

EVS in Poland **at the Landscape Park Puszcza Knyszynska**

Before EVS

First of all, I love travelling, discovering new countries and I find languages fascinating (even if I didn't expect such a tricky language as Polish!).

I've had previous professional experiences abroad (India, UK) for 6 month placements. I had such great times during these that I decided to have one more go after my studies and before starting to work. Once you've caught the "travelling bug", you can't get rid of it that easily!

Incidentally, my boyfriend (whom I met during one of my stays abroad, in England) started a PhD in Warsaw; the choice to come to Poland was then quite straightforward!

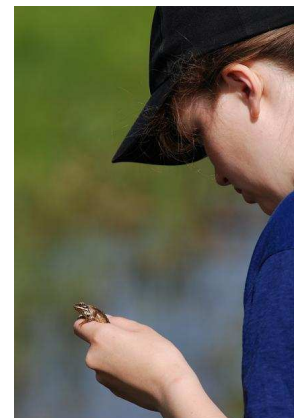


I was looking for a project related to my studies and the field in which I would like to work: Nature protection. Purely environmental projects aren't so common within the projects offered by EVS. For 6 months I regularly had to browse the EVS projects database before finding **THE** project: 1 year at the Landscape Park of Puszcza Knyszynska, near Białystok! Luckily they accepted my application and off I went...

One year at the Landscape Park of Puszcza Knyszynska (27 April 2009 – 26 April 2010)

For one year I helped the park's employees in various tasks...

During the spring, summer and autumn it would be a shame to sit in the office when the sun is shining and the forest is waiting for you (beware of the mosquitoes: they are also waiting for you!)



Outdoor activities:

- Taking part in amphibian surveys
- Taking part in various bird surveys: checking eagle nests, pigmy owl survey...
- Going bird watching with the ornithological specialist
- Going to a bird ringing camp
- Taking photographs of nature
- Taking part in botanical surveys and doing botany on site
- ...

In the late autumn and the winter, when it's raining or freezing, the forest seems a bit less welcoming. Then, I don't mind staying dry and warm in the office.

Indoor activities:

- Doing a presentation and writing articles about "Nature protection in France"
- Drawing illustrations for information tables and various leaflets
- Translating tourist leaflets from English to French
- Writing information in English and French for the Park's website
- Giving guided tours to foreign groups
- ...



I was lucky to join a **great team**. All of them were welcoming and helpful: it was so easy to feel good in such an atmosphere!

Bialystok was for me the ideal city for my EVS:

- Not too big (but not so small): I could quickly feel comfortable within the town and the streets were quickly familiar. Some missed wilder nightlife and a wider range of nightclubs, but there was enough to satisfy me.
- Close to the countryside and the forest: of course it depends on your interests but I appreciated being just a short bike ride from the countryside.
- Several hosting organisations, which means several other EVS volunteers to meet.



France – Poland: West vs East!



The first difference I can think of is the climate! I was *lucky* enough to witness a “real Polish winter”. Well, I won’t forget the never melting snow from mid-December to March and the freezing temperatures (down to -25°C) which didn’t make it above -5°C in 2.5 months (and -5°C was a lucky day!!!).

Oh, and the trains are much slower! Not the 300 km/hour of the TGV! ;) But, in their defense, it’s so much cheaper than in France!

Then, Poland can be proud of its pristine forests and fantastic wildlife: the bison (of course!) but also the wolf, bear (in the mountains), lynx, beaver, etc. Something you won’t come across so easily in western Europe.

After EVS

Well, back to “normal” life: I have to find a job, probably in France for now, and hopefully abroad in the future (I’d love to work in the UK).

My EVS experience was positive from a professional as well as a personal point of view as it showed my flexibility at work and in everyday life and my capacity to adapt to unknown situations. I know it will be a helpful experience for the future.

To conclude: I had a great time! Thanks to everyone I met here and contributed to making this stay so great, especially my colleagues from the Park and especially Karolina!

I will miss you guys! Good luck and I’m looking forward to seeing you again in the future :)

