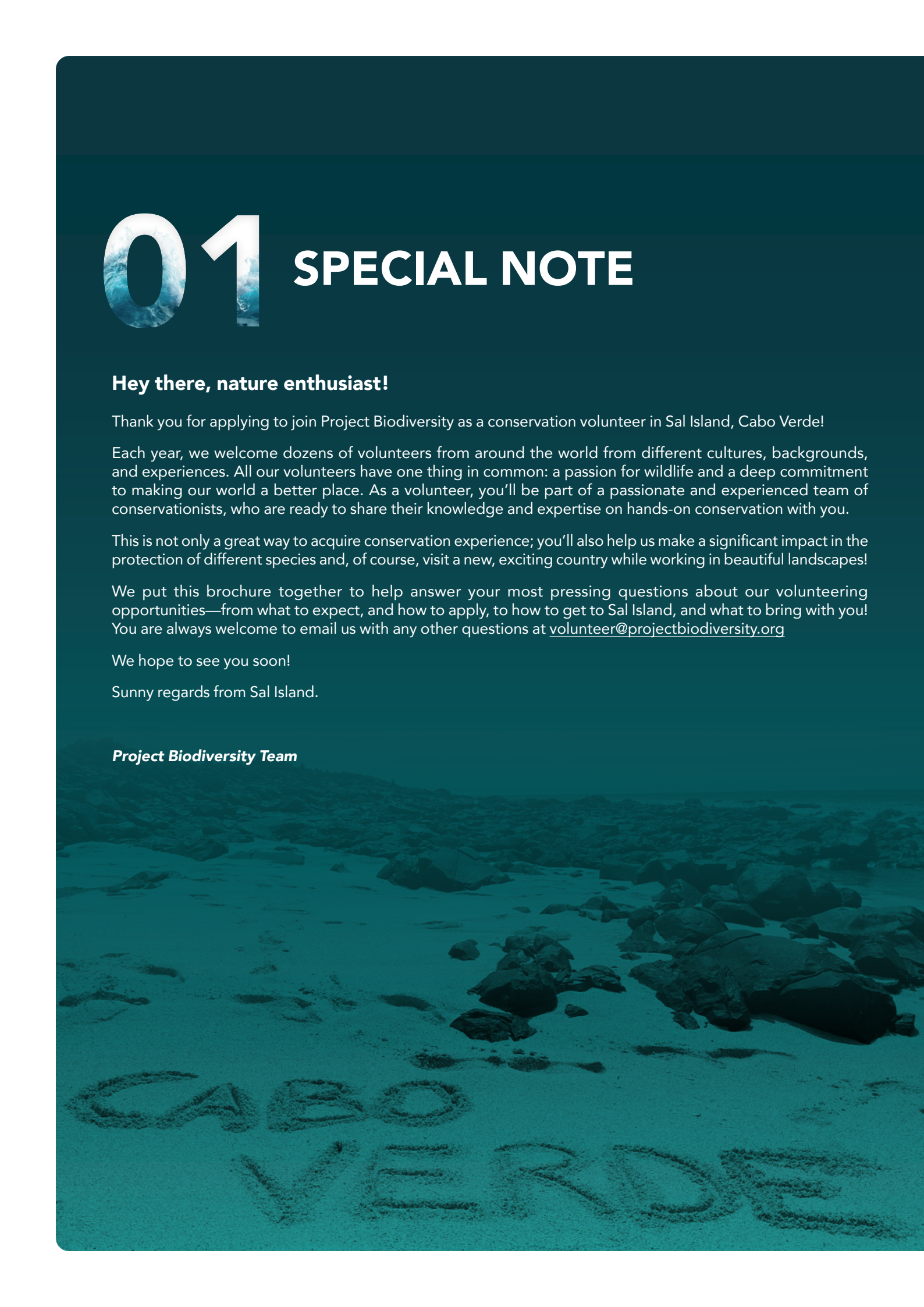


HOMESTAY VOLUNTEERING

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!

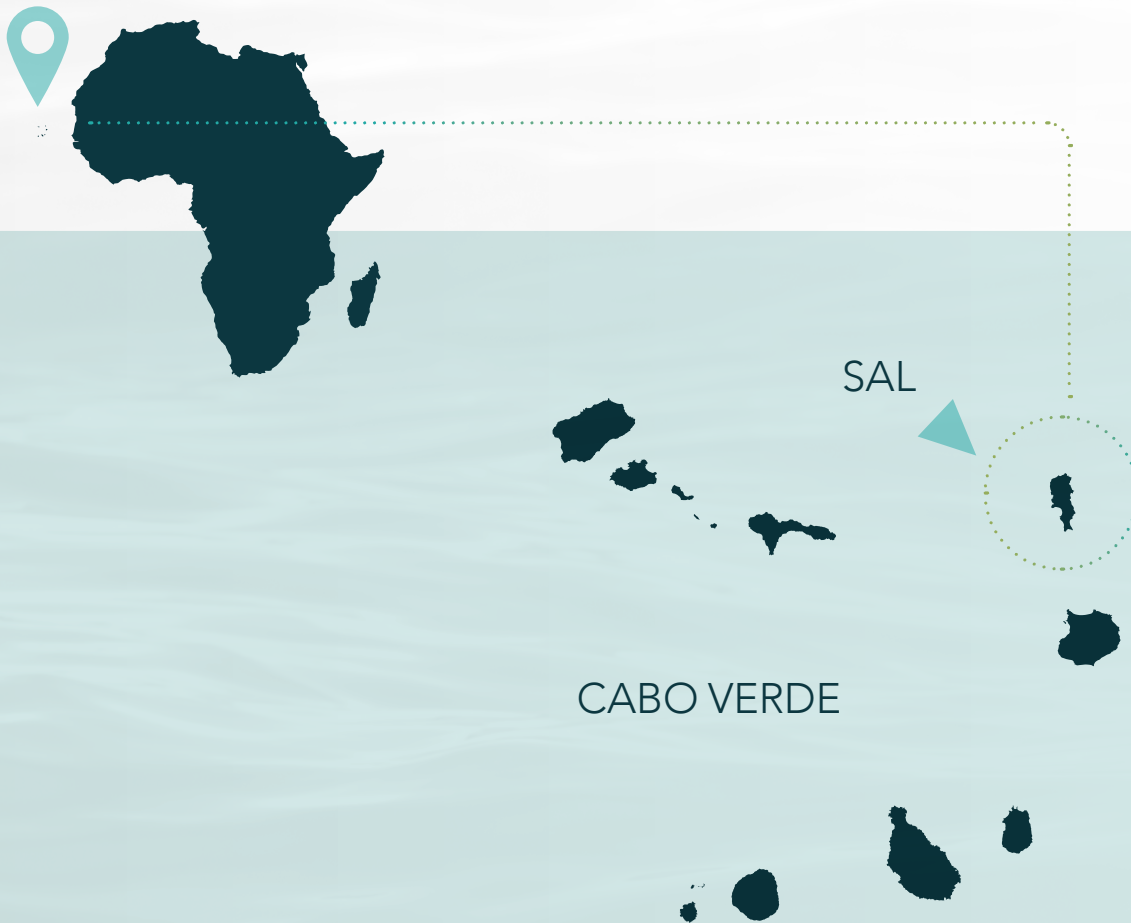
Sunny regards from Sal Island.

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**Homestay programme**

On the east coast of Sal Island is the fishing village of Pedra de Lume, where Project Biodiversity's Homestay Programme takes place. Pedra de Lume is, historically and economically, a crucial place on Sal Island. Pedra de Lume saw the birth of the first community on Sal Island, which was set up there to exploit the salt production of the Salinas de Pedra de Lume, an old salt mine in a volcanic crater, where you can take salt baths and enjoy the beautiful scenery.

On the other hand, Pedra de Lume and its surroundings are some of the most visited spots on the island. This is where you'll find Baía da Parda, a natural breeding ground for a population of lemon sharks. Unfortunately, although many tourists pass through this area, very little of their financial contribution goes to local families. That's why we've developed the Homestay programme. We want to give value and power to the families of this small but essential village.

This is a programme where volunteers stay with local families, who have been carefully selected and have followed specific guidelines for hosting volunteers. In addition, these families have received hospitality training so that you have a positive and unique exchange of experiences.

The volunteer will carry out activities in the Pedra de Lume community, including environmental education, community development, and environmental conservation. The activities to be carried out will be drawn up before the volunteer arrives, according to their experience and the community's needs. The activities planned may change during the volunteering period, so it is important that the volunteer be flexible.

07 HOW DOES IT WORK



A. Requirements

- Desire to participate in conservation;
- At least 18 years old;
- Must be open-minded and flexible in communicating;
- High level of energy and flexibility;
- Able to cope with physically challenging conditions;
- Ability to work and live with people of different backgrounds and nationalities;
- Speaking Portuguese is not a requirement, but it helps!



B. Cost

Most participation fees are passed directly to host families to cover the volunteers' stay and guarantee the programme's upkeep. In addition, a small part of the fees ($\approx 20\%$) is put into a conservation fund, which is used to finance conservation activities and the valorisation of the Pedra de Lume community.

- One week: 225 €
- Two weeks: 410 €
- Three weeks: 475 €
- Four weeks: 600 €

Volunteers can join for more than four weeks. After four weeks, the fee increases by 20 Euros/day.



C. Living conditions, meals

The volunteers' houses have separate rooms and may or may not have shared bathrooms. The programme accommodates up to six volunteers at a time, with a maximum of two volunteers per house, making three houses participate in the Homestay programme.

The programme includes breakfast and dinner. *Lunch is not provided for.* You can arrange lunch with the family and pay for it separately or have it at another location of the volunteer's choice. The families can accommodate vegetarians and vegans.



B. Cost

The programme welcomes volunteers all year round, so please contact us to check availability.

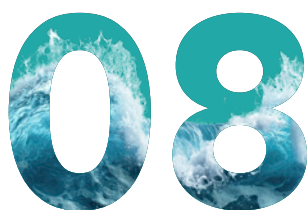
If you are also interested in participating in sea turtle protection activities, we recommend doing so between July and November, as during these months, we have a local team working to protect this species.

We recommend participating for at least two weeks to get the most out of the experience, but the *minimum participation* is one week.



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 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!

