PROGRAM GUIDE



WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CAMP

PROGRAM

Volunteer in the heart of rural **Portugal,** in the **Great Côa Valley** by joining the **Wildlife Conservation Volunteer Camp.**

This programme offers the opportunity to take part in meaningful conservation and community projects in a rural region of central Portugal.

Throughout their stay, volunteers will contribute to activities that support ecosystem restoration and local wellbeing, with tasks varying according to the season and current project priorities.

WHY JOIN

Through this program you will be able to help make a tangible contribution to **environmental restoration** and **biodiversity conservation.**

Support **rural communities** through practical, hands-on volunteering.

Gain **hands-on experience** in conservation, sustainable land management, and community projects - more specifically you will be able to learn about **wildlife prevention, invasive species control and biodiversity monitoring.**

All of this while experiencing the quite that the natural beauty and culture of central Portugal. get to offer to everyone who experiences it.



WHY?

The importance of conservation



Habitat preservation is crucial as expanding highways and railways continuously **fragment animals' natural homes**



Natural spaces are defended against the **increasing human activities** that constantly invade wildlife habitats



Wildlife is safeguarded from agricultural conflicts, such as the **poisoning of predators** by farmers



Key species are **protected** from **hunting activities** that directly threaten their survival



Local climate and ecosystems are impacted by **devastating wildfires** that **destroy over 100,000 hectares** of Portuguese forest on average each year

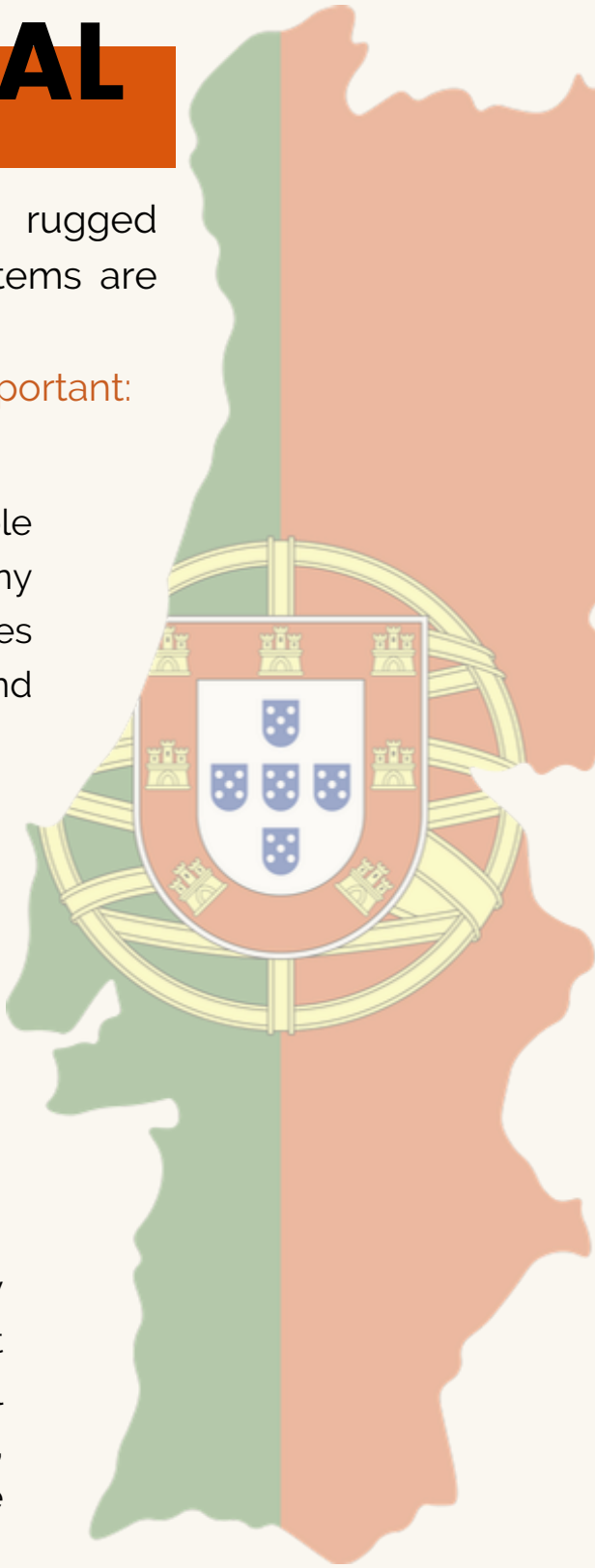


Conservation fills the gap left by **ineffective laws, policies**, and a lack of interest from competent authorities

PORTUGAL

Portugal's stunning landscapes range from rugged mountains to dense forests, but these ecosystems are under increasing pressure.

Here's why your conservation work here is so important:



A BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

The Iberian Peninsula is home to incredible biodiversity, acting as a crucial refuge for many endemic species. Protecting Portugal's natural spaces means safeguarding animals and plants that are found nowhere else on Earth.

THE WILDFIRE CRISIS

Portugal experiences some of the most devastating forest fires in Europe, often exacerbated by climate change, droughts, and unmanaged lands. Active conservation is critical to restoring these native habitats and protecting vulnerable wildlife from future disasters.

RURAL DEPOPULATION

Portugal's interior has seen decades of steady decline, as younger generations move to the coast and cities in search of work. This exodus leaves rural communities struggling to sustain themselves, making outside support essential to keeping these landscapes and their traditions alive.

IMPACT

By stepping into this hands-on role, your daily work directly improves the lives of the native and endangered species that rely on this sanctuary. Beyond environmental conservation, your presence provides essential support to the local staff and rural communities working tirelessly to protect these natural habitats, ensuring that both the wildlife and the region can thrive.

TASKS

TASKS (MAY VARY ACCORDING TO THE NEEDS AT THE TIME)

Depending on the season you join, you'll rotate between conservation-focused activities and social and community support activities — from fire prevention in summer to field forestry work in late autumn and winter.

CONSERVATION	COMMUNITY
• litter and waste collection in restoration areas; • invasive species removal; • biodiversity monitoring (bioblitz-style surveys); • wildfire prevention work during fire season, and identifying/reporting environmental crimes (snares, poison, etc.);	• animal feeding, • pruning and clearing native or recovering plantations; • sheep shearing; • sowing and harvesting cereals; • repairing irrigation systems; • planting aromatic herbs; • beekeeping-related activities; • painting and small building works for community spaces; • creating native-species gardens at partner sites across the region.



SCHEDULE

You will work up to 5 hours daily, typically from **8:30 AM** to **1:00 PM**. Summer hours shift may differ to avoid the midday heat.

HOW TO GET THERE?

1. **Orientation in Porto**
   Sunday and Monday are spent in Porto for an orientation session and a city tour with the other volunteers.

2. **Transfer to the Station**
   On Monday afternoon, the team transfers you to Porto Campanhã Bus Station

3. **Bus or Train to Guarda**
   Catch a direct bus to Guarda (travel time ~2h40).

4. **Local Pick-up**
   Someone from the local team meets you at the Guarda Bus Terminal and drives you to the accommodation.



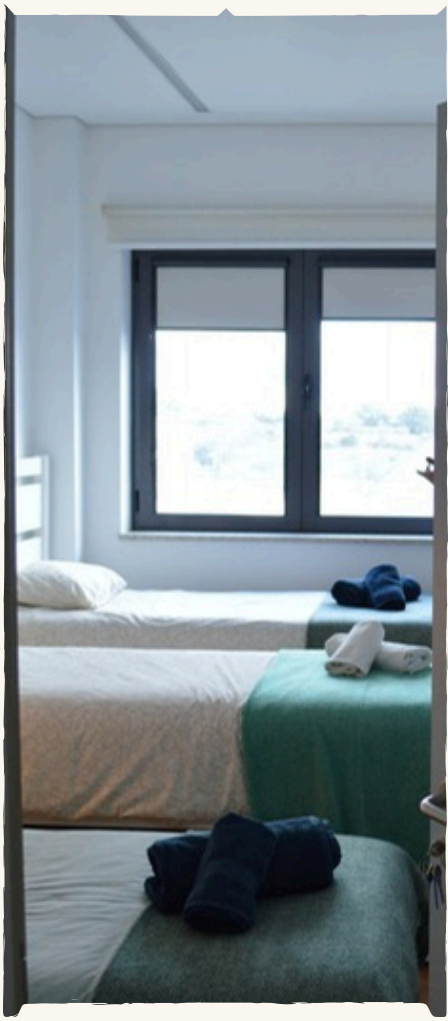


ACCOMMODATION

Volunteer accommodation is located in Vale de Madeira, in the Greater Côa Valley.

You will stay in Porto for your first **Sunday and Monday** for an orientation session and a city tour with the other volunteers. Afterward, you will transfer to Guarda and afterwards to the programm in Vale de Madeira.

- **The Location:** Vale de Madeira is a small, quiet village near the natural reserve where you will be volunteering. Here you will have the chance to experience Portugal's slow living lifestyle.
- **The accommodation:** You will stay in a comfortable house, that you will share with other volunteers, each room comes with their own bathroom. The house comes equipped with a full furnished kitchen, air conditioning, wi-fi, leisure areas with a TV and snooker table
- **Meals:** You will be in charge of making your own meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner - the accommodation has it's own small "grocery store" where you will be able to buy some essentials, like water, juice and ice cream.









GROCERY LIST



You'll be in a fairly remote location. While the accommodation has a small makeshift pantry/shop, you won't have many chances to stock up once you're settled in — so we've put together this guide to help you know what to buy on your first grocery run.

- **PROTEIN** — Protein is a must — you'll be working outdoors and that takes energy! Think meat, tinned tuna, sausage, lentils, tofu, eggs.
- **CARBS** - You can never go wrong with a pack of pasta and a pack of rice.
- **VEGGIES** — Onions, garlic, carrots, peppers and potatoes are sturdy, easy to store, and the base of most simple camp meals.
- **BREAD & SPREADS** — Bread, butter or margarine, and something like jam, honey or peanut butter for quick breakfasts or snacks.
- **SNACKS** — Grab some protein or cereal bars — biscuits and cookies are always nice for a little sweet treat after dinner.
- **FRUIT** — As the old saying goes, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away." Fruit is a great source of natural sugar to help keep you energized throughout the day.
- **BREAKFAST FOOD** — Breakfast is the most important meal of the day! Pick up some milk or yogurt, and don't forget your cereal or granola.



Don't worry though, the accomodation will always try to have in stock some cooking staples, like olive oil, salt, pepper.
Coffe and Tea is also provided.
The water at the accomodation is also drinkable, so no need to worry in buying gallons of water!

WHAT TO PACK





Clothing
Comfortable, sturdy work clothes you don't mind getting dirty (long sleeves and trousers are great for fieldwork)
Layers — a warm fleece or jumper, even in summer, as mornings and evenings can be cool
Waterproof/rain jacket
Closed-toe shoes or work boots (a must for most tasks)
A second pair of casual shoes
Swimwear
Sleepwear and comfortable clothes for downtime



Gear
Work gloves
A reusable water bottle
A daypack for outings and free time



Health & Comfort
Sunscreen and a sun hat
Insect repellent
Any personal medication
Toiletries



Practical Extras
Power adapter (Portugal uses the European two-pin plug)
A copy of important documents (ID/passport, insurance, emergency contacts)
Some cash for personal spending
A book, journal, or something for downtime — evenings in a remote location can be quiet!

GUIDELINES

Safety, priority number one!

Always put yours and animal safety at top priority. If you are not sure about how to act in a certain situation ask the staff or your coordinator.

Be ready to step into the wild

You will live and work outdoors with direct contact with nature, so if you are allergic to dust, moisture, pollen, insect bites, plants, etc. you should weigh your decision to join this program realistically, or take necessary precautions.

Good physical condition

Volunteers must be in good physical condition, able to work as part of a team and be independent in carrying out tasks to be a part of this program. The work is physical and demanding. Sometimes it can be hard and repetitive.



CONSCIOUS TRAVELER TIPS

1. **Hop on a bike:**
Cheaper, greener, and you get to experience the nature and the peace the countryside of Portugal has to offer.

2. **Respect the slow living culture:**
Learn and embrace the local way of life.

3. **Offset your flights:**
Back projects that lower emissions—because every small action adds up.

4. **Ditch plastic:**
Bring your reusable bottle or bag and say no to single-use!

5. **Choose green lodging:**
Look for eco-friendly hostels or accommodations.

6. **Shop local:**
Buy from local artisans and support the community.

7. **Quick showers:**
Keep it under 5 minutes! The easiest way to cut your water waste.



Pro Tip:
Post about your eco-friendly choices to inspire your friends — your actions might spark their own journey to make a difference!



LET’S MAKE AN IMPACT!