



Whale Shark Research
& Conservation:
Honda Bay, Puerto Princesa,
Palawan
Volunteer Information Pack
2018



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Project:	Whale Sharks of Honda Bay
Location:	Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines
Starting date:	1 st May 2018 in Oslob, Cebu for training; Palawan May 11 th
Cost per month:	\$450 (USD)
Key requirements:	Freediving skills to 10 m, able to work long hours at sea, 21 years old, marine/biology background preferred.

Who is LAMAVE?

Large Marine Vertebrates Research Institute Philippines (LAMAVE) is the largest independent non-stock non-profit non-government organization dedicated to the conservation of marine megafauna and the marine environment in the Philippines. We strive for **conservation** through **scientific research, policy** and **education**.

Introduction to the project

Through citizen science contributions in 2015, and initial satellite tracking of whale sharks from Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park in the Sulu Sea in partnership with Tubbataha Management Office (TMO) and Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), we identified the presence of whale sharks in Honda Bay, just north of Puerto Princesa City, the capital of the province of Palawan. In 2016 LAMAVE had a dedicated effort to further assess the feasibility of whale shark data collection, and this was further validated in 2017. We have now identified over 50 individual whale sharks in Honda Bay and have satellite-tracking data for a few individuals. In order to further understand the ecology of whale sharks using this rich shallow ecosystem, we will conduct season-wide surveys employing photo-ID, focal follows, and satellite data, to understand their seasonality and habitat use.

We will work closely with the local government unit of Puerto Princesa, under whose jurisdiction Honda Bay is, and the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development, under whose management the whale shark and its habitats fall. We will share data and results with these stakeholders, as well as with coastal communities with who whale shark-fisheries interactions occur, with the overarching goal of regulating the wildlife watching tourism industry that is currently underdeveloped in Palawan. We will do so by employing successful techniques we've used in Southern Leyte, Donsol and northern Mindanao.

Training/what you learn

- Whale shark photographic identification

- Focal follows of whale sharks to determine behaviour and responses to anthropogenic stimuli
- Opportunistic data collection of other marine megafauna (e.g. manta rays, dolphins)
- Data collection, validation, and encoding for management use
- Hands-on experience in marine wildlife monitoring and techniques
- Engagement with local communities who ultimately hold the key to species conservation and management

Daily life/Typical Working Day

This will be our **first** season in Palawan and therefore some of the factors are yet to be determined. However, drawing on our knowledge of whale sharks and the work to be employed, a typical day will look something like:

7:00 AM Wake-up and breakfast (typically toast and jam/peanut butter; eggs on toast)

8:00 AM Prepare gear for survey (ensure cameras are clean, SD and GPS are good to go, there's water packed, sunscreen, slate is clean, snacks packed)

8:30 AM Start of survey: surveys will take place onboard small local outrigger boats, or onboard tourist boats from Puerto Princesa City

2/3:00 PM Return from survey and clean gear / have lunch

3-5:00 PM Data processing, validation and encoding (download data from cameras and GPS; clean housing and slate; input data into excel; sort photo-ID data)

Free time

7:30 PM Dinner time (typically rice or pasta with vegetables, veggie burgers, curries, salads, soups; meats when available)

Training in Oslob, Cebu and then Puerto Princesa

To ensure you are water-ready by the time you get to Palawan, we will give you training for 10 days in-water in Oslob, Cebu. On Arrival on **May 1st** you will head to Oslob, 5 hours south of Cebu City in the central Visayas region of the Philippines. Flying to Cebu is normally easier from abroad. Then there's a ~250PHP taxi to the bus terminal, and the bus is ~200PHP to Oslob. You will spend 10 days with the team learning in-water techniques with whale sharks, data sorting, ID validation and encoding.

On the **12th May** you will head back up to Cebu and fly to Puerto Princesa City in Palawan (depending on airline will cost 2,500-7,000PHP one way), where you will meet our team there.

Volunteer Requirements

Please ensure you meet the following criteria:

- At least 21 years old
- Willing to commit to at least 3 months
- Fluent in English
- Able to work independently and as part of a team
- Comfortable living in a shared home and in a remote setting with extremely basic amenities
- Willing to work long and irregular hours if needed, at sea sometimes in rough conditions
- A degree in marine science, biology or similar prioritised.
- Excellent swimming/snorkelling skills
- Strong interest in marine ecosystems, research and conservation

Equipment required	Recommended general packing List
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mask• Snorkel• Free Diving Fins (long fins)• Leggings and a long sleeve rash vest/ rash suit (for protection from the sun and stingers when in the water)• Knee length board shorts (must be worn during surveys)• Rash guard (must be worn during surveys)• Hat & Sunglasses (polarized mandatory for boat work)• Sunscreen• Laptop (this is essential for work)• Digital waterproof watch• Dry bag for boat use• Mosquito net• Towel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small ziplock bag for electricals• Long (smart/jeans) trousers (for formal occasions)• Insect repellent• Casual clothing• Swimwear• Rain coat• Waterproof camera (for days off)• Protective Hat• Thin, long sleeved tops and trousers recommended to protect against biting insects• Personal First Aid Kit• Torch

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We strongly recommend to bring all required gear from home.

Dress Code

Volunteers continue to represent LAMAVE, even after work is finished, therefore, we enforce a dress code that is consistent and inoffensive to the local community and culture.

Shorts - hot pants and very short-shorts are forbidden. Shorts must be at least mid thigh in length. Shorts that reach just above the knee are preferred.



The \$450 a month Contribution

Being a non-profit organization, we request a contribution of \$450 USD per month to help cover the project's costs. This allows us to provide you with:

- Photo-ID & other in-water training
- Accommodation & Three meals a day
- Public transport to and from survey sites
- Training in whale shark biology & ecology, and survey procedures
- LAMAVE T-shirts

Other costs

Visas

On entering the country most visitors are allowed to stay in the country for 30 days without applying for a visa, but **please check the terms for your nationality**. Before the 30 days are over you must travel to an Immigration office to renew your visa. The first renewal lasts for 30 days and costs approximately 3000PHP. If you plan to stay in the country after this visa date, you will need to renew again and will be required to purchase an i-card (a tourist identity card) with your visa. This will cost approximately 6000PHP for the i- card and a 1-month extension. *Please note this information was correct as of the 30th June 2016 and may be subject to change.

Insurance

All volunteers are required to have medical insurance. The study sites for the projects are often in remote areas. All medical services in the Philippines need to be paid for by individual volunteers. Costs vary from PHP50 for a consultation at the local hospital to PHP 8000 for a full CTI scan in most hospitals. Volunteers that contract a contagious disease, that may put other volunteers and staff at risk, may be asked to depart from the project house for health reasons until appropriate health clearance.

Rules and regulations

Grounds for dismissal

Volunteers may be asked to leave the project if they display inappropriate behaviour or attitude that disrupts work, the living environment or portrays a negative image for the organization. Grounds for dismissal can also be as a result of release of sensitive information to media/social media platforms. Dismissal is at the Principal Investigators discretion. The use of drugs during the placement is prohibited and will result in immediate dismissal.

Days off

Each team member will be given a dedicated day off each week to relax or travel. Days off can be spent taking in the many wonders and unique culture of the Philippines.

Holidays and visitors

As a volunteer you are contracted to assist LAMAVE for a minimum of 3 month, therefore should you wish to have time to explore the Philippines further (which we strongly advise you do!) **please plan time before or after your stay with us, as during the three months placement we do not allow volunteers to take additional days off.**

How to apply?

Email us a covering letter and a copy of your CV to volunteer@lamave.org

Remember to:

- State the project you are applying for in the **email subject** e.g. BRUVS
- State the starting date
- Tell us why you want to join the team and any other relevant information in your covering letter.
- State if you are Filipino and applying for one of our Scholarships.