

Industry Guidelines and Our Answers

There are a few industry guidelines that exist which are to help people signing up to an overseas experience make the correct decision. Coral Cay believes that of most use are the Year Out Group guidelines. Below are Coral Cay's answers to these and key differences about us.

Should you require a more stringent set of questions to undertake your research. CCC has produced its own questions that it believes quality providers should be able to answer and be able to prove to you. These can be found in the Guide to Responsible Providers.

Year Out Group Guidelines

What is the age range of participants?

Our age range is from 16 years of age upwards.

1.1 What is the selection criteria?

Volunteers must be physically able to complete the activities they are undertaking. We aim not to be selective and believe that our expedition experience should be available to as many people as possible. Our teaching methods reflect this and academic ability is not a necessity.

1.2 What choice do I have?

Volunteers can take part from one week upwards on our expedition sites in the Philippines, Tobago and Papua New Guinea. You can choose between marine or rainforest conservation or do a combination. We also run a limited conservation holidays programme to the Red Sea and the Philippines.

1.3 What number of participants will there be when I am there?

This does differ depending on the time of year and location. Some of our sites have larger capacity than others. If you give us a call or drop us an email we will be able to tell you how many people will be on site at a given point.

2.1 What will I gain?

You will learn practical skills in either trekking and camp craft and/or scuba diving qualifications. On top of this all volunteers will receive science training which

includes species identification and survey techniques. All is valuable experience for working within the field of conservation. For those on marine projects there is the ability to progress from a non diver to a Divemaster (professional qualification). Less tangible (but equally important) are the spin off benefits of meeting new people, working within a different culture and the list goes on....

2.2. Will anyone else benefit?

The project partners will benefit from our data, the local staff who work for us earn a good wage, the fisher folk enjoy increased catches and the tourism industry benefits. Our projects lead to an increased level of pride in local people in their resources, the education system benefits through our teaching in schools and on site. Our projects have been proven over the long term to have very important benefits. Our track record speaks for itself in terms of awards (like the Tourism for Tomorrow Award) and the conservation successes (such as getting the Belize barrier reef nominated a World Heritage site). We have a well established scholarship programme which runs monthly to teach host country volunteers to dive and survey and this programme is focused on those who work within the field in country or have aspirations to. In Belize our site and practices became the foundation for a new university department.

2.3. Why are UK people needed and who asked for us?

We are only ever asked to take part in a project by our project partner, we never seek them out for work. Our reputation is such that we have more offers of work than we can fulfil with current funding. We believe that projects should be proposed and driven by our project partners. They are our bosses and they dictate the work that needs doing. Our partners range from grass roots NGOs to ministers of the government depending on the project. The countries and partners we work with don't have the resources to undertake the research needed, we offer this at zero cost to them. International volunteers not only help to contribute towards the costs of the project but provide the people power to collect the data. Local people in the countries we work in cannot afford to do this for free as often they are simply struggling to subsist, where they do have the time, they lack the technical expertise.

2.4. Will the programme continue after I have left?

We believe that anything other than a long term project is an ineffective one. Our programmes have on average lasted a minimum of twelve years. The investment in training of local scholars and stakeholders ensure that long after our involvement has ceased in country, that the benefit is still being reaped. This benefit comes from better technical skills, donated equipment, special facilities, the data collected and the management plans themselves.

3.1. Has the programme been chosen and checked out? Has a representative of the organisation had a good look?

All of our projects are checked out in the initial stages by a director of the company. A planning stage then occurs where mileposts have to be met to ensure we get involved. This include security assessments and safety checks. This visit is then followed up at least once (and generally more often) by a senior member of staff. Our field operations manager only sets up the project once we are 100% happy that the project is safe and has conservation need.

3.2. Are the host organisations paid to take me? Do they pay me? If not why not?

The answer to both questions is no, we provide our resource at no cost to the project partners we work with. They have no need to be paid as the value of our work for a year compared to using commercial resources is rated at an average of US \$5 million.

3.3. What exactly will I be doing?

This is dependant on the project type (reef or forest) but all projects involve learning to trek/dive, learning to survey and then collecting the data required. This could be with a pack or a tank on your back. Our website has a wealth of information on what you will do as a volunteer.

3.4. Will I be alone? Who will I be placed with?

You will never be alone, our projects always have a minimum of six staff on them and we cannot volunteer without at least two volunteers! Normally there are an average of 7-10 volunteers on our site at anyone time.

3.5. What can I expect in terms of accommodation and food?

Our accommodation isn't luxurious but inst primitive either. Normally it is dormitory accommodation with shared bathrooms/toilets. All volunteers get a bed and a mattress as well as a mosquito net. When trekking in the forest volunteers stay in state of the art hammocks.

Food is locally bought and prepared by local cooks or volunteers depending on the project. It is a good mix of staples and there is normally seconds.

3.6. What is expected of me? What are my responsibilities?

We expect our volunteers to be serious about the work, careful and accurate and have a good attitude to safety. They need to have a fun nature and be understanding of the fact that they are on expedition and not on holiday!

3.7. Do I have to sign anything? Is there a written agreement?

All volunteers have to sign to accept our terms and conditions that exist as much to protect the volunteer as they do for the organisation.

4.1. What is the precise cost and what does it cover?

Our costs differ depending on what time you spend with us and the training level undertaken. All are clearly detailed on the website and are easy to calculate.

4.2. What is the recommended budget for extras?

Our prices don't include travel to the expedition site, visa costs (where appropriate), insurance or personal expenditure. For dive and trekking projects certain equipment is mandatory and needs to be purchased by the volunteer. For more details the relevant project summary can be downloaded.

http://www.coralcay.org/expeditions/marine_index.php

http://www.coralcay.org/expeditions/forest_index.php

4.3. If I have to pay a deposit, it is refundable?

We have a three stage payment process. The first involves an administration fee which is non-refundable. The other two stages are refundable dependant on our terms and conditions. For more details please see:

<http://www.coralcay.org/joining/enrolmentpack/>

4.4. When and how do I pay? What happens if I cancel?

Volunteers can pay by card, cash or cheque. We always refer volunteers to our terms and conditions for details about cancellation. For more information on payment please see:

<http://www.coralcay.org/joining/enrolmentpack/>

For more information on our terms and conditions please see:

http://www.coralcay.org/expeditions/expedition_guide.php

4.5. If I have to raise funds, does the organisation offer advice?

We have a comprehensive fundraising pack on line that volunteers can access. For more information on raising funds please see:

http://www.coralcay.org/costs/fundraising_pack.php

5.1. Why does the organisation exist? How long has it been around?

Our mission statement is

Providing resources to help sustain livelihoods and alleviate poverty through the protection, restoration and management of coral reefs and tropical forests.

CCC has been in operation for 21 years and exists to offer technical assistance to conservation projects in the developing world at no cost to the project partners. Without this provision, many areas and people would not be able to afford the technical assistance to protect their natural resources. This is a need that is growing year by year and we have more requests for help than we can fulfil.

5.2 Is it a partnership, private company, public company, registered charity, sole trader or other? Where is it registered?

CCC is a not for profit organisation. We are a limited company where the shareholders and director elect not to take dividends or make profit. Any profit made is donated to the Coral Cay Conservation trust which is a registered charity.

5.3 What are the examples of success? Can I chat to past volunteers?

Our successes include marine protected areas in Fiji, Philippines and Belize. Belize barrier reef being declared a World Heritage Site. The purchase of Danjungan Island through the World Land Trust and the creation of marine reserve. The re-designation of the North Negros Forest Reserve as a National Park, Tobago Cays being proposed as a World Heritage site and a whole host of awards.

We have a whole host of volunteers who would be happy to speak to you!

5.4 What happens if there is an emergency? Are there sufficient funds to cope with this?

We hold comprehensive risk assessments, crisis management plans, emergency evacuation plans, hurricane plans and have twenty four hour contact with our sites if necessary. Our marine sites have a doctor/nurse/ paramedic present and we use the Diving Diseases Research Centre (DDRC) as advisory backup. If volunteers cannot be adequately cared for with local or national medical facilities then they are repatriated. This is an extremely rare occurrence.

5.5 What are the organisations policies on equal opportunities?

We are a keen supporter of equal opportunities. We offer no barriers to participation on our expeditions except for physical and psychological conditions which would be a risk to the participant and their peers in the expedition environment.

6.1. Who is responsible for travel arrangements?

The volunteer is responsible but we do help by recommending a travel agent who can arrange booking on a pre-agreed flight to ensure you have someone travelling with you.

6.2. Who provides insurance and what is included?

Volunteers must provide comprehensive insurance for activities undertaken and we offer guidance on this. We also have a recommended supplier.

6.3. What about inoculations and health precautions?

CCC cannot directly get involved in giving medical advice and insists that all volunteers have a full medical by their doctor (which is then reassessed by the sponsoring doctors), at the same time we recommend the best advice for travel health comes from the individuals travel nurse.

6.4. What training and pre-departure briefing will I get?

We have a range of documents available for your use. This includes our expedition guide, project summary and independent travel advice as well as notes from our pre-departure training day. We run quarterly pre-departure days for volunteers and volunteers receive extensive training on arrival at site.

7.1 Who is the person responsible for me at the programme location?

There will be a staff team of at least six who are managed by an Expedition Leader.

7.2. Where is the nearest representative of the organisation?

On the site in the form of a staff member.

7.3. What if there is an emergency, can someone get me home?

Yes, as detailed in point 5.4.

7.4. If I have a problem with my programme, can I talk to someone?

Yes, if a volunteer is unhappy they talk initially with their Expedition Leader who will then enact the grievances procedure. Each person is dealt with as an individual and the situation is assessed by a director before a decision is given. We pride ourselves in being fair to our volunteers.

7.5. What is included in the living accommodation. Who selects and checks it?

Please see point 3.5. Our marine sites will include volunteer accommodation, staff accommodation, toilets, showers or equivalent, medical room, office and science room.

7.6. If staying with host families, are they paid or are they volunteers?

You will not be accommodated in this way.

8.1. Will my organisation have contact with me when I return?

We have a comprehensive welcome back pack and feedback questionnaire which is emailed to volunteers on their return. Any further contact can be initiated from this point and is encouraged.

8.2. Can my experience be of use to future participants?

Of course. Our volunteers become representatives, staff and even directors over time. We encourage as much post expedition involvement as individually possible.

8.3. Will I get a reference or a certificate?

We can confirm to employers the dates of work and duties undertaken. Volunteers who wish can receive a certificate of their participation.

8.4. Will I be debriefed?

This is not a normal practice other than through feedback forms but encourage volunteers to come in and have a chat/debrief with us if necessary/required.