

NESTING AND HATCHLING SEASON

Volunteering with sea turtles
in Sal Island, Cabo Verde

2024/25



01

SPECIAL NOTE

Hey there, nature enthusiast!

Thank you for applying to join Project Biodiversity as a conservation volunteer in Sal Island, Cabo Verde!

Each year, we welcome dozens of volunteers from around the world from different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. All our volunteers have one thing in common: a passion for wildlife and a deep commitment to making our world a better place. As a volunteer, you'll be part of a passionate and experienced team of conservationists, who are ready to share their knowledge and expertise on hands-on conservation with you.

This is not only a great way to acquire conservation experience; you'll also help us make a significant impact in the protection of different species and, of course, visit a new, exciting country while working in beautiful landscapes!

We put this brochure together to help answer your most pressing questions about our volunteering opportunities—from what to expect, and how to apply, to how to get to Sal Island, and what to bring with you! You are always welcome to email us with any other questions at volunteer@projectbiodiversity.org

We hope to see you soon!

Sunny regards from Sal Island.

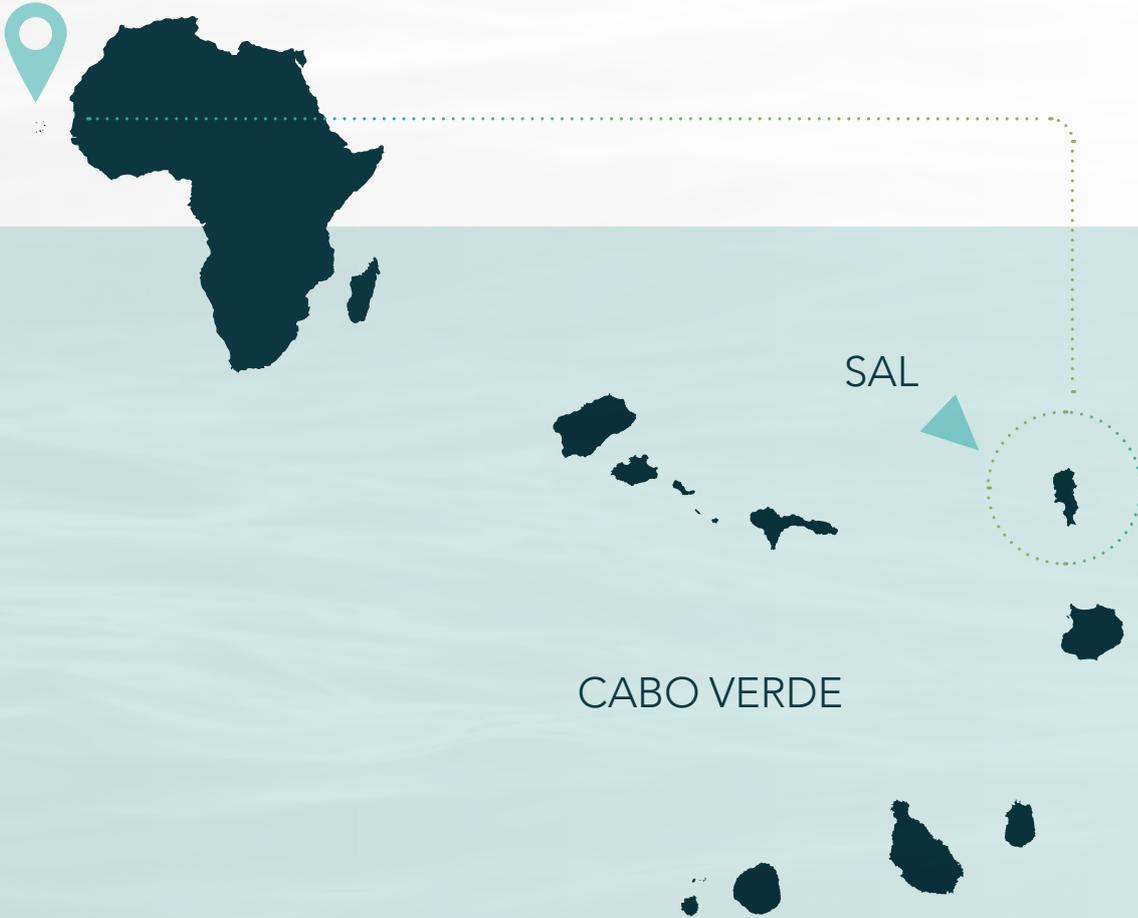
Project Biodiversity Team



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WEST AFRICA



02

SAL, CABO VERDE

Cabo Verde, an archipelago of volcanic origin made up of 10 islands off the west coast of the African continent, is a country known for its stunning landscapes, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality.

The island of Sal is no different. A small island with white sandy beaches and turquoise water, it is a tourist destination that receives hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.

Sal is not only popular among tourists, with its five Nature Reserves, Key Biodiversity Areas and Important Bird Areas; it is one of the world's top ten marine biodiversity hotspots!

The island's northern rocky cliffs host one of the largest red-billed tropicbird colonies in the world, four other seabird species, and a resident population of ospreys. Its white-sand beaches welcome thousands of nesting loggerhead turtles each summer, and a few months later, hundreds of thousands of baby turtles run to the ocean. The island also features 20 endemic plant species, some critically endangered. Underwater, lemon, hammerhead, and other shark species are found around Sal Island, in a haven for breeding year-round. While in the winter, humpback whales thrive in the warmer waters of the island.

03 WHO ARE WE

OBJECTIVE, VISION, MISSION

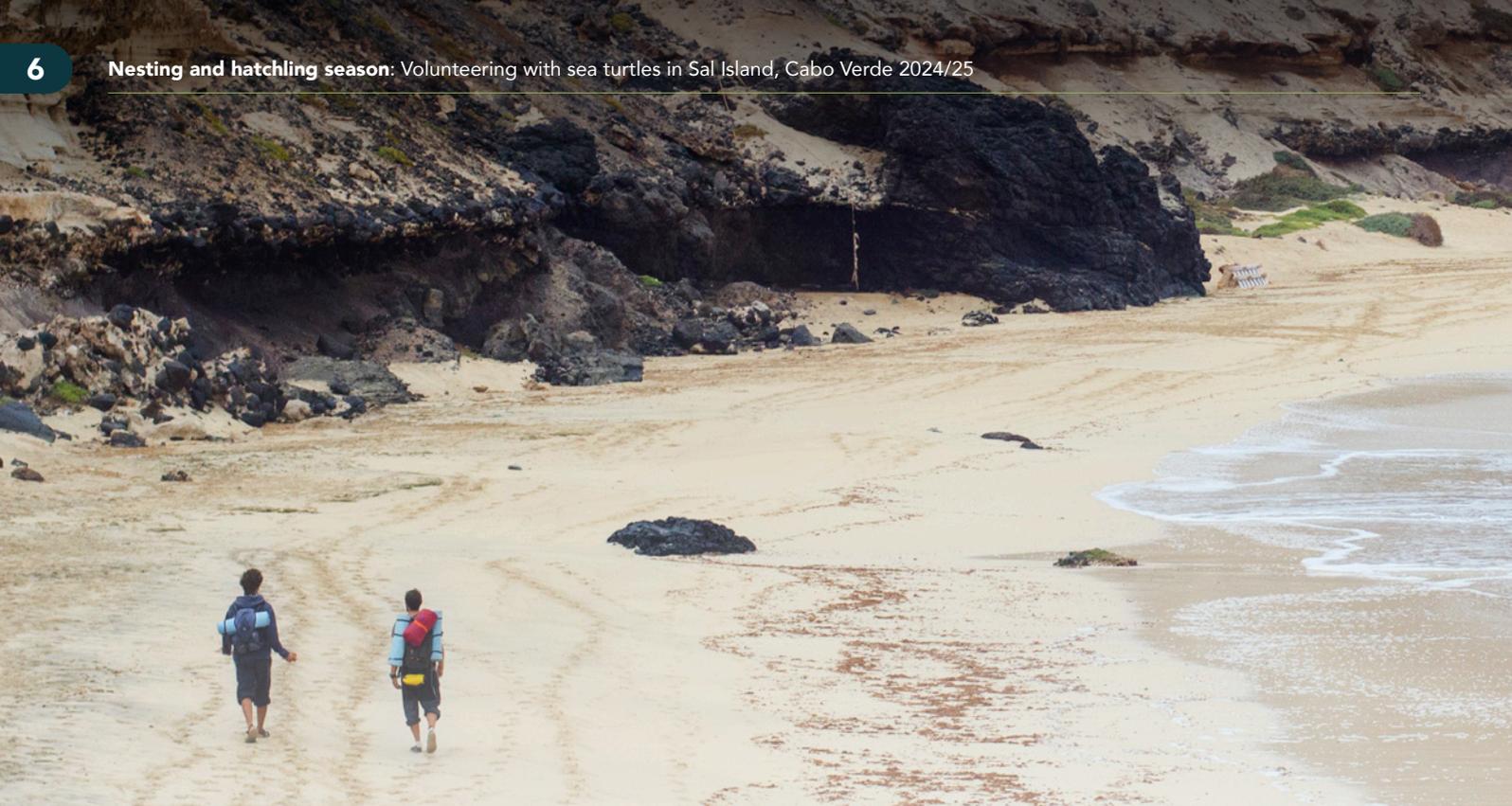
Project Biodiversity is a Cabo Verdean NGO based on Sal Island, established in 2015. We focus on conserving and restoring the island's unique ecosystems through various environmental programmes. Our main work areas include wildlife conservation, habitat protection, sustainable fisheries, and environmental outreach.

We collaborate with local communities to enhance environmental stewardship, providing education and capacity building. Our efforts aim to protect Sal's biodiversity while supporting sustainable economic growth and encouraging positive tourism impacts. We strive to preserve the island's ecosystems and promote cultural and economic prosperity for its residents.

Our vision is a world in which society and nature can prosper together, where communities practise sustainable resource management and protect nature.

Our mission is to develop a sustainable management system for Sal's natural resources that balances sustainable economies with ecosystem preservation, leading to a vibrant, eco-conscious, and economically strong community.





04 WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES

As a consequence of the development of Sal Island, biodiversity has been facing different challenges. These challenges, which are the same in different coastal ecosystems around the world, all have a common denominator: human actions.

Unfortunately, poaching is still a big threat to the fauna on the island. Even though different species are protected by law against poaching, it still happens each year, season after season, with hundreds of adult sea turtles and seabirds being poached. This illegal activity disrupts nesting patterns and threatens species survival, negatively impacting the island's delicate ecological balance.

The expansion of hotels and infrastructure on Sal Island has also led to habitat loss and increased coastal erosion. This quick and sometimes unplanned development negatively affects the beaches and their surroundings, putting biodiversity at risk.

Increasing fishing activities around Sal Island result in significant bycatch, where non-target species like sea turtles and seabirds are unintentionally captured. This threatens vulnerable populations and disrupts marine ecosystems, affecting overall biodiversity.

Pollution from plastics - often brought to the island by currents - harms marine life, posing a deadly threat to sea turtles, whales, and other marine wildlife. This pollution affects both wildlife health and the island's environmental quality, impacting its natural beauty and ecosystem services.



05

WHAT DO WE DO?

As the environmental organisation on the island, Project Biodiversity has various programmes to work on all sides of conservation.

- Terrestrial programme: we work in restoring key ecosystems, such as coastal dunes, protecting endangered plant species and strengthening the co-management of Protected Areas.
- Seabird programme: we monitor the different seabird species that breed on the island, and the resident population of ospreys, studying their populations and protecting them from predators.
- Marine monitoring programme: on one side, we work to improve the knowledge on the marine wildlife of Sal, including monitoring megafauna, especially sharks, and coral reefs, so we can strengthen their protection. On the other side, we implement projects that promote sustainable fishing practices within the local communities.
- Sea turtle programme: we work on the protection of nesting sea turtles, their nests and their habitat on Sal Island.
- Environmental education programme: with this programme, we connect all our work with the communities and the educational centres of the islands, raising awareness and promoting the participation of the communities in conservation.
- Sustainable tourism and outreach: we promote sustainable tourism on Sal Island among hotels, agencies and visitors.
- Volunteering programme: volunteers from all around the world join us year-round to help in the conservation of the biodiversity of Sal Island. We have three programmes: the sea turtle programme, the island conservation programme, and the homestay programme.



06

WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING & HOW YOU ARE HELPING



Nesting and hatchling programmes

Every summer, we register thousands of loggerhead turtles nesting on the beaches of Sal Island, making the island a critical region for this species worldwide.

However, this species faces human threats such as poaching, light pollution, and habitat loss, which affect both the adult turtles and the hatchlings.

This is where we need you; you can help in different ways! The sea turtle nesting season runs from June until October, with the hatchling season from September to December.

As a volunteer during the **nesting season**, your primary role will be to patrol the beaches at night, joining forces with other assistants to ensure the sea turtles can nest safely. During these beach patrols, you will also assist with essential fieldwork activities, including measuring turtles, relocation and excavation of nests.

As a volunteer during the **hatchling season**, you will be responsible for monitoring relocated sea turtle nests in our conservation hatcheries. You will join our volunteer team, taking shifts in releasing baby turtles safely and collecting information from the hatched nests. You may also get involved with other outreach activities, such as fundraising and talking to visitors.

In both programmes, volunteers will also help with general tasks such as maintaining equipment and materials so the work can run smoothly for everyone! With this experience, you'll gain valuable insights into turtle conservation techniques and have the chance to impact the survival of sea turtles positively.

07

HOW DOES IT WORK



A. Requirements

- Desire to participate in conservation;
- At least 18 years old and a maximum of 45 years old;
- Must 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, sleeping on the beach, working late nights, hot weather, insects);
- Ability to work and live with people of different backgrounds and nationalities.



B. Cost

Volunteer contributions cover accommodation and utilities such as water, electricity, and gas. During the nesting season, they also cover food during work days. Volunteer contributions also provide critical funds to support the project's basic but essential needs, allowing us to monitor more fauna and flora and ultimately protect our biodiversity!

Nesting season

- One week: 275 €
- Two weeks: 340 €
- Three weeks: 400 €
- 50 € for each additional week

Hatchling season

- One week: 220 €
- Two weeks: 270 €
- Three weeks: 320 €
- 50 € for each additional week



C. Living conditions, meals

Nesting season

Volunteers will be provided with accommodation during the entire stay: during work days in a shared campsite on the beach and on days off in a shared apartment in Santa Maria. The campsite has large shared tents for sleeping, a shared bathroom, and a communal eating area.

The apartment has shared bedrooms and bathrooms, a complete kitchen, and a living room. It is located within walking distance of the centre of Santa Maria. Water and basic meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) are provided in the camp, but not on the day off. Vegetarians and vegans are welcome!

Hatchling season

Volunteers will be provided with accommodation in a shared apartment in Santa Maria. The apartment has shared bedrooms and bathrooms, a complete kitchen, and a living room. It is located within walking distance of the centre of Santa Maria.

Please note: Meals are not provided. Food prices are similar to those in Europe, but communal cooking can save you some money!



D. Timing

To make the most of your time, we strongly recommend a stay of at least three weeks. However, we understand that people often have limited time off (and budget), so the minimum you can join us for is one week. You should join the volunteering programme on a Wednesday or Sunday, please **check flights accordingly**.

If you want, you can join both programmes, spending a week in one and the following week in the other!

Nesting season: volunteers are welcome from June 23rd to October 20th.

Hatching season: volunteers are welcome from September 1st to December 6th.

Volunteers can apply at any point throughout the year.



E. Fun – discounts

Besides living on a paradisiac island, volunteers can also enjoy discounts on dive centres, surfing schools, and nature excursions! During your time off, you can get a diving licence, take some kite surfing lessons, and even float inside a volcanic crater!



FLYING TO SAL ISLAND

You should search for flights to Sal Island (airport code SID). Flying to/from another island in Cabo Verde can make your trip a bit harder to plan; trust us! Flights to Sal Island can be expensive initially, but don't panic. We suggest you check different combinations of hours and dates and the flight directly on the airline website. We are also happy to help you find the best deal so you can join our team!



09

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



A. Visa

You will need a visa to visit Cabo Verde, but that is super simple to get! If you are staying for 30 days or less, you only need to fill out this form [here](#) and pay the fee online. If you are joining us for longer, you'll need to fill out the previous form and apply for a visa [here](#). Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions—we understand it can be overwhelming.



B. Currency

Prices for food in supermarkets, tourist restaurants, and other items are quite high due to the influence of tourism and import taxes. Local restaurants serve nice food at fair prices. A litre of milk costs 2€ at the supermarket, a small beer 2,50€ in a bar, and a meal costs around 4 or 5€.

It is quite common to pay in Euros, and this currency is accepted basically everywhere in Santa Maria. The official exchange rate for Euros to Escudos is 1€ = 110 Escudos.

However, when you pay in Euros in the shops and restaurants in town, they convert to 1€ = 100 Escudos, so you lose a little bit of money each time. Therefore, it is up to you whether you want to exchange money at the bank.

You can also withdraw money at ATMs with your card in Santa Maria, as sometimes the fee is not too high (this fee will depend on your card). You just have to make sure your credit card can be used abroad, so we recommend contacting your bank before travelling.



C. About Santa Maria and Sal Island

In 2024, Cabo Verde was ranked as the best democracy in Africa—it does not have any religious or geopolitical disputes. Sal Island and the town of Santa Maria (where our work is primarily based) are generally very safe, and you can walk and move around safely without running into danger or trouble. Nevertheless, it's important to remember that you are in a foreign country with a different language and culture. Using common sense will keep you safe from getting in trouble.



D. Internship

If you are a student looking for an internship abroad, you can do your internship with us! We have partnered with universities from different countries, and students have been able to use their volunteering experience as university credit. Your home institution only has to provide us with the documents they normally use for internships abroad. We are happy to help you get your credits, but you must facilitate the process, as we cannot provide you with the paperwork ourselves.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST...

Remember you are volunteering in a foreign country with limited resources and working with nature. We work hard to plan our activities as well as possible, but sometimes, circumstances change, and we cannot do the activity as planned—maybe the ocean is too rough to take a boat to the seabird islet, for example. So please be flexible and understand that the work schedule can change at the last minute. We always focus on everyone's safety first!

