

Conservation tourism

Driving conservation through sustainable tourism

“ Blue Ventures does magnificent work, helping local communities and offering extraordinary volunteering opportunities that you'll remember for the rest of your life. ”

SIMON REEVE - ADVENTURER, AUTHOR AND
TV PRESENTER OF BBC'S INDIAN OCEAN SERIES

2,000+
people have
participated in
Blue Ventures'
expeditions
to date



An effective model for marine conservation tourism

Since 2003, Blue Ventures has built a globally acclaimed conservation tourism social enterprise. Our model is simple and effective. Conservation tourism volunteers are trained to dive and study threatened coral reefs at project sites in remote tropical coastal settings. Living and working alongside traditional fishing communities, our volunteers play a direct role supporting local conservation initiatives. And instead of generating financial gains for shareholders, profits are used to fund grassroots conservation efforts.

Our model is based upon a six-week expedition cycle, with paying volunteers coming to sites in the Madagascar, Belize and Timor-Leste receiving hands-on scientific and SCUBA training from a resident team of local and international conservation experts. This training allows all volunteers, regardless of previous experience, to participate in dive surveys, collecting important data on the health of coral reefs and other marine ecosystems, in order to contribute to scientific reports and adaptive conservation management plans.

Our expeditions attract participants with diverse backgrounds of all ages. While there is no typical conservation tourism volunteer, the majority are mid-career professionals taking career breaks, gap year and university students and retirees.

Sarah Kleinschumacher joined Blue Ventures as a volunteer as part of her gap year between school and university. The expedition offered her the chance to learn about the marine environment, learn to SCUBA dive, and experience a new culture first-hand; *"Within six weeks, I made twenty new friends, got to know a different culture very closely, learned a lot about Caribbean reefs, felt that I made an impact on marine conservation, experienced amazing diving adventures, and relaxed as much as never before in a great dive camp!"*

Dr Pamela Viele joined Blue Ventures as a volunteer soon after retiring from her career in higher education. She was attracted to our commitment to ethical and culturally respectful tourism; *"Experiencing first-hand the warmth, sincerity, generosity, and hospitality of our homestay hosts will forever remain one of the most special gifts of my unforgettable Blue Venture adventure."*

A stepping-stone for conservation

Blue Ventures' model provides reliable income to communities and service partners, and enables the organisation to make robust commitments to long-term presence in priority field sites.

This partnership approach reduces the vulnerability of conservation programmes to the shifting priorities of donors, allowing strategies to be developed and sustained beyond the strictures of typical grant funding cycles. In this way, our model has proven to be a powerful, enduring and resilient approach to catalysing, financing and scaling critical marine conservation initiatives.

We also work to leverage conservation tourism revenues to drive donor investment in conservation programmes nurtured by these marine expeditions.

Since 2003, we have leveraged over £3 million in charitable funding on our tourism revenues, supporting dozens of conservation, research and development initiatives in some of the world's priority marine biodiversity hotspots.



Stimulating coastal economies

As well as building a highly effective social enterprise for financing marine conservation, Blue Ventures has demonstrated its effectiveness in supporting some of the world's poorest and most isolated coastal communities. Establishing conservation tourism activities in such remote settings is logistically challenging, and requires considerable sensitivity to local cultural contexts and economic conditions.

The longevity of our presence alongside local partners builds strong relations, trust, credibility, and a sensitive understanding of local contexts. These in turn enable the creation of locally and culturally relevant conservation and

development programmes, designed by placing community interests at the heart of all activities, and maintaining a balanced commercial ethos that responds to local social and economic needs.

Our approach is to employ, source and buy locally whenever possible. Over the past three years, more than 70% of volunteer fees have been spent in host countries, with remaining revenues financing a central management team and the essential costs associated with running field conservation operations.



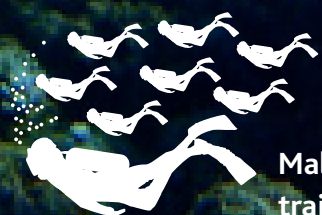


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Maintaining excellence in conservation

Intensive marine conservation and SCUBA diving training are provided for all volunteer tourists in order to maintain the high standards for which Blue Ventures' expeditions are renowned.

We are committed to building the capacity of local staff to develop careers in marine conservation and have trained over 25 local staff members to dive. Ten have attained professional diving qualifications, including Madagascar's first PADI Open Water SCUBA Instructor.



10
Malagasy staff
trained as
professional PADI SCUBA divers



Enduring benefits

Originating in Madagascar in 2003, Blue Ventures' conservation tourism model has since been developed and adapted to new markets and territories, including Fiji, Malaysia, Belize and Timor-Leste, providing diverse options to volunteers seeking to make a meaningful contribution to marine conservation efforts.

Since 2003, our staff and conservation volunteers have spent more than 150,000 tourist bed nights supporting local accommodation providers, helping to diversify local economies in partner communities in southeast Asia, the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the Caribbean.

In **Belize**, we have provided over US\$250,000 in income since 2010 to the Sarteneja Homestay Group. In **Madagascar**, our expeditions have continued to grow and finance marine conservation for over a decade without interruption despite cyclones, the global financial crisis, national political crises, and a fiercely competitive ecotourism market.



Scaling success

The benefits of our conservation tourism model go far beyond the reinvestment of profits in conservation. Our experiences over the past decade provide a compelling demonstration of the ability of our model to catalyse highly effective marine conservation efforts in some of the world's hardest to reach coastal communities.

Parallel conservation efforts seeded by our conservation tourism model have included the creation of the largest locally managed marine protected areas in the Indian Ocean, effective new models for community-led fisheries management in Madagascar, sustainable aquaculture businesses, and new approaches for integrating community health services within marine conservation.

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beyond conservation

Our Awards

Since 2003 Blue Ventures has established itself as the global market leader in conservation tourism.

Our model now serves as a benchmark and inspiration for conservation tourism organisations worldwide, and has been recognised in more awards than any of its UK competitors.



2015 winner
"Outstanding
Volunteer Project"
at the Global Youth
Travel Awards



2015 Lionfish dive
trip named as
one of National
Geographic's "50
Tours of a Lifetime"



2014 finalist in the
"Best Volunteering
Organisation"
category at the
British Youth Travel
Awards



2012 winner of the
"Best Volunteering
Organisation"
category at the
British Youth Travel
Awards



2011 finalist in the
"Green Tourism"
category at the
British Youth Travel
Awards



2010 winner of the
"Best Volunteering
Organisation"
category at the
Responsible Tourism
Awards



2009 highly
commended for the
"Best in a Marine
Environment"
category at the
Responsible Tourism
Awards



2008 highly
commended for the
"Best Volunteering
Organisation"
category at the
Responsible Tourism
Awards



2007 highly commended
for the "Best in a Marine
Environment" category at the
Responsible Tourism Awards



2006 winner of the "General
Countryside" category at the
Skal Ecotourism Awards



2006 highly commended
for the "Best Volunteering
Organisation" category at the
Responsible Tourism Awards



2004 highly
commended for the "Best
in a Marine
Environment"
category at the
Responsible
Tourism Awards

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For further information or to discuss
partnership opportunities, please contact:



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