



Canadian Sea Turtle Network Field Trip to Trinidad 2017

We are delighted that you want to join us on our Field Trip to Trinidad. The first time we went to Trinidad to see the leatherbacks nesting there was in 1999. Little did we know how important our collaboration with the Nature Seekers, a local environmental group, would become.

In the years that followed, we learned that the majority of leatherback turtles found in Canadian waters nest in Trinidad. So understanding the challenges “Canadian” turtles face in the nesting environment is critical to protecting those animals.

It is logistically difficult for us to bring people with us on our field boat off Nova Scotia to see leatherbacks in Canada. We are excited to have the chance to bring you to see “Canadian” turtles down south.

Where: Matura, Trinidad

When: May 7-14, 2017

Basic Cost: \$2,500 (Canadian dollars), plus flight to and from Port of Spain, Trinidad (Please see section on “Expenses” on p. 10 for specifics)

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About the Canadian Sea Turtle Network

The Canadian Sea Turtle Network (CSTN) is a charitable organization involving scientists, commercial fishermen, and coastal community members that works to conserve endangered sea turtles in Canadian waters and worldwide. The group won the 2007 Gold Canadian Environment Award for Conservation.

About Kayla Hamelin, Trip Leader

Kayla is the coordinator of conservation and educational outreach at the CSTN, where she has worked since 2014. Kayla has degrees in marine biology and oceanography (honours, with distinction) from Dalhousie University and a master's degree in biology from McGill University. She is involved in scientific research at the CSTN and is fascinated by leatherbacks and how they interact with jellyfish (their prey) and their oceanographic habitat. She is passionate about science education and outreach and is a driving force behind the CSTN's educational outreach initiatives.



About Nature Seekers, our research partners in Trinidad

Nature Seekers was founded in 1990 to protect nesting leatherback turtles in Trinidad and Tobago. The group worked to eliminate poaching of nesting female turtles and their eggs from Matura Beach. In addition to nightly beach patrols to ensure the safety of the leatherbacks, Nature Seekers is involved in other conservation initiatives such as waste recycling and reforestation. The group also leads evening beach tours to increase local public awareness about leatherbacks and the threats they face.



About the town of Matura

Our expedition is based in Matura, a small community in northeastern Trinidad where Nature Seekers has its headquarters. The village is surrounded by thick tropical forest with a wealth of wild fauna. Nearby is the Matura Beach Protected Area, where large numbers of leatherback turtles nest annually.



About Trinidad

Trinidad is the southernmost island in the chain of Caribbean islands stretching from Florida to South America. It is located less than 20 kilometres off the northeast coast of Venezuela, and this proximity means that Trinidad is populated by flora and fauna more similar to South America than most of the more insular Caribbean islands. The island enjoys a warm, maritime tropical climate year round.

Turtles in Trinidad

Trinidad's beaches host one of the largest nesting colonies of endangered leatherback sea turtles in the world. Approximately 60% of leatherback turtles that forage in Canadian waters during the summer months originate from the Trinidad nesting population.

The major nesting beaches of Trinidad are protected and patrolled by community conservation groups, like Nature Seekers, who protect the turtles from poaching. However, the turtles still face threats both locally, like predation of eggs and hatchlings, and regionally, like entanglement in fishing gear.

Leatherback research: How you will help

Each night during the sea turtle nesting season, the Nature Seekers patrol the nesting beach to prevent the poaching of leatherback turtles and their eggs. They conduct scientific research to allow them to assess the leatherback population size and trend as well as to monitor the reproduction of individual animals.

The CSTN is involved in a number of collaborative scientific initiatives with Nature Seekers, including satellite tagging “Canadian” turtles on the beach so we can learn about how the animals behave and where they go after they have nested. Sometimes we are lucky enough to follow the tracks of these turtles right back to Canadian waters.

Although some activities may be subject to change and we can’t guarantee that each volunteer will take part in each activity, volunteers on our field trip will likely have the chance to help:

- Record data on nesting leatherbacks (location, measurements)
- Visually scan leatherbacks for injuries
- Mark leatherbacks with flipper tags
- Help locate “Canadian” leatherbacks for further research by reading flipper tags on nesting animals



We will ensure that you are trained in sea turtle identification, data collection, and in the use of research equipment. You will practice each research task with project staff and will be paired with members of the Nature Seekers until you feel comfortable working independently.

Please note that leatherbacks nest at night. We will be on the beach working until approximately 1 a.m. each evening. (You are encouraged to sleep late into the morning to

accommodate this schedule.) Consistent, late-night activity in warm, humid temperatures can be challenging and we will work to ensure that everyone is as comfortable as possible. It is important to make sure you eat and drink well. And we find some of the best defences against becoming worn out in the field are a lot of laughter and a good team environment. We’ll do our best to provide those as well! And, if you need a break, please be sure to let Kayla know.



In addition to the turtles

We are particularly excited about you experiencing our partnership with Nature Seekers. It is a collaboration and friendship that we are proud of and it offers you the chance to see how international environmental conservation works up close. Highly-migratory species, like leatherbacks, move through the political boundaries of many countries and so conserving them requires cooperation on a massive scale. This means creating relationships at the grassroots level and developing common goals across cultures, languages (although in Trinidad, there is no language barrier) and geography.

Conserving sea turtles in Canadian waters provides the CSTN with the unique challenge of working with conservation groups throughout the Caribbean and South America. Although the majority of the leatherbacks found in Canadian waters are from Trinidad, Canada is like the United Nations of sea turtles—we are also host each summer and fall to turtles that come from more than a dozen different countries, including Anguilla, Colombia, Costa Rica, United States, French Guiana, Guyana, Panama, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Grenada, St. Croix and Suriname. Our work with nesting beach organizations in each of these places is critical to our conservation of leatherbacks.

After work

You'll have a chance to learn about Trinidad's natural environment through interaction with the Nature Seekers as well as during excursions to local ecotourism establishments. Afternoon ecotourism excursions will be finalized closer to the start of the trip based on participant interest, but may include rainforest hikes, kayaking, and visits to wildlife/bird sanctuaries. In addition, you'll be invited to visit the Nature Seekers Craft Program.

Where you will stay

Please note that you may be asked to provide information about your accommodations upon arrival at Customs and Immigration.

Address

Suzan's Guesthouse
16.5 KM Toco Main Road
Matura, Trinidad, West Indies
+1 (868) 319-0172 or +1 (868) 668-7337
natureseekers@gmail.com

Notes

- Up to four people may choose (though are not required) to share a room, though this does not affect the per person rate.
- Pillows, bedding and bath towels are provided.
- Most rooms have air conditioning.
- Each room has a bathroom with a modern flush toilet and a tiled shower with a low-flow shower head. Note there is no hot water in the shower, though the water is warmed slightly throughout the day by the sun in the collection tanks.
- You should not drink the water in your room. Drink only bottled water (provided).
- For charging personal electronic devices, the guesthouse has electricity (110 volts with standard Canadian-style plugs with two blades and a grounding pin).
- The guesthouse has WIFI available for free, although it may have limited reach and connection speed.
- There is a common area with a TV, a porch at the front of the house, and a veranda at the back of the house for use during leisure time.
- The guesthouse is a non-smoking environment.
- The guesthouse is inland, about 20 minutes away from the beach, and nightly transportation for volunteer work is provided via project bus or truck.
- There are no restaurants in the village, but there are two convenience stores next door to the guesthouse where you may purchase additional snacks and drinks (pop, chocolate bars, nuts, chips, etc.).



What you will eat

The guesthouse staff shop for food, set the menu, prepare the meals, and clean up afterward. It is important to note that food restrictions, such as allergies, can usually be accommodated and must be included on the Canadian Sea Turtle Network's online registration form. Below is a list of a selection of the foods you may be served. Please note that you may have different or additional choices as well. This list is meant to give you a general idea of what you might expect.

Breakfast

Granola, traditional fried bread, cereal, salt fish, plantains, pancakes, eggs, French toast, local fruit

Lunch/Dinner

“Brown down” (spicy Creole dish of stewed chicken/beef/fish), pelau (rice, peas, and chicken/beef/fish), callaloo (spicy soup), vegetable side dishes of ochro rice, green figs, yams, plantains, sweet potatoes, cassava pie, and eddoes (similar to sweet potatoes)

Snacks

Roti (thin, unleavened bread), other homemade bread, pastries, local cheeses

Beverages

Bottled water, coffee, tea, fruit juices, fruit punch



Sample schedule

Below is a tentative schedule for our trip.

Date	Time	Activity
Sunday, May 7	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival at Port of Spain • Travel to Matura • Breakfast
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest • Lunch • Talk: Introduction to the CSTN and leatherback biology
	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supper • Beach orientation
Monday, May 8	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch • Check-in meeting • Talk: All about Nature Seekers
	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supper • Beach work
Tuesday, May 9	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch • Check-in meeting • Excursion (TBD)
	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supper • Beach work
Wednesday, May 10	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch • Check-in meeting
	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supper • Beach work
Thursday, May 11	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch • Check-in meeting • Excursion (TBD)
	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supper • Beach work
Friday, May 12	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch • Check-in meeting • Tour of Nature Seekers Craft Program
	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supper • Beach work
Saturday, May 13	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rest
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunch • Excursion (TBD)
	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final supper together • Field Trip debrief • Social evening
Sunday, May 14	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trip to Port of Spain airport • Home!

Expenses

The base tour cost is \$2,500. This covers the cost of your accommodations, meals, transportation to and from the airport, transportation to and from the field site, and transportation to and from any excursions.

This money is payable to the Canadian Sea Turtle Network.

The first payment is a \$500 non-refundable deposit that guarantees your place on the trip.

The second payment is \$2,000 and must be made by April 21, 2017. If the payment is not received by April 21, 2017, we will assume you are not travelling with us and you will forfeit your deposit and your place on the trip.

After April 21, 2017, the total fee of \$2,500 becomes non-refundable except under exceptional circumstances decided on a case-by-case basis.

Payments can be made by:

Credit card

Visit our online store at: www.seaturtlestore.ca

You will see “Trinidad Trip – Deposit” and “Trinidad Trip – Balance” under the “Travel With Us” section

Interac e-transfer

Please use the password “LEATHERBACK” and send the money using the email address: kmartin@seaturtle.ca

Certified cheque

If you choose to send a certified cheque, please call us at (902) 423-6224 to let us know when you have mailed it. Please send the cheque to:

Canadian Sea Turtle Network (Field Trip)
110 - 2070 Oxford Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3L 2T2





Additional expenses

- You are responsible for the cost of your flight to and from Port of Spain, Trinidad. Your flight must allow you to arrive in Trinidad the morning of May 7 and depart Trinidad the morning of May 14. If you choose to arrive in Trinidad before May 7 or to stay in Trinidad after May 14, you are travelling independently from the Canadian Sea Turtle Network and this Field Trip and must manage all costs and arrangements independently.
 - You are responsible for the cost of (mandatory) health insurance while you are on the trip.
 - You are responsible for the cost of trip cancellation insurance, should you choose to purchase it.
 - You are responsible for the costs of any vaccines you choose to have.
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- You are responsible for the admission costs to any of the excursions you choose to attend. The tours range from free-of-charge to admission fees of \$20 USD per person. You are not required to attend any of these excursions and may pick the ones in which you would like to participate.
 - You are responsible for any spending money you may wish to bring with you. This money should be cash in either U.S. dollars or in TT (Trinidad and Tobago dollars). Please note that debit cards, credit cards, and traveller's cheques are generally not accepted in Trinidad. A minimum \$75 USD should be adequate for snacks, souvenirs, and ecotourism admissions, depending on personal spending habits.
 - You are responsible for any gratuities you would like to leave the local cooking, cleaning and driving staff. These tips are left at your discretion and are not mandatory, although they are appreciated.

Check list

- Submit your online registration form to the Canadian Sea Turtle Network.
- Submit your signed waiver (mandatory) to the Canadian Sea Turtle Network. (The CSTN will send you a copy of this waiver.)
- Pay your Field Trip deposit to the Canadian Sea Turtle Network.
- Pay the balance of your Field Trip fee to the Canadian Sea Turtle Network by April 21, 2017.
- Book flights in and out of Port of Spain, Trinidad, and make any additional travel arrangements you require.
- Your flights should allow you to arrive in Trinidad the morning of May 7, 2017, and depart Trinidad the morning of May 14, 2017.
- Purchase travel health insurance if you are not covered by your personal insurance policy. Health insurance is mandatory for this trip.
- Consider purchasing travel insurance.
- Make sure your passport is valid. If you are travelling from outside of North America, check travel visa requirements.
- Consult a physician to review the health risks of travelling in a tropical, developing country and to ensure that you have any vaccinations or medications you may need.
- Consider increasing your physical activity in advance of the trip to help prepare you for walking distances over the sand each evening.
- Review the packing list on p. 14 to ensure that you have all clothing and supplies that you will need. Please note that there are no shopping options for clothing or field supplies upon arrival in Matura.
- Leave copies of your passport, travel health insurance, airline tickets and any credit cards you plan to carry with a trusted friend or relative. Please provide this person's contact information to the Canadian Sea Turtle Network by April 28, 2017.
- Ensure that you have sufficient funds in cash (Trinidad and Tobago dollars or U.S. dollars), as debit/credit point of sale machines and ATMs are generally not available in Matura.



Travel tips

- Trinidad's official language is English
- Trinidad's time zone: -4 GMT/UTC. However, Trinidad does not recognize Daylight Savings Time. That means at this time of year, Trinidad time is equivalent to Eastern Standard Time.
- Do not bring more luggage than you can carry and handle on your own.
- If you are checking your luggage, please ensure that you pack an extra set of field clothing and personal essentials in your carry-on bag in case your luggage is lost or delayed.
- Check your airline's baggage policy to ensure you are familiar with weight limits, liquid restrictions, fees for checked bags, etc.
- Note: Camouflage clothing and luggage are illegal in Trinidad and Tobago and will be confiscated.

Suggested packing list

Documentation

- This document for reference
- Photocopies of your passport, flight itinerary, health insurance, and credit cards in case the originals are lost or stolen
- Passport
- Documentation for travel health insurance (mandatory)
- Documentation for travel insurance (optional)
- Documentation for travel by minors (if necessary)

To wear during field work

Please note that your clothes and shoes will become dirty with sand and/or soaked with salt water during your beach work. Please pack accordingly and prepare to dress in layers. Also, at this time of year, Trinidad is prone to sudden downpours. This means effective rain gear is important (although sometimes it rains with very little notice and you just get wet!).

- Long-sleeved or short-sleeved quick-drying athletic shirts
- Lightweight, quick-drying athletic pants
- Comfortable, worn-in, closed-toe hiking or running shoes
- Light sweater or hoodie for windy nights



- Waterproof jacket and rain pants (some people don't bring rain pants, particularly if they are wearing quick-dry field pants)
- Plenty of socks (quick-drying styles recommended, e.g., merino wool)

Field supplies

- Small daypack large enough for personal gear
- Drybag to protect phone/camera from water and sand (Some people choose to use a Ziploc bag for these items; however, these can tear, so be sure to have several extras with you and make sure they are well sealed when you are using them.)
- Batteries/chargers for all electronic gear
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen lotion with SPF 30+
- Wrist watch (preferably waterproof)
- Headlamp with red light option (Please note that nesting sea turtles are disrupted by white lights on the beach, so we are only able to use red lights while working with the turtles.)



To wear during activities/leisure

- Swimsuit
- Casual clothing to be worn in the guesthouse, in town or on excursions
- Sandals
- Sun hat
- Sunglasses
- Beach towel

Personal supplies

- Personal toiletries
- Antibacterial wipes and/or hand sanitizer
- Personal first aid kit and medications (We will have a group First Aid kit.)
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, floss
- Glasses and contact lenses (Please note it is best to have both options, as the mist and sand on the beach can affect their use.)
- Cash spending money in Trinidad and Tobago dollars ("TT") or U.S. dollars (Please note that debit cards, credit cards, and traveller's cheques are generally not accepted. Minimum \$75 USD should be adequate for snacks, souvenirs, and excursion admissions, depending on personal spending habits.)
- Camera with memory cards/film and charger/batteries (Please note that there are strict rules about photographing leatherbacks on the nesting beach because the light from a flash would disturb the turtles. This is serious because a flash or white light can cause a turtle to abort its nesting attempt. A flash going off can also cause other turtles further down the beach to abort their nesting attempts. We will try to provide an opportunity for you to photograph a nesting leatherback and to obtain a photograph of you with a nesting turtle. However, these opportunities will be limited. They will also be authorized and supervised by either the Nature Seekers or Kayla. Again, these restrictions are for the well being of the leatherbacks.)

Optional items

- Mosquito net
- Binoculars for bird watching
- Ear plugs or a sleep mask (There is sometimes an enthusiastic rooster in the area that may wake you. Some people prefer to bring ear plugs for that reason. Also, the rooms stay relatively dark during the day, but some people still prefer sleep masks.)
- Some people choose to bring some of their favourite dried snacks (granola bars, pretzels, cookies, etc.) from home. If you choose to do this, check to make sure you are bringing snacks that are allowed through Customs and Immigration.
- Book, journal, games, earphones, etc., for recreational time