

BUNKS AND BURROS

A unique two night volunteer camping event located along the foothills of the Sierra Nevada to benefit the wild burros and other rescued animals living at the Wild Burro Rescue and Preservation Project in Olancho, CA

DETAILS

Located on 130 acres in the shadow of the Eastern Sierra, the Wild Burro Rescue provides sanctuary to over 200 burros, mules, horses, dogs, cats and one orphaned cow. Founder Diana Chontos started the rescue after learning about the National Park's "direct reduction" program of wild burros in Death Valley. From 1987 to 1994, the park service shot 400 burros in Death Valley alone (thousands more were shot in Grand Canyon and Death Valley from 1920-1971). Because the government land-management policy calls for the elimination of wild burros, the Wild Burro Rescue Project has become one of the only safe places for them to live out their lives.

When I first visited the rescue back in May of 2016, I instantly felt a connection to the land and the animals that have found sanctuary there. I've also grown close to Diana and her dedicated team of workers who do an incredible job of providing care and love to all the animals but are often forced to place other projects on the back burner due to insufficient funding and/or limited resources. While the rescue has always been open to volunteers, the volunteer program itself hasn't always been able to reach its full potential.

Bunks & Burros was created to build upon the volunteer program that already exists at the rescue. This unique one of a kind program offers volunteers the opportunity to camp alongside some of the last remaining wild burros taken out of Death Valley National Park. They'll also work on projects during their stay that will help improve the lives of all the animals that now call the sanctuary their home.

WHAT TO EXPECT

After a short, bumpy drive off of Highway 395, you'll reach the entrance to the sanctuary. Inside sits a very secluded 130 acre ranch nestled against the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, where the sagebrush meets the pines. As you drive onto the property, you'll be greeted by some of the over 200 wild burros that have been rescued from Death Valley National Park or other nearby locations that they once called home. Soon you'll reach the spot where you'll be camping at over the next couple of nights. After all the volunteers have arrived and set up their camps, we'll meet up with Diana and enjoy a drink or two as we watch the stars appear over the Sierra Nevada Range. After heading back to camp, you'll have an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful night sky and say good night to the burros before hitting the hay.

The next morning, early risers will set off on an optional short hike up to a nearby rock outcropping to watch the sunrise over Owens Valley and the Inyo, Panamint and Coso Ranges. After meeting back up with the rest of the group, you'll then get a chance to help feed the burros, horses and the rest of the animals that call the sanctuary their home. After a short breakfast, you'll be assigned to work on a project. Projects may include anything from removing rocks from corrals, pouring a foundation for a

shed, making sure the animals have clean water or just about anything else you can think of. Each project will have a different level of difficulty, so if you get assigned to something you can't do (or don't want to do), let us know and we will gladly reassign you to something else. We want you to have an amazing experience so you'll come back or at least tell your friends about us. Regardless of what project you end up working on, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that each one will go towards improving the lives of the animals or the sanctuary in some way. Later that evening, we'll meet up with Diana for some pre-dinner Q & A. To show our appreciation for all the hard work you did during the day, dinner on Saturday night is on us!

The third day will progress much like the previous one but it will be way more casual. Depending on what needs to be done, we'll either wrap up the projects we were working on the day before or spend the morning enjoying the animals. During lunch, we'll clean up camp and pack our cars. After a little volunteer appreciation, you'll have one last chance to say goodbye to Diana and the rest of gang before we officially end the program. Volunteers are then free to leave or head out on an optional 3-4 mile moderate hike to the historic ruins of The Oaks Pack Station and secret waterfall. We should be back to our cars at the Rescue by 5:00pm.

SCHEDULE

Friday [Day 1]

5:00pm-6:45pm - Volunteer arrivals/Camp setup (arrival time is flexible, please read the FAQ's below for more info)

7:00pm - Diana Meet and Greet Happy Hour

8:00pm-11:00pm - Stargaze, play games, tell stories, read a book, enjoy the moment

11:00pm - Quite/bed time.