



Loggerhead Sea Turtle Protection Program Boa Vista Island – Cabo Verde



General information
for international volunteers

Protecting sea turtles and their habitats



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1. About Turtle Foundation



The Turtle Foundation is a non-profit organization with seven country offices, collectively committed to the protection of sea turtles and their habitats worldwide. Founded in Germany in 2000, the organization is primarily funded through private donations, foundations, and grants.

The Turtle Foundation's conservation work began in Indonesia with a nesting beach protection programme for green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) in the Derawan Islands, Berau Regency, off the coast of East Kalimantan. Over time, this initial project has expanded a lot. Today, the organization is engaged in the protection of green and hawksbill sea turtles in Berau, the conservation of leatherback sea turtles in Sumatra, nationwide education initiatives focusing on the topic of "headstarting," and, in the past, an anti-turtlesell project for hawksbill sea turtles in the Banggai region.

The Turtle Foundation's project in Cabo Verde, located on the island of Boa Vista, was initiated in 2008 in response to the large-scale slaughter of nesting female loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*). On Boa Vista, the Turtle Foundation works closely with Cabo Verdean rangers as well as national and international volunteers. Throughout the nesting season, from July till October, volunteers and local staff work side by side to protect nesting turtles and their nests.

Volunteers play an important role in the success of this project; without their dedication and commitment, the work on Boa Vista would not be possible. The Turtle Foundation deeply values their contribution and extends its sincere gratitude to all former, current, and future volunteers and team members.

Further information about the Turtle Foundation's history, personnel, and projects can be found on our website at www.turtle-foundation.org, as well as on our Facebook and Instagram profiles.





Our **vision** is a future where sea turtles and their habitats are sustainably protected, healthy, and safe from threat of extinction and destruction.



Our **mission** is to contribute to sea turtle conservation at our own project sites by cooperating with local communities to create a future where both sea turtles and people can thrive.

2. General description



Our sea turtle conservation project on Boa Vista operates on a number of different sites to protect and monitors the population of the Loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*), for which Cabo Verde was identified as the 3rd biggest rookery in the world in 2011. Latest figures from the past few years suggest that now Cabo Verde could be the largest nesting site for loggerhead turtles in the world, but is yet to be confirmed!

The coordination of the whole program is done by our project management team based at the Turtle Foundation's headquarter in Sal Rei, the capital of the island. There are five different camps around the island where teams are deployed to ensure the protection of several nesting beaches.

These are: Lacacção Camp, Boa Esperança Camp, Canto Camp, Cruz do Morto Camp and Curral Velho Camp. There are currently 9 nesting beaches that are fully protected and monitored by our teams between 1st of July and 1st of October (the exact date of the end of the season is dependent on turtle activity).

Each camp is locally managed by two coordinators. They are in charge of ensuring that the camps are well maintained, food and water are supplied, patrols are scheduled and data is collected in an appropriate manner. Local assistants and rangers are hired to help with the patrols. Fundação Tartaruga relies on national and international volunteers to help increase the patrol area, night coverage and data collection. Typically, a night patrol team is formed by one local ranger and one volunteer, it is scheduled to last between around 6 hours each night.

3. Requirements and duties



As a volunteer you will work alongside local and international volunteers and project staff, in assisting the program in all aspects of conservation and education.

Applicants must understand that this is partly an overnight position, resulting in lack of sleep. There are two shifts – first shift starts at 20h until 02h ; second shift starts at 01h until 07h. However, schedules can suffer changes depending on turtle activity.

Applicants should be physically fit and must be able to sit, stand and kneel for long periods of time.

Working conditions are often extreme with temperatures ranging from 17°C at night to 40°C during the day. Nonetheless cool winds during the night (particularly in June and July) can mean warmer clothing is required.

In the rainy season (September-October) work is sometimes required in adverse conditions, and bugs and flies can be extremely abundant.

You are not required to swim for the purposes of work, however, as work is on the beach, applicants need to be aware of the risks associated with the ocean and act with the appropriate respect at all times.



We only provide beds. Each person is responsible for their own mosquito net, pillow, bed sheets or sleeping bag.

3. Requirements and duties



As a volunteer you are required to stay for a minimum of 4 weeks and up to 12 weeks and participate in all aspects of the work. Applicants from any background are accepted and basic training is provided. However, this position is especially suitable for gap-year students, undergraduates or recent-graduates who wish to gain more experience in wildlife monitoring techniques or conservation work.

Your daily duties will include monitoring nesting beaches either during the night or early in the morning. In the afternoon, other activities such as beach clean-ups of plastic debris washed ashore, help with cooking, preparing materials or camp maintenance will be carried out. The Lacacão camp is sometimes visited by turtle watching groups.

You should expect to work up to 40 hours per week including patrols and camp help, but this may be much less.



No experience is needed, basic training will be provided. However, you must be willing to work hard as the patrols require long walks (up to 15 km) in warm and humid conditions. You also need to be friendly and communicative, be able to work in a group and live in a beach camp setting (no running water, basic toilets, and shared tents!)



- Searching for nesting activity and nesting turtles and collecting data.
- Helping with tagging post-nesting turtles, carapace measuring and other data collection.
- Relocation of nests in "risk areas"
- Searching for any evidence of nests hatching and checking nests already laid.
- Maintenance and preparation of equipment.
- Searching for any stranded turtle, whether sick or dead.
- Looking out for illegal poachers on the beach and reporting them to the patrol leader.
- Relocation of nests in "risk areas"
- Helping with releasing baby turtles and nest excavation (late August-October in Lacacão camp)



In the beginning of your volunteering, you are not expected to conduct patrols on your own. You will be accompanied at all times by an experienced volunteer, local ranger or staff member.

4. Work areas



You will be able to work in the following specific work fields:

Night patrols

After a few weeks of your arrival you might already have acquired the necessary skills to become Patrol Leader. Now you can teach new volunteers the skills necessary to patrol at night. Experience is not necessary but helps, more important is enthusiasm and commitment. The skills you will learn include tagging and measuring sea turtles, data collection and identifying activities.



Census

In the end of the second shift, when the sun is rising, a census needs to be made. In some situations, if turtle activity is low, it can happen to do only the census.

You will gain valuable experience in track identification and nest finding. It is an advantage if the candidate has a real interest in analyzing tracks, reconstructing turtle behavior and should not mind getting up in the middle of the night and work until the hot morning sun.

Nest excavations and relocations: Occasionally turtles lay their eggs in unsuitable places. In such cases, the nest is relocated to a new site, or our hatchery and the eggs are carefully moved and reburied. After the nest has hatched, we do an evaluation of the hatching success rate, which involves nest excavation of the nest and analysis of the shells left.



4. Work areas

Hatchery



The hatchery present in Lacacão camp is composed by nests that were relocated from Lacacão beach. This beach has a big tourist development in the area which causes negative impacts in the hatchlings, such as disorientation, from artificial light, and the presence of a big number of tourists, that can impact the nest itself and disturb the hatchlings when they hatch.

When the hatchlings start to hatch and come out of the nest (could start mid August) you will help or ensure that the biometric data of all hatchlings and nests are collected correctly and that all hatchlings will be accounted for. Afterwards, releasing them in the beach. Due to the nature of the work in the hatchery it might be required to visit the hatchery multiple times during the day, sleep in a smaller tent and wake up every hour during the night.



5. Living on Boa Vista



- You will be staying on very remote beaches and communities, and need to be prepared to live without nightlife, shops, television, etc. You will have free time during the day to walk and explore the beauty of the surrounded area or to read a book. All members of the camp are expected to take active part in camp maintenance, cleaning and cooking.
- Time-off is generally equivalent to 1 day off per week; however, the precise scheduling of this is decided by the Camp Coordinator during the season and depends on the number of people in camp so as not to preclude work.
- You should be open and prepared to live respecting Cabo Verdean culture and habits. It is only in the last few years that tourism has been growing. You might find the local's daily habits different from yours, but please consider that we are all different and you should respect the culture of the country we are in. The exchange of culture and different ways of seeing things enriches ourselves and brings positive effects.
- **Campsites** will be extremely basic and rustic, and volunteers share the tent with several other colleagues of the same gender (though you are welcome to bring your own tent).
- Since 2018 we have rustic **biogas toilets** in the camps to improve the situation, as we did not have any sanitation at all in previous years.
- There are large barrels/tanks for storing **water** for drinking, washing and cooking, which should always be used responsibly. There is no running water. There are private areas for having bucket showers.
- **Food** is basic and it will be repetitive. Our Cabo Verdean camp cooks are doing their very best to be creative with basic ingredients. Daily duties for everybody include assisting the cooks with preparing the meals, washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen area. It is possible to cater for vegetarians, but not always for vegans*. Applicants with specific diet requirements/food allergies should contact the project staff prior to applying.
- The **activities** of the project are mainly conducted on sandy tropical beaches, which are very isolated. Participants should have a keen and genuine interest in conservation and ecology and respect the surrounding environment.
- **Swimming** is done at the individual's choice and should always be done with a 'buddy'. Waves and currents, particularly in Lacacão, can be extremely strong, and there are days when even the most capable swimmer should not go in. **ALWAYS** advise someone who is staying in camp if you go in the sea.
- *Please contact volunteers@turtle-foundation.org for options

6. Beaches and camp

Lacação Camp



6. Beaches and camp

LACACÃO AND PONTA PESQUEIRA BEACHES

- Length: Lacacão 7 km (3 km monitored) / Average walking time: 45 minutes (each way)
- Ponta Pesqueira 450m / Average walking time: 10 minutes (each way)
- Number of nests per season: 300-4,000

CURRAL VELHO BEACH

- Length: 4.5 km / Average walking time: 1h 15 minutes (each way)
- Number of nests per season: 400-13,000

Ponta Pesqueira Beach



Curral Velho Beach



6. Beaches and camp



Camp Lacacão

Located on the Southeast coast of Boa Vista, the Lacacão beach camp, first set in 2009, is the base monitoring this corner of the island. It protects three important nesting sites: Lacacão, Ponta Pesqueira, and Curral Velho and has a hatchery.

The primary purpose of the work on these beaches is the protection of the nesting females against poaching on Lacacão and Curral Velho beaches as well as the protection of females and hatchlings from artificial lighting and other disturbances coming from the hotel RIU Touareg, which disorients both adult turtles and hatchlings. Further threats that may result in the loss of nests are inundation by high tides and motorized vehicles on the beach which may drive over nests.

Turtle Foundation believes in minimizing the human impact on an otherwise natural process. However, this is not always possible due to anthropogenic factors. As a result, a hatchery is built on Ponta Pesqueira beach for nests relocated from Lacacão. Such mitigation, as well as a tagging program and collection of biological data on nesting females, was initiated in 2010. Further scientific studies on the biology and behaviour of sea turtles are conducted here by researchers from Queen Mary University London (QMUL) in cooperation with the Turtle Foundation.

Turtle Foundation also offers information to hotel guests, quad bike tours and other visitors to create more awareness for an ecologically responsible tourism. The Turtle Foundation also assists small, selected local Tour Operator businesses to conduct turtle watching tours that meet our conservation standards.

The campsite is located on top of a dune overlooking Lacacão beach, and a short walk away from Curral Velho and Ponta Pesqueira beaches. In Curral Velho you will find the ruins of the oldest human settlement in Boa Vista island, thus of cultural importance, and next to an important RAMSAR wetland site, which is unique on the island. It is also a popular site for surfing but is mostly untouched and not regularly visited by tourists, despite being considered by many one of the most beautiful beaches on the island. The island off Curral Velho is an important breeding site for brown boobies and shearwaters. In contrast, Lacacão, another beautiful sandy beach, is where the largest tourism development in the country is constructed, and the impact of artificial light is notorious on the nesting females and emerging hatchlings.

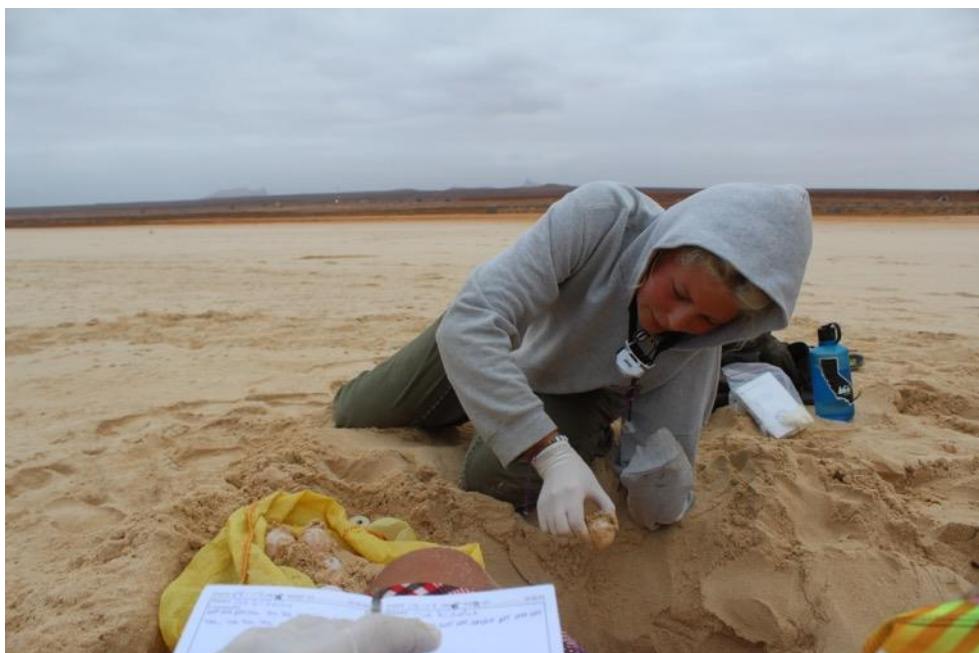
6. Beaches and camp



Participant profile:

Participant profile: Interest in participating in night patrols, data collection on nesting turtles and hatchery work. Must be comfortable living for at least 4 weeks in a very remote area in a self-catering camp setting with basic sanitation and limited water supply. Must endure extreme hot weather. High level of fitness and independence required. Bear in mind that the surf can be extremely powerful in the south of the island.

Transport for days off is not possible! Otherwise, there is always the option to call a taxi to get to town. When possible, you can get a ride.



7. Costs and benefits

Living costs are covered by a participation fee charged to the volunteers. Project site logistics are complex due to the remoteness of the sites and high living costs in Boa Vista. Project funds are limited and cover costs associated to local salaries, vehicles, maintenance and high running costs. Therefore, we rely on volunteers to contribute towards their participation costs. These fees cover 3 daily meals, drinking water, accommodation in camp, airport pick-up and travel to project site, in-country support. Airfare, medical insurance and personal expenses **ARE NOT** included in the costs and have to be paid on your own as well.

Food and accommodation is provided during the time at the project sites only. Personal expenses incurred during volunteer's free time are not covered by Turtle Foundation (days off, hotel stays, meals or snacks in town, etc.).

Expect similar prices to European cities. Note: you can of course always stay in camp on your days off. Your place and food is always reserved for you there.

For camp and field coordinators Turtle Foundation will incur with the costs towards food and accommodation during their time in the project. Additionally, a small salary of € 450/month will be offered. Travel costs for a return flight to Boa Vista will be reimbursed up to € 400. On free days Camp Coordinators cover their own expenses.



HOW MUCH DO I HAVE TO PAY?

VOLUNTEER FEE

Payment per month - € 400 (4 weeks €)
+ Administration fee of € 50 to pay (one-time).

Fees can be either paid upon arrival to Boa Vista (EUROS) or transferred to Turtle Foundation's bank account in Germany.

Please note, that we do not refund volunteer fees.

8. Travel information and application

WHEN TO COME?

NIGHT PATROLS: Start around July 1st and last until October 1st.

NESTING: Turtles are recorded from mid June and the peak-nesting season runs from mid July to mid September. After this time the number of nesting females starts to decrease.

HATCHLINGS: Hatchlings start emerging in August, most nests will hatch from late September to November.

RAINY SEASON: Heavy rainfalls over the period of a few days are usually expected between September and October. After the rains mosquitoes can be abundant on the beaches. The good news: This is also the peak hatching period!

VACCINATIONS: There are no specific vaccinations are required to travel to Cape Verde. It is always recommended to have all standard vaccinations of your home country up to date.

VISA: No visa is needed anymore (< 30 days) for EU-, EFTA- and ECOWAS-citizens. However, if you are staying longer than 30 days, you will need a visa. We will organize it during your stay here. For non-EU-, EFTA- and ECOWAS-citizens a visa is necessary, we will pre-arrange a visa for your stay and send you the necessary papers to present when entering the country.

PLEASE NOTE that we can only pre-arrange a visa when your flight arrives in Cape Verde by Boa Vista first! Participants who travel to Boa Vista via Praia/Santiago, Sal, São Vicente or any other Cabo Verdean destination have to arrange their visa themselves.

For all travelers it is necessary to register over the following website: <https://www.ease.gov.cv/> and to pay the TSA. It costs about 30 Euros.

INSURANCE: It is mandatory for you to take out medical insurance that will cover any medical expenses during your time in Boa Vista, for the duration of your stay. Please ensure that emergency medical evacuation is included in your policy.

FLIGHTS: Since Boa Vista is a fast developing tourist destination, new flight routes are emerging every year. Direct connections to Boa Vista are offered in various cities in Germany, Belgium and Netherlands (Tuifly) and Great Britain (TUI) as well as in Paris, Prague, Lisbon and other European cities. In the end of the year of 2025 Easyjet started to fly to Boa Vista.

8. Travel information and application

- **HOW TO APPLY**
- Did you read and understand all the information in this document? Do you fulfil all requirements and feel ready to apply?
- For volunteers, here is what you have to do next:
- Please go to our website (www.turtle-foundation.org) and fill in the online application form.
- Please upload your CV and a photo of you if you like.
- If you have questions please don't hesitate to contact us at volunteers@turtle-foundation.org
- Applicants will be notified no later than 2 weeks after application.
- The project staff will do their best to attend your preferences in terms of participation periods and project types. In case your choice is not available anymore, we will contact you and offer alternatives.
- Once your application is accepted you will need to book your flight and take out your medical insurance.
- You will be asked to provide Fundação Tartaruga with medical insurances' company name and policy number.
- There is no application deadline, however August is usually a quite popular destination both for Boa Vista and the project, and you are advised to book your place and flight early.
- Before departure, please read the Packing List which is available for download on our website.
- Please remember that we cannot fully confirm your place until we have received your flight and insurance details!
- For coordinators:
- Please check out our website and send your CV and motivation letter to info@turtle-foundation.org if positions are available. We will get in touch with you no later than 2 weeks after application.

