



**Ailsa Anson (BSc Environmental Science)**

**Cetacean research**

**Ligurian Sea, Italy**

1. *Where did you go?* I went to **Italy, sailing out of San Remo** around the Ligurian Sea, with the Tethys Research Institute <https://whalesanddolphins.tethys.org>
2. *What did you do?* Aboard the boat, we **used a hydrophone** to listen to underwater noises and specifically cetacean communications. Species individuals in the Mediterranean are genetically different from the others of the same species in the Atlantic etc., and have 'accents'. We travelled all around the area in the aim to **map where species occur** and in what numbers; noting their behaviour so what they were doing there. Afterwards, **photo ID analysis** could take place, for example matching dorsal fins of bottlenose dolphin to those in the database, giving us an idea of the size of the population.
3. *What was your highlight?* All the researchers and volunteers took it in turns to collect the survey data. There was **a group of dolphins who came bow riding whilst I was sat at the bow** and as I wasn't on shift and didn't have to focus on their numbers or behaviour I got to enjoy how mesmerising they were
4. *What did you learn?* **Once people learn of the fascinating life of cetaceans [e.g. dolphins and whales] they are much more likely to consider the wider environment.** I've learnt this by talking to people about my trip, they're excited to hear about the cetaceans, but the rest of the science is rarely acknowledged, it is a challenge for us environmental scientists to find ways to engage communities to take issues that we are passionate about seriously. I think now I have a **deeper knowledge and improved communication skills** and better understanding of society surrounding the environment
5. *How has this helped your studies?* **Seeing researchers** and those employed in the sector is definitely **motivating**...It was inspiring as I would love to be an expert like them.
6. *How did this help your employability?* You **learn a lot about career paths and opportunities** by engaging with those in the field. Especially internationally, you're likely to hear of more pathways and projects all over the world, and ways to get into positions.
7. *Any downsides?* The only thing preventing me from getting more experience overseas is the **money** needed so **thankfully I was able to get the universities help this summer.** Most opportunities I have come across are residential with **shared accommodation**, this isn't an issue for me, but others may be less comfortable, especially for extended periods.