CUBA

SEA TURTLE EXPEDITION

September 4-12, 2015

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Travel with two experts from the Sea Turtle Conservancy and a Cuban marine turtle specialist.
- Observe the nesting process of green sea turtles and collect data with biologists.
- Snorkel the clear waters of the coral reef at Maria la Gorda (optional scuba diving may also be available at an additional charge).
- Meet with local conservationists, marine researchers, and a wildlife artist.
- Visit the picturesque town of Viñales.
- Stop at Hemingway’s home, Finca La Vigia.
- Support the ongoing research and conservation projects of The Ocean Foundation.

Formerly known as the Caribbean Conservation Corporation, the STC is the world’s oldest sea turtle research and conservation group. Founded in 1959 by Dr. Archie Carr — the world’s leading authority on sea turtles — the Florida-based STC continues to study and protect sea turtles in the United States and around the world.
SEPTEMBER 4 - MIAMI OR TAMPA
Check into airport hotel for the night. *Overnight at Airport Hotel.*

SEPTEMBER 5 - HAVANA
Very early this morning you will take the hotel shuttle to the airport to check in for the charter flight to Havana. You will need to begin the check in process four hours prior to departure. Upon arrival at the José Martí International Airport in Havana, you will be transferred by bus to the Hotel Nacional. It may still be too early for check in, and in that case we will make use of the lobby to get acquainted with our program and exchange money. After lunch at a local restaurant take a walking tour of Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit the National Museum of Natural History, where we hope to meet a curator. This evening enjoy dinner at a privately owned restaurant with Dr. Jorge Angulo from the Cuban Society for the Protection of the Environment - Pronaturaleza and director of the Center for Marine Research at the University of Havana (or another local expert). *Overnight at Hotel Nacional or similar. (LD)*

SEPTEMBER 6 - HAVANA
This morning enjoy a visit to Alamar Organoponic Gardens. After lunch at a local restaurant, meet with a specialist from the Cuban Marine Research Center at Finca Molinos to hear about Cuban sea turtles and Cuba’s conservation programs. This evening have dinner on own. *Overnight at Hotel Nacional or similar. (BL)*

SEPTEMBER 7 - GUANAHACABIBES PENINSULA
Travel today to María La Gorda, located in the westernmost part of Cuba in the Guanahacabibes Natural Park. The remainder of the day will be at leisure to rest up or enjoy the beautiful beach. After dinner meet local researchers and park rangers and learn about this diverse park which is home to the second largest breeding population of green turtles in the country with an average of more than 300 nests per season. Later in the evening head over to the beach to look for turtles coming ashore and observe the nesting process as the researchers collect data. 2013 was a record year for with nearly 900 nests recorded. Through the efforts of University of Havana’s Center for Marine Investigations and Cuba Marine Research and Conservation an estimated 14,000 hatchlings were saved. *Overnight at Hotel Maria La Gorda. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 8 - GUANAHACABIBES PENINSULA
After breakfast, visit a turtle nesting beach in the park to document any tracks from the previous night. Next experience the park’s impressive coral reefs via a guided snorkel excursion (snorkel equipment is not included; the option for scuba diving is available with an added charge). Experts consider that the seabed at María la Gorda is among the best for marine photography because of the water clarity and the abundant marine life such as shark, sting rays, barracuda, groupers, lobsters, eels, angel fish, crabs and more. Before dusk, head to the turtle beach where you will have opportunities to help the researchers measure the turtles, record data, and other tasks. Spend the night helping biologists with research or return to your room. *Overnight at Hotel Maria La Gorda. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 9 - GUANAHACABIBES PENINSULA
After a late breakfast meet with conservation staff to discuss the previous night’s experiences. In the afternoon take another snorkeling excursion (snorkel equipment not included; diving is offered at an additional cost). Later tonight return to the beach to observe turtle nesting. *Overnight at Hotel Maria La Gorda. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 10 - VIÑALES
Today you will travel to the incredibly picturesque town of Viñales located in the Cuba’s western province of Pinar del Río. This small town is located amid a verdant valley where farmers cultivate tobacco, fruits, and vegetables. Rising from the ground are many mogotes, jungle-covered, steep-sided limestone mountains dating back from the Jurassic period, many have caves and underground rivers. Later we will visit the home of Nils Navarro, a talented wildlife artist and naturalist for a reception and welcome to a local Cuban home. *Overnight at Hotel Jazmines. (B)*

SEPTEMBER 11 - HAVANA
Today you will return to Havana. After lunch visit Hemingway’s home, Finca La Vigia, in the modest town of San Francisco de Paula. In the evening gather for a farewell dinner at local paladar followed by Opera de la Calle (Fridays and Saturdays only), an innovative “street opera” that is performed by talented musicians, and artists. *Overnight at Hotel Nacional or similar. (BLD)*

SEPTEMBER 12 - FAREWELL
This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your flight back to Miami or Tampa. (B)
PROGRAM PRICING

$3189 plus airfare

Cost includes gratuities, Miami/Tampa hotel and donations to the Ocean Foundation and Sea Turtle Conservancy.

Cost does not include flights within the U.S. or flights to Cuba (estimated at $600 from Miami or Tampa including visa fee).

TRAVEL INSURANCE

As you are traveling during hurricane season we strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance to cover you in the case of trip interruption or travel delays. For more information contact Travel Insured at 800-243-3174 or visit travelinsured.com. Holbrook Travel’s agency number is 15849.

ENROLL ONLINE

http://holbrook.travel/STCCuba

CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions? Contact Lisa Palmese-Graubard

800-451-7111 x339

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MEET YOUR LEADERS

DAVID GODFREY
Executive Director
Sea Turtle Conservancy

Mr. Godfrey is CEO of the nonprofit Sea Turtle Conservancy (STC). David has been involved professionally in environmental conservation for over 25 years. Since 1993, he has been focused on sea turtle and coastal habitat issues. David has authored numerous articles and papers on environmental matters, with an emphasis on coastal protection and sea turtles. He has participated in numerous sea turtle research projects, and he has written and/or narrated numerous documentaries and videos pertaining to sea turtle and coastal conservation issues. During his tenure with STC, he led the effort to establish Florida’s sea turtle specialty license plate, which is now the main funding source for sea turtle protection in Florida. He is Chairman of the Florida Sea Turtle Grants Program, which awards annual financial support for sea turtle research and education projects benefiting Florida sea turtles. He is also a member of the World Conservation Union’s Marine Turtle Specialist Group.

DR. EMMA HARRISON
Scientific Director
Sea Turtle Conservancy

Dr. Harrison is a seasoned field biologist with over ten years of experience conducting sea turtle research and conservation activities in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. She received her doctorate in behavioral ecology from Manchester Metropolitan University in the United Kingdom. After completing three years of field work for STC as the Field Research Coordinator at Tortuguero, Costa Rica, she took a position as Research Officer with the St. Eustatius National Parks Foundation, through which she guided sea turtle and other research programs on the Dutch Caribbean island. She returned to STC in 2006 to fill the position of Scientific Director, through which she oversees the implementation of STC’s research and conservation programs, manages and analyzes the data collected, and represents the organization at national, regional, and international meetings. She is a member of the Consultative Committee of Experts for the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles and is also on the board of directors of the International Sea Turtle Society.

DR. JULIA AZANZA RICARDO
Coordinator
Guanahacabibes Marine Turtle Conservation Program & WIDECAST

Dr. Azanza is a university professor and field scientist with 17 years of experience in sea turtle science and conservation in Cuba. The Guanahacabibes conservation program is the only program in Cuba conducted by volunteers (more than 2,000). Both university students and local community members participate, giving the program a strong educational component. After nine years with the program, she took on the role of coordinator in 2009 and has been directing the program ever since. Since 2010 she became one of the two national scientific coordinators of the marine turtle-monitoring program in Cuba’s National System of Protected Areas. She has advised several undergraduate and master’s theses on the biology of marine turtles and also teachers about conservation strategies of marine threatened species at the University of Havana. Julia has coauthored 30 publications and given over 100 presentations in symposia and international conferences all related to her scientific field work. Dr. Azanza also belongs to the Marine Turtle Specialist Group of IUCN since 2006.