

Colola Black Turtles



Welcome Letter

Welcome to the Colola Mexico, Black Turtle Capital of the World Expedition! On this special trip, you will have the opportunity to see and work with hundreds of black sea turtles (a sub-species of green turtles). By joining this trip, you will be directly supporting community-based conservation of these turtles by providing alternative income to poaching and generating funds to expand their efforts.

You can expect to work with black turtles each evening while nesting as well as daily hatchling releases. We'll also explore the surrounding area, visit an olive ridley beach, and more. This trip will be led by our Program Director Adriana Cortes, who has two decades of experience working in Mexico.

We started SEE Turtles in 2008 to encourage travelers to visit turtle conservation projects where their visit will make a difference in efforts to protect these endangered creatures. To date, we have generated more than \$1 million in benefits for local communities and conservation efforts and saved more than 9 million endangered turtle hatchlings. For these efforts, we received the prestigious Changemakers Award from the World Travel & Tourism Council.

Please join us on this action-packed volunteer trip. We will meet and interact with the dedicated people working to bring these turtles back from near extinction.

We hope to SEE you in Colola!



Brad Nahill
President & Co-Founder
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Cover photos: Juan Ma Gonzalez
Right: Neil Osborne

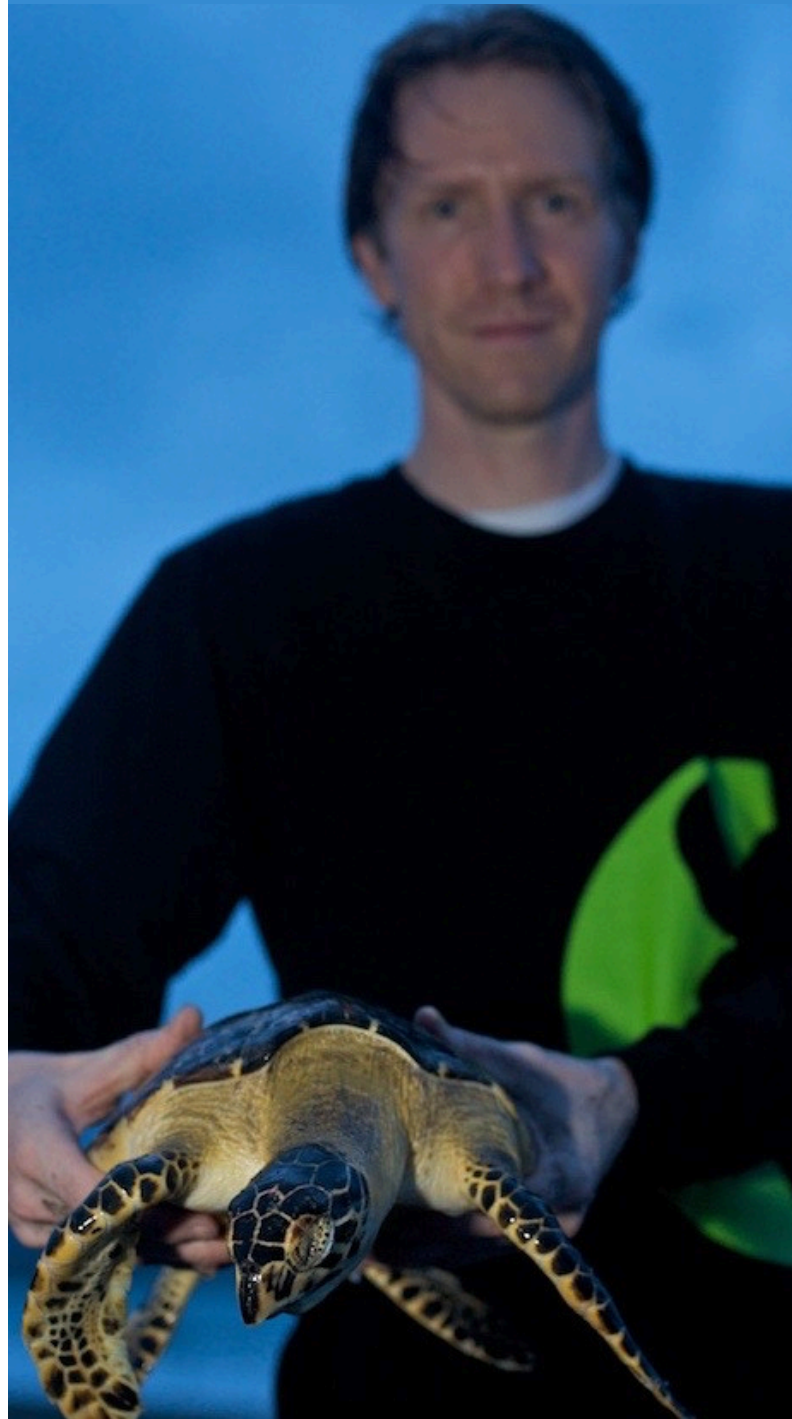


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Trip Information

Colola Beach is one of the most extraordinary turtle nesting beaches in the world. From a low of 500 nests in 1999, these black turtles (a sub-species of green turtles) have recovered to have 80,000 nests in 2022 with more than 5 million hatchlings. The beach is protected by the Nahua indigenous community with support from biologists at the University of Michoacan and is one of the most successful wildlife conservation programs in the world. SEE Turtles has been funding the nesting beach work here since 2013 with more than one million hatchlings saved here through our donations alone.

Prepare to see more turtles in a week than many turtle experts see in a lifetime. In January, the beach has thousands of nesting turtles and tens of thousands hatching each evening. This is one trip where we guarantee lots of turtles. You'll help study these turtles, measuring them, moving their nests, and releasing hatchlings. In between the nesting and hatchlings, we will do a hike, visit with local artisans, get a lesson in Mexican cooking, and explore this beautiful stretch of coast.

Is This Trip Right For Me?

Colola Beach is located in the Michoacan Province, which currently has a US State Department travel warning due to violence in the state. However, the coastal part of the state is safe and is not an area of concern. We will be staying in the coastal area accompanied by local residents and a professional driver. The research station is simple but clean and comfortable, with a mix of rooms with private and shared bathrooms. Meals will be simple Mexican staples and dietary restrictions can be accommodated.

Conservation Impact Pricing:

SEE Turtles is the first and only operator to provide transparent pricing that shows the economic impact of each trip on turtle and wildlife conservation and benefits to local communities.

- **Turtle Conservation:** \$655 of the tour price supports our work to protect sea turtles
- **Local Communities:** \$600 of the price stays in communities around sea turtle habitats
- **Travel Costs:** \$640 of the price pays for transportation, accommodations, activities, insurance, and other costs

[Register Here](#)

Dates: Jan 11 - 17, 2025

Price: \$1,895 pp.

Includes:

All in-country transportation, accommodations, meals, activities as listed, round trip airport pickup, and a donation to turtle conservation.

Excludes:

Airfare to Manzanillo, personal items, and tips.

Discounts & Notes:

- \$40 discount for paying by check
- Maximum group size of 10 and a minimum of 6 registered to confirm the trip.
- Minimum recommended age is 16 years old, under 18 needs to be accompanied by an adult.

Worry-Free Cancellation Policy

Book with us and you'll have peace of mind about your booking. If we cancel a trip, we'll refund 100% of the money paid or put it towards a future trip, your choice. If you cancel, all cancellation fees are usable for future trips with no penalty. Check out our terms and conditions for full details.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive to Manzanillo

Fly into Manzanillo airport (ZLO), arriving anytime of the day. We will pick you up at the airport and transfer you to the hotel. Dinner will be with the group in town. We will stay at Hotel La Pergola Manzanillo on the ocean (or a similar mid-level hotel). Meals: D

Day 2: Turtles, Turtles, Turtles

After breakfast, we will meet our bus for the 3 hour drive to Colola. Settle into the cabins and meet for an orientation to the research station and a presentation about sea turtles and the work in Colola. In the early evening, we will visit the turtle hatchery to work with hatchlings and learn how this project is integrated with the local community. After dinner, we will go out to the beach to be trained on the research work in front of the research station. Meals: B, L, D

Day 3: Ixtapilla & El Faro

This morning, we'll wake up with a traditional Mexican breakfast. If there are nesting olive ridleys to view, we will visit Ixtapilla Beach, a nesting beach a short drive away. We will be not likely be in this area around the time the mass nesting known as an "arribada" normally happens though this beach has many nesting turtles even outside the arribada and the olive ridleys sometimes nest during the day, offering great photographic opportunities.

Afterwards, we head to nearby El Faro beach for lunch and an opportunity to swim in the water potentially with black turtles. Take a rest in the late afternoon and then meet at dusk to release more hatchlings and then visit the beach again after dinner. Meals: B, L, D



Day 4: Maruata & Artisan Visit

After breakfast, we will make the short drive to the nearby town of Maruata. There we will visit local artisans to teach us how they make their various crafts and an opportunity to take home some unique souvenirs. Crafts include painted textiles, ceramics, turtle figurines, water jugs, and more. Next we will have lunch and visit the beach for some swimming and relaxing. Finally, we will visit the spectacular geologic formation on the coast known as “Dedo de Dios” (Finger of God) and explore the gorgeous coastal scenery. Finish the day with our daily hatchling release in the evening and nighttime beach work. Meals: B, L, D

Day 5: Forest Walk & Hat Workshop

Today we start with a walk in the forest to do some bird watching and explore more of this region and the mountainside. After lunch we will have a workshop to learn how to make traditional leaf palm hats. We will be able to fabricate our own hat from scratch with the guidance of one local patroller. Finish the day with our daily hatchling release in the evening and nighttime beach work. Meals: B, L, D

DAY 6: Manzanillo

After breakfast, we head back to Manzanillo (3 hour drive). We will have lunch in one of the local restaurants and then free time in the afternoon to hang out on the beach, swim, or go souvenir shopping. Meet up for one last celebratory dinner on the town and head out for a drink afterwards or get a good nights sleep for the journey home. Overnight: Hotel La Pergola Manzanillo (or similar). Meals: B, L, D

Day 7: Depart

Have breakfast at the hotel and then head to the airport in plenty of time to catch your flight home or feel free to explore more of this beautiful part of Mexico! Meals: B



Sea Turtle Research Information

Since 1982, the Michoacan University and indigenous communities from Maruata and Colola and national and international institutions carried out a project to recover the black turtle population in Michoacan has had satisfactory results. Since 1982 millions of black turtle hatchlings have been released into the waters of the Eastern Pacific, the average number of nests has increased from around 500 in 1999 to more than 75,000 nests in 2021/22. There have also been major research projects on migration of females and males, reproductive biology, energy invested in reproduction, concentration of heavy metals and other aspects of health, sex ratio, loss of nesting habitat, threats reduction, and conservation genetics among others.

In the Pacific coast state of Michoacan, it is the largest population of black turtle or the eastern Pacific green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*, also called *Chelonia mydas agassizii*). Colola beaches and Maruata host more than 70% of the world population of black turtle, therefore, these sites represent hotspots for the conservation of this population. During the decade of the 60's, the population of black turtle was very abundant in the eastern Pacific, on the beaches of Colola and Maruata was estimated to be around 15,000 adult females, which dropped to just a few hundred in the late 1990's. Through decades of hard work, the numbers are rebounding and the population is now estimated at more than 20,000 adult females. SEE Turtles has been a proud partner of this project since 2013 through our Billion Baby Turtles program, helping them save more than 1 million hatchlings over that time.



Background Information

Black Sea Turtles

The green turtle is the second largest after the leatherback. They can weigh up to 500 lbs (225 kg) and reach four feet (1.2 m) in length. The adult is an herbivore, dining on sea grasses, seaweeds, algae and other forms of marine plant life. Their beak is sharp and finely serrated, perfectly adapted for grazing in seagrass beds and scraping algae off of hard surfaces. The green turtles you find in the Pacific are also known as black turtles due to their darker shells. Most scientists believe that black turtles are a sub-species of green turtles but some believe they are a different species. Learn more about green turtles on our website.



Photo: Juan Ma Gonzalez

Olive Ridley Sea Turtles

The second smallest after the Kemp's ridley, the olive ridley turtles weigh between 75-100 pounds (34 - 45 kg) and reach 2-2 1/2 feet (roughly .6 m) in length. They are named for their pale green carapace, or shell and are the most abundant of sea turtle species. Like the Kemp's ridley, nest in masses referred to as arribadas. During arribadas, thousands of females may nest over the course of a few days to a few weeks. Adults reach sexual maturity around the age of 15 years. Olive ridleys occur globally and are found mainly in tropical regions of the Pacific, Indian, and Southern Atlantic Oceans. They are primarily pelagic, spending much of their life in the open ocean, but may also inhabit continental shelf areas and venture into bays and estuaries. Arribadas occur in Mexico, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Australia, parts of Africa, and a few beaches along the coast of India. The largest ones occur in Costa Rica, Mexico, and India. The nearby beach of Ixtapilla is an arribada beach though we are not likely to see one during our trip due to their timing. Learn more about olive ridley sea turtles.



Photo: Brad Nahill / SEE Turtles

Accommodations

The Colola Research Station is a simple and comfortable place for our group. The rooms are all double occupancy and have a mix of private and shared bathrooms (private bathrooms are first come, first serve). The showers have hot water and there are electric outlets available in each room (no converter needed.) The station has wifi in the kitchen area, though be aware that the signal is not very strong. Meals will be traditional Mexican fare cooked by members of the local Nahua community.



Hotel Marbella

Hotel Marbella is a mid-level beachfront hotel in the city of Manzanillo. Situated on the water, the hotel has 100 meters of beachfront, with a pool and outdoor seating along the beach. Rooms are comfortable with two queens, private bathrooms, wifi, and hot water.



Frequently Asked Questions

Wildlife Issues

Am I guaranteed to see a sea turtle?

Yes, lots of them! Unique among our trips, this beach has so many nesting turtles that we'll guarantee that you'll see more of them than you can count. This beach averages several hundred nests and thousands of hatchlings per night during this time of year.

How does this trip benefit turtle conservation?

Of the \$1,795 cost, \$750 of that goes to the Colola Research Project for nesting beach research and conservation and funds that support our Billion Baby Turtles, Too Rare To Wear, and Sea Turtles & Plastic programs and general operations. The trip also includes 8 volunteer shifts helping collect data on green turtles. [Learn more about our Conservation Impact Pricing.](#)

Will I get to do every volunteer job on the trip?

Yes, many times if you want! There are lots of options of work to do at this beach with both nesting turtles and hatchlings, so you will be able to work with as many turtles as you have energy for. Check out the page Sea Turtle Research Information for details about the tasks involved in turtle research.



Logistical/Travel Questions

How much money should I bring?

All meals and activities are covered in the trip cost, so the only money you will need will be for souvenirs and tips (info below.) Plan on around US \$100 for tips total.

Is an ATM available?

There is an ATM available in the towns of Manzanillo, which we fly into and leave from. You will have time to take out money in local currency when you arrive in Manzanillo.

How much should I tip?

Since this trip doesn't have a regular guide, the tipping will be only for the driver and the local camp staff. Plan on around \$50 for each, \$100 total. Tips for meals are included in the trip price.

Can I call home or check my email while in Colola?

Calling home from Mexico can be expensive and challenging, please check with your provider about international coverage and cost. For email, the station has wifi though don't expect a great signal. The station does not get normal cell service. You will have wifi at the hotel in Manzanillo and will likely have cell service as well though it may incur digital roaming charges.

How should I handle medications I need to bring?

If you plan to bring personal medicine, please consider the following:

- Carry just the necessary quantity
- Have the medicines labeled or properly identified.

Do I need any vaccinations before going?

Since we are not doctors, we cannot give you advice on vaccinations. We recommend speaking with your doctor or visiting a travel clinic. You can also check the [CDC website for Mexico](#) for the most up-to-date information.

What is the weather like in Colola?

In January, the average temperature in this area ranges from the mid to high 80' and humid, so be prepared for heat. Rain is rare this time of year.

Testimonials

"This trip is one of the BEST solo trips I have ever taken! It was educational, inspirational, rejuvenating, reflective, fun and of course FULL of baby turtles! I can't wait for the next. "

-Zoey P.

"I always feel totally safe on SEE Turtles trips and I feel they are well organized. The trip to Colola was wonderful because there were so many turtles and hatchlings. Because everything was so hands on I learned more this trip than on a previous trip. It was also less strenuous because adult turtles nested immediately in front of the station."

-Anonymous

"I recently returned from my second trip with SEE Turtles. Once again it exceeded my expectations. The location, the guides, the other people were amazing. I learned a lot and gained personal peace while watching these beautiful creatures."

-Anonymous

"After reading about this conservation success, we felt honored to be able to participate in its continued success. The highlight had to be our work in releasing thousands of hatchlings every night! At times we couldn't keep up with all the hatchlings that were crawling to the surface. To be able to release a baby hatchling is unforgettable."

-Bruce and Liza E.



Conservation Travel

SEE Turtles strives to reduce the environmental impact of our trips wherever possible. Sometimes we need help from you, the traveler, so here are some ways that we (and you) can help.

Tortoiseshell Jewelry

Did you know that tortoiseshell is actually hawksbill sea turtle shell? This is a major threat to hawksbills, which are critically endangered. Souvenirs made from their shells include bracelets, earrings, guitar picks, and combs. Below is a photo to recognizing these items and we encourage our travelers not only to not purchase these items but also to refuse to purchase from stores that offer them and to alert your guide when you see these items for sale. Learn more at SEEturtles.org/TooRareToWear and [download our SEE Shell App to identify these products here](#).

Reducing Plastic Use

Another major threat to sea turtles is plastic in the ocean, which can be confused for jellyfish. SEE Turtles is a member of “[Travelers Against Plastic](#),” an organization that reduces plastic waste created on vacation. We encourage travelers to bring reusable water bottles to refill; you can go through as many as 15-20 bottles on one trip per person. Another suggestion is to ask for no straws with your drinks. Souvenirs can be stored in day packs instead of disposable bags.

Reef-Friendly Sunscreen

Did you know that sunscreen can damage coral reefs? The ingredient “oxybenzone” has been found to cause harm in even very small quantities and an estimated 4,000 - 6,000 tons per year. Look for sunscreen without this ingredient (zinc oxide or titanium oxide are both safe), or wear a shirt while swimming to reduce the need for sunscreen. [Check out this great resource from our friends at Oceanic Society to learn more.](#)

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Travel by its nature is very carbon-intensive. Some ways you can reduce your emissions include leaving electronic devices at home, using fans instead of AC, by turning of AC, fans, and lights when not at hotels or cabins, and by using public transportation when possible. For sites with limited electricity, you can purchase a solar powered charger to recharge small electronics. You can also purchase carbon offsets. One we recommend is “[Seagrass Grow](#)” a program with our former organization The Ocean Foundation. The offsets are used to restore important seagrass beds, which are important habitat for green sea turtles.



HOW TO IDENTIFY & AVOID HAWKSBILL TURTLESHELL

Endangered hawksbill turtles are hunted for their shells to make souvenirs. Help save this turtle by avoiding vendors selling turtleshell products.

IMITATION		TURTLESHELL	
	PLASTIC Uniform pattern with markings		COLOR Browns, oranges, amber, yellow
	COCONUT Brown on top, beige underneath		PATTERN Assymetric and irregular shapes
	HORN Heavy with black/white coloring		SURFACE Color pattern visible throughout

Download our SEE Shell App



SCAN ME

Apple



SCAN ME

Android

Conservation Impact Pricing

We believe in transparency and that travelers should know how much their trips are helping, so we now list the impact of every trip on our conservation partners and local communities. Your participation on these trips makes a big difference to the work on the ground and in the water.

We break up the impact into three categories:

- **Conservation:** For this trip, an estimated \$815 of the trip cost supports conservation efforts. This includes funds that go to local partners to protect nesting beaches and conduct in-water research, as well as support for our Billion Baby Turtles, Too Rare To Wear, and Sea Turtles & Plastic programs and general operations. We also list the amount of volunteer opportunities in each trip. Since our launch, we have generated more than US \$1 million for turtle conservation and our 1,000+ travelers have completed nearly 5,000 volunteer shifts for an additional \$50,000 in in-kind benefits.
- **Local Communities:** For this trip, an estimated \$270 of the trip cost is spent in local communities. We believe that money spent communities around turtle hotspots is as important as direct funding. When communities benefit from turtle watching, they are more likely to support protecting sea turtles and less likely to participate in activities like illegal egg harvesting. This category includes tour costs going towards staying in local accommodations, eating in local restaurants, and paying local staff (including local guides for tourist activities.) We have pumped more than US \$300,000 into coastal communities near sea turtle sites since our launch.
- **Travel Costs:** For this trip, an estimated \$710 goes towards travel costs. Every tour involves costs to get you to places to see the sea turtles, hiring a guide and driver to get you there safely, airport transfers, as well as profits and administrative costs of our local operators and partners.



Recommended Packing List

Pack in a duffel bag/suitcase/backpack that you can carry yourself and a day pack.

*** Indicates required items.**

Clothing

- Shorts & t-shirts
- Sleepwear
- **Polarized sunglasses***
- **Water-friendly sandals or shoes***
- Long-sleeve shirts and pants for patrols
- Socks, underwear
- Tennis or walking shoes
- Hat (with a tie for the wind)

Miscellaneous Gear

- Camera, batteries, battery charger, underwater camera
- Dry-bag for camera and gear
- Day pack
- Bath towel and wash cloth
- Small first aid kit with personal prescriptions
- Binoculars (some may be supplied)
- Flashlight or headlamp (with red setting) & extra batteries
- **Reusable water bottle***

Toiletries & Health

(Please try to bring biodegradable products)

- Toothbrush, toothpaste
- Soap, shampoo, brush, comb
- **Waterproof, reef-friendly sun screen (SPF 30 or higher)***
- Bug repellent
- Skin lotions/ lip balm/ aloe
- Antibiotic cream & band aids
- Snacks for between meals
- Medicine for upset stomachs/diarrhea
- Electrolyte packets (like vitamin C packets)
- Headache medicine
- Personal medicines



Photo: Joyce Moore

About Us

SEE Turtles was launched in 2008 as the world's first effort to protect these species through ecotourism. Since then, we have expanded to include our Billion Baby Turtles, Too Rare To Wear, Sea Turtle Inclusivity Fund, and Sea Turtles & Plastic programs.

To date, we have brought more than 1,500 people to visit turtle projects around the world, generated more than US \$1 million for turtle conservation and local communities, saved more than 9 million turtle hatchlings at more than 60 nesting beaches, and reached more than 10,000 students with our educational programs. SEE Turtles is an independent 501c3 organization based in Portland, Oregon.



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Terms & Conditions

Payment Policies

Full payment of the total price of the expedition is due no later than 60 days (2 months) before departure. Travelers can choose to do monthly payments (the balance of the trip cost after deposit, divided evenly between the remaining months before the final payment is due) or pay 50% of the balance at 120 days before the trip with the remaining balance due 60 days before the trip. Monthly payment plans are not available within 4 months of trip departure. We reserve the right to cancel a reservation if payment is not made on time. In such cases, all payments are non-refundable.

Cancellation Policy:

If you cancel your space, it must be in writing and is effective the day we receive it in our office. Your cancellation will entitle you to a refund of any deposit or payment made to us, less a cancellation fee, according to the following schedule:

- 120 to 179 days or more prior to departure: \$300
- 60 to 119 days prior to departure: 50% of expedition cost
- 59 days or less prior to departure: 100% of expedition cost

Cancellation fees can be used towards one future SEE Turtles trip with no penalties or expiration except in the case of cancellations within 60 days prior to departure, when payments to local providers has already been completed. Any fees paid can be deducted from a future trip, based on available dates for cancellations made before 60 days prior to departure. Trip credits can be transferred one time only, if a second trip is cancelled by the traveler, all fees will be forfeited with the exception of extreme circumstances, which is up to the discretion of SEE Turtles staff.

Transfers:

Depending on availability, you may transfer from one trip to another four months prior to departure at no charge. If you transfer less than four months prior to departure, you may be subject to the cancellation fees. Registration fees paid may be transferred to another traveler up until 2 months before departure with prior notice provided. In some cases, transfers may be made less than 2 months before departure.

Cancelled Trips:

We reserve the right to cancel any trip prior to scheduled departure due to not meeting our minimum number required or logistical problems (vessel breakdown, strikes, etc.). You may transfer to another expedition or we will refund all payments made to SEE Turtles in full. In no event, however, shall our liability exceed the obligation to refund the amount you paid to us. Trip cancellation due to too few registrations normally occurs at a minimum of two months prior to departure. Refunds will not be given for individual hotel rooms, meals, sightseeing trips, or expedition arrangements for any reason. Expedition costs are quoted as a package; credits are not given for services not used.

Trip Cost Includes:

Accommodations, airport transfers as specified in the trip itinerary, excursions, entrance fees, local guides, most permits, and meals, unless otherwise indicated in the itinerary. SEE Turtles reserves the right to make any changes in the itinerary or to substitute hotels, modes of transport, or guides, for those mentioned in the literature if circumstances require it.

Trip Cost Does Not Include:

The cost of international air to the tour starting point (unless otherwise indicated in the itinerary) airport taxes, passport and visa fees, immunizations, insurance of any kind, alcoholic beverages, laundry, tips, excess baggage, items of a personal nature, medical costs, costs of hospitalization, additional expenses arising from the delay or extension of a trip due to weather, political disputes, illness, failure of transportation, or other causes beyond our control.

Children on Trips:

Some SEE Turtles trips are suitable for children, depending on the child's age and experience. Anyone under age 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Unexpected Trip Costs: We reserve the right to raise the trip fee if there are cost increases beyond our control. These cases are extremely rare and would only occur where unforeseen cost increases from suppliers would result in a financial loss for the organization. In these cases, registered clients are given the option to transfer or cancel with no penalties.

Accommodations: Land accommodations are based on double occupancy unless otherwise indicated in the trip description. We can try to match single travelers of the same gender but some trips require a single supplement if single rooms are preferred or there is no match available.

Single Travelers: If you are a single traveler wishing to share accommodations, we will try to match you with a roommate. If no roommate becomes available, you may be required to pay the Single Supplement Fee listed in the trip description if applicable. If you request a single, private room you must pay the Single Supplement Fee listed in the trip description regardless of sign-up date. Please note that single accommodations are not always available.

Budget Airfare Caution: We recommend against buying non-refundable airline tickets until your trip departure has been confirmed (usually a minimum of 90 days before departure). Budget air tickets often carry restrictions and you risk penalties in the event of itinerary or date changes or trip cancellation. Please await confirmation of the trip before purchasing non-refundable airfare.

Withdrawal: SEE Turtles reserves the right to require any participant to withdraw from an expedition at any time if the expedition director deems their acts or conduct to be detrimental to or incompatible with the interest, harmony, comfort, or welfare of the expedition. In such cases, no refunds will be given.

Medical Issues: Although SEE Turtles trips are not generally very physically demanding, you must be in general good health to participate. It is the passengers' responsibility to judge the appropriateness of their physical capabilities to these travel activities. Anyone with medical problems or restrictions must make them known to us well in advance of the trip and should have a personal supply of any special medications they may need. The trip leader has the right to disqualify any member from the group at any time if considered medically necessary; no refund will be made under such circumstances. SEE Turtles and its affiliates take no responsibility for special arrangements required by passengers physically unable to complete a trip and assume no liability regarding provision of medical care or medical evacuation.

Release Forms: On some trips you may need to sign an additional release form by our local partners and/or tour operators.

Suppliers of Services: SEE Turtles is performing a nonprofit service by informing potential participants of worthwhile expeditions. However, SEE Turtles is acting independently and has no business association as partner or joint venture with any boat owner, resort, hotel, carrier, SCUBA operation, or other services. Any claims for inadequate performance or non-performance of services may be made against the supplier of those services but shall not be made against SEE Turtles.

SCUBA Diving: SEE Turtles does not offer SCUBA diving as part of any of our trips. Participants may participate in diving while on a trip but acknowledges that SEE Turtles has no responsibility for the actions, performance, or equipment of any SCUBA services offered by hotels or dive shops. We recommend that any travelers planning to dive while on a SEE Turtles trip research the safety record of the operators and obtain additional divers insurance.