**Headline:** See the World and Save the Planet: 10 Incredible Places That Desperately Need Eco-Volunteers

**Teaser:** Purpose-driven travel offers unforgettable experiences that foster environmental stewardship, cultural connection, and lasting impact.

By Kate Petty

**Author Bio:** Kate Petty is an educator, writer, yoga teacher, and environmental activist who has worked with the [New York Nature Conservancy](https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/new-york/) and various United Nations initiatives, including UNICEF, the [World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations](https://www.wango.org/), and the [Universal Versatile Society](https://www.uvsociety.org/) to promote education, social justice, and solution-oriented projects for a healthier planet.

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**[Article Body:]**

[Ecotourism](https://ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism/) and purpose-driven travel are transforming the way individuals engage with the world, offering enriching alternatives to conventional sightseeing. [Volunteer travel](https://www.volunteerhq.org/destinations/) encourages meaningful participation, inviting individuals to take an active role in [conservation efforts](https://earthwatch.org/) and community support. From [teens](https://rusticpathways.com/service-trips-for-teens?utm_source=bing&utm_campaign=S_HS_Nonbrand_P&utm_medium=ppc&utm_term=volunteer%20service%20opportunities&hsa_mt=p&hsa_acc=9734037576&hsa_grp=1174280237537938&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_tgt=kwd-73392910057259:loc-190&hsa_kw=volunteer%20service%20opportunities&hsa_ad=&hsa_ver=3&hsa_src=o&hsa_cam=21108069533&msclkid=9164b326e0b71bbc29f5d4dfb5411582) and college students to f[amilies](https://discovercorps.com/our-trips/family-volunteer-vacations/) and [retirees](https://silvertraveladvisor.com/), there are countless opportunities to contribute to conservation through responsible travel.

This guide explores the wide range of experiences available and offers tips on finding a reputable program that aligns with your priorities.

**Impact and Ethics**

Advocates of ecotourism celebrate its power as a crucial conservation tool that promotes environmental awareness, cultural appreciation, and sustainable development. However, critics question its tangible impact, citing issues such as [greenwashing](https://earth.org/what-is-greenwashing/), [over-tourism](https://sustainabletravel.org/what-is-overtourism/), and the unintended consequences of increased visitor numbers.

Non-governmental organizations, such as the [World Wildlife Fund (WWF)](https://www.worldwildlife.org/), play a crucial role in the industry by setting standards, raising awareness, and collaborating with tour operators to promote responsible practices.

Several reputable organizations, certifications, and frameworks help determine the legitimacy, ethical standards, and quality of volunteer travel companies. Some organizations are aligned with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals). Others are certified [B Corporation](https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/certification/)s, which undergo a rigorous accreditation process that evaluates social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency.

Many ecotourism companies offer low-cost, immersive programs; others market luxury travel experiences that combine volunteer work with upscale accommodations and amenities. [International Volunteer HQ](https://www.volunteerhq.org/how-ivhq-is-affordable/) is a leading organization that makes global volunteerism accessible and affordable for everyone. They specialize in providing low-cost volunteer opportunities across a wide range of impactful programs, including education, healthcare, environmental conservation, and community development. By working directly with local partners and eliminating unnecessary overhead, International HQ ensures that more resources go directly to the communities they serve—and that volunteers can make a real difference without incurring significant costs.

“Anybody who takes the trouble to fully research the organization they’re traveling with can be confident they’re operating in a way that’s actually ethical and for the good of the beneficiaries,” [Global Vision International](https://www.gviusa.com/) CEO Andrew Valentine told National Geographic in a 2024 [article](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/can-voluntourism-make-a-difference?utm) about the impact of “voluntourism.”

**Life-Changing Experiences**

Getting involved in preserving natural habitats and interacting with local communities can be a life-changing experience. It allows nature lovers, environmental enthusiasts, and curious individuals to visit remote and exotic locations—from the lush rainforests of the Amazon to the icy expanse of Antarctica—where adventure meets purpose.

“[Volunteer travel] takes a certain amount of courage,” writer and volunteer Enrico Belcore says in his 2024 [article](https://www.vergemagazine.com/volunteer-abroad/articles/3011-volunteering-as-a-formative-experience.html) “Three Unexpected Benefits of Volunteer Travel,” published by [Verge Magazine](https://www.vergemagazine.com/), a resource for purposeful travel. “The payoff, however, can be an incredibly enriching experience, offering plenty of opportunities for learning and growth, both personally and professionally.”

Many ecotourism companies offer excursions to countries around the world. The following organizations provide a wide range of options for eco-travelers.

[GoEco](https://www.goeco.org/) offers over 150 volunteer programs in more than 50 countries, including Africa, Asia, and Central America. Its focus is on wildlife conservation, marine protection, and community development.

[International Volunteer HQ](https://www.volunteerhq.org/blog/top-eco-volunteer-programs/?utm_source=chatgpt.com) offers affordable environmental volunteer programs in destinations such as Nepal, Madagascar, New Zealand, and Peru. Projects focus on sustainable agriculture, marine conservation, and environmental education.

[Earthwatch](https://earthwatch.org/expeditions/browse) offers low-cost expeditions that pair volunteers with researchers to address pressing environmental challenges in Central and South America, Asia, Oceania, and other regions. Activities include wildlife tagging, monitoring flora and fauna, and conducting marine research.

​[ConservationVIP](https://conservationvip.org/?utm_source=chatgpt.com) organizes small-group volunteer trips to locations such as Costa Rica, Peru, the Galápagos, and Tanzania, preserving natural and cultural heritage sites.

[OpenmindProjects](https://openmindprojects.org/) organizes affordable eco-volunteering opportunities in Southeast Asia, collaborating with local communities on ecotourism and marine conservation initiatives.

For those seeking focused programs in particular regions, these 10 destinations and projects offer exciting opportunities.

**1. The Amazon Rainforest, Peru & Brazil:** Volunteer with conservation projects that fight deforestation, rescue injured wildlife, and support Indigenous-led sustainability initiatives.

[Earthwatch](https://earthwatch.org/) invites participants to participate in fieldwork at the Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu. Participants can assist with monitoring mammal activity, reforestation efforts, and biodiversity data collection. The reserve is home to species such as pumas and the endangered southern woolly spider monkey.

[The Amazon Conservation Team](https://www.amazonteam.org/) supports Indigenous communities in conserving the biodiversity of the Amazon rainforest through mapping projects, sustainable resource management, and educational programs that empower local populations.

**2. Australia and the Great Barrier Reef:** Help restore coral reefs, monitor marine biodiversity, and participate in beach cleanups to protect this fragile ecosystem from the effects of climate change and pollution.

The [Great Barrier Reef Foundation](https://barrierreef.org/you-can-help/volunteer) runs numerous projects that protect wildlife and habitats by collecting vital information on a range of species, including mangroves, manta rays, corals, and coastal ecosystems.

The [Australian Conservation Foundation](https://www.acf.org.au/our_organisation) advocates against pollution and works to prevent the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef.

**3. Malaysia, Indonesia & Borneo:** Join efforts to rehabilitate and protect endangered orangutans and sun bears while working to restore deforested land.

The [Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre](https://www.bsbcc.org.my/) (BSBCC) offers volunteer opportunities focused on improving the welfare of rescued sun bears, an endangered species. Tasks include cleaning enclosures, preparing food, and creating enrichment activities to stimulate the bears’ natural behaviors.

“The first time seeing the bears is unforgettable,” writes Cameron Watson about his [personal experience](https://malaysianwildlife.org/volunteering/personal-experiences-of-a-sun-bear-volunteer-in-sepilok-borneo/) as a BBSCC volunteer in Sepilok, Borneo. “Honestly, the thrill of seeing them never once wore off during my time there.”

[Malaysian Wildlife](https://malaysianwildlife.org/orangutan-rescue/) sponsors an award-winning orangutan project at the Matang Wildlife Rescue Centre in Sarawak, on Borneo Island.

“This was my first volunteering trip and without doubt, the best thing I have ever done,” [writes](https://www.goeco.org/blog/) volunteer Dawn McIntyre about joining [The Great Orangutan and Pygmy Elephant Project](https://www.thegreatprojects.com/projects/the-great-orangutan-and-pygmy-elephant-project) in Borneo.

**4. Galápagos Islands, Ecuador**: Assist in conservation programs that protect giant tortoises, remove invasive species, and monitor marine wildlife populations.

[SEE Turtles](https://www.seeturtles.org/turtle-tours)offers volunteers the chance to contribute to the conservation of Galápagos tortoises, a species that is critically endangered. Volunteers assist with breeding programs, habitat restoration, and educating local communities about conservation.

[Ecuador Eco Volunteer](https://www.ecuadorecovolunteer.com/volunteer-in-ecuador/) focuses on sea turtle research, mangrove restoration, and broader conservation efforts to protect wildlife.

“Supporting biologists in their efforts to save leatherback turtles from extinction was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences I have ever had,” writes volunteer Ann Coles about her experience with sea turtle conservation on the [GoEco blog](https://www.goeco.org/blog/).

**5. Madagascar:** Contribute to reforestation efforts, lemur conservation, and sustainable farming projects that support local communities and prevent habitat destruction.

Volunteers with the [Madagascar Research and Conservation Institute](https://www.gooverseas.com/organization/madagascar-research-and-conservation-institute-reviews) participate in lemur population surveys, forest patrols, reforestation efforts, marine conservation initiatives, and teaching programs.

**6. Antarctica:** Volunteer on eco-research expeditions that track climate change impacts, monitor wildlife populations, and clean up waste left by human activity.

[Students on Ice](https://soifoundation.org/en/), a Canadian organization that leads educational expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic, allowing high school and university students to participate in scientific research, including wildlife surveys and environmental studies in polar ecosystems, as well as climate change research.

**7. Costa Rica**: Work with sea turtle conservation projects, help rehabilitate injured sloths and monkeys, or participate in sustainable agriculture programs.

[Discover Corps’](https://discovercorps.com/trip/costa-rica-sea-turtle-volunteer/) Sea Turtle Initiative involves rescuing and rehabilitating sea turtles. Volunteers develop research skills and contribute to sustainable conservation efforts.

The [Global Environment Centre](https://www.goeco.org/area/volunteer-in-central-america/costa-rica/family-friendly-wildlife-volunteering-on-the-pacific-coast/) supports wildlife conservation, focusing on iconic species such as sloths, parrots, and spider monkeys.

**8. Kenya and Tanzania**: Support anti-poaching initiatives, assist with wildlife rehabilitation, and contribute to reforestation efforts in national parks and conservancies.

[Tanzania Wildlife Conservation (TWC)](https://tanzania.wcs.org/) focuses on wildlife conservation projects that preserve endangered species, conduct research, and support local conservation efforts.

[African Impact](https://africanimpact.com/) offers a variety of volunteer projects in both Kenya and Tanzania, focusing on wildlife conservation, nursery work, planting native trees, erosion control, and working with local farmers.

“My time here has been nothing short of amazing,” [wrote](https://africanimpact.com/volunteer-stories/) volunteer Gavin Kuehl of his expedition working with elephants. “Outside of the impact I am fortunate enough to make, the wildlife is outstanding.”

**9. Patagonia, Chile, and Argentina**: Get involved in projects that protect glaciers, restore native forests, and monitor endangered wildlife such as pumas and Andean condors.

[Volunteer Latin America](https://www.volunteerlatinamerica.com/) is engaged in numerous volunteer projects across Latin America, including protecting glaciers, restoring forests, and monitoring wildlife such as pumas and condors.

[GoEco](https://www.goeco.org/) offers a program that monitors and protects [pumas](https://www.goeco.org/area/volunteer-in-south-america/argentina/puma-sanctuary-wildlife-reserve/) and other wildlife in Argentina’s Patagonia region.

**10. China, Thailand, and the Philippines:** Help restore mangroves, monitor coral reefs, and participate in ocean cleanup programs to combat the effects of overfishing and pollution.

[Conservation International Philippines](https://www.conservation.org/philippines) offers opportunities to participate in biodiversity and ecosystem restoration projects, including efforts to combat mangrove loss, deforestation, climate change, unsustainable fishing practices, and the illegal wildlife trade.

[Marine Conservation Philippines](https://www.marineconservationphilippines.org/) focuses on protecting marine ecosystems, conserving coral reefs, and preserving endangered species, such as sea turtles. It also conducts marine biodiversity research, organizes beach cleanups, and provides educational programs for local communities.

[The Great Projects](https://www.thegreatprojects.com/volunteer-in-asia) organization offers opportunities for wildlife conservation and environmental protection across Asia. Volunteers can work on projects focused on endangered species, such as elephants, orangutans, and tigers, and contribute to habitat restoration and conservation programs in Thailand and Borneo.

“I think the most exhilarating experience for me as a volunteer is knowing that rehabilitated orangutans may eventually experience freedom, but this time, in protected forests,” wrote volunteer Sharon Lynne on the Great Projects [blog](https://www.thegreatprojects.com/blog/nyaru-menteng-season-back-with-a-bang).

[Panda International](https://www.pandasinternational.org/volunteer-program/), focused primarily on wildlife conservation, offers programs in China that allow volunteers to work with giant pandas and other endangered species. Volunteers can participate in animal care, habitat restoration, and wildlife research projects.

As the world faces mounting environmental and social challenges, global volunteer travel offers a unique way to make a difference.