



Hatchling Season volunteering with sea turtles in Sal Island, Cabo Verde 2021

The islands of Cabo Verde constitute the world's second 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 species has brought them to the brink of extinction. The illegal hunt and trade of turtle meat along with the quick tourist and urban development are the main threats to the species in Sal Island.

For the last 10 years, both international volunteers and members of the local community have worked tirelessly to ensure protection of the female turtle – with beach patrols, community engagement activities. We have also been working closely with the government to improve regulations. While the number of turtles killed has drastically reduced, illegal poaching and trafficking persists.

2020 was a record season in Sal Island: we registered 35.016 nests and we have also relocated 2.888 of these nests to our hatcheries, from where we released around 145.000 baby turtles! It was also a different year for us because, despite being a record season, the challenges of COVID-19 meant that we weren't able to welcome many international volunteers. As a result, our field camp site was not as lively and filled with people from all around the world as we are so used to. 2020 was a year of lessons – one of which being just how many great things international volunteers bring to our project. Volunteers play a key role to our team, not only they bring critical manpower, but also important energy, enthusiasm and multiculturalism, essential elements for supporting motivation and refreshing team energy throughout the season.

2020 was also a difficult year for everyone around the world, with many having to change their routine and even cancelling their plans to adjust the new conditions. It was a year where we learned how much we depend on a healthy planet to ensure our health in the future. Volunteering with conservation projects is just one way to support nature and help it thrive. When you volunteer with us, you can be certain of your contribution to protect critical ecosystems and the important wildlife species that are a part of it. What better way to move forward from a challenging year than to reconnect with nature and join our project as a volunteer?

Our mission continues in 2021 – hopefully with you as a part of our team! We aim to further empower the community to take action against the slaughter of nesting females, through direct beach protection, hatcheries management as well community 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 Cabo Verde.

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. During the volunteering hatchling season, participants are in a shared apartment in Santa Maria, just a few minutes from the beach. This volunteering 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 hatchlings, and to experience a high level of satisfaction from being able to rapidly affect the declining situation of sea turtles 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 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.

During the hatching season, volunteers are responsible for the monitoring of Loggerhead nests in the hatchery and on the nesting beaches. Under the supervision of the coordinators, volunteers will take part in different activities:

- Morning patrols on the main nesting beaches of Sal Island looking for nests that hatched during the previous night;
- Overnight shift in the project hatchery monitoring the nests that are due to hatch and releasing the hatchlings on nearby beaches;
- Excavation of nests that hatched on the previous night and collection of important scientific data. During those excavations volunteers will also be releasing any hatchlings left inside the nests;
- Taking part in outreach activities with the local community and tourists;
- Maintenance of material used throughout the nesting season.

With this experience you will 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 an apartment in Santa Maria. You will be sharing a bedroom with one or two more volunteers. Volunteers work six days each week and will have 1 day/night off to explore the island, enjoy diving, surfing and other watersports, or just lay on the beach and relax! The project has agreements with different businesses that do a very good discount for our volunteers.

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 night shifts are long and morning patrols can be tiring. Shift patterns vary but you will have 1 day of rest per week.

Requirements:

- Desire to participate in conservation;
- At least 18 years old and under 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 (sleeping on the beach, 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 and utilities such as water and electricity. **Meals are not provided.** Food is not cheap here, but you will be able to save some money by doing communal cooking. 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: €220

Two weeks: €270

Three weeks: €320

50€ for each additional week.

At your arrival you will be required to pay a €100 refundable security 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 100€ of your fees in advance. This payment will ensure that your place is booked as we have limited spaces and the demand is big. The payment will not be refunded if you cancel your volunteering – unless the cancellation is due to travel bans and/or flight restrictions, as a result of the pandemic (see the Updates on COVID-19 document for more information on the conditions of the programmes). The remaining amount of the fees should be paid upon arrival. If once you arrive at the project you decide to leave before the agreed date, your total contribution will not be refunded (this does not apply for the refundable security deposit, which will be refunded).

Benefits: Volunteers will be provided with accommodation during their stay in an apartment in Santa Maria. You will also be able to enjoy discounts in dive clubs, surfing schools and nature excursions! In addition to accommodation, spending time on 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 strongly recommend a stay of at least 2 weeks, but the minimum stay is of 1 week. Some airlines only fly to Sal Island on specific days of the week, depending where they fly from. Please, confirm the best routes to Sal Island with our team before purchasing your flights, we will be happy to assist you. The period when you can participate runs from the **20th of October until the 9th of December**. Volunteers can apply at any point throughout the season.

For more information, please feel free to contact us at volunteerinsal@gmail.com
You can check our FAQs website at www.projectbiodiversity.org/faqs

COVID-19

Health and safety have been our priority during this pandemic and as a multicultural organization, we are committed to ensuring the health and safety of our staff, volunteers, collaborators and communities we are part of, while continuing with our conservation efforts on Sal Island.

For that reason, all volunteers must have comprehensive travel insurance before joining us. Please, read more detailed and up-to-date information on our COVID-19 response and policy clicking [here](#).