

Sea Turtle & Marine Conservation Project

Objective

The primary objective of this project is to protect and conserve Sri Lanka's marine ecosystems, with a strong focus on endangered sea turtles. The project aims to support species preservation, promote safe hatching and release practices, restore marine habitats, and contribute to the overall health of coastal and ocean ecosystems. Additionally, the project works toward reducing pollution, improving environmental awareness, and encouraging sustainable practices within local communities.

Background

Marine ecosystems in Sri Lanka are under increasing pressure from pollution, habitat destruction, and climate change. Sea turtles, as a keystone species, play a critical role in maintaining the balance of marine life, yet face serious threats largely due to human activity. Alongside turtle conservation, broader environmental challenges such as plastic pollution, coral degradation and ecosystem decline require immediate and sustained action. This project combines direct conservation work with wider environmental initiatives to create meaningful, long-term impact.

Goals

- Protect and conserve endangered sea turtles
- Increase hatchling survival and safe release rates
- Preserve and restore marine and coastal habitats
- Reduce pollution through active environmental initiatives
- Support long-term health of marine ecosystems
- Engage and educate local communities on sustainability

What volunteers do on the project

Participants spend at least 50% of their time working directly with sea turtles, with the remaining time contributing to broader marine and environmental conservation activities.

1. Sea Turtle Conservation (Primary Focus)

- Assist in the care and protection of sea turtles
- Support hatchery operations and monitor nesting sites
- Help with feeding, cleaning, and maintenance of turtle facilities
- Participate in safe release of hatchlings into the ocean
- Learn about threats to turtle populations and conservation practices



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2. Marine Conservation & Restoration

- Support coral reef restoration initiatives (seasonal)
- Assist in reef and coastal ecosystem protection efforts
- Participate in awareness and conservation activities related to marine biodiversity



3. Beach & Ocean Clean-Ups

- Conduct regular beach clean-ups to reduce plastic pollution
- Segregate waste for recycling and proper disposal
- Contribute to maintaining clean and safe coastal environments



4. River & Lagoon Clean-Ups

- Participate in river and lagoon clean-ups (including canoe-based activities)
- Remove plastic and waste from waterways impacting marine life
- Support protection of interconnected ecosystems



5. Environmental Conservation Activities

- Mangrove restoration and coastal habitat protection
- Tree planting and reforestation initiatives
- Making eco-bricks as a way to reduce plastic pollution



6. Community Engagement & Awareness

- Take part in environmental education programs in schools and communities
- Help raise awareness about marine conservation and sustainability
- Engage with local communities to promote eco-friendly practices

7. Night patrols

- Night patrols are conducted during the primary nesting season (December to April).
- Volunteers spend nights on nesting beaches to observe and document mother turtles laying eggs and to safeguard eggs for relocation to secure.



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Required Documents

The following documents are needed from our volunteers:

- Updated CV or Resume
- Motivation letter describing personal background and rationale for volunteering
- Any documents that need to be attested by the local organization to certify the project completion

Volunteers should be able to communicate in English - not fluently but enough to follow instructions and interact with local team.

Other Information:

- **Capacity:** Maximum of 35 participants at one time
- **Availability:** Project is available all year round
 - No availability from April 13th to 15th due to Sinhala and Tamil New Year
 - No availability from December 24th to 26th due to Christmas
- **Arrival & Departure Days:** Saturdays
- **Project Workdays:** Monday to Friday (weekends are free)
 - Minimum Project Duration: 1 week
 - Maximum Project Duration: 20 weeks
- **Age Requirement:** Must be 16 years or above
- **Nearest Airport:** Colombo Bandaranaike International Airport
- **Location of the project:**
 - 60-70 minutes for the main turtle hatchery;
 - within 15-40 min for the rest of the activities.
- **Location of the Volunteer Houses:**
 - Unawatuna 80600, Galle, Sri Lanka



Meals Provided: 3 freshly cooked meals every day
(breakfast + lunch + dinner)

Support provided: On arrival, a detailed orientation training programme is provided, including health and safety training, culture training and an area orientation tour around Galle. Volunteers get an introduction prior to the project by the project coordinator, who will continue to guide them, provide support and supervise. Local transportation to and from the project is included every day.

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Recommended Attire: Since this project involves a significant amount of field work in a tropical climate, we recommend participants to wear casual, light and comfortable clothing that suits the type of activities listed above. Clothing should be comfortable yet conservative – no excessive skin should be shown as locals tend to be on the conservative side being a majority Buddhist country. Quick-dry material (or wet suit) is recommended (but not mandatory) when in close contact with water (e.g., river cleaning). Footwear can be comfortable sneakers or sandals/flipflops. Sunscreen recommended since a lot of the work is outside. A light rain jacket is recommended during the wet season and when we go to the school awareness program volunteers should be wearing long pants and a t-shirt that covers the knees & shoulders.

