



Turtle Project



Overview

The Islands of Cabo Verde represent the **second largest breeding colony of the loggerhead turtle** (*Caretta caretta*) in the Atlantic and the second in the world. Four other species of sea turtles can be observed in the archipelago: hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), leatherback or giant turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) and the olive turtle (*Lepidochelys olivacea*). Despite being protected by law, poaching is still one of the main threats to the survival of the species.

The first conservation programs began in the late 1990s. Since then, tangible gains have been achieved for the conservation of the species, reversing a scenario of possible extinction, postulated in 2007 to happen in 2017, if more concrete conservation actions were not adopted.

Sea turtle conservation program is conducted in the **northern region of the island of Santiago, in the municipality of Tarrafal**. Since then, we have worked thoroughly and

diligently to protect this natural heritage and its genetic stock.

As part of the marine ecosystem, **turtles play a key role in keeping seagrass beds and coral reefs healthy**. These, in turn, are important sources of food and shelter for countless marine species.

The project has had engagement from the local communities from the beginning. This has been a catalyst in the drastic reduction of sea turtle poaching and in strengthening communities' capacities to play a crucial role in the protection of the species.

The work carried out within the scope of **the project is executed by the local team, with the support of individuals from the local communities and national/international participants**. Together, we work on nightly beach patrols during the nesting season. Our work is carried out in close collaboration with national and local authorities to improve environmental and species conservation policies and raise awareness of local communities and the general public.

There is an urgent need to address the illegal hunting of sea turtles on Santiago Island through liaisons with the local communities and maritime police. The aim of this project is to develop a stronger sense of ownership of the project and sea turtles within the local communities by training and involving the local associations and fishermen in monitoring and protecting sea turtles. Decrease the widespread consumption of turtle meat in Santiago and develop a strong awareness campaign including some of the activities of the project.

The Cape Verde island's beaches are one of the most visited sites by the Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*) for nesting during the months of July to October. These species play a critical link in the marine ecosystems and in the marine food chain by maintaining the health of seagrass and coral reef ecosystems that provide food and home for a wide variety of other marine life.

The greatest threat to these sea turtles' survival is the loss of nesting habitat due to coastal development, predation of nests, and human disturbances (such as coastal lighting and housing developments) that cause disorientations during the emergence of hatchlings. Other major threats include incidental capture in longline fishing, shrimp trawling and pollution. Incidental capture in fisheries is thought to have played a significant role in the recent population declines observed for the loggerhead.

Through this program, you and members of the local community will be working to ensure the protection of the female sea turtles –

Participate in **patrolling beaches** (night and morning), with the support of other participants and our team, to monitor breeding females and deter illegal poaching. Assist in the introduction of **data collected** during the monitoring of females. During patrol you will help in collecting information about the species. For example, measuring and marking the turtles and relocating the nests to a nursery protected from animal

predation, when necessary. Identify and count nest tracks in the early hours of the day. Watch over the nursery to prevent the nests from being preyed upon by dogs or other animals and prevent access by unauthorized persons. Participate in project awareness and outreach activities carried out by us in local communities. Transporting the eggs into a safe hatchery to protect them from animals and humans,

We aim to empower the local young community to act by protecting nesting females, through direct beach protection, as well as grassroots education at local schools. As a critical part of the team, you will have the opportunity to directly contribute to the conservation of Loggerhead Sea turtle species and ultimately help to build a more sustainable Island.

Our homestay program is an important part of our participants' experience. By staying with families in communities close to the beaches where the conservation projects are located, you will be able to have a genuine experience of the local cultural and social realities. The selected families are made up of fishermen and people who have a history of poaching, one-parent households (especially single mothers) given their socio-economic status.

The program encompasses, patrolling beaches (night and morning) to monitor nesting and deter hunting, data collection, operation of hatcheries, education and outreach activities and beach clean-ups.

To significantly reduce the consumption of sea turtle meat and to improve the scientific knowledge of the species in Santiago Island, Cabo Verde.

To reduce the illegal poaching of sea turtles on Santiago Island and ensure monitoring of the main beaches on the island.

To protect and conserve the loggerhead sea turtles and their nesting habitat by various means such as, providing protective hatcheries, treating injured or wounded turtles, conserving their beaches from pollution, and collecting data to better understand the species and their habitats.

Project details

- Arrival Day: Sunday
- Departure Day: Saturday
- Airport: Nelson Mandela (RAI), Praia
- Min Duration: 2 weeks

Schedule

Monday to Friday

- Night Patrol on the nesting beaches
- Relocation program (relocation of the nests in risk areas)
- Conducting a successful study of nests in the hatchery

- Collection of biological data, abundance and distribution of sea turtles
- Conduct workshops in the local communities about the importance of sea turtles and the project results
- Organize beach cleaning activities in the project area
- Movie projection in communities about the importance of sea turtles
- Conduct a workshop with the fishermen about bycatch

Equipment

- Water bottle
- Sleeping bags
- Additional bed linen, towels etc.
- Toiletries
- Appropriate clothing for camping
- Insect repellent
- Sunglasses and sunblock

The sea turtle season coincides with the **rainy season**. The climate tends to be **hot** and **humid**. Therefore, we recommend that you bring fresh clothes, a bathing suit, sunglasses and a hat. Oh! Don't forget the sunscreen. During the rainy season the mosquito population increases, so light pants and long-sleeved shirts/t-shirts can be very helpful. Also, mosquito repellents, mosquito nets, snorkeling equipment and a small backpack can be of great use. Other items such as personal computers, binoculars and books are left to your discretion.

Accommodation & Food

The city is named after the indigenous plant Tarrafe, (*Tamarix senegalensis*). Also called Mangui or Mangué, it is situated on the northern part of the island of Santiago. A fishing port situated on the northwestern coast and also is a municipality.

About the Accommodation

You can expect to share a room on single gender basis. The bathroom is shared and western toilets are available.

Available Room Types

	Standard Room
All meals included	Yes *
Free beverages	Yes **

Persons per room	4 - 8
Wifi in public areas	Yes
Laundry facilities	No
Safety box	No
Lockable rooms	Yes
Hot shower	Yes
Private bathroom	No
Bed linen	Yes
Towels	No
Air conditioning	No
Fan	Yes
Mosquito protection	No

Food Arrangements

The meals will contain a mix of local and various types of Western food.

* Three meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) during the week and two meals (breakfast, dinner) during weekends

** Tea, Coffee and Drinking water

Facilities

There are ATMs, mini marts, some shops and restaurants available in the city center.

Arrival

Praia International Airport (RAI)

After passing through immigration and customs, our representative will be waiting at the exit door of the airport. Please look for your name on the board. Our coordinator will wait for you at Tarrafal Square in front of the church

Mandatory Orientation Day

On the Monday of your first week at this location, you will join our orientation day, to familiarize you with the surroundings as well as local culture. Your program will continue as usual from Tuesday onward throughout the rest of the week.

Schedule

Welcome, introduction to Cape Verdean traditions and culture, House rules, Code of Conduct and handling of documents

Basic Kriolu Lesson

Visit local supermarkets and ATMs, and explore the surroundings of our center.

Lunch

Visit to Mar De President Beach and spend some time on the beach before returning back to the center for dinner.

Country Information

The beautiful islands of the Cape Verde were initially uninhabited until it was discovered by the Portuguese in the 15th century. The country flourished during the 16th and the 17th centuries due to the Atlantic slave trade. But with the decline of the slave trade in the 19th century, the country experienced an economic crisis. Yet the location of the island made it survive as it became a significant commercial center in the 19th century as the location was perfect for re-supply of the ships. In the present day context, the economy of the country is mostly relying on the services provided by the country targeting the growing tourism industry.

Climate

Cape Verde has a mild climate compared to the mainland of Africa with an average high temperature of about 26 °C during February and 31 °C in September. The country has an irregular rain pattern in the months between August and October and it is in September

that the country experiences its maximum rainfall. The country can boast about the rich vegetation and the forests that provides a rainforest habitat although the close proximity to the Sahara is makes most islands with no mountains mostly dry. The islands as initially were isolated, the existence of a number of endemic species mostly the birds and reptiles can be seen although the existence is threatened by the human developments.

Culture

As the country was discovered by the Portuguese, the culture is immensely influenced by them as the rural Portuguese practices are displayed in the social and cultural patterns of the country. The closeness to the church activities and the football games act as way of interaction between the locals for entertainment.

Transportation

By bus

For travelling within the islands, the most famous transportation is the minibuses which are known as "Yasi" which can accommodate around 12 to 14 passengers. In addition, the modified pickup truck and the cabs which are sometimes covered provide the transport facilities for shorter distances and in rural areas.

By Taxi

Taxis can mostly be found in the cities of Praia and Assomada, and they have unique colored taxis in these two cities, where taxis painted in beige are based in Praia and the taxis painted in white are based in Assomada. The taxis sometimes have a meter fixed to it although they hardly use it as the rates which are usually accepted are cheaper than the ones the metered taxis would count.