Volunteer Placement Profile

Sea Turtle Preservation Volunteer

ASVO

Montezuma, Costa Rica
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Job Description

Montezuma’s beach is and has been for many years a very important location for sea turtles to lay their eggs. However, it has also now become a fast growing tourist destination.

The protection of the beach area from poachers, animals and curious local and tourist people who interrupt the turtles while they are laying their eggs is a important duty in the conservation program at Montezuma. The project is striving to help educate the general public in regards to the harm that is being done by disturbing turtles and/or their nest of eggs. At the same time the project is working to contribute to the development of this important beach location for tourist. Highlighting that a harmonious approach to obtaining both goals is possible.

The Sea Turtle Conservation Program at Montezuma Beach works to preserve the nests on the beach and 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 in serious risk of extinction. In discussion groups problems like: 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, can be brought forward and solutions sought.

At this project sea turtle volunteers will construct nurseries to protect the nests from depredation and harvesting, help to clean the beaches, make nightly patrols with staff 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 wiliness to help nature is very much appreciated.

Volunteer Tasks Required

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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 sea turtle volunteers are important to help with this job is because poachers try to gather the eggs or turtles during the night; so 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.

Eggs Reallocation

Sea turtle eggs are considered a delicacy and if not brought to the hatchery to be monitored, 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 and reallocate them in the hatchery. There 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 their survival rate.

Hatchery Responsibilities

Sea turtle volunteers help to make sure that the hatchery is clean and well protected from animals and poachers at all times. Any newborn turtles must be reported to the program coordinator immediately. 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. Newborn turtles must be counted and released in the evening to an appropriate location along the high tide line. Then watched until they reach the ocean and are safely swimming. Newborn turtles should never be released directly into the ocean.
Documentation

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

Construction and Maintenance

Sea turtle volunteers will help with the general maintenance and repairs to the hatcheries. During the rainy season some of the hatcheries need frequent maintenance. The volunteers will also help with the construction of new hatcheries when and if necessary. Every sea turtle season a new hatchery is built to confirm that the location is at the right temperature for the hatching of sea turtle eggs.

Beach Clean up

Sea turtle volunteers will help with beach clean up at least once a week to pick up the garbage and debris in the area. It is important to keep the beach clean so that the turtles will not find obstacles in their path on the way to the right location to lay their eggs.

Conservation Awareness

Educating the people and future generations will help to reduce the number of poachers and a better understanding of the importance of sea turtle conservation and how this can be accomplished. Seminars may be conducted in Montezuma, Cabuya and/or Cobano communities, as well as the tourist population. Sea turtle volunteers may be asked to give a lecture regarding the importance of sea turtle conservation at Montezuma, Cabuya, Cobano and/or Paquera Primary School and High School.
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.
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 increased 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.
Placement Location Information

Montezuma is a tiny and charming town with a relaxing lifestyle. It is easy to see a lot of people chilling by the beach or at the three block town. There are two supermarkets, several hotels and several restaurants with a variety of foods, from vegetarian to Italian and of course traditional Costa Rican food.

There are a few tour operators offering trips to Tortuga Island for snorkelling and dolphin watching tours, horseback riding, ATV's, nature walks and waterfall trips as well as other tours to farther areas.

There are a few clothing stores with a lot of beach products and one ATM. There is no banks in Montezuma and no internet cafes but most of the restaurants offers free WiFi.

Volunteer housing is located in front of the beach, a few meters away from the town. The house has six smalls bedrooms and each of them have two bunk beds, one small kitchen and dinning area is at the balcony with ocean view. There is only two bathrooms in the house.

City Description

Montezuma is a town in Puntarenas Province, Costa Rica which began as a remote fishing village and has gained popularity since the 1980s among tourists on a budget.

Montezuma is located near the southern tip of the Nicoya Peninsula, 41 km southwest of Paquera and 8 km south of the town of Cóbano. Most services are available in Cóbano.

The town features a mix of local residents as well as foreign backpackers and eco-tourists who come for the beaches, rivers, and scenic waterfalls that surround the village. The nearby Cabo Blanco Nature Reserve draws a large number of visitors to the area. Montezuma has well-known healing arts and yoga communities and is known by filmmakers and artists from across the world that a bogus film festival is poorly put on there every November. Costa Rica International Film Festival - Montezuma. Montezuma is also known as a great place for a yoga retreat.

www.volunteerbasecamp.com
The center of Montezuma consists almost entirely of accommodations, restaurants, and souvenir shops. For those who are looking for something to do at night, Chico’s Bar offers different music and dancing nightly. The crowd is a great mix of the beautiful locals and visitors from all over the world. There is no bank and no post office in Montezuma (although there is an automated teller machine that works at certain times when there is not a huge crowd in town).

Points of Interest

In the mid 1900’s Montezuma was nothing more than a poor, struggling fishing village, remotely situated in the southern tip of the Nicoya Peninsula. But since the 1980’s the town has been continuously growing in popularity as tourists from all over the world flock to Montezuma’s beaches to enjoy its beautiful scenery and relaxing atmosphere. The whole town possesses a uniquely tranquil and laid back feel with a distinct bohemian vibe.

Weather in the Area

It is important to be aware that Costa Rica has two distinct seasons, in which the weather is very different. The dry season runs from December to May; in this season there is very little precipitation - the weather will be hot and dry both in the central valley and on the coasts. The coasts of Costa Rica are typically slightly more humid than the central valley.

The Green season runs from June to November. This is also referred to as the rainy season - however it is important to know that it will not necessarily rain throughout this entire period. Overall precipitation will be higher, but it typically does not rain for the whole day - usually only for an hour or two in the afternoon. Of course there are days where it doesn't stop - and some spectacular tropical thunderstorms. Be sure to bring adequate rain gear if coming during this time period.

It is hot and humid during both seasons, with temperatures ranging between 26°C and 28°C.

Transportation From BaseCamp

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The first part of the trip will be from San Jose to Puntarenas, it lasts 2.5 hours. Once in Puntarenas all passengers have to get off the bus to get to the ferry to continue to Paquera. The ferry ticket is not included on bus fees. You will buy the ticket in front of the bus stop and the ferry leaves 15 minutes later. Before to get off the bus, you will not need to get your luggage back because after the ferry you will take the same bus again.

After the ferry trip, you will go back to the bus to continue to Cobano.

In Cobano, the bus driver will ask the passengers headed to Montezuma to switch buses. At this point to need to get your luggage.

The bus ride from Cobano to Montezuma is only 15 minutes. Once in Montezuma, an ASVO member will be waiting for you at the bus stop.
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

Take a Tour of BaseCamp

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
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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration Fee</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Week</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Weeks</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Weeks</td>
<td>844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Weeks</td>
<td>1,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Weeks</td>
<td>1,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Weeks</td>
<td>1,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Weeks</td>
<td>1,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Weeks</td>
<td>1,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Weeks</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

- March

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.

| Nov 06, 2020 | Dec 04, 2020 | Jan 01, 2021 |
| Feb 05, 2021 | Mar 05, 2021 | Apr 02, 2021 |
| May 07, 2021 | Jun 04, 2021 | Jul 02, 2021 |
| Aug 06, 2021 | Sep 03, 2021 | Oct 01, 2021 |
| Nov 05, 2021 | Dec 03, 2021 | Jan 07, 2022 |
| Feb 04, 2022 | Mar 04, 2022 | Apr 01, 2022 |
| May 06, 2022 | Jun 03, 2022 | Jul 01, 2022 |
| Aug 05, 2022 | Sep 02, 2022 | Oct 07, 2022 |

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.