

Volunteering at Lucy's Sanctuary for Holy Land Donkeys in Israel

Words can not describe the unbearable cruelty and abuse so many little donkeys suffered from before finally finding refuge at Lucy's Sanctuary for Holy Land Donkeys – a place of love and peace for poor and broken animal souls.

I am from Berlin and after reading about the immense problems Lucy is facing every day in order to care for the donkeys, I decided to give her a hand for a while. After an unforgettable time in Israel I would like to share my experiences and hope to encourage other animal lovers to help as well.



Bella, Katy and their friends can finally relax after enduring an unbearable life as working donkeys

It was in April 2018 when I travelled to Israel for the first time. The flying time from Berlin to Tel Aviv went by so quickly and after four hours we landed at the Ben Gurion Airport. After passing the visa process, which required some time, I could finally start my trip to the sanctuary. I took the comfortable and affordable public transportation which brought me to the sanctuary in less than 1,5 hours.

Inspired by a travel report of Erika, a supporter of Lucy's sanctuary for years, I already had an idea about what to expect. However, when I entered the sanctuary I was so impressed by what I actually saw. So many lovely longears were relaxing in the afternoon sun on a large and very clean field. Since donkeys are such curious and smart animals they immediately figured out that there is someone coming they have not seen before. So some of them came to the fence to say hello and to get a cuddle. The donkeys looked so relaxed that from a distance you would think only happy and perfectly healthy donkeys are living there. But after a closer look I could see a lot of horrible scars, wounds and bone deformations.



While Alfredo continued his beauty nap, some of his friends were curious and came to say »hello«

Most of the rescued donkeys are coming from the Palestinian territories where they endure violence and an intolerable hard life as working donkeys. Donkeys as the »lowest of the low« also have to suffer for political reasons and some of them have their ears and tails cut off. That all these donkeys eventually learnt to trust again is because of all the love and care they get every day at the sanctuary.

One exceptional poor soul is little Zachariah who I found all by himself in the stable since he never dares to go out with the others. Zachariah is deeply traumatized with stab wounds all over his body and with eyes that had been violently gouged out. Lucy told me, Zachariah could not being touched or approached at all for many months after his arrival. Giving him the time he needs and never putting pressure on him, he has made some wonderful progress ever since. Little by little he has accepted to be



touched on certain areas, which is very important to apply medications. Sometimes you would think he even starts enjoying being loved, but only one inconsiderate movement will made him flinch since he is expecting to be beaten or stabbed again.

Whereas Michael and Raphael, who were also in a terrible state some months ago, look and behave like completely new donkeys now.



Michael during his healing process and some months later happy with his best friend Rahpael

Several bottle-fed orphans and comparatively young donkeys are also living at the sanctuary. This is because often highly pregnant donkeys or foals are abandoned. Many rescued donkeys already gave birth at Lucy's sanctuary shortly after their arrival. Unlike their poor mums these foals will luckily never experience anything bad in their life. But all these little additional donkeys mean a lot of unexpected costs that the sanctuary can hardly handle anymore. It is heartbreaking that at the moment Lucy can take in no further donkeys, although there are still so many more desperately waiting for help. But the funds are so low and the costs so high that it is already difficult to feed and shelter the current residents.



The daily work at the shelter is enormous and it is almost completely down to Lucy and her partner to handle all this. Although they get some hours of help once in a while, the huge amount of work is so demanding, that it would keep five people busy for the entire day. In the night Lucy is busy with paperwork to apply for further funding. It is always a great concern and a lot of worries if there will be enough to feed the donkeys for another month. Running a sanctuary for so many donkeys with special needs without any governmental support is extremely difficult and I appeal to all donkeyfriends to consider a donation, no matter how small it is.

In addition to the sanctuary Lucy is running a mobile clinics to provide free veterinary support and treatment for donkeys, horses and mules in the West Bank. On this mission she also strive to teach compassion and humane handling which seems to be an endless struggle. Animals in general are not valued there but a donkey sadly belongs to the lowest in the hierarchy and suffers more than anyone could imagine. Volunteers are free to join the outreach work if they feel mentally able.

Very devastating during Lucy's latest outreach was the fate of a little donkey who had given birth to her beautiful baby not long ago. The mum was found at the West Bank, lying in filth and dirt on the hard floor, her head got stuck in an empty water drough. She was so weak that she could not even lift her head up by herself. Due to her poor condition it was impossible to bring her to the sanctuary and also her foal did not get the allowance by the local people to go with Lucy. So the mama donkey was treated for several days with infusions and antibiotics on site while her baby was watching over her every single minute. Lucy provided the poor donkey with a little pillow that at least her head did not have to be in all the mud any longer. Unfortunately some days later she had to be put down. What a disgraceful end of life for this poor soul who worked so hard her entire life.

This is how Lucy found her – too weak to lift her head out of the empty water bucket. After some days of injections and painkiller she finally found peace. The future of her little foal is still unclear.



The future of her little foal is still unclear and while I am already back in Berlin, Lucy still has not given up negotiating with the people to leave the foal to her. Sadly, so far no agreement could be reached

Being with the donkeys all day was such a rewarding experience. These friendly, gentle and highly intelligent animals are so grateful for the love and attention they get



Golden Oldie Esther gets her eyes cleaned by Lucy

and they truly show their attachment. Some follow you around all day just to make sure they get enough cuddles and maybe a carrot now and then. Esther, a very old and quiet donkey, found terrified in the middle of a busy highway was a loner in the beginning and now found a great friend in Sika.

When I left Israel I took wonderful moments but also great concerns with me. In Lucy I have found a lovely, caring person who has cut down her own life to an absolutely minimum to give the abandoned donkeys a place where they can overcome their former life and be happy again. However, seeing her struggling so much against the odds all day makes me worry about the future of this lovely little donkey sanctuary.

If someone feels inspired to support Lucy and her donkeys, please be sure that any financial support is highly needed and appreciated, no matter how small it is. All of your donation will go to the donkeys without any hidden costs. There are so many important things on the agenda. The main goals are not just being able to continue to take in rescued donkeys in need but also Lucy sees a desperate need to progress and expand the outreach work in Arab towns and the Palestinian West Bank. She wants to be able to make concentrated efforts in those areas where conditions are so poor and keep working to drive home the essential need for donkeys to be treated far better than they are. If one or two workers could be paid then Lucy would be able to hold more frequent outreach clinics to give first aid to the wounded working donkeys.

To set up a little cross-border place of encounter and education would be such another valuable thing to build. The idea behind is, that both, Israeli and Palestinian children come together peacefully, making friends while learning some amazing facts about the world and feelings of a donkey. To educate empathy would not only help both countries but also had an important effect on the future wellbeing of the donkeys.

Additional note:

Since my first visit in April I have been at Lucy's sanctuary another two times. For some weeks in summer the financial situation seemed to be a bit better, but now it is more than worrying. I cannot stand the thought that all these precious donkeys are at risk to lose their lovely home. To everyone who is reading this please help to get more awareness and more people to support Lucy's important work.

If you consider making a donation please go to the website:

<https://www.lucysdonkeysanctuary.org/donations>

Or simply make a donation directly to the sanctuary's charity bank account:

Lucy's Sanctuary for Holy Land Donkeys

BAN: IL310111050000135878804

Swiftcode: IDBLILIT

Bank: Discount Bank

If you wish further information about my volunteering experience, just contact me on Facebook (Biggi Zielo) or email bzielo@yahoo.com

Thank you very much for donating for our delicious food

