

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

For volunteers at Four-Legged Orphan Sanctuary



HISTORY AND AIM

Four-Legged Orphan Sanctuary – FLOS for short – runs adjacent to the resort Dar Danse, run by the English Filpi family. Dar Danse hosts retreats for ballet dancers, but offers relaxing holidays for everybody, families as well as individuals. Over the years the Filpi family has come across several animals in need of help, and started taking in and helping dogs, cats and donkeys. In 2014 they began the process of setting up an animal charity and so the Four-Legged Orphan Sanctuary became a reality.

The aim of FLOS is to relieve and prevent the suffering and ill treatment of stray, abandoned and working animals in the Essaouira region of Morocco through the provision of shelter, care and access to medical treatment.

Unfortunately animals here too often suffer and are neglected. The working animals are often abandoned when they are no longer fit or young enough to do what is required and so are ultimately left stranded and alone to suffer a long drawn out death. A lot of these animals are in fact an essential part of everyday life for communities in these rural areas, as the local people rely heavily on them for their livelihood. However, despite this fact, the reality we see is that the mentality and practices of owning these animals often fall short from the basic standards of animal husbandry and welfare that these animals, and all animals, have a right to, most often this is due to financial constraint or lack of better knowledge. Which is where we want to come in!



It is not only working animals we see suffering. Denser areas in Morocco have large populations of stray dogs and cats fending for themselves and with very little done to control growing numbers. Until recently this was only done by officials laying down poison in the streets! The first government supported sterilisation and rabies control scheme only began in 2013 and there is still a long way to go. Pet ownership is still a relatively new and uncommon concept

in Morocco and a lot of people still hold traditional beliefs that these animals are 'unclean' and to be avoided. It is important to regard that Moroccan people, in the vast majority, are not intentionally cruel or neglectful and in fact it is our experience that they are generally friendly and well-meaning. Rather that the opinions and practises towards these animals comes from a very 'traditional' way of doing things and from a lack of better knowledge, understanding and resources, which again is exactly the area we want to help in.

Our additional purposes focus on rehoming of healthy animals, both locally and to the UK, and promoting awareness and education in basic husbandry and welfare. This we do via a variety of public workshops as well as running volunteer programmes for UK Veterinary undergraduates, among others, to come and assist our work.



OUR ANIMALS

At our sanctuary we cater for anything from dogs, cats and chickens to horses and donkeys and additionally the occasionally visiting camel and turtles. We are still in the early stages of building our sanctuary, and hope to soon be able to house even more animals in need of a good home.

If you would like to know more about the animals that we have living with us at the sanctuary, please feel free to visit our website where you will find detailed histories for all our four-legged friends.

[FLOS Animals](#)

DAILY ROUTINE

The general day to day work will include cleaning of the stables, feeding animals, walking the dogs and general maintenance of our grounds. It may also include construction work like building shelters and walls, or help out with fundraising events.

You can expect a day off every week but due to planning we cannot guarantee that you will be able to choose a specific weekday – though we will try to accommodate your wishes.

ACCOMMODATION

You will get to stay in one of our characterful and quirky rooms which are placed in the main building or dotted around the gardens with a view to the sea. Our rooms are all different and made in natural materials like terracotta, bamboo, wood and stone and decorated with vintage furniture.

Please be aware that depending on bookings that you might have to share the room with other volunteers, but we will try to be flexible in our endeavour to meet your needs whenever possible.

European sockets are in use throughout Morocco, so an adaptor might come in handy.



WIFI

There is Wi-Fi at Dar Danse, but it is very limited and also expensive – so please don't overuse it for streaming large files or videos and instead stick to checking emails etc. Our network is called 'TP link' and the password is: 47 40 73 81

FOOD PROVISIONS

We will provide you with three meals a day, prepared by our wonderful cook Fatima. Breakfast will usually consist of either local bread with condiments, porridge or yoghurt and fruit, served alongside coffee or tea (English tea or Moroccan mint tea). Lunch and dinner will be more traditional Moroccan cuisine.

If you prefer vegetarian food or have any special dietary needs or allergies, please let us know beforehand.

We will also provide you with bottled mineral water, as the tap water is not for drinking.



ACTIVITIES AND EXCURSIONS

There are a number of non-sanctuary activities that can be arranged or enjoyed on site. We have an outdoor infinity swimming pool, a traditional Moroccan Hammam (a bit like a Turkish steambath) and treatment room, a small boutique, a library with books and games, and of course miles of deserted sandy beaches.

Camel rides along the beach can be arranged, as well as trips to the nearest city of Essaouira where you can explore the souks or visit the fishing port.

If our cook has the time it might be possible to learn to master some Moroccan cookery, or you might be able to join the odd yoga or pilates class.

WHAT TO BRING

There are a few things that we recommend bringing along to make your experience here more pleasant.

- Suitable workclothes
- Sturdy working boots
- Work gloves
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Hat (to protect you from the sun)
- Torch
- Adaptor (European sockets)
- Warm clothes for chilly evenings
- Cash in the form of GB, Moroccan Dirhams or Euro – there is no credit card facility at Dar Danse, however you will generally not require any money for use here on site. Dirhams may be purchased at the airport on your arrival or withdrawn from ATM's in Essaouira.

LAUNDRY

There is no automatic washing machine at Dar Danse, but our twin tub machine will get the job done. We do suggest to hand-wash your favourite items, since the machine tends to get clothes rather in a tangle. Washing lines are available, and everything generally tends to dry in minutes!

WEATHER

Dar Danse is situated on the wild Atlantic coast. We are blessed with a fairly temperate climate all year round and during the hotter summer months we even have our own air-conditioning which blows off from the ocean! However don't be fooled - it is Africa after all, and the sun is very strong, so don't forget the hat and sunscreen!

When the sun sets, there can be quite a nip in the air, especially in winter so do make sure you have something warm and cosy for the evenings too!

You may expect that in a warm climate like Morocco's you will have to fight off swarms of mosquitoes, but in fact you might as well leave the mosquito repellent at home, since we rarely ever see any of them. But this is not to say that we do not have the occasional bugs and insects around, we are in the Moroccan wilderness after all!

THE ENVIRONMENT

Dar Danse is a self-sufficient little bubble. All the water comes from our well, and electricity is powered by the sun (occasionally backed up by our generator).

Water is also heated by the sun, and is therefore naturally limited, so please try to keep showers as short as possible.

Naturally we have to keep our electricity consumption to a minimum and powered appliances can cause a power failure....so unless you are tied at the hip with your hairdryer etc., please try to leave it at home - the sun does an excellent job!

All our rubbish has to be taken to Essaouira, nearly 50 km away, so we are now attempting to do our own basic recycling. Please put all paper and plastic bottles in the relevant bins by the gate. One of the aims is to introduce environmental awareness into the local community. After much negotiation a bin has finally been introduced to the nearby fishing port Akermoud. It is a start...!

MOROCCAN PEOPLE AND CULTURE

People in Morocco speak Arabic, Berber and French, and since most of the staff is local you might find it useful to brush up on a few French - or Arabic - phrases before arrival.

The predominant religion is Islam therefore please be respectful of this in what you where and how you behave. You will find the Moroccan people to be very friendly and inviting to foreigners.



TRANSFERS AND TRANSPORT

Airport transfers can be arranged from both Marrakech and Essaouira airport however are much cheaper and convenient to arrange from Essaouira. If you are making your own way to us you can find us along the coastal road 50km north from Essaouira. Look out for the white sign labelled 'Camping' at the side of the road, turn down here towards the beach until you hit the small fishing port, turn left along the coast following with the sea on your right for approximately half a kilometre until you find us!



Volunteers should note that given our remote location and limited vehicles we generally only tend to visit our nearest city of Essaouira once a week to pick up supplies. Of course all your needs here will be met but we just encourage you to bear in mind that we do not have cafés, restaurants or shops anywhere nearby to satisfy any of the usual modern day cravings that we can come to expect!

INSURANCE NEEDS

Obviously when spending any time travelling abroad it is highly advisable to take out personal travel insurance to cover your luggage, personal items, plus travel arrangements and any unforeseen medical expenses. We as a company have a basic public liability insurance to cover all people on our property however this is not an adequate substitute for taking out personal cover. For the purpose of volunteer placements it is also highly advisable to take out a policy which specifically covers volunteering with animals and animal sanctuary/refuge work (always check policy wording). Below are a sample of insurance providers we have sourced which will cover these requirements, however other providers are available and there is no obligation to take out a policy with these providers. Prices will vary. We do not accept liability for any injury or loss which is not covered by your own personal insurance provider.

- [24/7 Travel Insurance \(backpacker policy\)](#)
- [World Nomads](#)
- [OVEuropa](#)
- [Endsleigh Travel insurance](#)
- [Insure and Away](#)

MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY

A friendly and reliable doctor is on call at all times and both private and public hospitals in Essaouira with A&E.

Medicines such as Nurofen etc. are not always easily available, so do bring your usual holiday remedies with you and please note as we obviously have animals on site that if you are allergic to any of these you may want to bring some anti-histamines also!

Please ensure you let us know in plenty of time, of any serious food allergies or dietary requirements.

VACCINATION POLICY

There are no specific immunisations required for our area of Morocco, but below is a link to a website, providing information regarding recommendations.

[Netdoctor - Morocco](#)

However we would like to make you aware that rabies is endemic in the area of Morocco and although all our dogs on site are vaccinated and disease free there is still the possibility of interacting with stray dogs during your time here, some of whom could possibly be infected. Although highly unlikely that you may be exposed it is our recommendation that you seek immunisation for this disease. Please note we do not require evidence of vaccination status to carry out a placement with us but we do not accept liability in this and you should understand it is entirely your own responsibility to arrange.

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

During your stay here you will be treated pleasantly, politely and respectfully by all of our members of staff here on site and as such we expect you to do the same. However if any issue should arise for whatever reason please discuss this discretely with your placement supervisor who will endeavour to resolve the issue to its full extent should a reasonable action be deemed required.

We have a strict zero tolerance policy towards illegal substances and if any volunteers are found with such items on person or on site this will result in immediate termination of the placement.

Whilst of course we wish you to enjoy your placement to the fullest extent please be aware that the hotel may also be accommodating guests and families during your time here. As such we ask that you always be respectful and mindful of them at all times. Of course friendly interaction with guests is always encouraged and can be a great part of your experience here; however we do ask that after 10pm noise levels are kept to a minimum. Any anti-social behaviour towards guests or staff will not be tolerated.

WISH LIST, BRINGING OUT THINGS FROM UK

We will always be in the need of several things for the animals, and would be more than grateful if you should choose to save some room in your luggage to bring us some necessities. Any spare collars, brushes, dog toys etc. will be gratefully received.

We also have a wish list on [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) - so have a look, or get in touch with us to hear if we are in dire need of any particular items during the period of your stay.

[Our Amazon Wish List](#)

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS...

If there is any further information you may require or further questions you would like to ask please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at floanimals@gmail.com