

ShowerPower Facilities on Lesbos

Information for those considering joining ShowerPower as a volunteer

We are happy that you've become interested in our project, and that you're considering to maybe join us a volunteer! In this note, we want to provide you with some practical details about your stay on Lesbos and the chores that have to be done at the bathhouse.

ShowerPower provides safe, clean, hot showers to women and children from refugee camp Moria and the adjacent makeshift camp the Olive Groove. The shower facilities in the camp are insufficient: they are few, they do not feel safe and a more significant part of the day there is no water available, let alone hot water. Therefore, we drive, depending on the situation and adapting to the case, several times a day, six days a week - from Tuesday till Monday - to the camp to collect groups of women and children.

Our facilities are in a cosy traditional Greek house, 8 km from Moria and 18 km from Mytilini. Maybe the showers are outdated, but they are a far cry from the facilities provided in the camp. Two showers are situated on the ground floor, and the third is on the first floor. This is only a beginning on a small scale, but it already provides the women and children we can help with some reprieve: they feel safe and welcome. Since we started in the second week of February 2018, the hammam has already been visited by more than 9.000 women and children. A team in the Netherlands is seeking to provide this service at more locations in the nearby future. Our first priority in realising this expansion is to be able to guarantee the same warm intimacy and safety that our current facility provides. So, we are working towards several small-scale locations.

Volunteering is a tough job

Of course, your offer to volunteer with ShowerPower is your free choice. However, volunteering is, at the same time, a firm commitment towards the NGO and its guests: these people need us. ShowerPower works with a team leader and a maximum of three to four volunteers. Your share will be 25 to 30 per cent of the total. We do firmly count on you for the agreed period!

Do not underestimate the workload. It takes a lot of energy to keep the hammam a quiet and safe environment. You should bring along a lot of strength and resilience to act tactfully to safeguard the ambience. Furthermore, it takes psychological skills and awareness to deal with vulnerable people (women as well as children). Volunteers should be physically and mentally in superb condition. We do not recommend applying when you recently had personal problems or when you are looking to make a change in your life after burnout or had a lot of stress in the last few months. Consider your situation thoroughly.

A common working day

The driver leaves for the camp to pick up the first group of women and children. It will usually be the team leader that drives, but she could decide to ask an experienced volunteer to do so. The volunteers that stay at home check the bathrooms for toilet paper, shampoo etc. And, weather permitting, we make a nice place to stay for our guests in the garden or as an alternative: in the house. Some tea and soup are brewed, and a welcoming table is laid out with cups, sugar, cookies etc.

You'll receive a WhatsApp message from the team leader mentioning the exact number of guests. When they arrive you bid them welcome, show them the facilities, offer them towels and ask if they need help with bathing the children. While the women take a shower, you take care of the children.

You pour tea, play with the children and 'talk' with the women as best you can. Usually, a significant part of the conversation will be in a natural sign language. After they have all taken a shower, the guests will be returned to the camp. The team members that remain in the house clean the bathrooms and prepare the home for the next group.



In this way, we have several rounds of visitors every day.

At the end of the day - around 18.00 - we do a final cleaning of the bathrooms and put the laundries in the washing machine.

You will find detailed instructions in the ShowerPower House.

How does it feel?

Not one day is alike: everyday people that turn up will surprise you. The women, the children, the babies, take their stories along. You will smile, you will laugh, and you will share their tears. You will be surprised by the spontaneous joy of a child, or a shy hug from someone else. You will share a multitude of experiences that will leave you feeling very much alive.

minimum length of your stay

We feel that a useful stay starts with ten days. Seven days of this will be working at the bathhouse, one day is your day off and two days will be reserved for arrival and departure. You can, of course, prolong this stay for one or more weeks. The exact timing of your visit will be planned with our volunteer's coordinator. We will try to find a time frame that will best suit your availability and our needs.

Volunteers' Counsellor

For issues that cause a volunteer's concern an external and independent counsellor (trust@showerpower.eu) is available. As a standard procedure, a few days after a volunteer leaves Lesvos for home, she will be contacted to check a possible need to be debriefed.

Room and board

The team leader resides at the hammam. For € 10 a night, you can stay there too. It is a cosy traditional Greek house with a garden and a terrace. For volunteers we have two double bedrooms and usually no more than three to four volunteers. The maximum time you pay for lodging is one month, for the remaining you will have free accommodation. For payment instructions see 'Meals'.

Towels are available, we kindly ask you to bring pillow cover and bed sheets. We have a lot of laundries already!

Another option is that you arrange other sleeping accommodation by yourself. In that case, you have to organise your transportations from and to the airport as well as between the bathhouse and your shelter. Remember there is no reliable bus connection.

For those who have issues with allergies: we have a cat in and around the house!

Meals

The house has a kitchen and a fridge, it is possible, when sharing the shopping, to prepare meals. Usually, we do this together and share cooking as well. Because the vast majority of our volunteers is a vegetarian, all meals are veggie.

Volunteers donate € 5 per day to cover store expenses. We kindly ask you to pay all amounts due before your arrival. Preference is given to bank transfers to the ShowerPower bank account

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Communication

A smartphone with a Facebook account and WhatsApp is essential for any internal communication between group members.

You will enjoy free WIFI in ShowerPower House.

What clothes to wear?

Out of respect for our guests and to avoid unnecessary commotion at the Camp we urge you to refrain from see-through clothing, shorts, miniskirts and low necklines if you work in your capacity as a volunteer. Your clothes should be decent and respectful, as you would dress for work anywhere.

Remember this when putting together your wardrobe.

Winters (November - February) have lots of rainy days – it will be chill in the house, and you will like the warm clothes you brought along!

Summers (May - September) can be sweltering!

Car

The ShowerPower House is situated in a remote area from Mytilini. You may want to rent a car; however, this is not necessary, unless you want an opportunity to visit Mytilini in the evening and discover Lesbos in your spare time.

The ShowerPower minivan is exclusively meant for the transportation of the women and children from the camp.

Arranging transportation

You travel at your own expense and organise your individual bookings.

Given the fact that circumstances can rapidly change, we advise you to have the risk that we have to cancel your upcoming stay well covered in your insurance policy. It is essential to wait for the final booking arrangements until our coordinator gives you the go-ahead. When done, please provide the coordinator with your flight numbers and the arrival and departure times.

Travelling to Lesbos

You fly to Athens or Thessaloniki, then transfer to a local flight with SkyExpress or Olympus airways that takes you in 30 minutes to Mytilini. If you choose this option: the easiest way, but not necessarily the cheapest, is to book for Athens with AEGEAN airways: Olympus is their daughter company, and thus your luggage will be labelled through to Mytilini.

Another option is to check whether tour operators sell tickets on their direct flights to Mytilini. Flying inbound with one, and outbound with another airline or tour operator can be less expensive.

You may also take a ferry from Athens (Piraeus) to Mytilini. Most boats leave at 20.00, to arrive at daybreak in Mytilini (07.00). The shipping companies who provide this service are BLUE STAR and HELLENIC SEAWAYS.

Transportation from Mytilini (MJT) airport

There is no reliable or frequent bus service from the airport to the bathhouse.

On the day of your arrival, we will arrange a pick-up at Mytilini airport. This could be after our shift ends. If you arrive before, it is, subject to other arrangements made by your team leader, best to take the local bus to Mytilini. We will take you from there. Your team leader will contact you well before your planned departure for the inbound flight.



Insurance

Be advised that, from a legal point of view, volunteering is different from travelling like a tourist. We, therefore, recommend checking your travel, legal assistance and liability insurance policies as well as your healthcare insurance to avoid any disappointments in case of

an event that invokes any of these risks. Your insurance agent should be able to inform you to which extend your risks are covered. Dutch citizens are advised to read the attachment.

Donations

The ShowerPower volunteers, like volunteers from other NGOs, are not allowed to distribute any goods that they brought along.

Fellow NGO's are in charge of distributing donated goods, they have a sound distribution system and know where and what the needs are. ShowerPower takes donations like clothes, shoes, toys and foods directly to Attika Warehouse. From there it will quickly find its way to the beneficiaries: the refugees. Medical goods will be handed over to MSF.

Providing people with stuff (clothes/toys/ sweets etc.) is not our objective nor part of our mission. We stock only a few items for direct needs. See this stock as our 'first aid kit'.

We do have a variety of decent toys to play with. Blowing bubbles, for instance, looks great fun but it attracts kids for only a few minutes. If you, for a moment, realise that, during their young life, these kids already saw many certainties and promises bursting like bubbles, you want them to encounter better experiences.

Sweets, we offer our visitors lots of fruits and vegetable snacks as they lack vitamins and fresh vegetables more than sugar!

So, when you want to bring goods to share, contact us before and please honour our agreement.

We are well aware that friends and family like to support you with donations on your private mission rather than money. You probably can convince them to the contrary: by bringing money you save the costs of extra luggage. Your money, together with that savings, buys a lot more goods in Greece than abroad. Finally, by spending money on Lesvos, you support the Greek retailers as well!

Our mission

The refugees in camp Moria have to survive in great uncertainty amidst the noise, the dirt, the dust and the damp of an overcrowded Camp. This is why ShowerPower wants to provide them not only with a hot shower but also with a quiet, spotless and dry environment. A place where they will be treated with dignity as the priceless individuals they are. This is more than just a bath – it is an experience.

To conclude

ShowerPower is an organisation that seeks to return a sense of basic humanity to our guests. We have no political or religious ambitions; we ask our volunteers to observe strict neutrality in that respect!

starting - local - sponsoring activities helps us to help the people in Moria, one is more readily motivated to help if invited by an acquaintance who goes there himself to help.