Rancho Mastatal
Costa Rica

Apprenticeship in Sustainable Living

Permaculture, Natural Building, and Homesteading Skills

The following is an extensive amount of information about Rancho Mastatal’s Apprenticeship in Sustainable Living. We have taken the time to put this document together in order to answer your many questions and clarify what you can expect from our program. If, after thoroughly reading through these pages, you are interested in joining our program, please submit an application.

If you have any questions we can be reached at info@ranchomastatal.com or by phone at +(506) 2200 0920.

Program Overview

Participants in Rancho Mastatal’s Apprenticeship in Sustainable Living live and work with amazing people at the Ranch and in Mastatal. They make lifelong friends, participating in a style of living that oftentimes changes them forever. This experience offers the unique opportunity to become a part of the magic and beauty of a remote area of Costa Rica, while simultaneously learning tangible skills to take back home.

Our goals for this program are to:

• empower individuals who are genuinely interested in creating a more sustainable world.
• be a “living laboratory” for experiential education through progressive learning and daily practice of a variety of skills.
• inspire and enable individuals to continue to develop creative solutions and generate positive social change and sustainable practices in their own lives and communities after they leave.
• prepare a group of capable individuals to help manage and caretake the Ranch during our Core Team’s absence (two to three months of the year).
• provide post-apprenticeship support through our networks.

Each year we offer five to seven positions for our year-long apprenticeship. The costs of the program, official start and end dates, payment plans, and included workshops may differ from year to year. Updated information can be found on our website at http://ranchomastatal.com/apprenticeship. During the last third of the apprenticeship, it is common for some or all of the Core Team members to be off site. Apprentices run the Ranch during this caretaker period.
Dates and Introduction to our Instruction
Start Date:  Mid-January
End Date:  Mid-December

We are looking for applicants who are serious about our work and who are motivated to be part of our industrious team, working towards solutions for current environmental and social challenges. We offer a unique and focused program based on experiential education and practical skill-building. Our apprenticeship offers specific instruction, course work, and/or project-based learning opportunities in the fields of permaculture, natural building, and homesteading skills. The following topics are often part of our program, but vary year to year in their depth of exposure:

**Permaculture**
1. Place-based Agriculture
2. Tropical Agroforestry
3. Soil Conservation and Erosion Mitigation
4. Orchard Establishment and Management
5. Soil Fertility, Compost, and Soil Amendments
6. Perennial Vegetable Gardening
8. Design Process and Mapping

**Natural Building**
1. Tool Use, Sharpening, and Care
2. Introduction and Use of Hand Tools
3. Furniture Construction
4. Natural Plasters
5. Earth Building including Wattle and Daub wall systems

**Homesteading Skills**
1. Culinary arts—creating nutritious, flavorful meals where there is no store! No boxes, cans, or bottles.
2. Fermentation (pickles, kimchi, vinegar, country wine, ginger beer, herbal sodas, and more)
3. Processing tropical tubers and starches, perennial vegetables, nuts, and fruits
4. Corn nixtamalization
5. Basic dairy processing and farmer’s cheese
6. Preparing medicinal herbs and spices
7. Processing coconuts for milk and meat
8. Making local flours (yucca, rice, green banana, plantain, cuadrado)
9. Using alternative cooking methods (solar ovens, rocket stoves, methane stoves, etc.)
10. Soapmaking

The areas of focus for the apprenticeship will depend upon the interests and goals of each apprentice as well as the overall needs of the community. In addition to daily work on individual and group projects, each apprentice is expected to help cook, clean, and otherwise become an integral part of the Ranch team. During your time in Mastatal, you will become a part of an intimate group of individuals. It is, without exception, a life-changing experience for all participants.
We greatly value and adhere to the principles of experiential learning. Reading or learning about how to do something is a useful tool, but unless you practice what you have learned, it remains a tool unused. We have begun formulating a pattern language for experiential learning; our program builds on the concepts below.

1. **Value direct engagement.** The Ranch’s experiential education programs are based on direct engagement with the physical world. We believe you can’t truly learn how to plant a tree without actually planting it. Remember that the skills you develop will be embedded in direct engagement with the Ranch’s functioning systems.

2. **Build solid foundations.** Complex systems are built upon solid foundations of simple, humble, tasks— you have to learn to sharpen your chisel before you can build a timber framed house. After time you may be surprised when you step away from your “simple” tasks and find you have already been building something complex.

3. **Own your skills.** Learn something deeply enough to take with you when you go, not just use while you are here. Ask yourself frequently, what skills do I own now? What skills do I want to own by the time I leave?

4. **Find the teachable moments.** Learning is everywhere, and its often most effective in the field. The Ranch team will pass on new skills and information at times when they are not officially “teaching”. Take time each day to reflect on moments when you learned something new.

5. **Recognize learning patterns.** This program is designed to follow a sequential learning pattern of 1) learning; 2) practicing; 3) teaching; and 4) managing. Each stage of this pattern will challenge and enforce the depth of your skill set. Be prepared to transition your skills into new settings and levels of understanding.

6. **Learn to fail better.** Not everything will go right the first time, or the second. Challenge yourself to recognize failures as opportunities to learn. As you practice new skills, practice them well—don’t repeat patterns that don’t give you the result you want.

7. **Create solutions.** In the face of any challenge, you have the power to create solutions. Community living and experiential education are sculpted by an individuals’ and groups’ ability to see themselves as solution builders.

8. **Be a part of the whole.** The Ranch facilities were built by a network of thousands of people who contributed a part of their lives to build something greater than themselves. As an apprentice you become a part of this larger network. What will you leave behind? How will you utilize this network as you move forward?
Apprentices will receive significant instruction and assistance, especially in the first few months of the program. Learning environments include a variety of formats such as lectures, field work, individual reading, self-directed projects and hands-on trials. The instruction methods are designed to accomplish our program goals. We need our apprentices to take responsibility for key operating activities at the Ranch. For example, after we have demonstrated our kimchi-making process in a workshop, the apprentices, as a group, will be expected to take over that task for the remainder of the apprenticeship. The projects one becomes involved with largely depend on the Ranch’s needs for the first half of the year. Apprentices typically develop personal projects during the latter portion of their stay. We do expect a lot from our apprentices but will not be micromanaging your weeks. We are seeking highly motivated individuals who can work effectively alone and collaboratively in groups. We have a set day-to-day schedule, but the specifics of the work within this framework change weekly. The success of this system is dependent on having proactive, motivated individuals who ask good questions and have the confidence and patience to learn by doing.

Commitment
We expect an average of 45 hours of work per week. But keep in mind this is not a 9-5 life, and we are all expected to contribute to evening and weekend activities (cooking, watering, cleaning, etc.) All apprentices are expected to commit to the full 11-month session and meet their hourly requirements no matter the desirability of the assigned work or group activity. Our community structure depends upon your commitment to stay through our entire program.

As part of our commitment to apprentices, one of our program goals is supporting individuals post-apprenticeship. For us this means providing references, connecting individuals to our extensive network, and sharing other opportunities.

Please come with an open mind, a lot of energy, a chunk of tolerance, a sense of adventure, and most importantly a positive attitude. The latter will be the key to having an amazing experience while living in a wonderful village on the edge of the rainforest.

Daily Schedule
In order to help you picture what a typical day looks like in Mastatal, here is a sample daily schedule:
6:00—6:30 Wake up, stretch, yoga, read, etc.
6:30—8:00 CC Skills: watering the nursery, chopping wood, making salad etc
8:00—8:30 Breakfast
8:30—8:45 Morning Meeting: organize the day, choose projects, general communication
9:15—1:00 Work Party, Farm Work, Projects (Ex: digging a swale, building a cob wall, harvesting taro)
1:00—2:00 Lunch
2:00—4:30 Work Party (Ex: making mango pickles, mulching trees, fixing a lamp) or Personal Practice Time
4:30—6:30 Free time, play, research
6:30—7:30 Dinner

Once a week we have Community Check-In. This is an essential element of living in community and provides a place for the whole community to meet and discuss anything all together. The weekends are often more open for apprentices with the exception of cooking and cleaning shifts, CC Skills, and occasional hospitality duties.
Personal and Practice Time (PPT)
In order to ensure everyone in our community has time to rest, explore a neighboring farm, research, check email, finish a project, wash clothes, write, practice yoga, etc., we leave multiple afternoons free during the work week for PP Time. This is your time to meet your personal needs. This is also time meant for you to focus on reaching your own personal and professional goals for your time here.

Caretaker Season
For approximately three months of the year, August through November, some or all of the Ranch Core Team will NOT be on site. This is dependent on group scheduling. The apprentice crew will be fully in charge of managing our site and its systems. We have been training crews to manage the Ranch in our absence for over a decade and are confident in our ability to pass on all needed information in order for the apprentice team to thrive during the caretaker season. This is an important opportunity for apprentices to take on greater responsibilities and challenge themselves.

Play
We love to work and play in Mastatal and do our best to balance the two. We try to recreate multiple times per week and commonly head to the rivers on weekends. If you like to play Ultimate Frisbee, soccer, or basketball, you may want to bring appropriate footwear. And, if you like ping-pong or Scrabble, you may want to brush up on your game before your arrival. Yoga practitioners are highly recommended to bring their own mat and other equipment though we do have a few mats that are available for sharing.

Groups and Workshops
We host many groups and workshops throughout the year. As an education center this is how we earn a livelihood and is the primary focus of our work. Interest and desire in engaging visitors is essential for apprentices. When groups are on site, which is roughly half the year, we typically average 30 people on site. There is a lot of coming and going, many mouths to feed, and generally the Ranch becomes a very busy place. For more information about upcoming classes and our schedule please see our Course Calendar.

The apprenticeship program usually includes a number of workshops, such as our Permaculture Design Certification course and a Wilderness First Responder Certification, as part of the program. These workshop opportunities are a special advantage of our program, and a unique opportunity to study with world-class instructors for an affordable price.
The Ranch Core Team
The Ranch Core Team is made up of five resident instructors: Tim O’Hara, Robin Nunes, Nic Donati, Ali Ostergard and Jacob Porter. For complete bios of our Core Team as well as our Tico Team please see our [website here](#).

Expectations

What Makes a Good Apprentice
While we are not looking for any specific skills per se, it is extremely important that all applicants understand that we work hard at the Ranch. We are looking for industrious, conscientious, mature, and diligent individuals who enjoy long days and putting their nose to the grindstone. We will try to check in to see that both the Ranch and the apprentices are meeting each-other's expectations. This will likely be some of the hardest, albeit most rewarding, work of your life. **If you are looking to spend the year exploring different parts of Costa Rica and Central America than this program is NOT for you.**

We look for individuals who:

- can balance work and play.
- are flexible with positive attitudes about life and work.
- are adventurous and can enjoy life in a rural setting.
- are tidy. This essential characteristic makes communal living a much more positive experience for all involved.
- are able to be present at the Ranch during the entire program. With the exception of visa runs, group beach trips, and the occasional day/weekend trip and family or friend visit, we expect you to be on-site.
- have organizational and time-management skills.
- are prepared to be a morning person.
- are patient in the learning process. Many projects require a basic skill set, that you likely won’t anticipate, before you approach more advanced work.
- are physically, mentally, and emotionally fit. Being able to match our pace is very important. We need high energy people. If you would not describe yourself as high energy, whether due to physical illness/limitations or personal decision, this may not be the right experience for you. If you are going through a major life change or challenging time, this experience may not be suitable for you at the moment. Your health, attitude, and mindset greatly affect the entire Ranch community. None of this should imply that you must be at the peak of physical fitness or that all in your life is perfect, but rather you need to be ready for an intense experience requiring your full physical, mental and emotional attention.
- are willing to learn and delve into projects and can give the same energy and dedication to washing dishes as you would to planting trees.

What the Ranch is Not
While our project is incredibly diverse and encompasses much, it is important to know the services we do NOT provide and the culture we are NOT trying to create.

- We are not a Spanish school. There are ample opportunities to work on your Spanish, but this is not one of the Ranch’s overriding objectives. For those looking for formal instruction during their stay, there is a Spanish school in town and other opportunities that we can discuss in person. For those desiring to speak a lot of Spanish during their time in Mastatal, you will have to be disciplined, get out into the community, and seek out the plethora of opportunities that exist in and around Mastatal.
• We are not a hostel, nor located in a party town. We are a home and a community. While we certainly enjoy a good time and there are many amazing visitors coming and going, we will not tolerate individuals who treat our community as something other than their own and our home.

• We are not a wellness retreat center nor a holistic mental health clinic. As stated earlier, if you are not in a good state of mental or physical health, this may not be the best program for you. Much of our work centers around health but our mission does not include providing a space and the time for intense healing work.

• We are not a temperate climate vegetable farm. When we use the words agriculture and gardening they are based in this place. Consequently you will not find tidy rows of organic vegetables, but rather a farming system matching our topography, climate, and culture.

• We are not a self-sufficient farm nor do we aim to be. Our goal is to foster a rural economy, support local farmers and try to redistribute the wealth that foreigner visitors and guests bring to our small community.

Community

The Ranch is a strong, cohesive community made up of local employees, the founders, residents, apprentices, groups and other guests. The setting is quite rural and apprentices have limited access to travel and many modern-day amenities. Community living at the Ranch can be an intense experience. We live in a shared space and eat, work and spend free time together. Being a part of our community requires tolerance, patience, respect, and openness to new ideas and perspectives. Acceptance to this program involves a commitment to collective responsibility – going the extra mile to assure that all works well.

Our lives here are not compartmentalized. We live, work and play in the same spaces. This can be extremely different than “normal life” and something that you must be prepared to embrace. Success in the apprenticeship requires a commitment to this process and willingness to challenge yourself.

If you are not meeting our expectations for whatever reason, we will talk to you in person and we would expect you to approach us if we are not meeting your expectations.

Substance Policy

The “cantina” is one of the social centers of Mastatal, especially for local males. It is a good place to meet people and practice Spanish but we ask that you don’t go after dinner. Our community, like many other rural towns around the world, struggles with problems of alcoholism and alcohol-related issues that we do not want to exacerbate.

Due to our location in the center of town, the student groups who use our facilities, and the unpredictability of illegal drug use in our small communities, we maintain a no drug policy at the Ranch and within the town. Please do not purchase, sell, or use drugs in town or at the Ranch during your stay here or you will be asked you to leave. Please keep in mind that you are being welcomed into a small community and that your actions will have a great impact, either positive or negative, on the people with whom you interact. These are very important issues for us that will be discussed in more detail upon arrival.
Hospitality

Groups and guests are an important part of the Ranch’s educational mission and financially allow us to continue developing our programs and to maintain our structures. During times when we have groups, the Ranch tends to get extremely busy. We do our best to keep our numbers down, but apprentices need to be aware that they will be constantly sharing the Ranch’s infrastructure with people from all walks of life. When we have groups there are consistently over 30 people at the Ranch. Your ability to share your experience and interact with course participants will be key to your happiness and success of our community.

Apprentices are expected to participate in basic hospitality chores such as answering questions, cleaning and preparing beds. It is important to understand that most Ranch space is considered community space, and a tolerance of people of all ages, lifestyles, etc., is mandatory.

The Kitchen and Food Preferences

The kitchen is the heart of the Ranch. As an education center we rely on groups and workshops as our primary source of income, and feeding these hungry mouths is a principle activity. All apprentices are actively trained in kitchen basics and are expected to take a role in meal preparation. This is one of the fundamental components of communal living at the Ranch. In general we find that most weeks everyone is expected to participate in 1-2 cooking shifts and 3-4 cleaning shifts, which includes weekend shifts. This is an incredible opportunity to become comfortable in a quick-paced kitchen, filled with amazing ingredients, cookbooks, and history. It also means that most days of the week, all you have to do is arrive at meal time and enjoy.

A large percentage of the food that we eat at the Ranch is sourced from local and regional farms or grown on site. Almost all of our grains and legumes (rice, corn, and beans) and our roots, tubers, and tropical starch crops (yucca, taro, plantain, green banana, pejibaye) come from farms within 10 kilometers. All our milk, cheese, and other dairy products are made at the Ranch, or by our neighbors. Generally, most of our salad greens are grown at the Ranch. We also produce an increasing amount of our own spices, herbs, nuts, and fruits. Any eggs and meat products we eat come from neighbor’s farms. Though we eat eggs daily, meat is generally only consumed once a week at most. The vast majority of our meals are cooked with regionally-sourced lard (pig fat).

It is important to let us know in advance if you have any dietary restrictions or allergies. Our kitchen is small and in almost constant use. We source food from individual farmers on a seasonal basis, and there is no supermarket in town. It is challenging for us to meet some special dietary needs.

Health, Safety and Acclimatization

In general, Mastatal is a very safe place. However, there are general health risks you should be aware of including venomous snakes, lightning, working with machetes and sharp tools, insect bites, skin infections, and allergies. The most common health issues are skin infections and allergies. All of these risks can usually be prevented through common sense and paying attention to safety information. Wearing long pants and long sleeves while working in the orchards helps too.

Mastatal is 2-3 hour drive from the largest city and capital, San Jose and major hospitals. In the case of a non-life-threatening/serious medical condition/situation you will have the option to leave on the next bus (once a day) or hire a taxi. Rancho Mastatal will most likely NOT be able to drive you to a doctor/hospital in these non-emergency situations.
In the case of a life threatening/serious medical emergency we will call the Red Cross ambulance and/or evacuate you in our vehicle (assuming that it is on-site and in good working order). In the case that we use the Ranch’s vehicle, we kindly ask you to cover the transportation expense (approximately $100).

Each apprentice will be responsible for putting a plan in place if they have to stay in the hospital for multiple days. We will help you in every way that we can though we will not necessarily be able to stay with you at or pick you up from the hospital. We can help arrange and coordinate taxis when necessary.

**What to Bring**

Remember that you’ll be living in the tropics. Often you can get by with a pair of shorts, a t-shirt, and some flip-flops or Crocs. However, for agricultural work you will also need high socks and long sleeve pants and shirts.

We tend to get pretty dirty during the workday so please make sure that you bring work clothes you aren’t attached to. ALL of your belongings WILL get stained, torn, moldy, etc. If you plan to get involved in building while at the Ranch, feel free to bring along a few of your favorite tools though we do have just about everything that you’ll need. Most important for us is that you bring a super solid work ethic and a positive attitude.

**Essential Checklist:** *These items can also be purchased in country, but not in Mastatal.*

- A high quality, bright flashlight. If your flashlight is not rechargeable, plan on replacing batteries every month so please make sure to take them home with you afterwards for disposal as that is not possible in Mastatal.
- Lightweight long work pants (in general lightweight, quick-dry clothing is very useful down here)
- Lightweight long-sleeved work shirts, 2 pair
- Work shorts, 2 pair
- Long, knee high socks, at least 2 pair
- High rubber boots (wellies)*
- Crocs, flip-flops or sturdy shoes/sandals that are very easy to slip on and off
- Umbrella for the rainy season*
- Sneakers for hiking or running around
- A watch with an alarm (being on time is important)
- Sunglasses and sunhat
- Shorts and short sleeved shirts or tank tops for work, play, and hanging out
- Water bottle, 1 or 2
- Towel
- Combo lock or suitcase padlock
- Toiletries, biodegradable if possible
- Swimsuit/swimwear
- Surge protector for electronics
- Work gloves
- Garden clippers/shears*
• First-aid supplies
• Two sets of sheets (fitted and flat and pillow cases) for a double bed
• Enough cash for three months in Mastatal (the nearest ATM is a full day trip away from the Ranch)
• Warm jumper/sweatshirt
• Any medication or personal care items that you need

Other optional things to consider: *These items can also be purchased in country, but not in Mastatal.
• Favorite games
• Cleats for soccer or Frisbee
• Comfortable indoor shoes (especially for cooking shifts)
• Rain jacket or poncho (though umbrellas are superior in this climate in our opinion)
• Notebooks, journals*
• Pens, pencils, art supplies*
• P-Style for females
• Smaller daypack for use at Ranch and for outside trips
• Nice outfit for community events (dances, fund-raisers, etc)
• Diva/Keeper cup for females
• Camera
• Laptop (Be aware that humidity, electrical surges and insects can be harsh on electronics)
• Thumb drive or external hard drive*
• Unlocked cell phone with chip purchased in country*
• Music device with portable speakers
• Favorite instrument
• Mosquito net (rated for midges, 400 holes per inch Skeeter brand)
• Workshop tools: chisel, pull saw, carpenter’s square, tool belt, etc. (We provide these as well.)*
• Machete with case*
• Speaker for use during work parties (coordinate with apprentice group)
• Tupperware: consider bringing your own if you have special food needs.*

Items the Ranch Provides:
• Pillows
• Blanket

What NOT to bring:
• Nice leather goods
• Camping equipment
• Expensive jewelry or other flashy items
• Anything irreplaceable item as the tropical climate is harsh of belongings
• Pets
Accommodations, Amenities, and Communication

Most apprentices are provided a comfortable bed in the Hankey House or the Goat Barn. Showers and composting toilets are located nearby all structures. The structures also have grid electricity and running water.

Apprentices have access to a 300-acre wildlife preserve, with many kilometers of hiking trails, and multiple swimming holes and waterfalls. The main house features an amazing and extensive library open to use. We invest in books yearly and our library has numerous texts and resources for permaculture, natural building, homesteading, etc.

Each apprentice is given a laundry day when they will have access to a washing machine. You are expected to wash your bedding weekly on your dedicated day. Frequent washing keeps mold to a minimum. You will need to purchase (or make) your own laundry detergent.

The Ranch does NOT provide Internet service. Most apprentices these days seem to bring an unlocked cell phone and purchase a chip/SIM and a cellular plan in country. We recommend that you do this at the airport upon arrival and they will be able to help get your phone set up with internet and service in Costa Rica. Please remember that many Ranch program participants and visitors are coming to rural Costa Rica to reconnect with each other and not with the Internet. The Main House at the Ranch is designated as a sacred space that is phone and Internet free.

Please come prepared to unplug. Unfailingly, apprentices who are excited to turn their phone off, ignore Facebook, and be present, adapt much quicker and better to life in Mastatal and ultimately have a more transformative experience. If you want to let friends and family know that you have arrived safe and sound to Mastatal, it is best to call or email them before arriving to Mastatal, though local options become more reliable every year. The Ranch has an office phone that can be used to make free local calls. You can also receive calls at this number, but only during times that don't conflict with our normal business hours.

Our Surroundings

The area in and around Rancho Mastatal contains some of the most pristine terrain left in Puriscal County. The rivers that flow through this region provide the surrounding communities with their potable water. For this reason, apprentices are expected to adhere to the following simple rules.

- Pack out what you bring in. One of our aims is to produce as little garbage as possible from our activities. Please minimize the amount of plastics, glass and other non-compostable material that you bring to the Ranch.
- If possible please bring only natural, biodegradable soaps, toothpaste, shampoos, conditioners, deodorants, lotions and bug sprays.
- Bring your own water bottles. The water at Rancho Mastatal, as well as many parts of Costa Rica is potable. There is no need to buy bottled water while here.

We strongly encourage all of our apprentices to immerse themselves in the community of Mastatal. One can do this by teaching in the elementary school during PPT, patronizing local businesses, helping families with small jobs in their homes or on their farms, playing soccer with the locals, and by staying or eating with a family in their home from time to time.
Neighbors
Parque Naticonal La Cangreja
Finca Siempre Verde
Villas Mastatal
La Iguana Chocolate
Soda Paso de Las Lapas

Visa Requirements
When you enter Costa Rica, you will be required to present proof of onward travel. This is a copy of a plane ticket that shows you will be exiting the country within 90 days. We recommend purchasing a fully refundable plane ticket, which you may refund upon arrival. Your passport will be stamped with a 90-day tourist visa. Please double check that the border agent puts a 90-day stamp in your passport. For more information about what this might entail, please see here. Another option could be www.bestonwardticket.com

Time Away Policy & Offsite Travel
We expect that apprentices can be away from the Ranch for no more than 6 weeks through the entire program. Apprentices are encouraged to take up to 1 week for visa runs (including travel days) between specific dates that will be shared as our yearly schedule is finalized.

We ask that you **do not travel during the first 3 months of the program** when it's critical that everyone is present for the most intensive part of the program training. Outside of normal length visa runs (about 1 week 3 times during your apprenticeship), days away from the Ranch may include when family is visiting the country, weekend trips, field trips, and extended visa trips.

Our schedule does change with fluctuations in groups and programming. For longer visits with family and friends, please schedule as far in advance as possible.

Apprentices are expected to keep track of their own days away. Time away does not include a potential beach trip that we sometimes take as a team (core team and apprentices). We prefer for people to be on-site as much as possible because this is the best way to get the most out of the experience and be a full member of our community.
Family and Friend Visits

In order to best support our apprentice team, we provide discounted stays for friends and family members. We've created the following policy to balance the needs of the Ranch, such as minimizing coming and goings, distraction of friends on apprentice work, and the need to earn a livelihood, with the needs of apprentices, principally providing an affordable stay for close friends and family.

- Close friends and family receive a $30/night/person rate (the normal rate is between $45 and $55/person).
- In addition, each apprentice gets two “VIP passes” during their stay.
- Each pass allows a guest to stay in the apprentices’ bed for a maximum of two weeks (14 nights).
- The cost is a sliding scale of $15-$30 a night.
- If that guest wants to stay longer than 14 nights the cost is $30 a night.
- The apprentice can choose to use their two passes on one guest, but can not divide the time up between more than two people.
- These reservations need to be made with advance notice to assure availability, with confirmation from other apprentices that will be sharing the house space, and preferably during our “low season,” July-December.

We encourage apprentices to coordinate guests around their visa runs to avoid conflicts with their educational experience. During your time here we expect you to be engaged in everyday activities and personal guests can sometimes pull you away from daily Ranch life. Although extra hands can sometimes be beneficial to our work, in many cases it can be challenging to get guests involved in daily work parties. Staying for a short time at the Ranch and then joining you for your visa run is a good option. The more information you can give us about your potential plans, the more likely we can accommodate you.

Deadlines for the Application Process

The application deadline for the apprenticeship is three months before the official start date, though the earlier you submit your application the better. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and spots fill as solid candidates are identified. Once your application is submitted we will let you know about available space and set up a phone interview if your application is solid and we still have space. These positions are competitive and throughout the year we receive around 100 applications, therefore we are only able to interview the best applicants. We aim to wrap up the application process by the end of June. We will notify selected apprentices as soon as possible. In some cases it will take several months. Feel free to contact us during the waiting period to inquire about the status of your application. We have five to seven spaces available depending on the year.

You can and are encouraged to apply for positions as a couple.
All incoming apprentices must be at the Ranch on the morning (8:00 am) on the first day of their apprenticeship.

You may be able to arrive before the beginning date but should contact the Ranch to arrange this ahead of time. We hope that you will arrive ready and motivated to hit the ground running.

**Costs**

The cost of the program is posted on our website.

Much of the apprentices’ needs will be met while at the Ranch, including all food, except dinner on Sundays, and lodging, unlimited access to our wildlife refuge, library and facilities, and much more.

**What Does Your Apprenticeship Fee Go Towards?**

As listed below, this contribution covers basic program expenses such as food, lodging, basic amenities, project materials, etc., as well as the included courses. The Ranch is not a typical, production-based WWOOF farm. Your labor does not directly offset the cost of for-profit farming activities. Your labor is mainly in exchange for a life-changing educational experience that we offer at a fraction of the price that it would cost someone seeking a conventional educational experience today.

We are dedicated to having a positive impact in our local economy. That means employing a local staff and purchasing foodstuffs and building materials from regional families and farms when at times it would be cheaper to source from elsewhere. Low-cost imported and irresponsibly-sourced goods are detrimental to rural communities such as ours, and we are committed to be part of the revival of our local economy. Our principle expenses are broken down as follows:

- 36% Local employee wages and health insurance.
- 1.4% Farm expenses such as seeds, trees, tools, transportation, etc.
- 7.2% Hospitality overheads such as laundry, toilet paper, cleaning supplies, etc.
- 13% Salary of instructors for workshops, courses, and the apprenticeship.
- 7% Construction and building maintenance materials.
- 2% Car maintenance.
- 13.9% Administration costs such as taxes, legal fees, accounting, etc.
- 15.5% Food, sourced locally whenever possible.
Sunday and Family Meals
If we have a group staying with us at the Ranch and they are budgeted to eat at the soda the core team we will join them for this meal and will not eat at the Ranch. Apprentices are welcome to join everyone at the Soda, meals cost around 3000 colones and are a Costa Rican typical plate. If apprentices are on a tight budget we will schedule an apprentice to heat up left over and a cleanup crew.

Other Expenses
It is important that you fully understand the financial commitment you are making beyond the apprenticeship program costs. You will incur additional expenses outside of the apprenticeship cost. You should have a budget prior to your arrival. These expenses commonly include the following: flights, visa run and travel, beach trips, chocolate from our neighbors, internet use, alcoholic beverages, supporting community fundraisers such as bingo nights and dances, public transport, and extra personal items you may want/need such as special food items, toiletries, etc.

Payment
Please see our website payment page for all payment options.

Fundraising for your Apprenticeship
There are a number of ways to help fund your apprenticeship experience at Rancho Mastatal. Below are a few crowdfunding sites that have come to our attention. These are third party providers, so please do your due diligence on their requirements and fee structure.

We the Trees is a crowdfunding platform for raising money for permaculture classes, internships and projects. Volunteer Forever is a crowdfunding platform for raising money for international volunteer opportunities. Crowdrise is a fundraising site for charitable and personal causes.

Apply

Thank you for your interest in the Ranch and our Apprenticeship in Sustainable Living. If after reading these pages you are still interested in becoming part of our program, please submit an application here.

If you have any questions we can be reached at info@ranchomastatal.com or by phone at +(506) 2200 0920.