

Extensive information:

Project Sea Turtles
Peloponnesus Greece



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Note: This document will be updated annually. Although Global Spirit will do its best to keep the information as current as possible, please be aware that changes that will inevitably take place at the projects described below may not be outlined in this document.

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1. Sea turtle introduction

Sea turtles are reptiles that have totally adapted to sea life. Like all reptiles, they have lungs and need to surface occasionally to breathe, their skin is covered in scales and they lay eggs. Although they spend most of their lives at sea, they are dependent on land for reproduction. Unfortunately, all seven species of sea turtles are threatened by extinction due to the degradation of their nesting habitats, pollution and human interaction (such as fisheries).

1.1 Anatomy



The Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) is one of three species of sea turtles that can be found in the Mediterranean Sea and the only one that nests in Greece. The loggerhead is one of the most widespread of all the marine turtles. Its common name comes from its relatively large head, which contains powerful jaws. The carapace (top shell) and flippers of the adult turtle are reddish-brown in colour, whilst the underneath (or plastron) is more yellow in appearance. Adults can reach a length of 80-100 cm and weigh about 80 kg.

1.2 Reproductive behaviour

Loggerhead turtles are pelagic animals. This means that they travel in the open sea but approach the coast when they are ready to reproduce.

They reach sexual maturity when they are 20-30 years old. The eggs have the same shape and size as a ping-pong ball and are laid in a dry part of a sandy beach. The eggs are placed in an egg chamber, which is usually dug in an undisturbed area and is about 50-60 cm deep. The female comes ashore and climbs up towards the back of the beach. She then makes a shallow hole in the sand called a body pit. Then she digs the egg chamber using her hind flippers, lays the eggs inside, and covers the nest with sand. There are usually 120 eggs per clutch, and each female lays approximately two clutches every 15 days. The females only come ashore to nest at night from the end of May until the end of August. The females usually nest every 2-3 years with 3-4 nests per season.

The nests must remain undisturbed in the warm sand for about 60 days before the eggs hatch. The hatchlings remain in the nest for several days before emerging to cross the beach and enter the sea.

Hatchlings can be seen emerging from their nests from late July until the end of October. They dig their way out of the nest in a joint effort and usually emerge during the night. They then make their way down to the sea by heading for the brightest source of light - in undisturbed beaches this is usually the reflection of the stars and moon in the ocean. This race from their nests to the sea is crucial for the turtles' survival. Although a female sea turtle may lay hundreds of eggs each summer, it is estimated that only a few hatchlings out of a thousand will survive to adulthood.



1.3 Diet

Loggerheads turtles are carnivorous and feed mainly on jellyfish, crustaceans such as sea urchins, and other slow-moving organisms. They have very powerful jaws which enable them to easily crush the hard shells of their prey.



1.4 Endangered species

Sea turtles have been swimming in our oceans and seas for over 150 million years. Contemporaries of the earliest dinosaurs, they appeared long before mankind. After having survived climatic and geological changes, sea turtles today face extinction due to uncontrolled human exploitation. Although sea turtles spend the majority of their time at sea, their survival still depends on the condition of specific beaches. Amazingly, females will return to the beach where they were born to lay their eggs. Sadly, most of the beaches that sea turtles use for nesting have been destroyed or are under intense human pressure.

Threats to sea turtles today include the destruction of their nesting habitats, their accidental capture in fishing gear, the illegal wildlife trade and pollution.



2. The project

The project is a non-profit organisation founded in 1983 with the aim to protect sea turtles and their habitats in Greece. They work to raise public awareness about the dangers turtles face and lobby for the implementation of measures needed for their protection. For over 25 years, the project has been running conservation projects in Greece's main Loggerhead nesting sites. They've also started an environmental education programme directed towards Greek students and a Rescue Centre for the treatment and rehabilitation of injured turtles. More than 500 volunteers from all over the world participate in projects on Zakynthos, Crete, Peloponnesus and at the Rescue Centre in Athens.

2.1 Education

The project's extensive Public Awareness Programme aims to educate local communities, tourists and other visitors and in effect stop the further deterioration of the sea turtles' nesting beaches. Regular slide shows on sea turtle biology and conservation are conducted at campsites, in hotels and other facilities.



3. Volunteers

3.1 Research opportunities

Research opportunities are available for students interested in conducting undergraduate or postgraduate research during their stay as a volunteer. Research applications must be completed well in advance in order to receive the necessary information and complete a research agreement form. If you are interested please indicate this in the section of the booking sheet that reads 'possible or additional general remarks'.

3.2 Family opportunities

Families can now actively participate by helping the project's team of volunteers at the area of Lakonikos' Bay during July and August. They follow an independent schedule and participate in selected activities depending on the age of the children (8 to 18 years old). However, both parents and children become part of the voluntary team.

Children participating in the programme become members of the "Chelonoparea", the official ARCHELON Youth Club and will receive a hat, a badge and a sticker. Parents become ARCHELON supporters and will receive a volunteer t-shirt.



3.3 Period / duration

Volunteers are welcome on the project locations in the Peloponnesus;

- Kyparissia from 15 May - 30 September 2010
- Lakonikos and Koroni from 01 June - 30 September 2010

You are free to choose your own arrival date.

Your stay must be 28 days or longer, but the recommended duration is 6 weeks.

Long-term participation is highly appreciated.

Family volunteers:

You are free to choose your own arrival date in the period July / August 2009.

There is no minimum stay limit for families, although a minimum of ten days is advised.

3.4 Requirements

No prior experience in animal care or welfare is required to participate in the project.

However, the following ARE required:

- Minimum age of 18 years, unless accompanied by a parent/carer.
- Volunteers must be able to communicate in English.
- Vaccinations (see medical advice section).



3.5 Fees

Participation fees are specified on the Global Spirit website.

These fees include:

- Accommodation (volunteers have to bring their own camp gear)
- Training and supervision
- Volunteer T-shirt and Turtle biology booklet (received upon arrival)
- Administrative costs

These fees do not include:

- Flight/travel to and from Peloponnesus, Greece
- Transfer to and from the project
- Passport
- Travel insurance (compulsory for all participants) and cancellation insurance
- All meals
- Personal expenses such as telephone bills, internet, souvenirs, etc.
- Any excursions undertaken by the volunteer

These fees include for Family volunteering:

- Training and supervision
- A hat, a badge and a sticker for volunteer children and for volunteer parents a T-shirt (received upon arrival)
- Administrative costs

These fees do not include for family volunteering:

- Flight/travel to and from the Peloponnesus, Greece
- Transfer to and from the project
- Passport
- Travel insurance (compulsory for all participants) and cancellation insurance
- Accommodation
- All meals
- Personal expenses such as telephone bills, internet, souvenirs, etc.
- Any excursions undertaken by the volunteer

3.6 Accommodation

Koroni:

At the Koroni project volunteers will stay in a house.

Remark: the Koroni project is full for the year 2010. No more volunteers can be accepted.

Kyparissia Bay

At this project location you will stay at a campsite. Everything you need is available on the camp: cooking facilities, showers, toilets, electricity and fresh water. If you need internet you must visit the nearest village in 20 min walking distance.

The sanitary facilities are very basic and include cold-water showers and toilets.

The cooking facilities are also very basic. Volunteers have access to gas stoves, fridges, cooking pots and pans, cutlery and crockery.

You will share these facilities with the other volunteers.



Lakonikos

At this project location you will stay at a campsite on a nice camping with swimming pool. Everything you need is available on the camping: cooking facilities, showers, toilets.

The sanitary facilities include hot and cold-water showers and toilets.

The cooking facilities are very basic. Volunteers have access to gas stoves, fridges, cooking pots and pans, cutlery and crockery.

You will share these facilities with the other volunteers.

Volunteers must have a positive attitude towards working and living in a group and will have to accept the responsibilities that group living entails. Volunteers are also responsible for housekeeping duties.

Families cover their own accommodation.

Accommodation within the camping is offered at a 10% discount.

For more information info@globalspirit.nl

3.7 The work

Peloponnesus hosts 900 nests per year (24.3% at national level) in the Bays of Kyparissia and Lakonikos and in Koroni. The nesting season commences at the end of May and lasts until August.

During this period, after an orientation, the following activities may include your participation:

- **Morning and Night Survey:** recording daily nesting activities
- **Nest Protection:** against human activities and predation by mammals (foxes, etc)
- **Sand dune restoration:** against the degradation of this sensitive ecosystem
- **Public awareness:** through the operation of seasonal Information Stations, slide shows in tourist resorts and beach patrols in order to inform beach users.

During the whole year permanent ecotourism structures are operated: Scientific Environmental Centre of Agiannakis with the "Forest Trail" in the coastal forest of Neda mouth. Guided tours are operated for individual visitors and organised groups. Great emphasis is given to children through special environmental education programmes.

You will work 7 days a week (about 8 hours a day) and are entitled to 3 days off during a 28 day period.



3.8 The project staff

The Peloponnesus projects have a coordinator who is assisted by seasonal personnel (field leaders). Field leaders and other experienced members of the project are responsible for allocating duties as well as training and supervising volunteers.

The Official language of communication on the project site is English. Knowledge of other languages such as German can also prove to be very useful for public awareness purposes.



4. Peloponnesus, Greece

4.1 Geography

Greece is a mountainous peninsula located in Southern Europe, on the Mediterranean Sea, between Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Peloponnesus is situated at the southernmost part of the Greek mainland. The largest town in the area is Patra (170,000 inhabitants), one of the most important ports in Greece.

Having been inhabited since the Neolithic period (6000-2600 BC), Peloponnesus is rich in history and culture. It has been the focal point of many ancient civilisations like Mycenaean and the Spartans. Its rich cultural activity continued during the Byzantium Age. Peloponnesus played a key role during the Greek Independence against from the Ottoman Empire. All civilisations have left their mark in the area, which is rich in archaeological sites and architecture.

Peloponnesus is also known for its natural heritage. Due to the large number of species of fauna and flora (some of which are endemic) included in the appendices of the 92/43 Habitats Directive of the European Union, a large proportion of its surface is included in the NATURA 2000 network of protected areas. The main source of income in Peloponnesus has been agriculture and fishing, although there is increasing tourist activity.

4.2 Project Location

The project works in the three most important *Caretta caretta* nesting areas, the Bay of Kyparissia, Koroni and the Bay of Lakonikos.

- Kyparissia Bay

Kyparissia Bay is located in West Peloponnesus and extends as far as Katakolo cape to the north and Kounelos cape to the south. It is an open bay with a north-western direction and therefore exposed to strong north-westerly winds that mainly occur in the Ionian Sea, during the summer. Kyparissia Bay consists of a sandy beach backed by one of the most extensive dune systems in Greece, reaching 10 meters of height. A large river called Alfios and two smaller rivers called Neda and Arkadikos run into the sea. The southern part of Kyparissia Bay, which lies between the port of Kyparissia and the mouth of Neda, hosts the second largest nesting population of the loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta* in the Mediterranean with an average of 600 nests. In the context of a Life Nature project, co-funded by the European Commission, a nest management plan for the area has been drafted.

- Lakonikos Bay

Every year, around 200 nests are protected on the 23.5 km of beach monitored by ARCHELON in Lakonikos Bay, in south Peloponnesus. Nesting occurs on Evrotas beach, from Kokkinia to Trinisa. Sea turtles can also be found nesting on the beaches of Vathi, Mavrovouni, Selinitza and Valtaki and sporadic nesting has been noted on other beaches of the Bay.

Lakonikos Bay is important as a loggerhead nesting area, but also provides refuge for many other species within the Evrotas Delta region, one of the last remaining important wetlands in southern Greece. The extensive sand dune system backing Evrotas beach is largest in southern Peloponnesus and is inhabited by rare and endangered plant species, such as the Sea Daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*). The marine ecosystem in Lakonikos is characterised by some of the most extensive *Posidonia* sea grass beds in Greece. The *Posidonia* ecosystem provides a home to many species of fish, as well as shelter to the eggs of many organisms and sea turtle hatchlings. Furthermore, the local *Posidonia* sea grass beds have been identified as development habitat of juvenile green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*).



In 1989, the first pilot project with fishermen in Greece was launched in the Bay of Lakonikos. This work was the starting point for the activities of ARCHELON towards the implementation of collaborative programs with fishermen in other areas.

- Koroni:

The importance of the nesting beach in the area of Koroni, in south west Peloponnesus, has been noted since the end of 1980's. It is a relatively small beach (2.7 km in length) which hosts 40-80 nests every summer, reaching a density that is relatively high for the Mediterranean standards. The systematic monitoring of nesting activity was initiated in 1995.

Two areas in the broader region of Koroni are to be included in the European Natura 2000 Network as being very important not only for the presence of sea turtles, but also for the existence of extended *Posidonia* beds (*Posidonia oceanica*) and the appearance of cetaceans in local waters.

Remark: the Koroni project will be re-opened this year with the participation of the local community and is full for the year 2010.



4.3 Climate

Greece has a temperate climate. Dry, hot summer days are often relieved by seasonal breezes popularly called "meltemia". An outstanding feature of the Greek climate is its ample sunshine, estimated to be 3,000 hours per year. Winters are mild and the rainy season is between November and March.

4.4 Culture

Greece has a diverse culture that has been influenced by its location at the junction between the East and the West and by the many occupations endured by the Greek people throughout history.

Greeks are particularly proud of their culture and celebrate it with great passion; their culture helps to define their national and ethnic identity.



5. Travel information

5.1 Flight arrangements

Volunteers are responsible for their own flight arrangements. We advise you not to reserve your flight before we have confirmed your participation in the project (unless you are planning to include your participation as a part of a longer journey).

However, if you are unable to arrange your flight for any reason, please let us know on the booking sheet and Global Spirit will do what it can to help.

5.2 Passport and visa

To visit Greece, EU citizens will need a valid passport (or ID-card). The passport must be valid for at least six months after the date of your arrival. If you are not an EU citizen, please check whether a visa is necessary at the Greek embassy in your country.

5.3 Insurances

Every volunteer is required to have a travel (medical) insurance policy and cancellation insurance is highly recommended. You will not be permitted to work at the sea turtle project without travel (medical) insurance. Global Spirit can help you to arrange travel (medical) and cancellation insurance. If you'd like our help, please indicate this on the booking sheet. If you already have insurance(s) (or you are a participant outside the Netherlands) please send a copy of the policy to Global Spirit.

5.4 Arrival in Peloponnesus, Greece

You will be responsible for arranging your own transport to Peloponnesus, Greece as well as to the project location.

Specific directions describing how to get to your project location will be sent to you after your booking.



6. Medical advice

6.1 Advice

As Global Spirit is not a professional medical service, we advise you to go to a local clinic or medical authority in your own country for the appropriate medical advice.

This document is provided for informational purposes only

As a participant at this project you are responsible for your own actions. Global Spirit is not held responsible/liable for any unexpected casualties.

6.2 Required vaccinations

No vaccinations are required for working at this project.

6.3 Recommended vaccinations

You are recommended to be vaccinated against:

- D(K)TP
- Hepatitis A

These vaccinations are not required, but are still very important to have.

6.4 Medical services Peloponnesus

Good medical services are available in the Peloponnesus.

If you should need a doctor or hospital, you can go to:

Koroni: Koroni's Medical Center

Kyparissia Bay: Kyparissia's Hospital

Lakonikos Bay: Gytheio Hospital

If you should need medical attention, please contact a staff member of the project.

Pharmacies are also nearby every project camp.



7. Personal equipment

7.1 Essential items

The following is a list of items that you should bring with you:

- Valid passport (or ID-card)
- A tent
- Camping mattress
- Sleeping bag
- Work clothes for work on the beach (and dark clothes for working at night)
- Appropriate clothes and shoes for working with the public (e.g. presentations at hotels)
- Warm and comfortable clothes (May, June, September, October)
- Waterproof clothes (especially for May and September/October)
- A raincoat or poncho (especially for May and September/October)
- Strong, good walking shoes
- Slippers or sandals suitable for off road walking
- A hat or cap
- Sunglasses
- Insect/mosquito repellent
- First-aid kit with plasters and disinfectant
- Bathing/swimming suit
- A towel
- Sunscreen (it's recommended to use for at least SPF 15)
- Drivers license or boat licence (if you have one)
- Alarm clock

7.2 Optional items

The following is a list of optional items you may choose to bring with you:

- Water bottle
- A watch
- A torch and spare batteries
- A Pocket knife
- Binoculars
- A lighter
- A notebook
- A compass
- A camera (and photographic materials)
- Toiletry articles
- Snorkelling equipment
- Mosquito net
- Something against dehydration like ORS (we advise you to drink a lot of water)
- Imodium or other anti-diarrhoea medication
- Books
- Magazines
- Snacks
- Etc.



8. General information (Peloponnesus, Greece)

8.1 Food and refreshments

Greek cuisine is famous for its high-quality products and the amazing taste of its food and wines. Some dishes are prepared similarly everywhere in Greece, whereas others are local culinary specialties or may be cooked in different styles depending on the region (like the Peloponnesus, etc...).

Cooking facilities are available at every project site on the Peloponnesus. Usually volunteers eat and cook together, splitting food expenses equally. At the Kyparissia project, all volunteers put 20 Euros per week in the common pot for common food shopping. Any extra expenses are personal costs.



A minimum amount of €7,00 per day should cover basic food costs.

Family volunteering will take care of the food themselves.

8.2 Supermarkets and markets

There are many supermarkets and markets available in Peloponnesus. Once you arrive at your project, a staff member will show you where supplies can be purchased.

8.3 Laundry services

There is a washing machine available at the Lakonikos campsite which volunteers may use once a week. At the Kyparissia project, hand wash is common.

8.4 Telephone

Volunteers will have to make their own arrangements when contacting their family and friends at home. The office phones are only to be used for emergencies.

There are several phone booths available near the campsites. Phone cards can be purchased for about € 6,00.

Mobile phones can be used and network coverage is generally good except in some mountainous areas and on some small islands. The main operators are Vodafone, Cosmote and Telestet. Please contact your home phone company for the most updated information.

8.5 Internet access

Although all offices are equipped with internet connections, the office computers can only be used to receive urgent messages. However, all project camp areas have internet cafes or other Internet facilities nearby.



8.6 Electricity

Greece's electricity system has a voltage of 220 Volt (50 Hertz). Round two-pin plugs can be used. North Americans will require a transformer and British volunteers will need to bring an adaptor. These can be purchased in specialised shops in your own country.

8.7 Transport during your stay

The project in the Peloponnesus covers the costs of transportation to and from work shifts when needed.

8.8 Excursion arrangements

Although you won't have much free time, you can arrange some excursions on your own or through travel agencies.

Here are some examples:

- The Ancient Olympia is 1,5h away from Kyparissia
- The River Neda with beautiful waterfalls is very close to the Kyparissia project area.
- Etc.

8.9 Photo and film materials

Camera film is available in supermarkets and photo shops.

It's also possible to develop your film before you go home. It can usually be developed in one day.

Slide film and videotapes are also available for purchase.

8.10 Currency

The monetary unit of Greece is the Euro.

Cash and traveller cheques can be changed in most banks. We advise you to bring traveller cheques instead of cash, because they are usually insured and the exchange rates are typically better.

All project camps have ATM machines nearby.

At the Kyparissia project you can find an ATM in the city 15 km away from the campsite.

Credit cards such as American Express, Master Card and VISA are accepted in big hotels, shopping malls, and at most shops and restaurants. However, many shops do add an extra charge for paying with a credit card. They can be also used at most banks to obtain cash directly (also for an additional charge).

