tired and dozy. One day, the host asks, “Good sleep?” Yulius turns around slowly, waits for two seconds and answers, “Yeeees, very good sleep. Almost die.”

Some hosts dedicate the work WWOOFers have done to them. One host put up a wall of fame on the bicycle track build by WWOOFers. Another named the trees planted by one WWOOFer “The Norbert Oaks Allee”.

### **Run Down**

Host Isabell picks up the WWOOFer at the backpacker. Ingmar leans over the car window to the host, “It’s good that you are here! I only have \$1.50 left, a jar of jam and a spare T-Shirt”, pointing towards his small backpack. The host, still shocked of her WWOOFer’s appearance, listens to Ingmar carrying on, “Over there, this is my friend. Can you take him as well? He is broke like me!”, and laughs aloud. Ingmar’s friend has the jeans half way down his bottom, does not wear a shirt and is stubbing out a cigarette. Isabell’s answer is short, but clear, “Sorry, we are full.”

### **Saw**

WWOOFer Alice arrives late in the evening at the host’s place. After they get to know each other, the host asks her, if she would like to see his hobby. The girl agrees and follows him to the garage. The host walks inside through the side entrance saying that he will open the garage door. Slowly it starts to move upwards and Alice sees the shapes of chainsaws in the darkness. When the host switches on the lights, it turns out, he owns more than one hundred “hobby” chainsaws.

### **Fly Away**

Host Suzanne and her partner own a dairy farm. The flies are particularly bad during the summer. Irish WWOOFer Gordon has the



answer, “Back home, we make a challenge out of this. Where is your vacuum cleaner?” Gordon switches on the household appliance and runs around the room like crazy. He climbs up the table and tries to suck the flies up. This is the start of a new WWOOFer challenge and so far, French WWOOFer Michel holds the record with 120 flies per stint.

**WWOOFers appreciate it if you offer them local information about sights to visit. One option is to hand them free brochures from your local I-site about you area.**

### **The Tiny Dot on the Map**

It is Anita’s first night and the host asks her casually where she comes from in Germany. “Oh, you would not even find my tiny village on the map. It is so small, only 200 people live there. And nothing changes ever! I think I am the only one leaving this place in the last ten years.” The host takes out the atlas of the bookshelf and Anita points to the small dot. The host laughs, stands up and grabs his WWOOFers visitor’s book. He opens it and asks the girl, “Do you maybe know her?” pointing to a photo of a blond girl. Anita yells out, “Yeees! This my neighbour and we even went to school together.”

### **The Lawyer**

Kael and Daisy’s task is to milk the goats. It is the first time for both of them. Host Odessa explains in detail how it works. Daisy listens very carefully, while her boyfriend is not interested in paying attention. Daisy starts milking and right from the beginning, her bucket fills with milk. Kael sits down and before starting, he brags, “I need a bigger bucket.” When he squeezes the goat’s teat, not one single drop of milk comes out. He tries again and again. Slowly he loses patience and eventually screams, kicking the bucket away, “I don’t need to know how to milk a goat, I am gonna be a lawyer!”



# 14. If things go wrong ...

Even with the best intentions in the world on both sides, things may not always work out. If this happens, neither you nor your host are obliged to continue.

It is important to not get carried away by disappointment - stay calm talk to your host and try to sort things out.

Communicate! If it is not working for you, there is a good chance that it is not working for the other person either! Stay calm and remember that by listening to the other person you in turn have the best chance of being listened to.

Try to understand each others points of view and what they think are the reasons for why things are not how you expected them to be. If necessary, review together the key points of your stay (hence the importance of quality of communication in advance).

If you do not reach an agreement, perhaps you will decide to end the exchange. If this is the case:decide on a departure date and leave on good terms.

In the rare cases where the situation becomes «extreme» host or WWOOFer can end the exchange at any time.

If the situation is extreme, it is essential that you let us know immediately at [support@woof.co.nz](mailto:support@woof.co.nz)

Try also to first analyse why you are dissatisfied. Very often it turns out that the exchange did not work out because of host and WWOOFer had different expectations. Try to keep an open mind and - except under grave circumstances - give it another try. You may end up getting a lot out of the experience, even though it was not what you had in mind!

*(Source WWOOF France)*



Below the TOP 5 lists of how not do it:

### **WWOOFers TOP 5 to leave the host**

- Driving off by night without saying goodbye
- Meeting friends nearby but never come back
- “My visa expires tomorrow. I have to leave the country. Now!”
- “My Grandfather died unexpected.”
- Sneaking out while the host is in the shower

### **Hosts TOP 5 to get rid of the WWOOFer**

- “My daughter comes for a visit and we need your room. Tomorrow.”
- “A big storm is approaching. I better bring you to the train station before our property gets flooded.”
- “We are so sorry, but another WWOOFer is coming tomorrow and we need your room.”
- “My husband surprised me today with a weekend in Australia.”
- “We are so sorry, but you did such a fantastic job. There is no work left.”





# 15. Tips and tricks from WWOOFer2WWOOFer

... or how to impress your host!

## Prior to your arrival:

- Research the facts about the country you are going to (there are no real Hobbits in New Zealand)
- Please note that NZ is not an easy country to drive in. Always keep left!
- Bring a big smile (it brakes the ice)
- Make sure you have enough money to support your stay (your hosts are not international banks or your parents!)
- Be curious
- Be flexible and prepared to do something new.
- Think about what you want to experience while WWOOFing, living with a family, help on a big farm with other WWOOFers, be around animals or in a more urban setting.

Think about which skills you would like to gain while WWOOFing, like beekeeping or growing avocados.

- Read the hosts profile and write a personal request. Your hosts are not amused if you want to come on their “farm” and they only own a veggie garden.
- Make sure your profile is detailed and contains pictures
- Tell your host of issues that could affect your stay like hay fever.
- Bring warm clothing to New Zealand. It can be cold.
- Have your own gumboots or garden gloves.
- Do not judge the book by its cover. Sometimes at first sight the hosts’ place may not look like you imagined, but there may be the loveliest people living inside.

Local I-Sites are convenient to ask about the best backpackers in town and sometimes you can even leave your big backpack behind for some hours.



## **During your stay:**

- Be interested and ask questions.
- If you do not understand what your host is saying, ask again.
- Help prepare meals and clean the dishes - this is not part of your 4-6 hours work
- Ask your hosts how they recycle.
- Return the tools and equipment to the right place.
- If you drink alcohol, please bring your own.
- Finish the job, even if it takes 10 minutes more than your working hours.
- If you have pictures of your family and your hometown be ready to show your host.
- If your stay was good, leave them a small thing behind like a written note.
- Write a feedback/reference on the hosts profile at the end of your stay.

**If you can't manage to make it to your host's place - tell them as soon as possible and have a good reason! Just not showing up is unacceptable and will lead to negative feedback on your profile.**

## **How to make sure that your host is most unimpressed!**

### **Prior your arrival:**

- Don't bother reading your host's profile.
- Send out a general bulk message to 20 hosts.
- Write in the request, "I will come on this day" without even asking the hosts when they have time.

### **During your stay:**

- Talk in your own language in front of your hosts.
- Just help yourself to food and drinks without asking your hosts.
- Bring your dirty laundry from the last 3 weeks to do at your host's place.
- Be a spoilt teenager - your hosts will love to act as your parents.
- Don't bother bringing your own toiletries. Hosts love spending money on shampoo, toothpaste etc for all their WWOOFers to use



**Joking aside, below a few more points which should be common courtesy but we feel necessary to make:**

**WWOOFing means “Willing workers on organic farms” and includes getting your hands dirty.**

- It is essential to bring your own working clothes.
- Stuffing yourself with food the day before you leave is not a nice gesture.
- Using the cellphone during meals is rude.
- Skyping during work hours is a no go.
- Preparing food from back home is not part of your working time
- Breaking things and not telling your host is an abuse of confidence.
- Internet is very expensive in New Zealand and most hosts don't have unlimited data supply. Respect the rules regarding internet.

**It is sad that this point has to be made: do not steal things, even if it is only the battery of the TV remote.**

- Electricity is very expensive in New Zealand. Don't leave the lights or heater on if you don't need them.
- Remember your table manners.
- Do not hog the remote at the hosts place.
- Don't leave the host without saying goodbye.
- Leave a reference/feedback after your WWOOFing experience.

**Do not stay at a host's place only to save money. WWOOFing is more than living cheaply!**

### **Useful working equipment for WWOOFers**

- Warm jumper
- Long working pants
- Closed working shoes or boots
- Rain jacket
- Thick socks
- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream
- Insect repellent



# 16. Employees or WWOOFers?

## Why your business should not rely on WWOOFers

Some hosts rely on the work force of WWOOFers to run their business – sometimes without even knowing. The following two boxes show a possible development of a fictitious host couple. The green box shows the beginning of the WWOOF experience and in the red box the story continuous with a more businesslike mindset.

In 1990, Tom and Stefanie bought four hectares of land and started a small farm campground with 15 animals. Two years later a friend told them about WWOOFing and they liked the idea of having people from overseas around them. They enjoyed the company of WWOOFers and worked alongside them. Sharing knowledge and experience was an important part of their lives. The WWOOFers accommodation was in the main house and meals were spent together. Sometimes after work, they all went for a swim or a kayaking tour. When Tom and Stefanie did not feel like it, they would not take any WWOOFers on.

Today, 26 years later, Tom and Stefanie run a successful business: They have a farm park with 70 animals and three luxury lodges. They are still part of WWOOF, but now they host at least five WWOOFers at any time. They built a separate small house with a kitchen and provide the WWOOFers with food, so they can prepare their own meals. One of the WWOOFers stayed already for five months and is in charge of teaching newly arriving WWOOFers their tasks which include cleaning the lodges and doing the laundry. Tom and Stefanie are busy with their business and have hardly time to enjoy WWOOFer's company. Stefanie is sure that people like it, "It is more fun for young people to stay with a group in their own



accommodation. Who wants to spend time with an elderly couple at the age of 60? Unlimited data internet and sky TV must be a dream for young backpackers.”

**In order for WWOOFers not to be considered employees, we have been advised by the Ministry of Business and Innovation that WWOOFers are not to be relied on by hosts to operate their businesses. If hosts are relying on WWOOFers for their business, they must offer that position to a paid worker.**

### **Checklist: Does your business rely on WWOOFers?**

- You are hosting WWOOFers all the time. Even if you want to, you cannot afford having a break.
- If a WWOOFer does not show up, it has an influence on your business.
- You compare WWOOFers' work to paid labor and therefore the work satisfaction is rare.
- The interaction and conversations between you and your WWOOFers are minimal and mostly about work.
- Most meals are not shared.
- You take on many WWOOFers at the same time, so they entertain themselves.
- You have to take on many WWOOFers to be able to do all the work.
- WWOOFers' tasks are often monotonous for long hours like folding sheets.
- WWOOFers do not gain new skills while staying at your place.
- WWOOFers earn some extra money if they work more than four to six hours.
- Your WWOOFers interact with your customers during their stay e.g. dealing with your paying guests.

### **Tips on how to create your own WWOOFer's guide**

Some hosts create their own WWOOFers guide, which they usually explain the first night. The following is a summary of things they included:



- Welcome words
- Introduction of family members and animals
- Contact numbers of family members and staff
- Working hours, including breaks
- WWOOFers free time and local activities
- Meals and meal preparation
- Dishes
- House rules like no smoking or drugs
- Resources: Water, Internet, Electricity
- Use of the washing machine
- Rubbish/recycling
- Use of phone/skyping
- Other things that are important to the host WWOOFers' job management

A good idea is to have three types of WWOOFer jobs:

- Ordinary tasks
- Tasks if the weather is bad
- Backup tasks in case the host is not available or the WWOOFer finishes work early

Additionally it is very helpful for WWOOFers to have written detailed instructions of repetitive or crucial jobs, like feeding your animals.

### Host Example: if you want to have a day off

Sundays:

We like to have a “personal space” day, so you need to look after yourself for food. We can provide fresh bread on Sunday mornings for you to make sandwiches for lunch in our kitchen. Evening meal: We can provide eggs for you to make scrambled eggs on toast using the microwave in the studio. If you do not like this option, you need to make your own arrangement.





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