

Volunteer Positions with Sea Turtles in Sal Island, Cabo Verde 2018

The islands of Cape Verde constitute the world's third most important nesting site for the Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), one of seven marine turtle species found worldwide. This incredible species is a critical link in marine ecosystems, helping to maintain the health of sea grass beds and coral reef systems that provide food and shelter for a vast array of other marine life.

Unfortunately, human exploitation of this amazing species has brought them to the brink of extinction. In 2007 it was estimated that the Loggerhead population in Cape Verde would be extinct by 2015 if immediate actions weren't taken to halt the illegal hunt and trade of turtle meat.

For the last 9 years, both international volunteers and members of the local community have worked tirelessly to ensure protection of the female turtle – by patrolling the beaches nightly throughout the nesting season, educating members of the community about turtle conservation, and working with the government to improve regulations. While the number of turtles killed has drastically reduced, the illegal poaching and trafficking persists.

In 2018, we aim to further empower the community to take action against the slaughter of nesting females, through direct beach protection, as well as grassroots education and engagement. As critical part of our team, you will have the opportunity to directly contribute to the conservation of this endangered species, and ultimately help build a more sustainable Cape Verde.

The project encompasses patrolling beaches (night and morning) to monitor nesting and deter hunting, data collection, research, working with tourists and local businesses, operation of hatcheries, education and outreach activities and beach clean-ups. The work is undertaken by local and international field assistants and volunteers. Although there is a wide scope of activities within the project, protection of nesting turtles continues to be the main focus and this can be stressful and tiring, but ultimately highly rewarding.

The usual nesting season is from June until October with hatchlings being born from mid-August until late December. The project is based in Santa Maria, a popular tourist destination known for its beaches and water-sports. Participants are based in field camps with self-catering accommodation in Santa Maria provided on rest days. This opportunity will not only provide you with good experience of turtle conservation techniques, but also allow you to make a real difference to the survival of marine turtles. Your participation will allow for opportunities to be directly responsible for saving numerous nesting turtles and hatchlings, and to experience a high level of satisfaction from being able to rapidly affect the declining situation in Cabo Verde.

If you are looking for your first experience working in conservation, are taking a career break, or just wish to spend your holidays doing something meaningful, this is the opportunity for you! We only take a limited number of volunteers each season and we are looking for people who want to do something really worthwhile during their free time and who are prepared for some challenging, but very fulfilling work. Volunteers are a critical part of our turtle protection team with their enthusiasm and energy helping us to save many turtles.

As a volunteer, your primary role will be to patrol the beaches at night with other assistants in order to deter hunters and ensure the turtle can nest safely. During patrols, you will also assist with important fieldwork activities, including tagging and measuring turtles, and relocation and excavation of nests. You may also get involved with other aspects of the outreach activities and assisting other local community focused charities with small projects. With this experience you'll learn about turtle conservation techniques and will have the opportunity to make a real difference to the survival of marine turtles.

Volunteers are based in field camps with rest periods in apartments in Santa Maria. Volunteers work six days each week and will have 1 day/night off to explore the island, enjoy diving, surfing and other water sports, or just lay on the beach and relax!

Living under these conditions can be challenging, extremely tiring and stressful, and will include work both at night and during the day. A good level of fitness and physical and mental energy is required as patrols are long (possibly all night), conducted on foot and may be as long as 15km. Shift patterns vary but you will have 1 day of rest per week.

Requirements:

- Desire to participate in conservation
- At least 18 years old
- Understand written and spoken English
- Good level of physical fitness
- High level of energy and flexibility
- Able to cope with physically challenging conditions (camping, long walks, late nights, hot weather, insects)
- Ability to work and live with people of different backgrounds and nationalities

Volunteer Contribution:

Volunteer contributions cover accommodation, utilities such as water and electricity, and meals during your working period. Meals are not provided on rest days. Please note that water and basic meals are provided in the camp (see section About the Camp for more information). Volunteer contributions also provide critical funds needed to support basic but essential needs of the project, allowing us to patrol the beaches more effectively, and ultimately protect more turtles.

One week €250

Two weeks €315

Three weeks €375

50€ for each additional week

At your arrival you will be required to pay a €100 refundable deposit against loss or damage of project equipment and you should bring sufficient funds for any other activities that you would like to do. Once a volunteering period has been agreed you will be asked to pay via bank transfer or Pay-Pal 100€ of your fees in advance. This payment must be done before one month of your start date and will not be refunded if you cancel your volunteering. If you decide to leave the project before the agreed date, your total contribution will not be refunded (this does not apply for the deposit, which will be refunded).

Benefits:

Volunteers will be provided with accommodation during their stay – 6 nights per week in camp, with a rest night off in Santa Maria. Meals will be provided to volunteers during their time in camp. In addition to meals and accommodation, spending time with the project will give you an incredible opportunity to work closely with marine turtles and directly contribute to their conservation. You will gain valuable fieldwork experience, and be exposed to a wide range of cultures and backgrounds during your time with us.

Timing:

We recommend a minimum stay of 3 weeks. The period runs from **1 July until 20 October**; Volunteers can apply at any point throughout the season.