

# Panama Leatherbacks



# Welcome Letter

Welcome to the SEE Turtles Panama Leatherback Research Trip! On this unique adventure, you will spend four nights with researchers studying giant leatherback sea turtles, snorkel in beautiful reefs, and more. By joining this trip, you will be directly supporting community-based conservation with our partners at the Sea Turtle Conservancy of these turtles by providing alternative income to illegal hunting and generating funds to expand their efforts.

We started SEE Turtles in 2008 to encourage travelers to visit turtle conservation projects where their visit will make a difference in efforts to protect these endangered creatures and this has been our most popular tour. With the help of travelers like you, we have generated more than \$1 million for turtle conservation and local communities and have helped to save millions of baby turtles at important nesting beaches. For these efforts, we received the prestigious Changemakers Award from the World Travel & Tourism Council.

Please join us on this action-packed volunteer trip. We will meet and interact with the dedicated people working to protect their natural resources and learn much about the biology and threats facing Panama's wildlife.

We hope to SEE you in Panama!



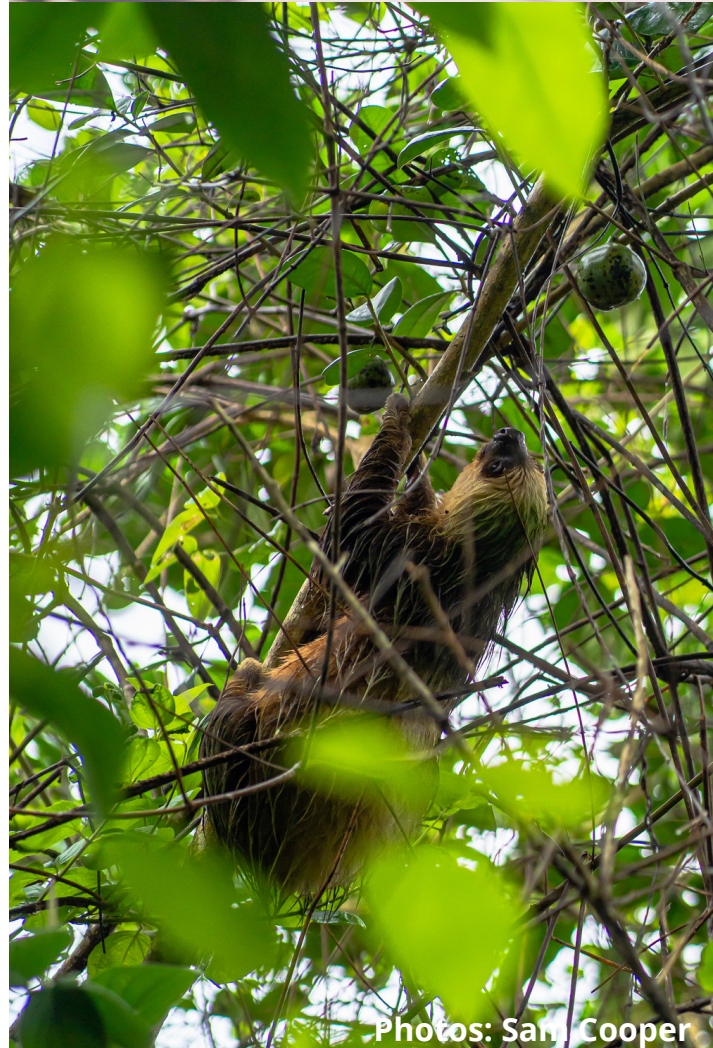
Brad Nahill  
President & Co-Founder  
brad@seeturtles.org

Cover photos: Brad Nahill (right), and Lulu Muse (left). Right: Neil Osborne



# Table of Contents

|                             |    |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Trip Information            | 1  |
| Detailed Itinerary          | 2  |
| Turtle Research Information | 3  |
| Our Conservation Partner    | 4  |
| Background Information      | 5  |
| Accommodations              | 6  |
| Frequently Asked Questions  | 7  |
| Testimonials                | 9  |
| Conservation Travel         | 10 |
| Conservation Impact Pricing | 11 |
| Packing List                | 12 |
| Terms & Conditions          | 13 |
| About SEE Turtles           | 15 |



# Trip Information

The leatherback is one of nature's truly unique creatures. Their immense size boggles the mind; these turtles can average more than 6 feet long and 800 lbs. But that's not the only thing that makes them unique. Their softer shell allows them to dive deeper than any other sea turtle and their size and dark color allows them to inhabit cold waters. The leatherback has had an impressive recovery over the past decade but human activities like consumption of their eggs and getting caught in fishing gear continue to threaten these extraordinary reptiles.

Spend 4 nights working with giant leatherback turtles at the Sea Turtle Conservancy Research Station along the northern Panama Caribbean coast. Walk the nesting beach at night with local researchers and relax and explore the rainforest during the day. The turtle work includes helping to study the turtles and working with hatchlings.

## Is This Trip Right For Me?

Panama is a safe and beautiful country. This trip goes off the beaten path for 4 nights at the rustic and remote Soropta Research Station (see accommodations for additional information). This is an active trip that requires a level of physical fitness and an ability to manage sometimes challenging conditions including weather and heat, bugs, and a schedule that can affect sleeping patterns. Participants will share rooms of 4 (we can pair friends and family) with shared bathrooms and showers. There is no electricity or wifi at the station though a cell signal can be possible.

## Conservation Impact Pricing:

SEE Turtles is the first and only operator to provide transparent pricing that shows the economic impact of each trip on turtle and wildlife conservation and benefits to local communities.

- **Turtle Conservation:** \$885 of the trip price goes to organizations working to protect sea turtles
- **Local Communities:** \$525 of the trip price supports communities around sea turtle habitats
- **Travel Costs:** \$485 of the cost covers guides, transport, accommodations, insurance, and other costs

[Register Here](#)

**2024 Date:** June 8 - 15

**Trip Price:** \$1,895 pp

## Discounts:

- \$40 for paying by check
- \$50 off for kids 16 - 18 years

**Includes:** In-country transport, meals, lodging, activities, guides, and a donation to turtle conservation.

**Excludes:** Airfare to Panama and Bocas del Toro, personal items, and tips for the guide and driver.

## Notes:

- Minimum recommended age is 16 years old, under 18 needs to be accompanied by an adult.
- Group size is limited to 9 people.

## Worry-Free Cancellation Policy

Book with us and you'll have peace of mind about your booking. If we cancel a trip, we'll refund 100% of the money paid or put it towards a future trip, your choice. If you cancel, all cancellation fees are usable for future trips with no penalty. Check out our terms and conditions for full details.

# Detailed Itinerary

## **June 8th: ARRIVE TO PANAMA CITY**

Fly into Panama City Tocumen International Airport (PTY) anytime this day and our shuttle will pick you up. Arrive early to visit to the famous Panama Canal or the city's impressive Biomuseo (Biodiversity Museum) (note, this is not included in the tour cost). Overnight: Balboa Inn or similar. Meals: None included today.

## **June 9th: FLY TO BOCAS DEL TORO & ORIENTATION**

After breakfast at the hotel, we will transfer to the domestic airport (Albrook) for the short flight to Bocas del Toro. Upon arrival, we will have lunch in town and then we will be picked up by Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC) staff to transfer by boat to the Soropta field station (about an hour boat ride). After settling into the rooms, we will have lunch and an orientation to the station. Relax this afternoon and join the research staff on the nesting beach to look for hatchlings in the afternoon and turtles in the evening. The training will happen on the beach this evening so there won't be direct hands-on work this night. Meals: B, L, D

## **June 10th: CANAL TOUR & TURTLE RESEARCH**

Today, we will take a boat ride to explore the canals around the area to look for wildlife. We'll see many species of birds and possibly other animals like caiman, sloths, monkeys, and more. In the afternoon, we will receive a training and presentation by STC staff so that we can participate in the research this evening. Later in the afternoon, we will visit the rivermouth to look for manatees and sloths and then do nest excavations (where we open old nests to see how many hatchlings hatched). This evening, we will head to the beach to look for turtles and hatchlings and help collect data on what we see. Patrols are 2-4 hours (though we can be flexible with those who need it) each evening. Meals: B, L, D



### **JUNE 11th: CHOCOLATE TOUR & TURTLE RESEARCH**

This morning after an early breakfast, we will head by boat and bus (about 1 hour total) to visit the Oreba Cacao Farm to see how chocolate is grown and processed. The farm is run by the Ngobe indigenous community and is completely organic. We will tour the farm to see how cacao is grown, fermented, and dried, sample the chocolate, and have a traditional lunch. We will also have chances to see sloths, poison dart frogs, & more. In the afternoon, we will have an optional visit the beach to excavate previously hatched nests. We will work with researchers to dig up the nests and count how many eggs hatched and look for straggler hatchlings, which we will release to the ocean. That evening, we head out to the beach for a night of patrols and hands-on data collection. Meals: B, L, D

### **JUNE 12th: FREE DAY & TURTLE RESEARCH**

Today the group will have free time during the day and may organize an activity such as a beach cleanup if needed. In the afternoon, STC staff will give a presentation on sea turtles and their work in this region. This evening will be the final night of beach patrols at Soroopta. Meals: B, L, D

### **JUNE 13th: STARFISH BEACH & BIRD ISLAND**

Today we will take a short boat ride from Soroopta to Playa Estrella (Starfish Beach, 30 minute ride). On the way, we will pass by Isla Pajaro (Bird Island) to look for brown boobies, red-billed tropic birds, and other species of birds that use this island to nest. We'll also look for mating turtles in the water as we pass by. In the afternoon, we will visit the beautiful Playa Estrella to look for starfish and enjoy some time in the water and on the beach. Lunch will be covered and snacks or drinks will be on your own, there are several places to order from on the beach. Dinner will be on your own to choose from many options in Bocas Town. The evening will be free to explore the town and shop for souvenirs. Overnight: Hotel Bocas del Toro. Meals: B, L

### **JUNE 14th: ZAPATILLA CAYES**

After breakfast, we will head to the Zapatilla Cayes, two spectacular islands in the Bastimentos Island National Marine Park. On the way, we will pass by Sloth Island, where we can see sloths from the boat, as well as a popular area for dolphins. On the islands, we will visit the STC research stations at these islands and then have time for some excellent snorkeling in the surrounding coral reefs. We will have lunch on the beach and then some beach time before we head back to Bocas town. That evening we will get drinks by the water and have a final dinner as a group in one of the town's fine restaurants (note: drinks are not included). Overnight: Hotel Bocas del Toro. Meals: B, L, D

### **JUNE 15th: DEPARTURE**

Have breakfast at the hotel and then fly out from Bocas del Toro airport in the morning to Panama City for your connecting flight. Or extend your stay and visit other parts of the region. Meals: B



# Turtle Research Information

Between March and June, volunteers and researchers patrol the beach from 8:00 pm to 4:00 am in 4 hour shifts (8pm to midnight and midnight to 4 am) and in different sectors. It takes at least 4 hours to patrol the beach effectively and if a nesting turtle is found, the eggs are collected and relocated into a hatchery, where a new nest is dug and the eggs are watched until hatching.

A team of biologists and researchers trained in conservation techniques carry out the important work. Volunteers help with tasks including measuring length and width of the turtles, recording information on data sheets (see photo below), and other tasks. Participants may be asked to help with beach clean-up activities as well.

## Night Patrols

A group of volunteers, led by an experienced patrol leader, walks one of the sectors of the 4 km long beach searching for nesting females. Once a turtle is encountered on a night patrol, the volunteers work directly with it, taking carapace and nest dimension measurements, moving the eggs if necessary, and recording the data. Researchers will place tags on their flippers if they don't have any.

## Hatchlings

If hatchlings are encountered, they are counted and released in the evening to an appropriate location along the high tide line and observed until they reach the sea. Some hatchlings will also be selected for data collection including length and weight. Hatchlings that emerge during the day are held until evening to be released under cover of darkness. Sea Turtle Conservancy does not use hatcheries, so we will look for hatchlings from natural nests in the early evenings. In addition, the group will participate in nest excavations, where previously hatched nests are dug up to look for stragglers and to collect data on how many eggs hatched and what stage of development unhatched eggs were in.



# Our Conservation Partner

## Sea Turtle Conservancy

The Sea Turtle Conservancy, formerly known as the Caribbean Conservation Corporation, is the world's oldest sea turtle research and conservation group. An international nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization, Sea Turtle Conservancy was founded in 1959 by world-renowned sea turtle expert Dr. Archie Carr to save sea turtles from eminent extinction through rigorous science-based conservation.



Headquartered in Florida, the organization carries out worldwide programs to conserve and recover sea turtle populations through research, education, advocacy and protection of the natural habitats upon which they depend. Over the course of nearly 60 years, Sea Turtle Conservancy's research programs have yielded much of what is now known about sea turtles and the threats they face, and the organization is applying this knowledge to carry out the world's most successful sea turtle protection and recovery programs.

## Soropta Beach

Soropta Beach is a 7 km stretch of beach located north of Bocas del Toro, near the border with Costa Rica. From March through June it hosts an important nesting population of leatherback sea turtles with between 500 and 1,000 nests per year, as well as an occasional hawksbill. In 2012, STC had the opportunity to expand its leatherback conservation work in Panama by adding this beach. STC was approached by the London-based Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), which monitored and protected leatherbacks at Soropta Beach since 2002. Before EWT began its initiative in 2001, nearly 100% of all eggs were being harvested from the beach. Even more disturbing, a significant number of nesting leatherbacks were being killed on the beach so their eggs and flippers could be harvested – leaving the rest of the poor turtles to rot on the beach. EWT's intervention virtually eliminated egg poaching, and nesting by leatherbacks increased from around 450 nests per year in 2002 to a high of 675 in 2010, and now even reaching numbers around 800 nests. In 2013, STC took over the monitoring and protection of this critical leatherback nesting beach.



Photo: Ben Hicks



Photo: Ben Hicks



Photo: Raul Garcia





# Background Information

## Leatherback Sea Turtles

The largest of all sea turtles, and one of the largest reptiles on earth, the leatherback turtle ranges in size from 4-8 feet in length (1.2 - 2.4 meters) and weighs between 500-2,000 pounds (225 - 900 kg). The average adult measures in between 5-6 feet (1.5 - 1.8 m) and weighs 600-800 pounds (270 - 360 kg).

The oldest of all sea turtle species, it has been around for more than 150 million years! They survived the extinction of the dinosaurs and thrived until the last several decades when human interactions have taken a major toll. Leatherbacks are considered vulnerable according to the IUCN Red List, upgraded in 2013 from critically endangered due in large part to efforts around the Caribbean to protect important nesting beaches.

At Soropta, the leatherbacks nest starting in early March through the end of June/early July with a peak from mid-April to early May. Hatchlings start arriving mid to late May and peak in mid June. [Learn more about leatherback turtles on our website.](#)

## Hawksbill Sea Turtles

Considered by many to be the most beautiful of sea turtles for their colorful shells, the hawksbill is found in tropical waters around the world. They spend their time in coral reefs, rocky areas, lagoons, mangroves, oceanic islands, and shallow coastal areas. Named for its narrow head and sharp, bird-like beak, hawksbills can reach into cracks and crevices of coral reefs looking for food. Their diet is very specialized, feeding almost exclusively on sponges. One of the smaller turtles, adults weigh between 100-200 pounds (45 - 90 kg) and reach 2-3 feet (roughly .5 to 1 meter) in length. [Learn more about their diet.](#)

This species inhabits tropical and some sub-tropical regions in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. The largest populations occur in the Caribbean Sea, the Seychelles, Indonesia, Mexico, and Australia. Hawksbills are not found in the Mediterranean and few are found in US waters; only a handful nest in Florida each year. [Learn more about hawksbill turtles on our website.](#)



Photo: Lulu Muse



Photo: Sam Cooper

# Accommodations

## Soropta Field Station

The Soropta station is a rustic and remote outpost on the northern Caribbean coast. Bedrooms are shared by 2-4 people with bunk beds. Bathrooms and showers are shared and located in a separate building. Meals are simple and dietary restrictions can be accommodated. More photos available on the trip webpage and Our Conservation Partner section.



## Crowne Plaza Hotel (Panama City)

Relaxed airport hotel featuring a restaurant & a bar, plus a fitness center & an outdoor pool.



## Hotel Bocas del Toro

This charming waterfront hotel on Isla Colon offers great views, great breakfast, hot water, & wifi as well as air conditioning and a great spot on the water.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Turtle Questions

### **Am I guaranteed to see a sea turtle or hatchling?**

As with most wild animals, there is never a guarantee to see a sea turtle (they are endangered of course). However at this beach, which can have 500 - 1,000 nests per season, you have a very good chance of seeing and working with multiple turtles. Hatchlings start arriving in mid-May and from early June through July, so you have a good chance of seeing hatchlings as well.

### **Is walking on the beach at night safe in Panama?**

You will be walking with local researchers and guides who know how to handle any situations that might arise. While there are people that collect eggs at this and surrounding beaches, there is no safety concern for volunteers.

### **How does this trip benefit turtle conservation?**

Of the \$1,895 cost, \$885 (49%) goes to Sea Turtle Conservancy for beach patrols and funds that support our Billion Baby Turtles program (which helps save 500 hatchlings) and other programs and general operations. The trip also includes 4 volunteer shifts patrolling the leatherback nesting beach. [Learn more here.](#)

### **Will I get to do every volunteer job on the trip?**

As we can't guarantee that you will see a sea turtle, we also can't guarantee you'll get to do every job in the volunteer program. We hope to give every participant the opportunity to do each job but it depends on the number of participants, the number of turtles encountered, and the individual circumstances with each turtle (sometimes more complicated situations require the researchers to do specific jobs).

The tagging is done only by research staff. If there is one specific job you really want to do, let your guide know and he will do his best to accommodate your request. Check out the page Turtle Research Information for details about the tasks involved in sea turtle research.



## Logistical/Travel Issues

### **How much money should I bring?**

We recommend that each participant bring \$100 in cash for tipping and spending money. Panama uses US dollars, so feel free to bring cash (though you may get change in local currency). Many shop owners are wary of accepting torn or “old looking” bills – so please bring crisp newer bills if possible! Small bills (\$1’s and \$5’s) are useful at the turtle projects where there are no banks and people have a harder time finding change for larger bills.

### **How much should I tip?**

Tipping guides isn’t mandatory, but it is customary. We recommend tipping \$5 dollars per day per participant for the local staff. (That would be \$25 per participant). For the chocolate, Starfish Beach, and Zapatilla Cayes activities, we recommend \$5-10 per person for the guides. Participants will not need to tip anyone else along the way other than the meals on your own but feel free to leave additional tips if you have great service at restaurants.

### **Can I call home or check my email while in Panama?**

Calling home from Panama can be expensive. For email, you should not rely on or expect to be able to get online while on the trip other than in Panama City and Bocas Town though a signal can sometimes be found on the beach near the station. Cell phones from the US or Canada often do not work in Panama or automatically switch you to a local service which can activate international roaming fees. If you plan to bring a phone, please check with your provider about coverage and cost.

### **Are the electrical outlets the same?**

The voltage in Panama is the same as the United States. However, most outlets are 2 prong instead of 3 prong, so if you are bringing something that needs 3 prongs you need to bring an adapter. Electricity at this station is generated by solar power, so there is not enough power to charge electronics.

### **Can I go to an ATM in Panama?**

Although there are ATMs in Panama, much of the time you will be in places where they are not available. ATM’s don’t always work, so while you may be able to get cash from ATMs, don’t count on it. Your best bet is to do that while in Panama City before heading to the station or in Bocas Town at the end of the trip.

### **How should I handle medications I need to bring?**

If you plan to bring personal medicine, please consider the following:

- Carry just the necessary quantity, which is the quantity normally used by a person having your health problem.
- Have the medicines labeled or properly identified.

### **Do I need any vaccinations?**

Since we are not doctors, we cannot give you advice on vaccinations. We recommend speaking with your doctor or visiting a travel clinic. You can also [check the CDC website for Panama](#) for the most up-to-date information.

### **What is the weather like on Panama's Caribbean coast?**

On the Caribbean, there are no defined wet or dry seasons like the Pacific coast. Generally it’s pretty hot (80’s to 90’s F) and humid. Be prepared for possible rain during your stay including a light rain jacket and clothes that can dry easily.

### **Can I photograph the turtles?**

Nesting turtles are sensitive to white light (including camera flash). To prevent disturbance, our conservation partner prohibits photographs at night (even with infrared). If there are hatchlings during the daytime, those can be photographed.

# Testimonials

Read some of the feedback we've had from our past Panama trips:

Amazing trip, full of many wonders and "thank you God" moments. Unforgettable interactions with the turtles, hatchlings, starfish, and beautiful birds. Very friendly and knowledgeable staff. Learned a lot about the turtles and the research that is taking place by the enthusiastic staff.

-Suzi M

The Panama trip exceeded my expectations and left me wanting to book again ASAP. I highly recommend you travel with SEE Turtles in the near future, you will not regret it!

-Natalie

I was not expecting to see so many turtles and be able to have the hands-on experiences that we did. The bonus was the turtle hatchling finding its way to the sea on the last day...perfect. Also, I thought there was a perfect amount of scheduled activities vs. down time on your own.

-Anonymous

Working with Leatherbacks, adults and hatchlings. Being able to interact with the adults, I have never before been able to work with an adult sea turtle in this capacity and just seeing a leatherback has been a dream of mine for as long as I can remember. The hatchlings are beyond adorable. Also, staying at an STC research station and working with STC staff was such an honor and privilege! It was just so cool!

-Anonymous



# Conservation Travel

SEE Turtles strives to reduce the environmental impact of our trips wherever possible. Sometimes we need help from you, the traveler, so here are some ways that we (and you) can help.

## Tortoiseshell Jewelry

Did you know that tortoiseshell is actually hawksbill sea turtle shell? This is a major threat to hawksbills, which are critically endangered. Souvenirs made from their shells include bracelets, earrings, guitar picks, and combs. Below is a photo to recognizing these items and we encourage our travelers not only to not purchase these items but also to refuse to purchase from stores that offer them and to alert your guide when you see these items for sale. Learn more at [SEEturtles.org/TooRareToWear](http://SEEturtles.org/TooRareToWear) and [download our SEE Shell App to identify these products here](#).

## Reducing Plastic Use

Another major threat to sea turtles is plastic in the ocean, which can be confused for jellyfish. SEE Turtles is a member of “[Travelers Against Plastic](#),” an organization that reduces plastic waste created on vacation. We encourage travelers to bring reusable water bottles to refill; you can go through as many as 15-20 bottles on one trip per person. Another suggestion is to ask for no straws with your drinks. Souvenirs can be stored in day packs instead of disposable bags.

## Reef-Friendly Sunscreen

Did you know that sunscreen can damage coral reefs? The ingredient “oxybenzone” has been found to cause harm in even very small quantities and an estimated 4,000 - 6,000 tons per year. Look for sunscreen without this ingredient (zinc oxide or titanium oxide are both safe), or wear a shirt while swimming to reduce the need for sunscreen. [Check out this great resource from our friends at Oceanic Society to learn more](#).

## Reducing Carbon Emissions

Travel by its nature is very carbon-intensive. Some ways you can reduce your emissions include leaving electronic devices at home, using fans instead of AC, by turning of AC, fans, and lights when not at hotels or cabins, and by using public transportation when possible. For sites with limited electricity, you can purchase a solar powered charger to recharge small electronics. You can also purchase carbon offsets. One we recommend is “[Seagrass Grow](#)” a program with our former organization The Ocean Foundation. The offsets are used to restore important seagrass beds, which are important habitat for green sea turtles.



## HOW TO IDENTIFY & AVOID HAWKSBILL TURTLESHELL

Endangered hawksbill turtles are hunted for their shells to make souvenirs. Help save this turtle by avoiding vendors selling turtleshell products.

| IMITATION |   | TURTLESHELL |   |
|-----------|---|-------------|---|
|           | PLASTIC<br>Uniform pattern with markings  |             | COLOR<br>Browns, oranges, amber, yellow     |
|           | COCONUT<br>Brown on top, beige underneath |             | PATTERN<br>Assymetric and irregular shapes  |
|           | HORN<br>Heavy with black/white coloring   |             | SURFACE<br>Color pattern visible throughout |

## Download our SEE Shell App



Apple



Android

# Conservation Impact Pricing

We believe in transparency and that travelers should know how much their trips are helping, so we now list the impact of every trip on our conservation partners and local communities. Your participation on these trips makes a big difference to the work on the ground and in the water.

We break up the impact into three categories:

- **Conservation:** For this trip, an estimated \$885 of the trip cost supports conservation efforts. This includes funds that go to local partners to protect nesting beaches and conduct in-water research, as well as support for our Billion Baby Turtles and Too Rare To Wear programs and general operations. We also list the amount of volunteer opportunities in each trip. Since our launch, we have generated more than US \$1 million for turtle conservation and our 1,000+ travelers have completed nearly 5,000 volunteer shifts for an additional \$50,000 in in-kind benefits.
- **Local Communities:** For this trip, an estimated \$525 of the trip cost is spent in local communities. We believe that money spent communities around turtle hotspots is as important as direct funding. When communities benefit from turtle watching, they are more likely to support protecting sea turtles and less likely to participate in activities like illegal egg harvesting. This category includes tour costs going towards staying in local accommodations, eating in local restaurants, and paying local staff (including local guides for tourist activities.) We have pumped more than US \$300,000 into coastal communities near sea turtle sites since our launch.
- **Travel Costs:** For this trip, an estimated \$485 goes towards travel costs. Every tour involves costs to get you to places to see the sea turtles, hiring a guide and driver to get you there safely, airport transfers, as well as profits and administrative costs of our local operators and partners.



# Recommended Packing List

Pack in a duffel bag/suitcase/backpack that you can carry yourself and a day pack (If you have a suitcase with wheels, please realize there may be times when you will need to carry it short distances.

**\* Indicates required items.**

## Clothing

- **Sturdy sneakers for walks or close-toed sandals for beach walks\***
- 3-4 Pairs socks
- Pairs of dark & lightweight pants (nylon is better than cotton)\*
- **2 Pairs of long sleeve dark colored lightweight shirts\***
- 3-4 Pairs of shorts
- 5-6 T-shirts or short sleeve shirts
- **Rain gear or poncho** (dark color for turtle patrols)\*
- Sun hat for the beach
- Swimwear for snorkeling

## Toiletries

- Comb/brush
- Shampoo/bath soap (ideally a biodegradable variety)
- **Sunscreen 30+ (waterproof & reef-friendly)\***
- Insect repellent & after-bite stick
- Deodorant
- Toothpaste/toothbrush
- Washcloth
- Beach towel
- Hand Sanitizer (small bottle)

## Other Stuff

- **Refillable bottle for water (clean water will be provided)\***
- Passport and a photocopy
- Money (recommend US \$200-\$250 clean bills for tips and souvenirs)
- Camera
- Binoculars
- Games, cards, things to do during down time
- Small flashlight or headlamp with extra batteries
- Large ziplock bags for wet clothes & shoes and for electronics (to keep dry and protect from humidity)
- Polarized sunglasses
- Prescription medications (bring in carry on baggage in original packaging)





# Terms & Conditions

## Payment Policies

Full payment of the total price of the expedition is due no later than 60 days (2 months) before departure. Travelers can choose to do monthly payments (the balance of the trip cost after deposit, divided evenly between the remaining months before the final payment is due) or pay 50% of the balance at 120 days before the trip with the remaining balance due 60 days before the trip. Monthly payment plans are not available within 4 months of trip departure. We reserve the right to cancel a reservation if payment is not made on time. In such cases, all payments are non-refundable.

**Cancellation Policy:** If you cancel your space, it must be in writing (email is acceptable) and is effective the day we receive it in our office. Your cancellation will entitle you to a refund of any deposit or payment made to us, less a cancellation fee, according to the following schedule:

- 120 days or more prior to departure: \$300 per person (or whatever the specific trip deposit is)
- 60 to 119 days prior to departure: 50% of expedition fee per person
- 59 days or less prior to departure: 100% of expedition fee per person

Cancellation fees can be used towards one future SEE Turtles trip with no penalties or expiration except in the case of cancellations within 60 days prior to departure, when payments to local providers has already been completed. Any fees paid can be deducted from a future trip, based on available dates for cancellations made before 60 days prior to departure. Trip credits can be transferred one time only, if a second trip is cancelled by the traveler, all fees will be forfeited with the exception of extreme circumstances, which is up to the discretion of SEE Turtles staff.

## Transfers:

Depending on availability, you may transfer from one trip to another four months prior to departure at no charge. If you transfer less than four months prior to departure, you may be subject to the cancellation fees. Registration fees paid may be transferred to another traveler up until 2 months before departure with prior notice provided. In some cases, transfers may be made less than 2 months before departure.

## Cancelled Trips:

We reserve the right to cancel any trip prior to scheduled departure due to not meeting our minimum number required or logistical problems (vessel breakdown, strikes, etc.). You may transfer to another expedition or we will refund all payments made to SEE Turtles in full. In no event, however, shall our liability exceed the obligation to refund the amount you paid to us. Trip cancellation due to too few registrations normally occurs at a minimum of two months prior to departure. Refunds will not be given for individual hotel rooms, meals, sightseeing trips, or expedition arrangements for any reason. Expedition costs are quoted as a package; credits are not given for services not used.

## Trip Cost Includes:

Accommodations, airport transfers as specified in the trip itinerary, excursions, entrance fees, local guides, most permits, and meals, unless otherwise indicated in the itinerary. SEE Turtles reserves the right to make any changes in the itinerary or to substitute hotels, modes of transport, or guides, for those mentioned in the literature if circumstances require it.

## Trip Cost Does Not Include:

The cost of international air to the tour starting point (unless otherwise indicated in the itinerary) airport taxes, passport and visa fees, immunizations, insurance of any kind, alcoholic beverages, laundry, tips, excess baggage, items of a personal nature, medical costs, costs of hospitalization, additional expenses arising from the delay or extension of a trip due to weather, political disputes, illness, failure of transportation, or other causes beyond our control.

## Children on Trips:

Some SEE Turtles trips are suitable for children, depending on the child's age and experience. Anyone under age 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

**Unexpected Trip Costs:** We reserve the right to raise the trip fee if there are cost increases beyond our control. These cases are extremely rare and would only occur where unforeseen cost increases from suppliers would result in a financial loss for the organization. In these cases, registered clients are given the option to transfer or cancel with no penalties.

**Accommodations:** Land accommodations are based on double occupancy unless otherwise indicated in the trip description. We can try to match single travelers of the same gender but some trips require a single supplement if single rooms are preferred or there is no match available.

**Single Travelers:** If you are a single traveler wishing to share accommodations, we will try to match you with a roommate. If no roommate becomes available, you may be required to pay the Single Supplement Fee listed in the trip description if applicable. If you request a single, private room you must pay the Single Supplement Fee listed in the trip description regardless of sign-up date. Please note that single accommodations are not always available.

**Budget Airfare Caution:** We recommend against buying non-refundable airline tickets until your trip departure has been confirmed (usually a minimum of 90 days before departure). Budget air tickets often carry restrictions and you risk penalties in the event of itinerary or date changes or trip cancellation. Please await confirmation of the trip before purchasing non-refundable airfare.

**Withdrawal:** SEE Turtles reserves the right to require any participant to withdraw from an expedition at any time if the expedition director deems their acts or conduct to be detrimental to or incompatible with the interest, harmony, comfort, or welfare of the expedition. In such cases, no refunds will be given.

**Medical Issues:** Although SEE Turtles trips are not generally very physically demanding, you must be in general good health to participate. It is the passengers' responsibility to judge the appropriateness of their physical capabilities to these travel activities. Anyone with medical problems or restrictions must make them known to us well in advance of the trip and should have a personal supply of any special medications they may need. The trip leader has the right to disqualify any member from the group at any time if considered medically necessary; no refund will be made under such circumstances. SEE Turtles and its affiliates take no responsibility for special arrangements required by passengers physically unable to complete a trip and assume no liability regarding provision of medical care or medical evacuation.

**Release Forms:** On some trips you may need to sign an additional release form by our local partners and/or tour operators.

**Suppliers of Services:** SEE Turtles is performing a nonprofit service by informing potential participants of worthwhile expeditions. However, SEE Turtles is acting independently and has no business association as partner or joint venture with any boat owner, resort, hotel, carrier, SCUBA operation, or other services. Any claims for inadequate performance or non-performance of services may be made against the supplier of those services but shall not be made against SEE Turtles.

**SCUBA Diving:** SEE Turtles does not offer SCUBA diving as part of any of our trips. Participants may participate in diving while on a trip but acknowledges that SEE Turtles has no responsibility for the actions, performance, or equipment of any SCUBA services offered by hotels or dive shops. We recommend that any travelers planning to dive while on a SEE Turtles trip research the safety record of the operators and obtain additional divers insurance.

# About Us

SEE Turtles was launched in 2008 as the world's first effort to protect these species through ecotourism. Since then, we have expanded to include our Billion Baby Turtles, Too Rare To Wear, Sea Turtle Inclusivity Fund, and Sea Turtles & Plastic programs. To date, we have brought more than 1,500 people to visit turtle projects around the world, generated more than US \$1 million for turtle conservation and local communities, saved more than 10 million turtle hatchlings at more than 50 nesting beaches, and reached more than 10,000 students with our educational programs. SEE Turtles is an independent 501c3 organization based in Portland, Oregon.



[www.SEEturtles.org](http://www.SEEturtles.org)  
[info@seeturtles.org](mailto:info@seeturtles.org)



Photo: Juan Ma Gonzalez