



MAURITIUS MARINE RESEARCH PROJECT CLOSE UP

Work with a marine scientist and contribute to the development of new legislation to conserve and protect the diminishing marine wildlife off the coast of Mauritius.

CONSERVATION IN ACTION

How does this project make a difference?

In the fringing reefs and coast off the stunning island of Mauritius, tourism is flourishing at an unsustainable rate. The sad news is that due to this increasing level of human intrusion, resident spinner and bottlenose dolphins are demonstrating serious distress behaviour signals and their populations are in decline. With up to 50 tourist boats around one pod of dolphins at any one time, and with legislation and monitoring lacking, there is an urgent need to monitor the impact on the island's cetacean populations. The findings of the research work are so desperately needed they are being almost directly translated into new legislation to protect the dolphin populations and prevent their numbers from declining any further.

How do I, the volunteer, make a difference?

This project solely depends on volunteers to carry out the vital research since government funding has stopped. The continuation of the project will help ensure a sustainable future for all the island's people and wildlife.

CORE ACTIVITIES

You will be trained in cetacean research techniques and methodology, assisting with the research which involves taking photographs of dolphin and whale sightings to provide fin profiles for identification, population estimates and distribution studies. Some of the data you'll collect will include, for example, the following:

- Size
- Dorsal fin size, shape and position
- Body and head shape
- Colour and markings
- Number of animals
- Habitat
- Breaching and other activities
- Blow characteristics (whales)
- Tail shape and markings

Current projects also include surveys of tourists and local operators to gain a better understanding of the economic value of this activity. Monitoring the boats includes noting arrival and departure times, numbers of clients/tourists and their general behaviour for each boat while they are with the dolphins. These results assist in a number of ways:

- Looking at the value of the industry i.e. Number of tourists and number of people directly employed
- Effectiveness of the guidelines and education of operators
- Seasonality of industry
- Effects of boats and swimmers on the dolphins
- Boat categories are speed boats, fishing boats, catamarans, pirogues and glass bottom boats.





Community work:

- Educate the local children and general public raising awareness of marine mammals, the habitat they live in and the work of the project.
- School visits are arranged and lessons are given on basic environmental issues.
- Prepare educational activities for schools.

SKILLS GAINED

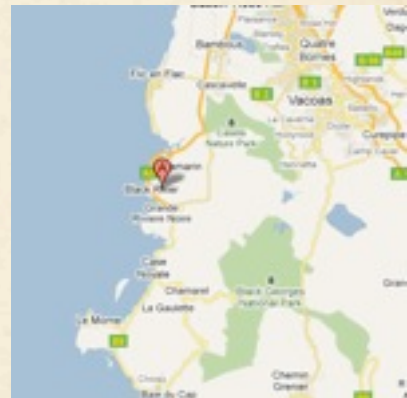
You will be trained in the latest cetacean research techniques and methodology including photographic identification, marine mammal identification and behaviour, public speaking (optional), teaching

WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE

Animals you are likely to encounter are spinner dolphin, Indo-Pacific bottlenose dolphin, common bottlenose dolphin, melon-headed dolphin, humpback whale (June-November), sperm whale, pilot whale, green turtle, hawksbill turtle.

LOCATION

You'll be based in La Preneuse, Black River, on the south west coast of Mauritius. This is a small town approximately 40 km south of the capital Port Louis. There are regular buses and taxis to access many of the country's most beautiful beaches and nature parks.



FACILITIES

Accommodation: During your stay you will live and work in a house in La Preneuse. The property is a two minute walk to the beach and has easy access to some small restaurants, supermarket and bus stops. In this two storey house the office is situated on the first floor and the volunteers live on the ground floor. It is equipped with a large living area and a dining/kitchen area, two toilets and a shower. A balcony front and back is perfect for relaxing after work and watching the glorious sunsets!

Meal arrangements: Food is not included on this project and you should allow approximately £40 / €48/ US\$65 a week budget depending on whether you want to eat out frequently in restaurants or prepare most of your meals at home.

Working hours: The general working hours are 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday, although these are flexible. You may be asked to help out over the weekends but generally you can spend this time relaxing on the beach, exploring the local forests or the many activities that Mauritius has to offer.

Contact with home: You will have access to payphones and internet cafés during town trips on days off. There is also WIFI connection in the house and volunteers are welcome to bring their own laptops.





Transfers: You will be transferred from Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam international airport to the project by taxi which takes roughly one hour.

Extras: Mauritius is an area of natural beauty where you can spend your time off relaxing on the beach, exploring the local forests or the many activities that it has to offer.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

First aid & emergency: There is a medical centre just a 5 minute drive from the house where doctors can provide the basics (e.g. Stitches). The nearest hospital is in the next town which is 20 minute drive from the house. A good English speaking doctor is a 5 minute walk away but here you pay for the consultation (Rs500 = £10).

IS THIS PROJECT RIGHT FOR ME?

This project is ideal for you if you study marine biology or have a serious interest in marine wildlife. The researchers at the Mauritius Dolphin Conservation project appreciate volunteers who are fairly independent, self-motivated and dedicated to marine conservation. Due to the remote location of Mauritius and our limited ability to give you on the ground support, this project is better suited to volunteers aged 20 and over.

BOOKING INFORMATION

What's included? Transfers from Mauritius airport, accommodation, financial contributions to the project. We can also arrange flights from London Heathrow on request.

What's not included? Travel insurance, spending money, meals

When can I join? This project runs all year round, except for a break over Christmas and New Year.

How can I join? You can apply online at www.conservationafrica.net/apply or simply fill out an application form in one of our brochures and post it back to us.

