



## **Volunteer Guidelines**

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# 1) Introduction

Welcome to REGUA!

REGUA directors and staff are delighted to have you here and we sincerely hope that your stay with us will be a very enriching experience in your life! Thank you for choosing REGUA as your destination.

REGUA is a non-governmental organization whose mission is the protection of the Guapiaçu river catchment situated within the 3<sup>rd</sup> district of Cachoeiras de Macacu Municipality. REGUA protects an area of around 6500 hectares of Atlantic Rain Forest covering a wide altitudinal range from 30 m a.s.l to nearly 2,000 m a.s.l. The higher areas of REGUA, where the most pristine forests are found, are included in the newly created Três Picos State Park. The Atlantic Rainforest is one of Unesco's World Natural Heritage or Biosphere Reserve and is under Brazilian Federal protection. REGUA staff and activities are largely funded by BART (Brazilian Atlantic Rainforest Trust) based in England.

The Volunteer programme started in February 2006 and the results from this initiative have been extremely positive: There has been a genuine and fruitful interaction between volunteers and our staff, which both parties seem to have benefited from. Our staff has been impressed by the volunteers' enthusiasm and seriousness when tackling the different array of activities in the reserve.

REGUA works with:

- Ecotourism
- Research
- Environmental Education
- Restoration of degraded areas
- Protection of the forest

**Ecotourism:** The Guapi Assu Bird Lodge caters for up to 15 visitors, the majority of them being birdwatchers from England and the USA who generally enjoy an average 4/5 stay at REGUA walking through our very complete trail system in the forest and the wetlands around the Lodge. We aim to increase the accommodation and thus, increase the number of visitors whose presence is vital to help run this conservation project. There is a very solid infrastructure to back this activity with staff comprising of a driver, several cooks, a handy-man and a gardener. We started promoting the Lodge through "word of mouth" with very good results and currently, bookings are made via internet. Our bird list is revised frequently and at present we have over 435 different bird species, with 120 endemics.

**Research:** Amongst other projects, REGUA is involved in a Red-billed Curassow reintroduction project with a biologist on site to monitor its progress. These birds (*Crax Blumenbachii*) are a threatened species and have been hunted out to extinction in our state of Rio de Janeiro over 100 years ago. The curassows which have arrived at REGUA are part of a captive breeding project in the state of Minas Gerais with whom REGUA has links.

**Environmental Education:** The implementation of the Agenda 21 project in our municipality is under way through the coordination of our environmental education officer. This project envisions the sustainable development of communities with economically sustainable activities, social inclusion and environmental awareness.

The Young Rangers Programme: this programme is proving very successful and consists of a weekly gathering at our Conservation Centre of youngsters between the ages of 14-18 with the objective of raising their environmental awareness and their knowledge of the Atlantic Rain Forest biome. We hope that the 20 young rangers who are part of this project, will in turn, become committed advocates for the conservation of nature and specifically of this very special ecosystem which is the Atlantic Rain Forest. We intend having school children from our entire municipality visiting the reserve under the supervision of our environmental education officer. These visits consist of guided walks around the wetlands and some activities in the classroom.

**Restoration of degraded areas:** We have successfully restored an area of old wetlands which were drained in the 70s for cattle grazing. It is an area of approximately 45 hectares which will provide food and shelter for myriads of life forms. We have re-introduced an arboreal anaerobic climax species (*Tabebuia Cassinoides*) which has by now flowered! There were around 2000 cuttings brought in by our rangers of which a third succeeded in their new environment. Aquatic avifauna is gradually increasing with over 100 species recorded so far. We are also planting trees around the wetlands and on newly acquired land as part of our restoration project with the rangers help. REGUA has established its own nursery where seeds collected in the forest are grown into saplings for planting.

**Protection of the forest:** For this purpose, we count on 8 rangers (all of them ex-hunters from adjacent communities to REGUA) who walk through the forest on a daily basis making sure that there are no hunters, forest fires and flora extraction (illegal commerce of ornamental and edible plants like bromeliads and heart of palms). They are also in charge of keeping the trail system clean of vegetation ensuring easy access to the forest for visitors and the different research activities in it.

## 2) What to bring

### Suggested Clothing

- Working clothes that can get dirty, torn etc.
- Long trousers and long sleeved tops for in the forest
- Waterproofs
- Clothes for hot weather
- Jumpers for night-time
- Clothes for leisure time
- Good walking boots or shoes
- Open shoes e.g. sandals or flip-flops (which are available for £3 in Brazil)
- Swim wear
- Hat

### Necessities

- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Anti-itch cream
- Antiseptic cream
- Alarm clock
- Flash light

## **Recommended items**

- USB pen
- Camera
- Batteries
- MP3 player or music
- Sleeping bag for camping in forest
- Note book
- Plug socket converter (2 round pin plug)
- First aid kit (plasters, medical tape, bandages, pain killers, anti-diarrhea pills, rehydration sachets, butterfly strips/steri-strips)
- Folding umbrella

## **3) What is provided**

3 meals a day, except Sundays  
Bed linen and towels  
Laundry  
Internet  
Library  
Safe for valuables

### **Facilities**

TV and DVD player  
Ping-pong table  
Swimming pool  
Horses at weekends  
Telephone for incoming calls  
Bikes  
Games: Monopoly, Scrabble and Uno

## **4) How to get to REGUA**

### **Collection**

A pick-up can be arranged from the airport or hostels in Rio de Janeiro to REGUA. This will cost US\$100 or on Sundays US\$120. Pick-ups can be arranged between 8:30 am to 6 pm. If you arrive later, there are some very good hostels in Rio to stay in.

### **By bus/taxi**

At the airport it is possible to take a bus to the Rodoviaria (bus station) in Rio de Janeiro, for less than 10 reais. Taxis are also available at the entrance. They vary in price, so always ask before you get in. At the Rodoviaria, look for the 1001 bus company and buy a ticket to Cachoeiras de Macacu. This is the bus that goes to Nova Friburgo. The ticket will cost a little less than 20 reais. If you do not know where to get off, ask the driver to tell you when the bus stops at the Rodoviaria of Cachoeiras de Macacu, it takes about 1.5 hours to get there. There you can take a bus of Coletivo de Guapiaçu company. The bus that stops directly outside REGUA goes to Areal and is around the corner from the number 8 bus stop. You can also take the bus to Guapiaçu at the number 8 bus stop. On this bus you will be required to walk 15 minutes to

REGUA from the bus stop. Ask the driver to tell you when it is time get off. There you take the road in front of the bus stop. After crossing the first bridge, take the first road on your left and after the second bridge you find the reserve on your right side.

### **Bus services**

Areal to Cachoeiras	Monday to Saturday- 6:30 am 10:30 am and 2:10 pm Sunday- 10:30 am
Cachoeiras to Areal	Monday to Saturday- 9:00 am 12:30 pm and 5:00 pm Sunday- 5:00 pm
Guapiaçu to Cachoeiras	Monday to Saturday- 6:40 am 10:40 am and 3:40 pm Sunday- 6:40 am and 5:00 pm
Cachoeiras to Guapiaçu	Monday and Wednesday- 9:00 am 1:30 pm and 5:30 pm Tuesday, Thursday and Friday- 9:00 am 2:00 pm and 5:30 pm Saturday- 9:00 am 2:00 pm and 6:00 pm Sunday- 9:00 am 7:00 pm and 9:00 pm

## **5) Settling in**

### **Climate**

Situated in the tropical South Atlantic, Rio de Janeiro state is warm all year round. Summers, between November and March, are very hot and humid, and temperatures vary between 20-40°C. Summer is the rainy season, while winter is the dry season. Winters (June to September) are cool and dry with temperatures from 15-30°C, and night times can get cold, with some precipitation.

### **Creepy crawlies**

Coming to a tropical rainforest means getting used to the variety of insects and other pleasant and less pleasant animals. Mosquitos, ants, sandflies and some other biting or stinging insects are the biggest problem for most volunteers. Even with good insect repellent, there is a good chance of being bitten. A good anti-itch cream is the best solution, and if you still scratch a lot, some anti-septic cream. It is important to take good care of these bites. Some people have had to take antibiotics after infection of insect bites, but this is usually due to scratching with dirty nails and not washing out the wounds enough. Luckily there is no danger from malaria or yellow fever in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

### **Luxuries**

Brazil is a developing country, and has almost the same facilities as Western countries. Some luxuries however are less available. Internet can be very slow and at REGUA there is not a very good satellite connection. Most mobile phones do not have any reception, unless you walk to Matumbo on a clear day. Keeping in contact with your friends and family at home can be difficult. Distances to the shops, public phones, bars and most important, hospitals are long and transport is not always easily available.

## **Cultural differences**

Brazil is known as a melting pot for a very great variety of cultures and origins. Being at REGUA gives you a good opportunity to get to know the Brazilian way of life. There are of course some differences between Brazilian culture and Western culture. Even if you do not agree with some of the visions, have respect for other people's lifestyle.

People here are very friendly, helpful and open, but hardly anybody speaks English. This is another barrier that might cause problems. It comes in handy to learn some Portuguese or to take a phrasebook with you to REGUA. Most volunteers pick up some basic Portuguese while staying here.

## **6) Infrastructure**

### **REGUA facilities**

There are three volunteer houses, casa 1, 2 and 3. In total there are 7 rooms, each with 2 beds. Depending on the number of volunteers, you can have your own room. Each house has a bathroom, with shower and toilet. Hot water is not always guaranteed.

The visitors' centre has a kitchen, a dining room, a classroom with TV and DVD-player, which can be used by the volunteers after work-hours, an office with 2 rooms, one for REGUA staff and one for volunteers and researchers. Both rooms have computers with internet access and a toilet. Finally there is a storage room, where equipment and bikes are stored. There are plans to further develop the infrastructure of the centre. Near the conservation centre there is a toilet bloc.

On the top of the hill you can find the Lodge, where the tourists stay. It has a pool and a veranda with humming-bird feeders. Inside there is a good reference library, which can be used by volunteers. The books cannot be taken from the villa and have to be read over there.

At the bottom of the hill you will find on one side, next to casa 1 and 2, the wetlands. A trail starts at the visitors' centre and goes around the wetlands. On the other side, next to casa 3 you will find the tree nursery.

About 4 km away is the Casa Alemanha, where Leibzig researchers and students stay. Another 3 km further you can find Casa Pesquisa, where Brazilian researchers and students stay.

### **Surroundings**

Located 4-6 km away you can find Guapiaçu. This local village has a shop and several bars. To get to Guapiaçu, on leaving REGUA turn left, at the end of the road turn left again. Follow this road for about 3 km until you arrive at a crossroad where you can find a small church on your right. Turn right and follow the road until you come across a footbridge. After crossing this bridge you turn left. Follow the road until you enter the town.

Located 2-3 km away you can find Matumbo, a small local village which also has some bars and a shop from where you can buy basic necessities. To get to Matumbo, on leaving REGUA turn right and follow the road until you see the shop on the crossroads.

Cachoeiras de Macacu is the nearest sizeable town at a distance of 15-20 km from Guapiaçu. There are a number of larger shops, bars, public telephones, internet services, restaurants and a regular bus service with good connections. To get there, you need to take the bus. For the bus time-table see chapter 4.

## **7) Volunteer projects**

### **Helping the staff with maintenance of the grounds**

This activity includes the planting, mowing, weeding of REGUA's grounds around the volunteers' houses, the Lodge and the Visitors Centre. Some dusting and sweeping of the different rooms within the Visitors' Centre is required (REGUA's staff office, 1 classroom, paved patio and dining room).

Regarding maintenance, it will be required that the volunteers contribute to the up keeping of tools and other implements which they will be using.

### **Tree nursery**

We are particularly interested in improving and developing our present Nursery. We aim at the restoration of degraded areas within and out of the Reserve. For this purpose we need our own supplies and at present, REGUA employs a gardener who is in charge of this job. Your contribution to the nursery is essential as part of our big effort to reforest all of the degraded areas of REGUA. We also purchase some small trees at one of the state's plant nurseries which helps us increase the number of trees available to be planted in the reserve.

We need you to help us fill up plastic bags with adequate soil, plant seeds, replant and move plants, do some bed weeding and water the plants in the early morning and afternoon if needed.

### **Monitoring the reforested areas**

There are quadrats at different sites in REGUA. Every tree in these quadrats that is bigger than a certain width will be tagged and measured (width and height) and the species will be identified if possible. A branch with leaves and if possible flowers will be collected from the unidentifiable trees, to put in our herbarium. Every specific extra feature must be noted e.g. rubber, special roots. Biodiversity will be measured with insect traps. Every plot must be measured at least twice a year and preferable three or four times. On a yearly basis a report needs to be written, after analysing the data.

### **Education program**

Some basic teaching of the English language can be very desirable to enrich our "Young Rangers' Programme" which is part of our Environmental Education Scheme. The latter takes place once a week at the Reserve and is attended by youngsters of the neighbouring communities. Arts and crafts lessons are very much appreciated by the children and school visits can be organized. Also basic scientific experiments and trips to the wetlands to do invertebrate identification for example can be nice contributions from the volunteers for the children.

There has been a lot of interest from the community to get some English lessons. Any contribution in this area is very welcome.

We also encourage volunteers to informally teach our staff some basic English language, and they are very receptive about learning.

We have not elaborated a formal syllabus for the English language teaching experience and we welcome some suggestions.

### **Forest patrolling with the rangers**

Volunteers can accompany REGUA's rangers in their daily patrolling of the forest in search of possible signs of hunting, fire and erosion along the trails.

Flora and Fauna observation with a written report of impressions and interests can be very useful (e.g. animal prints, vestiges of dead animals, records of different avifauna, etc). Birdwatching activities are particularly desirable as REGUA's is building up a great reputation in this area.

Seed gathering is a very important task as our reforestation scheme depends on this activity. Gathering, transportation, identification and planting of seeds will be required from volunteers. REGUA has organized a very basic nursery, which we intend improving both in infrastructure and contents with our volunteers' help.

Seed identification will be based on the rangers' knowledge and subsequently on Harry Lorenzi's "Trees of Brazil" which is available at the Lodge.

Re-marking the trails is another task which can be combined with the forest patrolling. Volunteers are asked to note which signs need replacement, to paint these signs in REGUA, and plant them on their next walk. Also other information on how to improve the trails is welcome.

### **Administration**

We welcome volunteers who have computer or management skills to help out in the office with the administration work. Mapping skills would also be very useful.

### **Orchard and vegetable garden**

Behind casa 2 you can find the orchard. As long as the trees are still small, they need maintaining: watering when it has been dry for a couple of days, and checking for ant damage.

There are plans to make a vegetable garden behind the kitchen at the visitors' centre. People who have experience with this are welcome to help, but must take into account that the summer in the state of Rio de Janeiro is too hot to grow vegetables.

All volunteers are encouraged to contribute news items and articles for inclusion in the website [www.regua.co.uk](http://www.regua.co.uk).

## **8) Routine**

### **Recycling**

We have got a recycling system running, so please set an example.

### **Working hours**

Work starts at 8 am until midday when we get lunch. Work starts again at 1 pm to 4 pm. It is possible that you might have to do some overtime and the walks usually start earlier.

### **Laundry and cleaning**

Laundry and cleaning is provided, but if you wish you can do your own laundry behind casa 3.

### **Making a weekly schedule**

Every Friday after work, volunteers gather in their office and discuss an agenda for the coming week, which is written on the board. This has to be flexible, because a lot depends on the weather, and a back-up plan for rainy days is handy. The agenda of the past week will be filled in one of the computers, to keep track of the frequency of the different tasks.

### **Food**

Breakfast starts at 7 am, and lunch is between 12 and 1 pm. There will be food left on the cooker for dinner, all you have to do is heat it. After dinner volunteers have to do their dishes, including pots and pans. On Sundays volunteers will have to buy their own food. You can have drinking water from the taps indicated by the administration as it comes from one of our sub soil aquifers. They have been tested and are perfectly suited for human consumption. There is also filtered water available next to the kitchen at the visitors' centre.

### **Toilet**

In Brazil you cannot throw toilet paper in the toilet! Please throw it in the bin next to it. Otherwise the toilets get clogged.

## **9) House rules**

We need your help in maintaining your house in order by respecting the rules that will make your stay always comfortable and pleasant.

REGUA does not provide alcoholic drinks but consumption is not prohibited. Excesses set bad examples to REGUA staff and reflect badly on the volunteer programme.

No parties are permitted during weekdays, and REGUA needs to be informed if social gatherings are organized during weekends.

REGUA charges its volunteers US\$400 per month and this covers the basic costs of food and accommodation. Please pay in advance either into our UK bank account or at the reserve.

Valuables: REGUA cannot accept responsibility for valuables left unattended at the reserve. A safe is provided where the volunteer can leave their valuables such as passport and money upon request. REGUA also has a night-watchman who patrols the main accommodation area.

REGUA is promoting its volunteer activity and of course students are expected to set an example of behaviour to everyone in the neighborhood.

REGUA cannot be responsible for their volunteers safety outside working hours. REGUA is a non-profit organization registered in Brazil and students above 18 years of age are responsible for their own actions. If activity is seen to be dangerous, the student can make a decision whether he/she wishes to continue. The forests have snakes and the terrain is mountainous making for potentially hazardous health conditions. Though we have had no accidents to date, the REGUA car may be used to help transport to the local hospital or doctor and we can help translate to resolve any health issues.

## **10) Leisure time**

The weekends are free and a great opportunity to see the surroundings of REGUA or some of the nearby cities or towns.

### **Leisure nearby**

At the Shincariol basin, there runs a river which has different beautiful places.

Trails with different levels of difficulty start from the conservation centre and are marked in different colours. There is a trail around the wetlands, one going to a waterfall, one passing the river at Shincariol, and the red trail, which is quite difficult, but has a beautiful view at the end and passes elfin forest.

It is possible to go horseback riding in the weekends. There are two horses available at REGUA which are used during the week for cattle herding. To go horseback riding, you first have to ask for permission from Nicholas or Raquel.

There is camping gear available at REGUA, so you can go camping in the forest. There are several good sites to set up a tent at the trails.

### **Leisure further away**

The most obvious city trip is to Rio de Janeiro, which is only 2 hours away. For more info about tourist attractions in Rio, there are a lot of guides and in the hostels you can always ask someone, they will be happy to help. Be aware that Rio is quite expensive in South American terms. Most of the trips that are offered in hostels cost a lot and there are ways to do those things for a much lower price. Just ask around, you will probably find someone who knows the city. Buses are quite cheap and go almost anywhere in Rio. They also drive around at night, so it is not necessary to take a taxi. You can find free maps of Rio in the metro stations. When looking on the map, be

aware that some routes go through favelas, which are not marked on it. It is advisable to avoid walking through them, so make sure you know the routes or take a bus.

Other nearby towns and cities worth visiting are: Cabo Frio, Nova Friburgo, Niterói, Petrópolis, Teresópolis and Ouro Preto.

## **11) Precautions**

### **Going into the rainforest**

The rainforest is full of toxic, biting, stinging, defensive and organised insects and stinging, spiked and toxic plants. So it is advisable to wear long trousers and long sleeved T-shirts. The tighter they fit, the more trouble insects will have to enter your clothes. As long as you stay on the trails, there is less danger of being attacked. But because some jobs are done in the middle of the forest, this should be taken into account.

### **Snakes**

There are some very poisonous snakes present in the REGUA area but normally they disappear once they hear you coming. But you should still be careful when entering high grass or shrubs. Always wear sensible shoes in the forest – no one has yet been bitten by a snake but several people have inadvertently trodden on them!

### **Rain**

Do not let rain stop you from taking a walk. But know that after a few days of rain, especially in the rainy season, a little water stream can turn into a wild river and steep hills can get slippery.

### **Heat**

The summertime is very hot. At least the first few weeks you are here it is better to avoid too much sun, wear sunscreen and maybe a hat. Winter is also hot, only at night it can get chilly and you need a sweater.

### **Check your shoes**

Before putting your feet in walking shoes, check them for spiders and other insects.

## 12) Contact information

Postal address:

REGUA  
Caixa postal 98.104  
Cachoeiras de Macacu  
Estado do Rio de Janeiro  
C.E.P. 28.680-000 Brasil

Phone numbers:

- The telephone of the office: 21 - 9859 - 2080
- Nicholas and Raquel personal numbers:
- 21 - 2745 - 3998
- 22 - 2533 - 3603 (Nova Friburgo)
- Alcenir: 21-9240-4896

Email address:

- [aregua@terra.com.br](mailto:aregua@terra.com.br)

For further information about the REGUA project go to [www.regua.co.uk](http://www.regua.co.uk).