

# WELCOME TO

## Volunteers Without Borders



### Dear Potential Volunteer,

Thank you for taking the time to locate our organization and we would like to personally send you a warm welcome. We are pleased to hear you will be volunteering with Volunteers Without Borders. Although there are numerous avenues for volunteering, we can assure that we offer **life changing volunteering opportunities** at the **LOWEST possible cost** to you, the volunteer. Now that you've filled out the online application and that you're on board, our goal is to take care of you every step of the way. We will ensure that you are fully prepared before you leave to the country of your choice and begin working on your first volunteer program with us. This information package was designed to serve two purposes. The first purpose is to give you more detailed information about the country you have chosen to volunteer in as well as providing some additional insight into the various types of programs we offer. The second purpose is to provide you with specific items that you will be expected to bring along with you, what types of vaccinations you will be needing before you leave, and what we recommend for your emergency/medical travel insurance. Not only do our volunteering programs benefit the organization and community you will be working with, but they also provide volunteers with an appreciation and gratitude for others, sense of fulfillment, as well as new perspectives. Our goal is to inspire volunteers to raise awareness, share their stories and continue to support or contribute to our programs in any way possible in the future. Although our programs can be quite demanding at times, we ensure that you will be given adequate time and days off to tour around the area you are working in and get the opportunity to participate in any outdoor activities or adventures you would be interested in.

It is your job to explore this information package and then reply back to us at: [info@vwbinternational.org](mailto:info@vwbinternational.org) to let us know that you are ready for the next step of the enrollment process. If you have specific questions please see our frequently asked questions page as this covers most questions that the volunteers may have. To locate this page, visit our website and click the 'About VWB' tab.

Like most developing countries in the world; political instability could arise at any given time, so we encourage you to check with your local government travel advisory just to be sure that nothing is expected to occur in the location while your over there. With that being said, we can ensure you that every country that we offer has been checked out by our team to ensure the security and safety for our volunteers.

While volunteering on any of our available programs, you will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of health, educational, community development, or wildlife and marine conservation programs. This will give you a chance to make an important contribution to the local community and while doing so, gain an in depth understanding of the country and its culture. We assure you that this experience will leave a lasting impression and stay with you for the rest of your life.

## Information to help you prepare for your trip

If it's your first time volunteering or going abroad, there are several things you will need to make sure you bring on your trip before you leave. Here is a list of the following items that we have deemed necessary to bring to make sure you can enjoy your time on the program. The list below is a general suggestion; each volunteer may prefer more specific items that we have not included in this list. Please make sure that you remember to bring any special items that you are used to having back home, that may only be purchased in your own country.

### What to Bring:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comfortable shoes and sandals   | <input type="checkbox"/> Camera and/or iPod                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shorts and pants                | <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone - You can buy simcard)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rain Coat/Jacket                | <input type="checkbox"/> Rechargeable batteries w/charger    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping Bag                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses and Sunscreen        | <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight/head torch               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel Guide                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Lock                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mosquito net & insect repellent | <input type="checkbox"/> String                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hand Sanitizer                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Eyeglasses/Contacts                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Medication (Anti Malarial Tablets)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Duct Tape and/or superglue      | <input type="checkbox"/> Picture Book / Journal              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Binder or notepad               | <input type="checkbox"/> Country Map                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet Paper                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Ear Plugs                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small water heater or kettle    | <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes or Electronics for donation |

## Vaccinations:

The World Health Organization recommends that all travelers be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, polio and hepatitis B, regardless of their destination. The consequences of these diseases can be severe and outbreaks do occur. [Click here](#) to learn more.

*“As the President and Founder of Volunteers Without Borders Association, I’d like to offer you a warm welcome! I have done a lot of volunteering myself and believe it is the most fulfilling and gratifying way to give back to countries around the world that need all the help they can get. Whether you’re an adventurous traveler or looking to help make a difference, we are happy to have you join us. By volunteering, you will make a difference to the local people that you come in contact with overseas. Our volunteering opportunities expose you to the often-harsh everyday realities of life for many people around the world in underdeveloped areas. We thank you for your time and consideration.”*

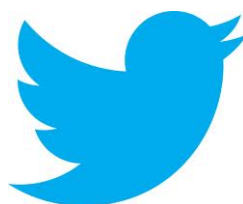
~ Kevin Francis

**President & Founder of VWB**



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# SRI LANKA



Sri Lanka is located just off the Southeastern tip of India in the Indian Ocean. It is a tropical island nation that has a history dating back to the birth of time and its scenery is breathtaking. It is a place where the original soul of Buddhism still flourishes and where nature's beauty remains abundant and unspoiled. There are few places in the world can offer a traveler such a remarkable combination of stunning landscapes, pristine beaches, captivating cultural heritage and unique experiences within such a compact location. 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 1,330 kilometers of pristine coastline, 15 National Parks showcasing an abundance of wildlife, close to 500,000 acres of lush tea estates, 250 acres of botanical gardens, 350 waterfalls, and at least 25,000 bodies of water. Sri Lanka is an island of magical proportions, once known as *Serendib*, *Taprobane*, or best put as the 'Pearl of the Indian Ocean' and *Ceylon*.

## Advice for bringing Currency into Sri Lanka

The currency accepted in India is **Sri Lankan rupee (LKR)** or USD. In some places, credit cards are frequently not accepted, even at many up market hotels. Where they are accepted, it's often only with steep commissions, which means that you will need to rely here more heavily on cash, ATMs and (in major centers) travelers checks. The best currency to bring is USD in a mixture of large and small denominations, plus some travelers' checks as an emergency standby and a Visa card for withdrawing money from ATMs. Euros are also easily changed.

## Dangers and Annoyances

Sri Lanka is in general a safe country, but if you have little or no travel experience under your belt, you may find yourself becoming overwhelmed as you get hassled in some form or another in most regions of the country and few locals speak English. With that being said, you do still need to take the usual precautions. Avoid isolated areas; and in busy cities and tourist areas take a taxi at night. When using public transport, don't accept drinks or food from someone you don't know and ensure your bag or belongs is secure. Be skeptical of anyone who comes up to you on the street asking whether you remember them from the airport, your hotel or wherever. In the majority of cases, they are just trying to get money from you.

In busy tourist areas like Colombo, touts and flycatchers tend to be aggressive, especially around bus stations and budget tourist hotels. Do your best to minimize the impression that you're a newly arrived tourist. Duck into a shop if you need to get your bearings or look at a map and don't walk around any more than necessary with your luggage. While looking for a room, leave your bag with a friend or reliable hotel rather than walking around town with it. Buy your bus tickets a day in advance (without your luggage) and,

when arriving in a new city, take a taxi from the bus station to your hotel. Be very wary of anyone who approaches you on the street, at the bus station or in your hotel offering tour deals, and never pay any money for a tour or trip in advance until you've thoroughly checked out the company.

## A Few Tips

- Avoid external money pouches, dangling backpacks, camera bags, and leave jewellery, fancy watches, and fancy headphones at home. Carry your passport, money and other documents in a pouch against your skin, hidden under loose-fitting clothing. Or, better, store valuables in a hotel safe, if there's a reliable one, ideally inside a pouch with a lockable zip to prevent tampering. It never hurts to make a photocopy of your identification and cards and store it separately in another bag.
- Take requests for donations from 'refugees', 'students' or others with a grain of salt. Contributions to humanitarian causes are best done through an established agency or project.
- When bargaining or discussing prices, don't do so with your money or wallet in your hand.

## Water

Unless your intestines are well accustomed to Southern Asia, don't drink water from the tap that hasn't been boiled, filtered or disinfected (with iodine tablets). Also avoid drinking from streams, rivers and lakes unless you've purified the water first. The same goes for drinking from pumps and wells – some do bring pure water to the surface, but the presence of animals can still contaminate supplies.

## Cultural Awareness

Sri Lanka is a very interesting, exciting, beautiful and scenic country, but the majority of the population does not speak the English language. We encourage volunteers, planning to stay for 2 to 3 months or more, to consider learning essential words and phrases in the local Sri Lankan language in order to communicate better with the surrounding community. Female volunteers should be aware that in the towns and villages, it is normally respectful to have your knees and your midriff covered (and in some cases, your shoulders). Some practices in Sri Lanka are very different to what volunteers may be used to at home. Visitors to Sri Lanka do not have to agree with all the customs around them, but should respect them and endeavor to understand the complex cultural history that shaped them.

**PLEASE NOTE:** There is a **ZERO TOLERANCE** policy in place for alcohol consumption, during volunteer work hours, while on the project. The consumption of alcohol is looked negatively upon and even forbidden in certain countries and it is essential that you abide by this rule. We need to ensure that you are giving the project the right impression of



Volunteers Without Borders during your stay. **If volunteers choose not to follow this policy, they will be removed from the project immediately, and no refund will be issued.**

## **ELEPHANT CARE & REHABILITATION PROGRAM**

Providing Care, Protection, Training and Treatment



**Location:** **Kegalle** (Approximately 160 km away from the Capital city of Colombo)

If you are infatuated with Elephants like many people are and looking to be part of a project where you get to work with your own elephant, then this is a once in a lifetime experience to be part of. Volunteers have a unique experience to gain grass root entry into the local community and work with the local people in improving education and promoting the important work of the Foundation in improved elephant care and conservation. As a volunteer you will have the opportunity to experience and immerse yourself in a different culture, as well as a way of thought which will make you learn more about yourself. Undoubtedly you will face the day-to-day frustrations and challenges that are Sri Lanka; seemingly endless power failures, bus journeys likened to being a sardine in a tin, unimaginable insects and a new perception of deadlines! But overall you'll be greeted by the warm Sri Lankan smile and hospitality, and struck by the sheer beauty of your surroundings.

### **VOLUNTEER DUTIES**

Upon arrival volunteers will be assigned an elephant with which you will work each and every day for the duration of your placement. Caring for an elephant is a huge responsibility and as a volunteer, you are also expected to help with the daily care and treatment that may be required. This opportunity is not just about the elephants the program is composed of 4 projects that are inter-related in working towards achieving the overall objectives of the project. During your down time with the elephants, volunteers are encouraged to get involved in as many different aspects of the project as is of interest to them; however you may wish to take a special focus for your placement and concentrate primarily on one project. In addition to working with the elephants, you

most likely will be involved in some if not all of the following activities: Teaching English, Ecological farming and/or Mobile vet unit.

While volunteering on this project, patience and perseverance are essential. Being enthusiastic along with a willingness to accept another culture will mean you get the most from your volunteering experience. After all, what you put into the project will be what you get in return. Each volunteer brings different ideas and skills that can make a real impact towards furthering the initiatives of this project. Most of the volunteer placements for this particular project is usually for a period of 3 months however placements can be arranged from a minimum of 1 month to a maximum of 6 months. Each week, most volunteers will get at least two days off depending on your workload. Since you are only in this country for a limited period of time, most volunteers use their days off to go on other excursions or visit other places that appeal to them in Sri Lanka.

## **SEA TURTLE MARINE CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

**Education, Night Patrol, Nesting Maintenance, Hatchery & Community Building**



**Location:** Galle Province (Southwestern Coastline)

This program provides an incredible opportunity for those who are interested and have a drive to help protect the oceans precious Sea Turtles. The truth of the matter is that our planets' marine life is diminishing rapidly and its up to us to understand the growing concern and educate others in trying to prevent it before its too late. Getting involved in marine conservation is a very hands-on experience. There's a lot to learn about our turtles and Sri Lanka is the perfect place to get involved. This project was first started in 1988 with the aim of monitoring local sea turtle activity and conserving the local nesting sites. The goal was to make the public more aware of sea turtles and just how important it is to help protect them as much as we can. Only a few hatchlings from each nest will ever make it to adulthood. Therefore every nest, every egg, every hatchling and every turtle is crucial to the survival of the species. Unfortunately, sea turtles face many dangers. Each year on average, the team helps clear and maintain local beaches, protects vital nesting-grounds, and releases 10,000 hatchlings. When you consider how

long the project has been going, you can understand the impact it has on our oceans and maintaining the sea turtle populations.

For those who remember Tsunami tragedy in December 2004, a sub-sea earthquake registering 9.2 on the Richter scale hit Sri Lanka hard. Most of the area where this project was established was devastated by a 6-meter wave that surged some 1.5 km inland. There were many casualties in the disaster, homes and property were destroyed and thousands were displaced. Thankfully enough, the founder of this project and his family were fortunate enough to escape with their lives. His home and the turtle conservation however were washed away along with some 200 Hawksbill turtles, which had been in their care at the time. There were fears that the destruction of the sea turtle nesting grounds would have a permanent effect on turtle populations.

Thankfully, the facility was re-built in 2005 and the focus was for volunteers to help rehabilitate the devastated beaches in order to attract sea turtles again. Together with local people and tourists, sea turtles have fortunately returned to the beaches of Sri Lanka and Kosgoda remains one of the most important sea turtle nesting sites in the country. With our help, sea turtles will continue to return to Kosgoda every year and it's up to us to help do our part to ensure the survival of these magnificent creatures continues.

## **VOLUNTEER DUTIES**

Volunteering on this project is a very hands-on experience involving beach conservation work, maintenance of the turtle hatchery, turtle feeding (and cleaning) and even taking tours around the project for locals and tourists. As a volunteer on this project, you will gain valuable experience participating in local projects - learning about turtles, turtle conservation, the local community, Sri Lanka and plenty more. Once arriving on the project, volunteers will live, learn and work together. While volunteering on this project, you may be asked to participate or help out in any of the following 6 tasks:

### **BEACH WORK**

Conservation of the turtle nesting grounds is crucial to successful breeding of the species. That means keeping the beach clean, planting shelter plants, etc. At times, Beach work can be physically demanding and hard work but it's essential to clear up the path so that turtles can enter the beaches and leave unharmed.

### **NIGHT PATROL**

There's nothing quite like night patrol. Patrolling the beach not only deters poachers but you may be lucky enough to spot a beautiful female turtle come up on the beach to lay her eggs. This in itself is a once-in-a-lifetime experience not to be missed. Turtles use the sand to lay their eggs at night, which makes them somewhat vulnerable. Once they lay their eggs, the nests themselves often become a target to predators or even poachers.



After the eggs are all laid, the turtles bury them with sand and head back out to sea. On their way back to the sea, they use their arms and legs to propel themselves forward which often leaves long tracks leading straight from their nest, which make the nesting area more easy for poachers to locate. If you are on night patrol and don't get to see a turtle nesting, you still get to enjoy a stroll along a warm beach and gazing at the stars to the sound of the waves from the Indian Ocean.

### **PROJECT OPERATION & MAINTENANCE**

This project requires the help of volunteers and locals to keep running. The area needs to be kept clean and tidy. Visitors are often shown around the site, the turtle tanks need to be well maintained and the turtles themselves need to be looked after and fed. Since the Tsunami, we have been rebuilding and refurbishing most of the project facilities.

### **EDUCATION**

Not only will you learn a lot about turtles yourself at the project, but you will also have the chance to pass on your knowledge to others. Volunteers may be required to give tours around the project and show off their knowledge with locals and tourists. Providing Awareness and education to the general public about these fascinating creatures and the dangers faced by them is crucial to their survival and conservation.

### **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Since the Tsunami, volunteers have also been heavily involved in working with the local community by rebuilding, playing and even some teaching opportunities.

### **HATCHERY**

One of the most important activities of the project is its hatchery. Within the sanctuary of the project, collected and rescued eggs can hatch safely away from predators. The hatchery program is designed to maximize the number of hatchlings reaching the sea and surviving through the critical stages of their early life. Eggs collected from nests on the beach (or even bought from poachers to avoid their sale in the markets) are reburied in the hatchery where they can hatch in safety. Most of the eggs that are hatched are released as soon as possible at night (hatchlings should never been released during daytime) but some are kept back for a short period for till they are stronger which provides a better chance for their survival.

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

**The program starts on Mondays** so please keep this in mind when booking your flights and that the preferred day to arrive is either on Saturday or Sunday.

## **HERE ARE THE STEPS TO COMPLETE OUR ENROLLMENT PROCESS**

**Step 1)** - Review this information package and decide which country you want to volunteer in and what program you are most interested to volunteer on. Once you have done that, please fill out the online application form available on our website and click submit. Please make sure to include the necessary required information.

**Step 2)** Once we receive the application form, we will send you a temporary confirmation for your desired program. If you need to make any changes, please feel free to email us and let us know. If we do not receive any further correspondence from you, we will send you the program fee payment request via Paypal within 3 business days.

**Please note:** *A \$225 CAD one-time registration/enrollment fee will also be added to your program fee.*

**Step 3)** - When we receive confirmation that your program fee has been paid, you will receive a confirmation email from us. In this email, there will be a waiver/release form that will be required to fill out and send back to us at your earliest convenience. You are also encouraged to book your flights at this time. Once you have done so, please send us a copy of your flight itinerary so that airport pickup/transfer (if available) can be arranged for you upon arrival.

**Step 4)** - After we receive your waiver/release form, we will confirm your placement on the program and detailed program specific information will be provided to you at this point.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Our enrolment and registration process begins by applying online. Once you have filled out and submitted the online application form, you will receive a confirmation email. To continue on in our enrolment process, all volunteers will be required to pay a Registration Fee of \$225 CAD, which will be added to the Program Fee. This fee helps to cover the administration and processing costs. Once we receive your payment, we will send you a confirmation email with the program details and encourage you to book your flight at that time. Our team will be readily available to correspond with you and answer any questions you might have from the time you apply until you reach the project. If you have any further questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact us at:

**[info@vwbinternational.org](mailto:info@vwbinternational.org)**

## **OUR PROGRAM FEES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

- **Registration Fee** (refundable if you choose not to go), ongoing support from VWB staff, program marketing costs, information pack, administration costs, travel costs to develop and ongoing costs to sustain programs and communication costs with volunteers.
- **Program Fee** – airport pick-up, orientation, program supervision, accommodation (private or dormitory style depending on location) and meals during volunteer program period, Internet facilities and bottled drinking water (*sea turtle conservation only*), Project t-shirt (*elephant care program only*) in-country 24/7 volunteer support and in-country administration costs.

## **WHAT ADDITIONAL COSTS WILL I HAVE?**

- Visa, flights, travel insurance (mandatory), immunizations / vaccinations, in-country trips or tours, transfer to other areas of the country, and spending money. If you stay on the project longer than 1 month, you will be required to extend your visa and there will be additional charges that you will be responsible for.



During this entire process, we will always be available to correspond with you to answer any other questions you might have from now until you reach the program. Thank you for choosing **Volunteers Without Borders**.

**We can assure you that you've come to the right place!**