

# AKUMAL TURTLE CAMP

PROJECT OVERVIEW FOR VOLUNTEERS  
2020



## Location

Akumal is situated on the eastern Caribbean coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, some ninety kilometers south of Cancun, between the towns of Playa del Carmen and Tulum. Akumal means the *Place of Turtles* in Maya.

## What is CEA

Centro Ukana I Akumal A.C., better known as Centro Ecológico Akumal (CEA). It was founded in 1993, to provide environmental initiatives. The aim is to protect the marine and coastal ecosystems as well as biodiversity in Akumal.



CEA, since its foundation, has developed within the Akumal community on the following matters:

- Protection and preservation of the marine ecosystems
- Sea turtle protection, conservation and research
- Water quality issues
- Environmental education for locals and tourists
- Community outreach and volunteer engagement

In addition to its own independent research, CEA hosts visiting researchers and experts in various fields from around the world.

## Volunteer with CEA

There are plenty of opportunities for adults of all ages who wish to donate their time and expertise to help Centro Ecológico Akumal meet its goals and carry out its mission.

## General Information

- Participants are expected to be enthusiastic and adventurous, be able to work as part of a team, be respectful of the host country's environment and cultures, and have a good sense of humor.
- Volunteers should be at least 18 years of age. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult.
- According to the number of applicants for the program, a strict selection of the applications will be made.
- Program fees, intake dates and time commitment vary according to program/project.
- Accommodation is included in the program fees.
- Volunteers should read **Terms and Conditions** before submitting the application form



# Akumal Turtle Camp

The main goal of CEA's Sea Turtle Protection Program is to protect, conserve and research Akumal's sea turtles as well as their nests and hatchlings.

## BACKGROUND

CEA's Sea Turtle Protection, Conservation and Research Program was founded in 1994.

All sea turtle species are protected by law because they are threatened by extinction. Of the seven existing species of sea turtles, four nest in Quintana Roo. There are two species that nest on the beaches at Akumal: the Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) and the Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). Year-round you can find them feeding in our bays and sometimes you can see the Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) around the reef.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

During the nesting season, CEA turtle staff and volunteers patrol the beaches of Akumal in search of nesting female turtles, turtle nests, and recent hatchlings.

Their duties include protecting and tagging females, collecting scientific data, relocating eggs (in extreme cases) to more favourable locations on the beach, and releasing hatchlings to the sea. The data that the turtle team collects is then used to determine turtle hatching success, behaviour, distribution, and abundance.

Raising awareness among tourists and residents on sea turtle biology and conservation issues is paramount with this program.

## ACTIVITIES

During the first week, volunteers will learn sea turtle monitoring protocols, methods and species identification through in-class and in-field activities. Then, the following weeks, volunteers will participate in the field (beach), under supervision, to take and record data and assist the turtle team.

### PROGRAM FEE

**\$276 USD / month**

### Time Commitment

**Minimum 4 weeks**

### What's Included?

- Accommodation (dorm room with ensuite), shared kitchen, lounge, garden + wifi
- Pre-arrival support
- Course materials + lectures
- Research support and guidance from supervisor
- Research tools + equipment
- Volunteer t-shirt

### What's NOT Included?

- Food/Meals
- Transportation + Transfers
- Medical / Travel Insurance
- Weekend excursions or activities



## FIELD WORK + HOURS

- 6 days/week, one day off according to set schedule
- Volunteers will work **mostly evenings (9pm-5am)**, however, depending on the needs and time of the season they may be required to do split shifts (dusk + dawn) to monitor hatchlings and prevent nest predation and support turtle-related field research activities during the days.

## REQUIRED SKILLS + EXPERIENCE

- Ability to work during the nights for several days in a row
- Ability to walk long distances—on the beach and on rocky, uneven terrain
- Work and live in a team community
- Tolerance to adverse weather conditions (rain/storms, hot/cold, insects)
- Flexible and willingness to help where needed
- A strong interest in wildlife, conservation, and turtles
- Data entry, computer skills and scientific data collection experience are a plus
- Fluency in Spanish a benefit / English a must
- Photography skills and experience with using a GPS a plus
- Flexible, curious to learn, outgoing and a team-player
- Social and enthusiastic
- Can swim/snorkel up to 100m unassisted

## TIME COMMITMENT + START DATES

We are currently accepting volunteers:

- for a **minimum of 4 weeks**. Volunteers that cannot commit for 4 weeks or more will not be accepted.
- previous turtle experience is a benefit, but not required.

Turtle season in Akumal begins in May and goes through to October. Volunteers are expected to arrive and be ready to begin training on the start date provided.

Volunteer start dates at the Akumal Turtle Camp are open starting Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, starting Monday, June 1. The last admission date is Friday, October 2.

## WHAT TO BRING

Besides your personal belongings, those volunteering with the Turtle Camp are asked to bring:

- Personal red flashlight or headlamp
- Comfortable shoes and clothes suited to the climate/conditions
- Light rain coat
- Hat, sunshirt, sunscreen (reef-safe)
- Breathable, light-weight clothing
- Reusable/refillable water bottle
- A small backpack for evening field work

## NEXT STEPS

Volunteers who are interested in this program and wish to participate should take the next steps:

1. Read the **Terms + Conditions** for Volunteering
2. Complete the online application form for Akumal Turtle Camp

Please allow up to 10 business days for our response to your application. Once it is received, we will be in contact—perhaps asking you for more details/info and/or informing you of your application status.

If your application is accepted, the next step is to start making arrangements for your arrival. The volunteer coordinator will work with you and provide support throughout the pre-arrival time to help you feel comfortable and confident in your new adventure.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact [communications.ceakumal@gmail.com](mailto:communications.ceakumal@gmail.com)

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