



Turtle conservation with Archelon in Greece

Is international volunteering right for you? This document will give you a brief outline about volunteering with **ARCHELON The Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece** from December 2019. Please read this information carefully.

Project Summary

There is an opportunity for one volunteer to work on a turtle conservation project in Athens, Greece from December 2019 for 6 months. You will join up to seven other volunteers based at the Rescue Centre for turtle conservation Society ARCHELON to help with a range of activities including tending to injured turtles and raising public awareness. You will be joining volunteers from other countries, living and working communally on site with shared accommodation at a volunteers' home at the Rescue Centre or at an organized campground in Rethymno, Crete. For volunteers under the age of 30 cost will be largely covered through a generous grant from Erasmus+ and support with training, organising and all aspects of the project will be provided by the Leeds Beckett University International Volunteering Team and ARCHELON.

About the organisation



Since 1983, the primary objective of ARCHELON, the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece has been to protect the sea turtles and their habitats in Greece through monitoring and research, developing and implementing management plans, habitat restoration, raising public awareness and rehabilitating sick and injured turtles.

In 1994, ARCHELON in co-operation with the Municipality of Glyfada and the financial support of the Environmental Ministry, set up one of the first Sea Turtle Rescue Centres in the Mediterranean, located in Glyfada, near Athens by the seaside. Its main functions are to receive, treat and rehabilitate injured and sick sea turtles, release them back to the wild and raise public awareness.

The Rethymno Bay area in northern Crete is the third largest nesting habitat of the *loggerhead sea turtle* (*Caretta caretta*) in Greece and the largest on the island. Rethymno Bay is known for its beautiful beaches of golden sand and shallow waters. The beach extends for 12 kilometers.

Based on statistics which have been collected by ARCHELON volunteers since 1989, there is an average of 300 sea turtle nests per year on Rethymno Bay beaches. However, due to increased pressure from tourism-related development, the average percentage of the number of the nests is decreasing year-by-year, which indicates that it is necessary to protect the area.

Turtles are an ancient order of reptiles and have remained largely unchanged for hundreds of millions of years, since the time of the dinosaurs – some of the oldest fossils are from a genus of turtles known as Archelon, from which the organisation takes its name. Once hatched, turtles rarely come onto land with only mature females coming back at night during the nesting season to the beaches where they were hatched. In recent years, fishing, pollution and habitat destruction has seen populations severely reduced and six of the seven species are now listed as a range from vulnerable (Loggerhead turtles), endangered to critically endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.



Since the 1960s tourists have been drawn to the beautiful beaches of Greece by its scenery, climate, ruins, beaches and the warmth of the local people. Extensive coastal construction has seen the development of hotels, bars, water sports and other facilities on the beachfront, major contributing factors to the threats facing turtles. Females of most species will return to the sea without laying eggs if lights or noise on the beach disturbs them. Unprotected nests can be damaged by beach activities, and hatchlings emerging at night can become disorientated by the bright lights of hotels, bars and coastal roads.

ARCHELON has been working with the local people who are fiercely proud of the presence of turtles on their islands and realise the importance of the nesting populations, and tourists to highlight the threats to loggerhead turtles and, more importantly, what can be done to address the issues.

About the volunteer role

Volunteers will participate in all aspects of work at the Rescue Centre. These are the Rescue Network, sea turtle rehabilitation, public awareness and maintenance. Duties will be allocated by the Project Leader who will also organise the weekly rota.



- **Rescue Network:** activities include responding to reports of live turtle strandings throughout Greece, collection of injured turtles from the airport, train or bus station, or Piraeus port. These activities are not part of the weekly routine but take priority whenever they do occur for this reason it would be very useful if volunteers can drive and may be asked to drive ARCHELON's car for this purpose.
- **Sea turtle Rehabilitation:** duties include the preparation and administration of food (usually fish) to the turtles, daily treatment of the animals as determined by the vets (administering medication, cleaning wounds etc) as well as taking biometric data and making behaviour observations. This is one of the main daily activities within the Rescue Centre, since at any given time there is an average of 20 to 25 turtles under treatment. Please note that this can be physical demanding work.
- **Public Awareness:** activities include the running of the Rescue Centre's exhibition area and providing information to visitors, conducting presentations to organized groups and assisting in public events organized by Archelon to promote the Rescue Centre (e.g. publicised sea turtle releases, participation in exhibitions, etc).
- **Maintenance:** activities include basic maintenance duties like painting the wagons, operation the water supply systems as well as cleaning the facilities and equipment.
- **Data entry:** detailed information is kept on each sea turtle admitted to the Rescue Centre. All data collected is entered in databases so that they can be subsequently used for statistical reports.





Accommodation – volunteer apartment

- Accommodation, provided by ARCHELON is an apartment in Paleo Faliro which can accommodate a maximum of eight volunteers. There are two bedrooms a kitchen, a bathroom, a living room/dining area and a big balcony. Heating and Wi-Fi are also available.
- Basic cooking facilities are provided and a main shopping area is five-minute walk away.
- Volunteers are encouraged to use a community based system for sharing the food cost. This is around €20 - €30 per week which will be enough for basic food costs. If you want to go it alone with food and cooking then you might need around €15 per day.
- Volunteers need to arrive at the accommodation one day before the first day of volunteering and you can stay one day after the last day of volunteering.
- Cleaning of all the accommodation areas in a regular basis is compulsory as is cleaning on arrival and leaving the accommodation.

Accommodation at the Rescue Centre

Some days of the week, a few volunteers must stay at the Rescue Centre. The accommodation for the volunteers at the Sea Turtle Rescue Centre is quite basic:

- **Bedrooms:** the volunteers have one train wagon (with a small bedroom with four beds, kitchen, toilet and shower) and one container with two bedrooms, one lounge room and a small laundry room.
- **Heating:** during winter it can get quite cold and heating is in the form of gas stoves. During summer it can get very hot. Some, although limited areas have air conditioning and fans are provided.
- **Privacy:** generally during winter due to the fact that it's cold weather, there are limited private areas, but during the summer there is a common area that the volunteers use.



Other important information about life with ARCHELON

- Turtles are quite heavy (up to 90 kilos) and the tasks involve much turtle lifting.
- During the summer it can get very hot outside and inside both the working areas and accommodation.
- The Rescue Centre facilities are like camping so expect some contact with nature including creepy crawlies. Mosquitoes, cockroaches, bees and other insects are normal in this part of the world and cannot be avoided. Cleaning is the best way of keeping them away.
- Volunteers must be prepared to work long hours. Free time is arranged around the needs of the project and volunteers should be able to work as part of a small team taking responsibility for the completion their duties. Working at the Rescue Centre involves many different asks and everyone is expected to participate in all tasks.
- Only volunteers that have been officially accepted by Archelon can use the project premises.



Transport in Athens

The accommodation is a short journey on local transport to the rescue centre and volunteers need to cover their own transport costs. There are different options (you will need your student ID)

- 90 minute ticket for all the transport (except from the airport) and for all destinations in Athens is €0.60.
- 5 day ticket: €9
- Monthly ticket: €15.

Funding and costs

For volunteers under 30 there is significant funding available for this project from the Erasmus+ programme. Depending on how careful you are with money, it should cover most if not all of the volunteering- related costs. Of course Greece is a beautiful and fascinating country and you will need



funding to explore in your free time. Exact grant amounts are calculated according to the exact number of days spent volunteering but an estimate is as follows:

For travel: €360*

General allowance: €900*

**Erasmus+ grants are calculated in Euros but can be paid in Euros or Pounds according to your preference.*

Approximate budget

Costs	Unit cost	Total in £
Flights and travel to and from airport	£400	£400
Accommodation	free	£0
Food	€30 a week	£315
Transport in Athens	€15 a month	£80
Insurance	free	£0
Fundraised donation*	£100	£100
Total		£895

Erasmus+ grant	Unit cost	Total in £
Travel	€360	£315
General allowance	€5 per day	£790
Total		£1105

**In addition we ask all volunteers to raise £100 to donate directly to Archelon to support their excellent work. We have lots of ideas of how to fundraise and it's a good way to meet other international volunteers.*

Erasmus+ grant terms

- Leeds Beckett's International Volunteering Team will help you organise the grant. There will be some forms for you to complete and these will be provided once your place on the project is confirmed
- The grant will be paid in two instalments: 80% at the beginning and 20% at the end when all final paperwork and other post-project admin has been completed
- In exchange for the grant, we would like you provide some photos and wording or web content that can be used to help inspire and prepare other volunteers. This will be agreed in advance and examples include:
 - a) Keeping a blog
 - b) Testimonial when you return (300 words min) describing the impact the experience has had on you
 - c) Vlog (1 minute minimum)
 - d) Video edit of your volunteering experience (1 minute minimum)
- The volunteering placement is for six months. If the worst comes to the worst and you need to cut it short, the grant will be adjusted accordingly and we will ask you to pay back the difference. There is a minimum time-period below which volunteer become ineligible for the grant – further details will be provided.



Being an Erasmus+ Volunteer



Erasmus+

Erasmus+ has held a long commitment to supporting volunteering opportunities for young people and mobility across borders. Starting in 1996, the European Voluntary Service has allowed more than 100 000 young people to go abroad and gain a life changing experience as a volunteer.

The reason for this commitment is that Erasmus+ values volunteering as a non-formal learning experience enhancing volunteers' professional skills and competences, thus contributing to their employability. At the same time, it increases their sense of solidarity, develops their social skills and promotes active participation in society. It is a win-win situation, where both the volunteer and the community benefit.

Erasmus+ is also very clear about the standard of the volunteering opportunities provide and as such has clear guidelines on what volunteers can expect which can be found here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/what-to-expect-from-erasmusvolunteering-2018.pdf>

YouthPass: As an Erasmus+ international volunteering project, you will be able to work towards a Youth Pass which is a tool to document and recognise learning outcomes from youth work activities as part of the Erasmus+ strategy to foster the recognition of non-formal learning. While creating their Youthpass certificate together with a support person, volunteers describe what they have done, the skills and competences acquired and generally reflect on the experience and what they have gain.

Other important information

Pre-Departure Activities and Commitments: if accepted onto the project there will be a lot for you to do to prepare for spending six months volunteering with Archelon. Please ensure that you will have enough time to devote to this. Preparation will include meetings, training, organising travel, language preparation (although you will be able to get by perfectly well in English), some paperwork and some fundraising.

Travel: you will organise your own transport to Greece and make your own way to the Rescue Centre but don't worry we can advise you on this if you need help and will provide all necessary transport information.

Volunteer support: each volunteer will be supported in the UK by the Leeds Beckett International Volunteering Team and in Greece by Archelon. Thorough risk assessments and careful planning are undertaken to ensure your experience is safe from start to finish and they will help you prepare and will provide training and advice on organising if needed. The International Volunteering staff at Leeds Beckett will also be on-call whilst you are volunteering in Greece, though the initial point of contact will usually be the staff at Archelon. Archelon will also be there to support in the preparation phase and will provide all necessary guidance and support once in Athens.

Challenges: this is a fantastic opportunity but there will be challenges. We want to give a realistic picture of what to expect so here are a few of the challenges that international volunteers sometimes face:

- culture shock – sometimes its hard to settle in and this is normal but by the end of the project, we find our volunteers look back upon the challenges as their proudest moments and they feel as
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- though they have a second home in their volunteering country. The interaction with local people and learning about local culture is what our volunteers come to cherish most from their time away.
- as with most volunteering projects there are often last-minute changes to the programme, either before departure or perhaps on a day-to-day basis with the host organisation. Volunteers need to be patient, flexible and understanding about the fact that arrangements can sometimes change last-minute and sometimes things do not run exactly to plan.
- although volunteers tell us they have made “friends for life” living 24/7 with other volunteers can present its own surprising challenges too. We have found a little tolerance goes a long way

How to apply

Thank you for your interest! Please email Cara at volunteering@leedsbeckett.ac.uk for more information.

Contact

If you are having any problems please contact volunteering@leedsbeckett.ac.uk / 0113 81 23804

We look forward to hearing from you!