Colola Mexico
Black Turtle Capitol of the World
Welcome to the very first Colola Mexico, Black Turtle Capitol 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 as well as seeing them in the water. We’ll also explore the surrounding area and visit an olive ridley arribada beach.

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 1 million endangered turtle hatchlings. For these efforts, we received the prestigious Changemakers Award from the World Travel & Tourism Council in 2019.

Please join me 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
brad@seeturtles.org
Table of Contents

Trip Information 1

Detailed Itinerary 2

Research Information 4

Background Information 6

Accommodations 7

FAQ’s 9

Eco-Friendly Travel 11

Travel Insurance 12

Packing List 13

About SEE Turtles 14

Terms & Conditions 15

Photos at right: Carlos Delgado / Universidad de Michoacan
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 45,000 nests in 2018 with nearly 2 million hatchlings. The beach is protected by the native Nahua 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 December, the beach has hundreds of nesting turtles and 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.

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Dec 6th: Arrive to Manzanillo
Fly into Manzanillo airport (ZLO), arriving anytime of the day. We will arrange a shuttle to the hotel and dinner will be with the group in town.

We will stay at one of the city’s mid-range hotels (specific one to be determined). We will meet with the group and have an orientation meeting and then a free night to sleep or explore the town. Meals: D.

Dec 7th: 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 and conduct some research on turtles nesting in front of the research station. Meals: B, L, D.

Dec. 8th: Ixtapilla & El Faro
This morning, we’ll wake up with a traditional Mexican breakfast. We start with a visit to Ixtapilla Beach, an arribada nesting beach a short drive away (if there are nesting olive ridleys to view). We will be not be in this area around the time the 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 with turtles in the water. 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.

Dec 9th: 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 visit the beach for some swimming and relaxing.
Dec 10th: Nature Walk & Swim
Today we start with a 2 hour guided nature walk to learn about the area's medicinal plants and look for wildlife like birds, butterflies, and iguanas. After lunch we will head to the small nearby town of El Faro, where we will visit the beach and swim in the bay and then head back to camp for a siesta before the evening's turtle activities. Meals: B, L, D

Dec 11th: Open Day
No planned activities today other than the hatchling release and night beach work. We will have the option to visit another nearby beach or hang out at the station. Join our hosts late afternoon for a lesson on cooking tortillas. Brad will give a sea turtle presentation in the evening after dinner. Meals: B, L, D

Dec 12th: Virgin of Guadalupe & Return to Manzanillo
After breakfast, we will visit a local village to participate in their celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, one of the world's largest religious celebrations. We will visit the church to make an offering, observe a traditional dance, and learn about the history of this 500 year old tradition. After, we will have lunch at the camp and then head back to Manzanillo (3 hour drive). We will have free time in the afternoon to hang out on the beach 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. Meals: B, L, D

Dec 13th: 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
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 more than 6 million black turtle hatchlings have been released into the waters of the Eastern Pacific, the average number of nesting females has increased from 500 in the decade of the 80s and 90s to +10,000 nesting females from 2000 to 2018. 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 Michocan, 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 60s, 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 10,000 adult females. SEE Turtles has been a proud partner of this project since 2013 through our Billion Baby Turtles program, helping them save nearly 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. This species can be found in the sub-tropics and tropics worldwide. 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.

Photos: Brad Nahill / SEE Turtles

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 ½ 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.

Photos: 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.
Wildlife Issues

Am I guaranteed to see a sea turtle?
Yes! 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?
SEE Turtles runs sea turtle trips as a way to help save these incredible animals. To participate in the work, we pay a fee to the local partner which helps to cover the costs of the conservation and research efforts, so the research is funded by the tour. By working directly with the Universidad de Michoacan and the Nahua community, most of the cost of this trip will benefit the conservation efforts and local community. In addition, the trip price includes a donation that will help protect at least 4,000 hatchlings through a donation to this project through our Billion Baby Turtles initiative.

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 Issues

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 US $100 - 150 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 $5 per day for each. 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. For email, the station has wifi though don’t expect a great signal. The station does not get normal cell service.

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, which is the quantity normally used by a person having your health problem.
- Bring a prescription or a written statement from your doctor, specifying that the medicine is being used under his/her control and that you need it for your physical health.
- 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 December, 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.
Eco-Friendly 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 help recognize these items and we encourage our travelers not only to not purchase these items but also to refuse to purchase from vendors that offer them and to alert your guide when you see these items for sale. Learn more at TooRareToWear.org.

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 plastic 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.

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 off 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 TURTLE SHELL

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMITATION PLASTIC</th>
<th>TURTLESHELL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uniform pattern with markings</td>
<td>Brown, orange, amber, yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>Pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown on top, beige underneath</td>
<td>Asymmetric and irregular shapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horn</td>
<td>Surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy with black/white coloring</td>
<td>Color pattern visible throughout</td>
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Travel Insurance...

That Saves Baby Turtles!

SEE Turtles partners with World Nomads to offer world-class travel insurance for your next trip. World Nomads is a socially responsible travel insurance company that has a great record of customer service. When you use World Nomads insurance, they will donate 10% of the cost of the policy to help save baby sea turtles through our Billion Baby Turtles program. Through their Footprints Network, they have helped to save more than 20,000 baby turtles in Cuba, El Salvador, and elsewhere!

World Nomads covers a wide range of activities and helps with trip cancellation, lost baggage, medical bills, theft, and more. No matter whether you travel with us, another operator, or on your own, this insurance will have you covered and have a real impact on conservation efforts. Click here to get a fast free quote for a policy for your next trip.
Recommended Packing List

* Indicates Required Items

Clothes:
- Shorts
- T-shirts & light shirts
- Sleepwear
- Polarized sunglasses*
- Water-friendly sandals or shoes
- Long-sleeve shirt for the evenings
- Hat for the sun
- Bathing suit

Miscellaneous Gear:
- Camera, batteries, battery charger, underwater camera
- Day pack
- Bath towel and wash cloth
- Dirty clothes bag
- Small first aid kit with personal prescriptions
- Flashlight & extra batteries
- Money / Passport
- Reusable water bottle
- Plastic bag for wet clothes

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 (vitamin C packets)
- Headache medicine
- Personal medicines
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 educational programs and our Billion Baby Turtles and Too Rare To Wear projects. To date, we have brought more than 1,300 people to visit turtle projects, generated more than $1 million for turtle conservation and local communities, saved more than 1 million turtle hatchlings at more than 20 beaches around the world, and reached more than 10,000 students with our educational programs. We received the 2019 Changemakers Award from the World Travel & Tourism Council for our work to protect wildlife through travel. SEE Turtles is an independent 501c3 organization based in Oregon.

www.SEEturtles.org
brad@SEEturtles.org
(800) 215-0378, M-F, 9-5 PST
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 unavailable 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.

Late Bookings: A late fee of $50 may apply to bookings received within 30 days of trip date.

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:

- 180 days or more prior to departure: $100.00
- 120 to 179 days prior to departure: $300.00
- 60 to 119 days prior to departure: 50% of expedition fee
- 59 days or less prior to departure: 100% of expedition fee

* Some costs are occasionally recoverable from the supplier

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, soft drinks, laundry, gratuities, 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. Please call before sending a trip deposit for anyone under 18 years of age.
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.

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Travel Protection Policy: We require all participants to obtain individual travel insurance to protect yourself and your equipment. Travel insurance may reimburse you for non-refundable air and expedition costs should you need to cancel or interrupt your trip. The carrier can be any insurance provider but we can provide recommendations. Proof of insurance is required before participating on the trip.

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 sex but some trips require a single supplement if single rooms are preferred to 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 his/her 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 tour operator release form by our local partners and/or tour operators.

Suppliers of Services: SEE Turtles is performing a non-profit 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.