

## Turtle Conservation Project, Greece

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In June 2019 I volunteered with Global Visions International to take part in the conservation and surveying of Loggerhead Turtles in Greece. The base camp was located in one of the most important Loggerhead Turtle nesting grounds in the Mediterranean. The type of work carried out by GVI as part of this scheme ranges from protection against predators, to monitoring and tracking female Loggerhead Turtles, and even helping young hatchlings make their way into the sea. Loggerhead Turtles are the most common species of sea turtle in the Mediterranean, but are now coming increasing under threat due to loss of nesting sites caused by tourism, and are being injured and even killed by fishing equipment.

Arriving in June, at the height of the nesting season I was mostly involved in 'morning surveys', which focused on the preservation of nests, this included nest relocations, building defences against predation and collecting data about each nest. However, I also got to participate in night surveys, where I got the opportunity to be in direct contact with nesting turtles. These surveys involved more hands-on data collection and monitoring of the mother Loggerheads. Community outreach was also a massive part of the work carried out by GVI and the partnered organisation Archelon. Tourists and local people took a lot of interest in the work we were doing, and increasing awareness benefits conservation. Not only was I able to expand on my knowledge of conservation practice and understanding of this particular species of turtle, but I was also able to make some amazing friends from all over the world by doing so.

Working in close contact with and alongside strangers from all over the world, I was able to develop much greater confidence, as well as communication skills through working in a team. As I became more knowledgeable about the project, I was also able to demonstrate leadership skill by explaining and delegating tasks within the group.

My time in Greece benefited me academically as I could see concepts and ideas I have learnt, particularly in my first year Ecology and Conservation module (ENVS157), implemented practically. I also gained an appreciation for conservation that couldn't have been taught in an academic setting. Being involved in such work first-hand, gave me a greater appreciation about the complexities of conservation work, these issues are becoming increasingly severe with climate change and as populations continue to expand. I was given insight into a career-path I would be keen to follow in the future.



Global Visions International run a range of eco-tourism and volunteering opportunities worldwide, each programme promising to be high quality for volunteers and deliver high impacts in terms of community development and conservation. Many of the schemes work towards multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, so I felt confident in the fact I was making a real contribution to the conservation of these turtles.

To learn more about GVI and the particular programme I worked in, please see the following links:

For information about volunteering programmes: <https://www.gvi.co.uk/volunteer-abroad/projects/>

For information about the turtle conservation programme in Greece:

<https://www.gvi.co.uk/programs/volunteer-turtles-greece/>