

# WWOOFING

## *with teenagers*

Tamara and Max, along with their three teenagers, Gidon, Max and Phoebe, live in Melbourne. They joined WWOOF Australia in November 2019 to spend their summer break together in nature, learning new skills and gaining insight into life on a farm.

**O**UR PLANS to stay with our first host in East Gippsland that summer changed suddenly as the bushfires hit, but we quickly found another host near Geelong. Unusually for a WWOOFing arrangement, Linda and Andrew asked if we could farm-sit for the week as they had to go away, and their original farm-sitter plans had fallen through.

After a two-day handover when our family had a crash course in caring for chickens, goats, turkeys, and geese, Linda and Andrew bravely left us to it! How brave they were! When not doing the chores, we enjoyed the facilities of the farm, including our own self-contained accommodation, swimming pool and tennis court, and we were able to cook varied, healthy meals from the abundance of fruit, vegetables, and eggs on the farm.

Overall, our first WWOOFing experience exceeded our expectations, and we were happy that COVID restrictions relaxed enough to allow us to WWOOF again this summer in Victoria. Once again, we struck lucky and found Kirsty and John at All Foods Farm, in South Gippsland.

John and Kirsty were perfect WWOOF hosts. They thoughtfully matched tasks to each of our skills and interests, ensuring we all had a positive experience. Our 16-year-old son, Gidon, spent a blissful morning on a ride-on lawnmower (after a thorough safety briefing) – a clear highlight of the week for him. And Max learned to drive a tractor. I am interested in permaculture and so Kirsty had me digging beds and planting vegies. Phoebe, our 12-year-old, learned



Phoebe painting beehives.



Sorting garlic.

to make elderflower cordial, fed the chickens, and painted the beehives we constructed from wood.

The farm was perfectly placed to explore South Gippsland in our afternoons, and we visited Venus Bay, Inverloch, Wilson's Prom, Gurney's Cidery and Fish Creek. Upon our return to the farm each evening, Kirsty and John served up a delicious vegetarian dinner and the six of us spent the evening playing board games together. We made our own breakfast and lunch in our self-contained cottage, with food Kirsty and John provided, including their own jam, honey, bread, and vegetables.

We have gone on a great many family trips together but our WWOOFing experiences are the

ones we have reminisced about most. WWOOF is a unique opportunity to gain new skills, learn new ways of life, meet wonderful people and have fun while getting fit outdoors. It is also authentic, sustainable tourism. At times it can be hard work, but if you believe change is as good as a rest, then I would recommend giving it a go. For our family WWOOFing is a great way to travel around our own State, or hopefully soon, the whole of Australia.

- Families with children under 18 can join on a two year Dual WWOOF volunteer membership to access around 900 hosts Australia-wide. All the information is on WWOOF Australia's website: [www.wwoof.com.au](http://www.wwoof.com.au).