



**Dolphin Research in Kenya -
Volunteer for two weeks to assist vital conservation efforts on
this long running research project on the East African Coast**

Översikt

GVI Volunteers will live and work in the beautiful Shimoni Archipelago, off the coast of the Indian Ocean on the border with Tanzania, a world class location for dolphins as well as other wildlife. Volunteers will conduct dolphin research from a surface vessel and have the opportunity to snorkel to observe turtles. Full training is provided by GVI's full time research staff allowing volunteers a hands on and invaluable contribution to the preservation of these majestic animals. Volunteers can also choose to combine this project with other GVI programs in the area including our teaching english project and primate research project.

Projektet

The Government of Kenya has expressed a strong interest in developing marine conservation and sustainable resource use along the southern coastline, but lacks the finance and scientific expertise to do so. GVI supports Kenyan organisations by examining how the local communities affect and utilize the region's natural resources. The project also assists communities in development initiatives, such as how to use resources in a sustainable manner. GVI assists partners in promoting this local framework as the basis for a larger conservation-research initiative in tropical coastal waters and terrestrial areas around Shimoni. Volunteers live and work alongside local researchers, students and staff from the Kenyan Wildlife Service.

Through collaboration with local conservation groups, tourist operators, and local villagers, the project combines ecological research with grass-roots conservation efforts. The ultimate aim is the self-financing of conservation through regulated ecotourism and resource use. Community interaction via English language and environmental education is central to the success of the project, alongside the scientific research itself. GVI run a variety of other projects in the area but all are interlinked with this common goal in mind. The projects include: collecting population and distribution data on marine mammals, determining residence rates and habitat relationships, assessing current anthropogenic impact on cetaceans, assisting partners in developing a 'code of conduct.

GVI volunteers are helping to expand the marine mammal research projects. This includes the observation of Indian Ocean bottlenose dolphins, Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins, spinner dolphins, and other seasonal mega-fauna such as humpback whales, whale sharks and manta rays. Due to extremely limited knowledge of East African delphinids, local and international researchers have initiated the project, and GVI is focusing on examining population ecology of the dolphin species inhabiting the Shimoni area and the Kisite-Mpunguti marine protected area. Once the basic data on population ecology is gathered, levels of anthropogenic impact will be assessed to identify potential problem issues, problem areas and (if required) propose appropriate mitigation measures. Subsequently, we will: a) identify species-specific critical habitats, b) identify sites that should be considered priority conservation areas (refuges with limited human impact), and c) map future dolphin-watch 'hot spots'.

En volontär berättar

"Jambo! We wake bright and early to the sounds of Rachel singing "You are my sunshine"... it's the start of a marine day. Marine days are great fun! After a yummy breakfast of pancakes we head out on the water in search of dolphins, turtles, whale sharks, manta rays and other wonders of the sea, on board the mighty Stingray. With captains Kyla, Hugo, Rachel or Shaffi at the helm ably assisted by trusty captain Haruni we plod up the channel between Shimoni and Wasini Island into the Kisite-Mpunguti Marine Protected Area. If we're lucky we may spot a pod of humpback dolphins cruising along the channel... not today, but as we travel further into the reserve we come across a pod of bottlenose dolphins off the shelf south of Kisite Island. It's always incredible to see dolphins in their natural environment, performing peduncle dives, tail dives, belly ups and bow riding.

When we spot a group of dolphins we have a series of forms and tasks to carry out as part of GVI's ongoing research within the marine reserve and park. After making note of general environmental conditions such as cloud cover, swell and wind direction in the Event Log we record the sighting and carry out a dolphin behaviour survey. If we are able we then carry out photo identification of individual dolphin dorsal fins which each have specific markings. During the course of the morning we may also spot a turtle or two, which we again record on data sheets. After a morning out on boat we head back to Wasini Island in time for a generously prepared lunch of bean burgers salad and flat bread, a GVI Kenya specialty!

The trip back to the island is usually great fun as we pick up speed bouncing over the waves and getting refreshingly wet! The afternoons generally consist of data entry into the computer and trip to the mangroves to carry out bird surveys or mangrove clean ups with the collection of flip flops which are recycled into unique crafts by members the village and plastic bottles which are recycled in Mombasa, again earning community members money whilst cleaning up this important marine environment. Overall camp life is a lot of fun, once you get use to the drop toilets, the resident noisy goats and the buckets showers. The community is fantastic; extremely welcoming. You get a true taste of coastal African life. The kids never forget your name, and you literally get treated as part of the family. It's an experience of a life time.

Melissa Pepper

En valhaj som är ute på äventyr



Vilken skillnad gör detta projekt?

This project is making a difference by supporting our partners, including Kenyan Wildlife Services, in cetacean research. Through education, environmental awareness and current wildlife monitoring studies, our collaborative work has been building capacity within the communities, assisting them in developing sustainable tourism practises and protecting cetacean and primate species within the area.

Höjdpunkter

Assisting local and international researchers to monitor dolphins; camping out under the African stars; living on an African island; developing your knowledge of marine studies, experiencing the amazing mega-fauna of the island that includes whales, whale sharks and manta rays (seasonal), snorkeling some of Kenya's finest coral reefs.

Plats

If you are looking to volunteer in Kenya in a truly exotic location, this is the project for you! Shimoni is a peninsula located next to the Kisite-Mpunguti Marine Protected Area, which lies at the tip of the Pemba Channel. With scattered islands covered by coastal forest, mangroves, rocky shores, sandy bays and fringed by coral reefs, Shimoni is a tropical haven and divers' paradise. The projects main base is located on Wasini Island, which is situated alongside the famous Kisite National Marine Park.

Ute i fält

Accommodation is in shared housing that has a large communal banda where volunteers can eat, conduct training and relax after their day out on the ocean. You will be living with different volunteer teams either from the GVI expedition or from volunteers choosing to work at the local school. This is a great way to learn more about what GVI does in the area and you will also have the opportunity to stop in to see other projects at work. The communal area has a beautiful view of the channel and Mkwiro beach. The base camp will have limited electricity, powered by solar panel and backed up by a generator. Volunteers can wash either in the ocean or using bucket-style showers on the base. Wholesome and varied meals will be cooked on a rotational basis

Förkunskaper

No previous experience is required, but volunteers must be able to work as part of a team, have a strong interest in wildlife and conservation, a sense of adventure and be prepared to enjoy Africa in a rustic way. Days are hot and dusty, and volunteers can expect to experience all the adventures and rigors of Africa on a continual basis. In addition, all volunteers will have to complete a swimming test on arrival at the base (an unaided 200m surface swim, followed by a ten minute float in the open sea environment). Participants must be enthusiastic, adventurous and respectful of their host country's culture and environment.

Annat att göra under resan

Being based on the Kenya / Tanzania border means during this project, you will be close to some of the most renowned national parks in East Africa, including Tsavo, Serengeti, Amboseli, Maasai Mara and Ngorongoro. Before or after your project you can visit these parks to explore the wild and beautiful home of wildlife that includes lions, rhinos and zebras, and there are also other opportunities during the project for you to go on excursions. The islands of Zanzibar and Pemba are a 30-minute flight away from Mombasa – the second largest city in Kenya which offers its visitors an excellent and vibrant cultural insight into the coastal Swahili culture. We recommend that you spend a bit of time exploring before or after your project, if you have the time.

At weekends you will have Saturday afternoon and Sunday off, and you can choose whether to stay on the base and relax in the community or go further a-field and explore. You have opportunities to:

- * Hire a sailing boat and visit Funzi Island, where you can stay in a traditional home, eat local dishes, and participate in turtle nesting surveys and nest relocations with Funzi Turtle Club in the evening.
- * Visit Bodo Village to help the Bodo Turtle Conservation Group re-plant their mangroves and the community to sustain their natural resources. After a morning's work you can sit back, relax and eat lunch with the group, before taking a boat trip through the mangroves to look for crocodiles.
- * Go on a safari to the Shimba Hills National Reserve and stay in the KWS bandas that sit amongst the coastal forest and beautiful grasslands. Here you can see elephants, giraffes, buffalo and the only breeding population in Kenya of the beautiful sable antelope. Take a guided walk down to the beautiful Sheldrick Falls and cool off in the pool beneath.
- * Visit Pemba and around Shimoni, where the scuba diving is world-class and PADI courses can be taken at good rates. The bird watching is also excellent.
- * Visit the East African coastal town Mombasa, to listen to some Taraab music or watch a Kenyan Premier League football match.
- * Enjoy the other numerous local attractions and activities that are available in the area, including safaris. Yet simply visiting the areas of great natural beauty is more than enough to give you the sights of a lifetime!

Foton från projektet



**För startdatum, priser och
bokning, se
www.blueberry.nu**