

1. On the Eco-Adventure.Org website we can read that **Eco - Adventure is a Non Profit, Non Government Organization. But what does it really mean in your case?**

The focus of our projects is non-monetary. The best reward in life are laughing children and with them of course happy families as well as lucky animals which can jointly lead a good life with us. All because of a more conscious contact with nature, themselves and the whole environment. Aware lifestyle, self-determined acting.

NGO means we are independent from any government or politics. So we are free to do what we want. Because we are working on the self-efficacy and the self-confidence of the individual, we are as well working on the society as a whole. We believe that life gets better together! That's why you profit and finally also the governments.

2. Does it mean that simply **anybody from all over the world can stay at your Adventure Base Camp absolutely free of charge?**

Basically we have only one rule: RESPECT. Everybody who respects the nature, animals and the fellows is welcome on the "Adventure Hill" in sunny Sicily.

3. So what the Eco-Adventure really is? **What do you have to offer and where are you located?**

We offer active holidays, adventure travels, animal-assisted therapy, team & manager training and outdoor education, as well as the possibility to live free self-sufficiently in a real social community – which we create day by day.

Our Vision: An "Adventure Base Camp" with Action Playground, a farm for animal assisted therapy and self sufficiency by permaculture, wind, water & solar-power.

To realize this vision we found the perfect place, in the middle of paradise: Our Adventure Hill with more than 200.000 square meters in the north of sunny Sicily. An epic view on the Tyrrhenian sea, including the seven Aeolian Islands, the Sanctuary of Tyndari and the archaeological site of Tyndaris nearby, as well as amazing lonesome beaches and many tourist attractions, like old castles and natural preserves only a stone's throw away.

4. You are the CEO of this amazing project. But **who else stands behind the scenes?**

Eco-Adventure.Org was founded 2008 by seven adventure educators, curative teachers, doctors and social worker. Meanwhile we have a good dozen more fellows from the fields of art, culture & environmental education, handicrafts, permaculture, nature medicine up to elderly care. Some of them will live in the near future on the Adventure Hill while some others come and go every now and then. Together with volunteers from all over the world we realize our projects step by step.

What makes us specially happy is the fact that all the volunteers and visitors are coming regularly and bringing also friends with them. - That means they are really enjoying it, even though we are still in development phase, living basic - nearly like Robinson Crusoe on a sunny island, doing pioneering work.

In the end it is just this fact of basic living that the people appreciate particularly, when they return to their homes they live more consciously with all their senses. And they often say that they have found another "chosen home" on a paradise island. Joyfully delighted we continue our work, knowing that we are on the right path.

5. Let's say I want to come and live with you on the sunny island for few months, **what should I bring? Who should I contact first?**

Adventure pioneering spirit are the best attributes you can bring with you. In addition, good travel gear, hiking boots, a backpack, functional clothes, a flashlight and a pocket knife. On our site we recommend some well tested high quality outdoor products. For more details feel free to contact us directly via email.

<http://eco-adventure.org/contact>

6. **Do you use money on a daily basis or are you fully sustainable yourself?**

I personally live good for months without money. From time to time I buy little extras. Over all we found much better exchange ways with our neighbours, friends and farmers.

The Adventure Hill already offers so much, ten months a year we have oranges (5 different kinds), half the year tangerines (2 sorts), in summer we have pears, figs, cactus fruits, blackberries & mulberries, carob... all in abundance - yes you can walk on the island and often simply stretch your hands to get marvelous delicacies – it's a true paradise! In Autumn we have up to hundreds of kilos of sweet chestnuts, and lots of nuts in Winter. In addition there is a large olive grove and a small vineyard. And of course at the bottom of the Adventure Hill we have 3000 square meters for our permaculture garden, there we grow tomatoes, zucchini, potatoes, pumpkins, beans and much more. Thanks to permaculture techniques, good earth, our own drinking water source directly out of the mountain and much sun, we had this year for example fresh zucchinis until November - directly outside!

Some terraces higher up the hill we will prepare more permaculture projects which are growing in the next few years. You can there also directly build your own earth-mound - or tree houses in the forests. We currently rebuild our two hundred years old little stone houses, and two stables. In addition there are a dozen other old farmhouses next to our land - they belong to good friends and together we'll renovate them for special holiday offers, intercultural projects as well as for the young and old living together in a eco village.

It depends on your personal needs how much money you spend. You can live without it - one hand helping the other, or with little money for some extras, and of course also spending a bit more for unforgettable holidays.

7. **Do you grow your own food? Are you vegetarians/vegans?**

I was a vegetarian for some years because i don't like contaminated meat full of medication, from animals undergoing long term suffering and getting completely distraught by factory farmers without scruples and conscience.

If today a good friend living on a little farm invites me for lunch, I sometimes eat a piece of meat. After all, the pigs, cows and sheep had a much better life - free in huge refuges they live well - in small families. I always thank then in my mind those animals, such as already did the Indians.

I can live well without meat, but I like very much from friends self made cheese (they don't kill for that), eggs and fish are also good from time to time.

Some friends instead are living well only with fruits! So called fruitarians. And I love also cactus fruits! - I can eat easily three kilos from those delicious nature gifts in the morning, every day in Summer, and feel the whole day fresh and much stronger than if eating meat and much carbohydrates instead. - But be careful, I also noticed the fact that some people suffer just after having more than 3 cactus fruits. It is a personal thing in general. When you live here you learn again to listen well to your body - and then your body is telling you what is really healthy for you.

8. What does **typical day at Eco - Adventure Base** look like?

That depends on the season, the nature, ourselves and other circumstances.

Sometimes we get up with the sun and go under with it, working long - of course with many breaks - simply because we enjoy what we do - to see how you create something with your own hands is always a great feeling.

We also enjoy celebrating until late at night, sitting or dancing around the campfire, listening to good stories from life and also just quite simply listening the love nature, the owls and other animals which are calling from time to time - or we go out to friends and have nice evenings, then mostly with typical Sicilian live music, guitar, mandolin, accordion, drums and vocals Tambourine... Of course the musicians from here as well as the other guests are also open to other musical influences and love to listen and learn.

We enjoy walking through the nature, from short day trips to the sea, into the huge woods, in the mountains near our land, up to longer tours over several days, to Etna and other beautiful spots - and even traveling for weeks and months - around the coast in Sicily, as well over the other little "treasure islands" near - and anywhere else in the world where you can still do this free and undisturbed.

For example we soon go on an eco adventure tour with our great donkey Hercules and typical Sicilian farmer cart – il Carretto Siciliano -, first around Sicily, then throughout Europe. Back on the island we will build a sailing ship to cross the seven seas - on the other continents we ride further with horse and mules.

On the journeys we connect with other eco villages and social communities. The target is that you have many places all over the world where you can stay and live for free.

Of course, after longer tours and evenings we relax then the next day(s).

9. Please, define, who is Christian Spang? What did you used to do before you moved to Sicily. And what is your mission in life?

I am just me and one of many. I always loved traveling, over all in a slow way - by foot, canoe... - through the nature in good company, with dog, donkey, horse ... and also alone open minded on self-discovery tour through life.

10. Tell us how was your beautiful, however unusual, idea born?

Sicilian friends invited my family for holidays in my childhood. I directly fell in love with this paradise island, the sunny climate and the welcoming warmhearted people - and so in 3 days I made my decision to live here as soon as possible. First I had to finish school. After studying and some years of social work in other organizations we founded Eco-Adventure.Org because the other welfare companies became too big for us and waste money. Most of them are completely inefficient! Up to 70 % of incoming cash they need only to "survive". That can not be social we thought. We earn the money we need by ourselves - 100 % of incoming donations to Eco-Adventure.Org are going in the benefit projects.

11. Where there any obstacles you had to overcome to **making your dream of Eco-Adventure come true?**

Life is not always easy - exactly this fact makes life so interesting.

When you emigrate you should already know the country and ideally speak the language. In Sicily people are delighted when you know a few words and show interest for the history of the island. They are inherently very helpful. As regards agreements and appointments you have to know that they are very "flexible". Thinking positive you can say: "Sicilians are the best teachers in patience." In any case this also has its good sides. Life on the sunny island is more loose. You live in the moment.

Besides my passion for Sicily I also loved as a child the novel about Robinson Crusoe, I read this book again and again - and dreamed to create once something like he did on an beautiful island. Of course here are no cannibals – instead, luckily, very friendly people. Beside this good fact we do mostly simple handcrafted work like hundred(s) years ago. When we build now wooden houses we cut trees and make then beams and planks... and often we also use practical things we find on our way. So called "flotsam and jetsam" like in the novel. We live our dreams.

For example you can build a little windmill to generate electricity from an old washing machine – and the drum is still a very nice luxury grill.

I see obstacles as challenges. And the biggest challenge in my life until now was to pull a self made bike caravan through 2300 kilometers and many thousands of high meters from the place where I was born to the place where I want to live.

Moving 200 kilograms only by muscle power over the Alps and the Apennines across five countries... "This is crazy!" thought all. - They were right. - "That's impossible!" almost everyone exclaimed. - Instead when you really want to do it and you believe in success then your abilities are (almost) limitless.

12. What are the **best things of living off the grid**?

Absolute freedom and liberty.

13. What does **living so close to nature** means to you?

Real life - not only close to – even better, directly *in* the nature.

14. Is there something you miss from your 'previous life' ?

My Grandma. She is now 93, still independent living and was always important for me.

15. If you could **change** one thing about **modern society** what would it be?

That is not easy to answer. I prefer to live without money, in other ways of exchange (for sure not as a parasite!) I enjoy more looking into a campfire than television, riding horse and driving donkey carts instead of motorbikes and cars. But this is my personal decision. I would never say that everybody has to live this way.

I wish for the next generation that they find more balance in life than there seems to be now. Not only staring on to their smart-phones and stroking these cold technical pieces as if being in relationships with it instead of having real ones with sentient beings. Less computer & TV, not only gray city life and over all not the sad rat race for money to buy things they don't really need.

Therefore we founded Eco-Adventure.Org - to offer positive adventure travels where the youth can make their own vivacious cheerful experiences. Self-directed actions. Helping people help themselves. Self-discovery for more self-confidence. Actions which encourage the creativity and imagination as well as team spirit and environmental awareness.

16. What does **happiness** mean to you?

To live in harmony with the nature.

To create something rather than destroy.

17. The words you live by.

Honesty, fairness & respect

18. What would you say to your 20 year old self?

Go the way of your heart. Live your dreams.

19. What's **your next goal, your next dream**? Where do you see yourself in 10 years from now?

First the European tour with donkey Hercules and Sicilian cart. Then building a sailing ship and crossing the seven seas. => => => <http://eco-adventure.org/crazy-adventure-travels/>

Christian Spang was **interviewed by Natalia Graziano** <http://nataliagraziano.com/>