

## Sri Lanka's Ecovillage Network Open To World

Sarvodaya, the 15,000 strong network of villages in Sri Lanka, is offering international visitors and groups personalised 1-4 week programmes to study and participate in their activities.

A typical programme includes home stay in a Sarvodaya village for a few days and participation in Shramadana activities with villagers, to fulfil any needs of the community.

Some volunteers may stay in a village or a district centre while others support the organisation's work at its headquarters. Individual visitors are free to choose their location.

The International Division can host researchers and university student interns who wish to study Sarvodaya programmes. They help with arrangements and with the specific interests of an individual student or researcher.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is the largest people's organisation in Sri Lanka and the major player in development of the country. The movement's integrated approach is rooted in Gandhian principles and Buddhism, and is open to people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds.

The literal translation of Sarvodaya Shramadana is "the sharing of labour, knowledge and resources for the awakening of all". It was founded in 1958 by Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, who was a

teacher in one of the country's leading Buddhist Institutions.

Sarvodaya's fundamental premise is that development begins with the individual, who is interdependent with family, village, nation and the world. Thus, most of the organisation's work takes place with individuals where they live.

Sarvodaya provides an opportunity for exploring Sri Lanka and becoming acquainted with the organisation's philosophy of sustainable development. It is involved in a broad range of activities, such as pre-school education, peace, gender issues, health, relief, micro finance and environmental protection programmes.

The International Division of Sarvodaya is involved in:

- ▶ Village exploration tours.
- ▶ International camps.
- ▶ Opportunities to see the realities of the life in Sri Lanka and acquire first hand knowledge of the cultural plurality of people.
- ▶ The establishment of new relationships between foreigners and Sri Lankan communities.

Anyone who would like to visit, work as a volunteer or study should contact: International Division Sarvodaya Headquarters, 98 Rawathawatte Road, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. Tel: +94 112 655 419

Web: [www.sarvodaya.org](http://www.sarvodaya.org)



Some of the participants of a course in 2009 at Shramadana, Sri Lanka

## Ecovillages Student Exchange Inspiring Success



Students from Kitezh and Findhorn enjoy the dramatic Scottish landscape

The second half of 2009 saw some fun and inspiring exchange visits between the youth of the Findhorn (Scotland) and Kitezh (Russia) ecovillages.

Following a visit by Findhorn youngsters to Kitezh during the summer of 2009, October saw the return visit to Findhorn by twelve young Russian people who were orphans but now have homes and foster families in the purpose-built Kitezh community.

The visits were enormously enriching to all who participated. In Russia, the young people visited Red Square, rural Russia and the safe and beautiful surroundings of Kitezh, about five hours south of Moscow.

For most of the two-week stay they played a role-play game based on Russian ancient history during which they were sent on quests, sought the advice of the wise old Babajaga and had to make decisions in youth councils about their future. It was an engaging and dramatic time, when the students stepped out of themselves and saw themselves and each other with new eyes.

It was the Russian students' first visit abroad and their first time flying. When they arrived in Findhorn they experienced the rituals and games of the Findhorn community. At Findhorn's

sister-community on the island of Erraid they learnt about permaculture in the gardens and used the compost toilets.

They played group-building games and shared their deeper impressions of the exchange. The Russian students were amazed by the amount of vegetarian food and by the seascapes and biodiversity of Scotland.

The exchange was made possible by the European Commission (Youth in Action) Programme: [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/index_en.htm)

For more information contact Gabrielle Haworth Hamm, the Youth Worker in the Findhorn Foundation Youth Project:

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### SUBMISSIONS

#### DEADLINE

for submissions to  
*Permaculture Magazine No.64*  
1 March 2010

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## Tamera's Test Field For A Model Solar Village



The village's solar powered fountain

In October 2009 Tamera, Portugal, inaugurated a Test Field for a SolarVillage; a model village for testing decentralised solar technology in everyday life.

Based on the results, a SolarVillage – self-sufficient in energy and food production – will be built as the core of a research and training institute. Its inventor (see PM42), Jürgen Kleinwächter from Lörrach, Germany, said "Our dream is to build the first worldwide Solar University here."

He believes the poor regions on Earth could be the wealthy ones in the future; their richness in sunshine offers them the chance to become independent of petrol and nuclear energy. In the European Union, it is regions like Alentejo, where Tamera is based, which can become magnets for innovative solar research.

However, he does not want to compete with the giant sun power stations in the Sahara. "Instead of energy monopolies, we are striving for regional autonomy in

energy and food supply. With this we can maintain landscapes and return life to villages worldwide."

Barbara Kovats, coordinator of the SolarVillage team, explained, "We put together all the developments we have made into a model village. Now, we will live within the system, and in this way improve it on a daily basis and make it ready for use in communities and peace villages."

The SolarVillage has a 60m<sup>2</sup> greenhouse, solar kitchen and other devices providing heat, steam and electricity, and a solar pumped fountain which adorns the middle of the village.



One of the innovative greenhouses

The innovative technology was built in small local workshops. It provides solutions for the storage problems which usually occur in solar energy technology and it provides independence from photovoltaic and also, in Jürgen's eyes, large industry. See: [www.tamera.org](http://www.tamera.org) and <http://solarvillage.tamera.org>

## Belgian Castle's Life Art

Belgian Ecovillage Kasteel Nieuwenhoven is launching a programme called Young Life Art. It is aimed at supporting young adults and helping them to make their own choices and find out what they want from life.

Living in community and participating in activities taking place on a sustainably managed country estate, participants get a glimpse of the possibilities for alternative living and have an opportunity to be part of a group which is creating its own future. The ecovillage's programme includes discussion and group meetings but the emphasis is on hands on experience working on the land and in the Castle.

Empowerment comes from learning by doing. Students take part in various permaculture projects in the community's vegetable garden and its extensive forest gardens and they join in with forestry work.

For further information please view: [www.YLAProgram.eu](http://www.YLAProgram.eu)



Working at Kasteel Nieuwenhoven

## Sustainable Villages

In November 2009 the CLEAR Village Foundation organised a community design lab at the Institute of Advance Architecture of Catalonia. 85 people from 20 countries focused on how to create and regenerate sustainable village communities.



Designing the villages of the future

Among the participants were representatives from Tamera, CloughJordan and Findhorn. The diverse crowd of designers, architects, planners, consultants and activists included people from Bioregional, ARUP, the Eden Project, IDEO, VESTAS, Avaaz, Gaia Education, Architecture for Humanity, Urban ReVision, and the Village Design Institute.

The foundation's aim is to co-create a real life CLEAR Village, and simultaneously develop a useful framework, collaborative design process and handbook to support and advise other village-scale sustainable projects.

For more information view: [www.clear-village.org](http://www.clear-village.org)

## Innovative Environment Course at Kibbutz Lotan

Kibbutz Lotan's Centre for Creative Ecology, Israel, now offers students a unique study abroad experience through the semester programme, 'Peace, Justice and the Environment'.

Participants are awarded 16 credits through the University of Massachusetts, and these are transferable to all US universities. The programme is run in collaboration with the organisation Living Routes ([www.livingroutes.org](http://www.livingroutes.org)), whose mission is to create opportunities to live and learn within human-scale communities that are consciously striving to live well and lightly.

Living Routes offers programmes based in ecovillages around the world which help students gain the knowledge, skills and inspir-



Students at Kibbutz Lotan, Israel

ation to build sustainable lifestyles for themselves, their communities and the Planet.

Lotan's commitment to ecology, equality, peace, conflict resolution, economic co-operation, right livelihood, community, alternative/natural construction and waste management, make it a perfect choice as the site for this innovative programme.

Please view: [www.kibbutzlotan.com/creativeEcology](http://www.kibbutzlotan.com/creativeEcology)

## Ecovillage Handbook

*Creating a Circle of Inspiration, Support & Action* is a new handbook published by NextGEN.

The book offers various tools for building community and includes financial and practical support. It was written by Elliott Saxby, of Scotland's Findhorn Foundation, which has supported NextGEN since it was created in 2005.

NextGEN supports individuals who want to live by Ecovillage principles and create a sense of community rooted in taking action.

The handbook is a great resource for building conscious community. Download it from their website as a resource, or to create your own circle of inspiration, support and action: [www.nextgen.cc](http://www.nextgen.cc)

## Politicians At Ecovillage

Officials from Germany's government have visited the Ecovillage at Sieben Linden.

The visit followed a presentation about the community at a regional conference on the economic and demographic problems of Germany's rural areas – which include an aging population, high unemployment, and the movement of young people to cities. Sieben Linden is the only area in the region where these trends have been reversed.

The German government is looking at what it can do to promote projects like Sieben Linden, draw people back to these rural areas and inspire social cohesion.

To follow further developments visit: [www.siebenlinden.de](http://www.siebenlinden.de)