Volunteer Placement Profile

Sea Turtle Preservation Volunteer

ASVO

Samara, Costa Rica
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Job Description

Buena Vista Beach is a primary nesting site for marine turtles. More than 300 nests have been observed in a season. These nests contain three of the four species of marine turtles that live in the Pacific Ocean. Unfortunately the government has not designated this site as a protected area for sea turtles.

The Sea Turtle Conservation Program at Buena Vista Beach works to preserve the nests on the beach. They strive to generate scientific information to describe the dynamics of nesting, by collecting data that provides us with scientific information to develop strategic plans to mitigate the problems that affect the maintenance of this essential resource in maintaining the health of the oceans.

Sea turtle volunteers are needed to help with the protection of the sea turtles who are at serious risk of extinction. This is done by developing and implementing programs and/or seminars that address the problems such as: intense development of infrastructure on the beaches, excessive lighting that confuses the turtles, the passage of people and vehicles, the taking of eggs and the depredation of nests, among others.

At this project sea turtle volunteers will also help to construct nurseries to protect the nests from depredation and harvesting, help to clean the beaches of debris and assist in nightly patrols to collect the eggs and to do scientific data collection, including measuring turtles and marking them. At the end of the cycle, volunteers will liberate newly hatched turtles.

No experience or conservation background is needed to work at this site but enthusiasm, energy and willingness to help nature is very much appreciated.

Volunteer Tasks Required

Night Patrols

Volunteers will walk areas of the beach to protect turtles/eggs from poachers and predators. Staff from the organization will accompany each sea turtle volunteer group. The reason why volunteers are important to help with this job is because
poachers try to gather the eggs or turtles during the night; if there is a large patrol of people watching the shoreline the poachers will not approach the site as they know it is illegal to hunt sea turtles. Night patrol duties, led by an experienced patrol leader, also includes searching for nesting females and when found appropriate action is taken.

**Collect Eggs to Transplant to Hatchery**

Sea turtle eggs are considered a delicacy and if not brought to the hatchery to be monitored they can easily be eaten by other animals or taken by poachers. After the turtles have laid their eggs on the beach, the group will take the eggs to reallocate them at the hatchery, where the sea turtle volunteers on shift will help to build nests, (according to specifications) and transplant the eggs. The number of eggs, nest location and turtle identification information, (tag number) is then recorded for further data analysis including the survival rate.

**Hatchery Responsibilities**

Sea turtle volunteers help to clean the hatchery and protect the area from animals and poachers. When a nest of eggs hatch volunteers must immediately inform the program coordinator. The approximate incubation time for turtle eggs is 60 days, therefore midway through the season the duties of the hatchery attendants increases as the eggs hatch.

**Turtle Release**

The newborn turtles need constant attention to ensure that they are continuously hydrated until they are released. These turtles must be counted and released in the evening to an appropriate location along the high tide line and then watched until they reach the ocean and are safely swimming. Newborn turtles should not be released directly into the ocean.

**Documentation**

During the night patrols it is important to help the program coordinator with the bio-metric measurements of the adult turtles and to keep a record of the turtles found at night. It is also important to identify and account for turtle tracks on the
beaches. Sea turtle volunteers will document how many turtles are born and how many die so that the park's records remain current in monitoring success rates.

**Construction and Maintenance**

Volunteers will help with general maintenance and repairs to hatcheries and help with the construction of new hatcheries when and if necessary. Every sea turtle season a new hatchery must be built in order to confirm that the hatcheries are at the correct temperature for the eggs to develop properly. Also during the rainy season some of the hatcheries need more frequent maintenance.

**Beach Clean-up**

Sea turtle volunteers will help with beach clean-up at least once a week, to pick up the garbage and all discarded items in the area. It is important to keep the beach free of debris so the turtles will not find any obstacles on their way to the right location to lay their eggs.
Organization Details

ASVO (Association of Volunteers for Service in Protected Areas) is a non-profit and non-governmental organization that is dedicated to maintaining and preserving national parks, communities and beaches throughout Costa Rica. ASVO's mission is to promote the importance of preserving the environment by operating a number of grass-root conservation projects and conducting a variety of educational workshops throughout the country. Over the years environmental issues such as deforestation, species extinction, forest fires, and climate change have been addressed by the members of ASVO as they have worked to expand their programs to different regions in the country.

The organization was founded on January 27, 1989 in the response to the growing realization that although Costa Rica is renowned for their natural resources and biodiversity, there was very little awareness around environmental protection by many people who lived in Costa Rica. Originally, ASVO focused on the preservation of national parks but as the program grew they expanded to include projects such as sea turtle conservation, community education and habitat identification.

For over 20 years, ASVO has been striving to call the people throughout Costa Rica to work together to stop the devastating environmental problems. In an attempt to address some of these issues, the members of ASVO have partnered with different Costa Rican schools, government agencies, community groups, local and international volunteer organizations and other environmental agencies. Through these partnerships the members of ASVO hope to raise awareness and encourage people to get involved to help solve these pressing issues.

The issues that ASVO are trying to address are very important for a number of reasons. In Costa Rica the government has allocated more than 25% of the countries land as National Parks or areas where ecosystems should be protected. The challenge is that the Costa Rican Government is unable to fund all the jobs, resources and supplies required to ensure that each area is constantly maintained, monitored and that required data that is needed to be collected from each park is conducted and kept up to date. Therefore organizations like ASVO play an important part in helping to achieve environmental objectives set out by the Costa Rican Government.

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Although ASVO initiatives comprise of a number of different goals the three dominant ones include deforestation, illegal hunting or poaching of endangered species and promoting educational seminars to a wide range of people. Each of the above are important to address.

During the 1990’s Costa Rica had one of the worst deforestation rates in Latin America. According to reports issued by "State of the World's Forests" at the beginning of the century they had approximately 99 percent of rain forest coverage that diminished quickly to 88 percent and by the 1940's the rain forest coverage was down to 35 percent. Now with the help of government initiatives and organizations like ASVO the current rain forest coverage is at about 50 percent.

The reason that forests were being cut down at such alarming rates were for two primary reasons: a) increased demand for cattle b) lush wood that could be exported to other countries who were wanting that commodity and it provide increased revenue for the country to improve things like infrastructure. There was a high demand from the United States for beef exported from Costa Rica which provided incentives for people to increase agricultural output and start cattle farms. Many historians believe that the increase demand for exported cattle was the number one cause of the rapid decline in the cutting down of massive areas of rain forests.

Although deforestation has stopped dramatically, the existing forests are still under threat by illegal logging in protected zones, agricultural development in protected zones, and the need for increased environmental awareness projects to stop people from continuing to impact protected land areas.

The increase of deforestation has put a huge amount of pressure on existing ecosystems in Costa Rica. As trees were cut down the natural habitats for so many species became inhabitable. This causes growing concern and challenges because of Costa Rica’s vast variety of wildlife that is found throughout the country. As a result the number of flora and fauna that are on the list of possibility of becoming distinct continually grows.

In recent reports from the Costa Rican Ministry of the Environment and Energy have stated that more than 500,000 species live within the country. This represents 4 % of the total number of species estimated worldwide. As a result, Costa Rica is listed in the top 20 countries with the highest biodiversity in the world. Therefore,
organizations like ASVO have an important role to help preserve the natural wonders of Costa Rica.

ASVO has been very successful at setting up grass-root initiatives that are designed to help increase patrolling of park grounds to ensure the park lands are kept safe; that endangered species like the leather-back turtle have a safe place to lay their eggs and a hatchery to monitor them when they are young plus creating educational seminars to various demographics. However, perhaps one of their greatest achievements is providing educational seminars to people whose livelihoods depend on illegal poaching or cutting down trees on protected land, by explaining the impacts this type of activity has on the ecosystems of Costa Rica. In many cases they have not only provided education but demonstrated alternative ways to make money so that they would not have to depend on poaching endangered animals as a way to make a sustainable income.

When the Organization was Founded

This organization was started on January 27th 1989 by a group of concerned Costa Rica citizens which included several retired civil servants. The group believed that they needed to start actively promoting the importance of preserving the bio-diversity of their country to help ensure that the increase in pollution and population did not have drastic effect on the environment. Many of the original members remain on the board in advisory positions.

How the Organization is Funded

ASVO is currently funded by donations, government grants and private donations. They are always looking for new ways to generate money to improve ranger stations, equipment and data collection materials.

Role of Religion Within This Organization

ASVO does not have any religious affiliations and does not discriminate against individuals who do affiliate themselves with a particular religious sector.
Playa Buena Vista, is located in the Guanacaste province three kilometres north of Samara Beach and it belongs to the Tempisque Conservation Area. The camp site is 300 meters from the ocean and therefore a sea turtle conservation volunteer can spend each day in this beautiful oasis. There are mangroves that are in the back of the park and the Rio Buena Vista is a few meters away. You will have the chance to see - apart from the sea turtles - many crocodiles, iguanas and other marine creatures.

Previous sea turtle conservation volunteers have commented that location more than makes up for its lack of modern conveniences; as the camp is nestled right in front of the beach. Surrounding the campsite, there is a mangrove forest and beautiful flowers that grow throughout the year. There are almost no people living close to the project, so the beach is used primarily by Costa Rica sea turtle volunteers.

Buena Vista, is a semi intensive nesting beach with more than one hundred nests per season. Despite this, it does not have an official category of protection. Buena Vista was initiated to protect the turtle nests from depredation and harvesting and to do scientific data collection, including measuring turtles and marking them to be able to make recommendations so authorities could regulate the activities that took place in that zone.

Right now there are four species of sea turtles that come frequently to the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica:

- Olive Ridley (Lepidochelys Olivacea) - Green Turtle (Chelonia Mydas Agassizi) - Hawksbill Turtle (Eretmochelys Imbricata) - Leatherback (Dermochelys Coriacea)

They are endangered species due to intense development of infrastructure on the beaches, excessive lighting that confuses the turtles, the traffic of people and vehicles, the taking of eggs and the destruction of nests, among others.

Many sea turtle volunteers help at Buena Vista to preserve the nesting areas and continue to provide support to the staff in various areas such as patrolling and helping to organize educational awareness campaigns.
City Description

Samara is a beautiful beach town on the Nicoya Peninsula's western shore. The town has a really laid-back feel with grass-roofed beach huts and one of the most beautiful beaches is all of Costa Rica. Also, the beach is quite safe with very little rip-tides and a great beginners surf school.

The bay of Samara is protected by a coral reef and the shallow water with a very gentle surf is perfect for swimming and snorkeling.

Samara is great for soaking up sun and beach life in an unpretentious, laid-back atmosphere. The little village is set in a large half moon bay with a broad sandy beach, that stretches for over 4 km and is shaded by palms and old fig trees.

Samara's main drag leads directly to the beach where seaside restaurants, lounges and bars feature sand floors, beach artwork, and a relaxed vibe. In Samara you'll find all the ingredients for a beach vacation: there are souvenir and art shops, supermarkets, tour operators, restaurants with local fare or gourmet cuisine, bars with night entertainment, and surf and Spanish schools right on the beach.

Points of Interest

Samara's laidback vibe allows for rest and relaxation, an almost universal characteristic of the Nicoya Peninsula. Its village offers a number of services: stores, restaurants, hotels, and a small selection of bars. The town's nightlife, however, can be found at one of its discos, which keeps the party trucking through to early morning.

Sport fishing is a popular activity off the coast, as is snorkeling and scuba diving around the coral environments. A short one-mile (2 km) walk down the beach brings visitors to the Tico hamlet of Matapalo, a great snorkeling spot. For birdwatchers, Chora Island, which is located just off the coast, is home to swaths of avian fauna that can easily be viewed from a kayak. Finally, swimming conditions in Samara's calm coastal waters are an ideal warm temperature.

Buena Vista was initiated to protect the turtle nests from depredation and harvesting.
and to do scientific data collection, including measuring turtles and marking them to be able to make recommendations so authorities could regulate the activities that took place in that zone.

**Weather in the Area**

Samara, is quite hot and has the typical climate of the Pacific Coast, with two different seasons. The rainy or "green" season lasts from May to November, with September and October being the rainiest months. During the rainy season, mornings are usually cloudy and rain moves in during the afternoon. Although called 'the rainy season', this is slightly misleading as even during this season it typically only rains in the afternoons for a period of one to two hours, with the remainder of the day being quite sunny.

The dry season is from December to April. Temperatures range from about 25-35 degrees Celsius and the relative humidity ranges from 50% to 95%. The hours of daylight are approximately from 5.30 a.m. to 6 p.m with only slight variations throughout the year.

**Transportation From BaseCamp**

Take the bus from San Jose to Nosara - this bus trip will take approximately 5 hours. Get off the bus in Bomba de Samara (Gas Station of Samara), and get on a local bus going to Samara city. This should take about another 15 minutes. Once in Samara, take a taxi to Buena Vista River. When you get to the river, your sea turtle volunteer coordinator will be there to pick you up.
Accommodation and Meals

All of our volunteers begin their stay in Costa Rica at our BaseCamp Center in San Jose. Given that this placement is more than a 1 hour 15 minute commute from BaseCamp, volunteers here will be living with a host family after your orientation. Living with a host family is an awesome experience for a person looking to really experience Costa Rica and its culture.

The following information outlines a brief description of life at BaseCamp and also what someone can expect living with a host family in Costa Rica.

If you think that living with a host family is not for you, then this placement might not be the best fit with what you are looking for. You should try completing our application. It's totally free and will allow our team in Costa Rica to come up with a list of exactly which placements they would recommend for you based on your personal preferences, background, skills and interests.
BaseCamp Costa Rica

BaseCamp Costa Rica Address
Ave 16 St. 39&41
Los Yoses Sur
San Jose, Costa Rica

Contact Details
Tel: 506-8763-9595
Tel: 506-8763-9595
Tel: 506-4030-1891

Take a Tour of BaseCamp
Accommodation in Costa Rica

All volunteers on our program in Costa Rica start out at our BaseCamp Center. The center is located in the capital city San Jose, and is a fantastic place from which to start your adventure.

Once volunteers have finished their orientation, where they live depends largely on the location of their placement. If their placement is more than a 1 hour 15 minute commute from BaseCamp, then the only accommodation option may be host families or volunteer lodges in the national parks. However, if the placement is within a 1 hour 15 minute commute, then volunteers can choose whether or not to stay with us at BaseCamp or live with a host family.

BaseCamp Costa Rica is located in the province of San Jose at Los Yoses area. This is a fantastic area closed to the University of Costa Rica, San Pedro Mall, banks, supermarkets, restaurants, embassies and stores. Walking distance to downtown and only 30 minutes away from the Juan Santamaria Airport.

BaseCamp has four bedrooms and three wash-rooms. The beds are mainly bunk beds in dormitory style rooms. Pillows, sheets and blankets are provided. There is a large common area where movies, books and games are available to our guests and there is a patio with a nice set up. This is an ideal setting for reading, studying Spanish or just some quiet relaxation.
BaseCamp is where volunteers first come when they arrive in Costa Rica and where they live for at least the duration of their orientation and training. The meal plan at the centre is based on a 14 day rotating schedule of a variety of traditional dishes from around the country. This meal plan allows volunteers to gain comfort and familiarity with both Costa Rican food and meal etiquette before making the transition to living with a host family.

Orientation and language training sessions take place in the BaseCamp Center. Each day of orientation blends some workshops and lessons with a mixture of outings to explore and become familiar with transportation and knowledge regarding the city.
Living With a Host Family

Living with a host family in Costa Rica is a fantastic way to gain a deep understanding of and appreciation for the people and customs of the country. Each home-stay will provide a bed and three meals per day for our volunteers. The majority of host families offer private rooms with only one or two volunteers living with the family.

In the case of a volunteer lodge or ranger station (which is often the only option for placements within a National Park), volunteers will be living in dormitory type accommodation and meals will be provided in a mess hall or dining area.

Living with a host family can greatly enhance your performance at your placement. For one, it will have a huge influence on the speed with which you gain familiarity with the local language. This, along with your deeper understanding of cultural practices and beliefs that you are likely to gain in this environment, can go a long way to improving or strengthening your relationships with your team mates at work. Furthermore, a significant percentage of our host families are closely affiliated with the organizations with which our volunteers work. As such, even the evening meal or
hanging out around the house can become valuable time during which volunteers can share their ideas and continue their support of their host organization.

All of this being said, living with a host family is not for everyone. It is very important for volunteers to honor the house rules in their host family and to be punctual. Also, depending on how remote your placement location, host families can be very rustic. Our staff in country can give you a better idea of what exactly you can expect from a host family in any particular community. However, in general, if these things sound like they might pose a challenge for you, we strongly suggest that you look at a placement within commuting distance from BaseCamp Costa Rica.
How the Program Works

Our program structure and costing is completely flexible which lets our volunteers ensure that they only pay for exactly the degree of support that they want.

Option 1 - Free Services

Some volunteers prefer to coordinate their own accommodation, meals and other support while overseas.

Anyone is welcome to use our volunteer placement search tool to help in finding a placement that is well suited to their interests. Once someone finds a placement that they wish to work with, they are welcome to make all the rest of their arrangements on their own.

As well, our team of staff overseas are often able to offer a few helpful pointers for volunteers 'doing it on their own'. Just send us an email with your questions and we will put you in touch with our team abroad. We only ask that you keep your requests fairly general, as this type of advice is exactly how our team earn their living. :)

Option 2 - Placement Support - 250 USD

Other volunteers would like assistance in selecting and confirming their placement, but they plan to manage their own accommodation and other expenses on their own.

These volunteers have the option of choosing to only have our assistance with selecting and confirming their placement. This option also includes ongoing placement support while abroad, so a volunteer would be able to ask our team for help if things at their placement were not working out.

In providing Placement Support, our team works with each volunteer through email, telephone and either Skype or Google Hangouts, to ensure that each volunteer has a clear understanding of their placement options. Our in-country staff will put together a custom list of placement options for each volunteer that they believe are the most appropriate matches with the volunteer's background, skills and interests.
Then each volunteer can work with our team both in Canada and abroad to go through each of the options and narrow-down their selection.

**Option 3 - Full Program Support**

For most volunteers who are volunteering for less than a year, they are looking for an option that includes their accommodation, meals, airport reception, country and program orientation and placement support. This is what our Program Fees are designed for.

We are proud of how over the years we have ensured that our program fees are amongst the most reasonable of any program in the world while we continue to provide exceptional volunteer support both at home and abroad.

Our Program Fees and listings of what these do and do not include are listed below:
# Program Fees Costa Rica

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Registration Fee</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Week</td>
<td>395</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
<td>620</td>
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<td>3 Weeks</td>
<td>844</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Weeks</td>
<td>1,068</td>
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<td>5 Weeks</td>
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<td>6 Weeks</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Weeks</td>
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<td>8 Weeks</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Additional Weeks</th>
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Costa Rica wildlife and conservation placements require an additional $7 USD per day fee to cover park fees and accommodation. All program fees are listed in US Dollars.

**This placement has a placement fee!**

In some cases, a placement will have to take on certain expenses in order to host a volunteer. For example, some medical internship placements take time away from paid medical staff to help with educational assistance. This has a cost that is compensated by a placement fee. In other cases, the organization may have to pay for additional equipment, energy consumption or other expense in order to put a volunteer to work.

In such cases, the organization charges a fee. This fee is paid directly to the organization in cash on the ground and IS NOT part of your Program Fees.
One of the reasons that we keep this fee separate is so that volunteers who do not pay us for accommodation, meals etc (Program Fees), will see that they will still have to make this payment directly to the organization upon their arrival.

The placement fee for this organization is: 60 USD
Inclusions & Exclusions

What is Included

- Pre-Departure support
- Placement consultation
- Airport reception & transfer
- 2 Day orientation
- Accommodation (BaseCamp or host family)
- Breakfast and dinner
- Emergency & placement support

What is Not Included

Before Departure

- International flight
- Travel medical insurance
- Visa costs where required
- Work permits where required

While Overseas

- Daily transportation to and from placement
- Transport to airport on departure
- Placement fees if required
Program Dates

The following is a list of all months during which this placement is not available.

- December

Our regularly scheduled program start dates are the first Friday of each month, every month of the year. We strongly recommend beginning your program on one of these dates as this will allow you to go through our orientation alongside other international volunteers.

If you would prefer, our application will also allow you to select a custom start date for your program. Keep in mind that there is an additional fee for a custom start date which ranges from 50 to 75 USD.

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<th>Jul 03, 2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 01, 2022</td>
<td>May 06, 2022</td>
<td>Jun 03, 2022</td>
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PLEASE NOTE:

These dates are the day that volunteers should plan to arrive on the ground in country. We can accommodate arrivals in-country at any time day or night on these dates.