



CONSERVATION
VOLUNTEERS
INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAM

2023 Impact Report

Driven by purpose, not profit.



MISSION



Conservation Volunteers International Program is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to helping sustain some of the world's greatest landscapes, cultural heritage sites, and biodiversity.



2023 Overview

WHERE WE ARE NOW

When Conservation Volunteers International Program began its journey as a nonprofit in 2008, we were focused on helping one extraordinary park, Torres del Paine National Park in the Patagonia region of Chile. Fifteen years later, in 2023, we provided support for ten extraordinary destinations. Torres del Paine continues to be one of our special destinations which tugs at our hearts and challenges us.

We began 2023 with optimistic expectations of continuing our post-COVID recovery as world travel generally continued to pick up. During the year, we did increase the number of destinations we served - most notably we successfully launched a new volunteer trip to Tanzania.

We were disappointed though that our 2023 volunteer hours still did not rebound to our pre-pandemic levels. Nevertheless, we were gratified and motivated by the appreciation we received from the destinations we helped. We were also pleased that we continued to receive praise from our volunteers for the unique experiences they had on our trips and for their satisfaction and enjoyment from choosing to participate in our volunteer trips. You can read their words in the review excerpts found later in this report.

When planning their journeys, travelers have many options. We remain optimistic that as travelers' choices again become more focused on sustainability, we will be able to provide even more support for our extraordinary destinations.





WE APPRECIATE YOU!



Because ConservationVIP's mission is to help sustain some of the world's greatest landscapes, cultural heritage sites and biodiversity, when we report on our impact, we focus on the statistics which quantify the support and protection we provide for the environment, cultural heritage sites and biodiversity.

Yet, numbers alone are inadequate to describe impact. Statistics do not capture the positive impact we make on the people at our destinations who benefit from our support. Nor do numbers adequately express the importance of the people who support us.

We accomplish our mission thanks to the dedication, generosity, and efforts of the many people who share their time, money, and passion to support ConservationVIP's activities.

We especially appreciate our volunteers who make so many contributions which enable us to achieve our collective mission.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!



VOLUNTEER TRIPS

One way we fulfill our mission is by offering volunteer trips to some extraordinary destinations where the trip participants volunteer on environmental conservation projects.

2023 Destinations:

Alaska
Cinque Terre, Italy
Costa Rica
Galapagos, Ecuador
Machu Picchu, Peru
Scottish Highlands
Tanzania
Torres del Paine, Chile
Yosemite National Park
U.S. Virgin Islands National Park

Excerpts from our 2023 Volunteer Trip Reports and Reviews follow. Full trip reports for all of our volunteer trips are available on their respective destination pages on our website at

<https://conservationvip.org>

SPECIAL PROJECTS

In addition to the work accomplished on our volunteer trips, we also sponsor Special Projects, which are projects which require longer time commitments, specialized skills, and funding to implement, beyond the scope of what is feasible on our shorter volunteer trips.

2023 Special Projects:

Trail to the Towers in Torres del Paine National Park in Chile

Additional information about our 2023 special projects is located after the individual volunteer trip information on the following pages.



VOLUNTEER TRIP DATA

2023



13 VOLUNTEER TRIPS



127 VOLUNTEERS



4,804 VOLUNTEER HOURS

CONSERVATION
VOLUNTEERS
INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAM



\$ 152,767
VALUE OF
VOLUNTEER TIME*

Volunteer Trip Activity Types

27%

Trail Maintenance
& Restoration

27%

Cultural Heritage
Site Maintenance

32%

Habitat Restoration
& Invasives

14%

Citizen Science

*Estimated dollar value of total volunteer hours Calculated using \$31.80/hr estimated value of volunteer time per hour calculated by independentsector.org



VOLUNTEER TRIP DATA

2008 - 2023



124 VOLUNTEER TRIPS



1,672 VOLUNTEERS



60,580 VOLUNTEER
HOURS

CONSERVATION
VOLUNTEERS
INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAM



\$ 1,926,444
VALUE OF
VOLUNTEER TIME*

Volunteer Trip Activity Types

35%

Trail Maintenance
& Restoration

21%

Cultural Heritage
Site Maintenance

34%

Habitat Restoration
& Invasives

10%

Citizen Science

*Estimated dollar value of total volunteer hours Calculated using \$31.80/hr estimated value of volunteer time per hour calculated by independentsector.org



ALASKA VOLUNTEER TRIP

Our Alaska Volunteer Trip begins in Juneau, where we participate in volunteer trail projects. Juneau is the home of the spectacular Mendenhall Glacier Recreation Area and headquarters for the Juneau Ranger District of the Tongass National Forest, the nation's largest national forest. Then northward we go to Skagway, on a ferry through the deepest fjord in North America, following the route of the Gold Rush of 1898. In Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, we help with projects on the Chilkoot Trail, the historic 33-mile route that led to the gold fields of the Yukon and Dawson City. On our final day, we whale watch and gaze at glaciers on the return catamaran ride to Juneau, where the journey ends.

June 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

In Juneau, the group improved ~650' of trail on the Mendenhall East Glacier trail and the Peterson Lake trail. This included the spreading of 5,000 lb of gravel on the East Glacier trail and significant, wet, rocky and rooty drainage work in both areas, brushing and relocating rocks to improve drainage and recreation activities. Additionally, they transplanted 112 seagrasses in the Lena Bay Recreation Area to reduce erosion in a used recreation area near a salmon stream. The group worked four days in Juneau for a total of 247 hours.

In Skagway, in the Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park, the work included: brushed of 2 miles of trail, brushed at the campground and Dyea Slide Cemetery locations to improve walking paths and preserve the cemetery; split, stacked and filled the campground's 3 cord firewood shed; spread 20 cubic yards (32,000 lb) of wet gravel material to construct 150' of trail tread for the new accessible ramp in the Chilkoot Trailhead Parking Lot; restored 6 campsites' deteriorating picnic tables; pulled six 42-gallon bags of invasive weeds and dandelion; direct seeded a large area of native plants at the main Chilkoot Trailhead sign. The group worked four days in Skagway for a total of 247 hours.

In both locations, the groups were led and guided by experienced USFS and NPS personnel. USFS in Juneau also partnered with Trail Mix Inc. Tools and materials were provided by all agencies. ConservationVIP® volunteers contributed a total of 494 hours equally divided among Juneau and Skagway during the 8 days of trail work. These hours exclude trip planning and pre- and post-trip volunteer hours by the leaders. Tools used included shovels, Pulaskis, McLeods, loppers, rock bar, hand saws and clippers, shovels, buckets, and wheelbarrows.



ALASKA VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"Absolutely amazing way to experience Alaska!!!... This was my 5th trip with Conservation VIP and each one has been a tremendously enjoyable and rewarding experience. Can't wait for my next adventure with Conservation VIP!" Nikki

"[O]ur trip leaders, Susan and Max, were what made the trip exceptional. They worked with the FS and NPS, handled all travel arrangements, kept us busy with very worthwhile work yet provided opportunities on our rest time to get out and truly explore and experience Southeast Alaska. And made it all seamless. Kudos! Highly recommend this trip. It's the best combination of giving back to nature while truly enjoying it." Pam

"This trip was remarkable in so many ways; being in Alaska, (also my third time in Alaska) its wildness, vastness and beauty beyond words." Tim



CINQUE TERRE, ITALY VOLUNTEER TRIP

Experience the historic, colorful villages of the iconic Mediterranean hillsides and jagged coastlines of Cinque Terre, Italy. Substantially located within the UNESCO World Heritage designation boundaries of Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre, the area embodies the connectivity between people and nature within an exceptional scenic landscape. Our Italian guide leads us through the iconic village where we volunteer and lodge. Gain an appreciation for the environment, history, and local cuisine while helping to preserve this historic cultural and environmental marvel. UNESCO recently added dry stone walls in Italy and much of the Mediterranean to its List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

May 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

In total, 13 volunteers donated approximately 444 volunteer hours to clearing brush and competing plants from around 2160 linear feet of terrace walls, 20 vineyard rows, and 100 feet of rock steps leading down to lower terraces. They also volunteered on a section of wall that had collapsed, which was approximately 20 feet long and 12 feet high.

October 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

Throughout the course of the trip, 13 volunteers donated approximately 380 volunteer work hours were dedicated to various tasks. These included clearing brush and competing plants along approximately 1990 linear feet of vineyard rows, as well as clearing about 20 feet of rock steps leading to the lower terraces.



CINQUE TERRE, ITALY VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"What I like about Conservation Volunteers International Program [ConservationVIP] trips is that I can learn from local guides and hosts about a new (to me) landscape, history, and culture while giving back to support that landscape and culture." Mona

"Overall, I had a wonderful time. The landscape, the work, the people, the food, and the itinerary were all superb." Jessica

"Definitely a 6 star trip for memories made and experiences gathered I am a better person, for having invested in the Conservation VIP travel experience. Thank you again, I will be signing up for a trip with [ConservationVIP] next year" Matt

"Like the two other trips with [ConservationVIP] I've been on, the most special part for me is the feeling that we were a useful part of the Riomaggiore community, if only for a while. Truly, Travel with a Purpose." Claire C

"I whole-heartedly recommend this and all the other trips that [ConservationVIP] organizes. As I always tell everyone who is willing to listen to me - all you need is a spirit of adventure, flexibility, willingness to work hard and keep an open mind." Seetha

"I feel lucky to have been immersed for 1 week in such a beautiful area with a great group of volunteers, leaders and guides. I highly recommend this trip!" Liz



COSTA RICA VOLUNTEER TRIP

Experience conservation in the land known for its progressive environmental policies and rich biodiversity. Help protect the area's biodiversity by participating in a sea turtle preservation program on the Burica Peninsula on the southern Pacific coast of Costa Rica. We also build nesting boxes and improve habitat for Resplendent Quetzals in the highlands.

September 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

The dedicated efforts of the volunteers were focused on four distinct regions in the Central and South Pacific areas of Costa Rica. The first project aimed to preserve the Scarlet Macaw habitat in Tárcoles. The next undertaking took place at the Hacienda Baru National Wildlife Refuge in Savegre, along the Pacific coast. However, the primary focus of the trip is centered around the protection of sea turtles nesting on the beaches of Punta Banco on the South Pacific Coast. These conservation initiatives were carried out in collaboration with the Proyecto Conservación Tortugas (Punta Banco Community Association), a local nonprofit organization established in 2004. Their mission is to enhance the conservation conditions for sea turtles inhabiting and nesting along the coastline of the Osa canton, particularly at Punta Banco beach.

Furthermore, the volunteers dedicated an impressive total of about 366 collective volunteer hours towards various projects. Their hard work and determination enabled them to accomplish the following: Along the Tárcoles beach, they carefully planted 10 almond trees, each standing at a height of 2 feet. In addition, they replaced worn-out fabric and constructed a sturdy worktable in the tree nursery. 53 compostable planting bags were filled with soil. These bags will serve as valuable resources for local school children, who will use them to plant almond seeds that will eventually grow to nurture Scarlet Macaws.



COSTA RICA VOLUNTEER TRIP

September 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments (Continued)

The conservation endeavors extended to the new Punta Banco sea turtle hatchery, an expansive site measuring an impressive 30x30 feet. The volunteers tirelessly transported approximately 425 wheelbarrows filled with beach sand to this location. With care and precision, they filled the enclosure with a staggering 3600 cubic square feet of sand. The hatchery was then secured by attaching 3-foot netting above the framework. To ensure the safety of sea turtle eggs, the group built 16 nest cages, creating a protective environment within the grid plots where the sea turtle eggs would be deposited. Then a natural sea barrier wall, measuring 20x6, was constructed to safeguard another hatchery.

During their tireless efforts, the group had the joyous opportunity to release an estimated total of 257 hatchlings into the ocean. During a night patrol, they witnessed an awe-inspiring sight: an Olive Ridley sea turtle laying 83 eggs. The volunteers also undertook the vital task of carefully excavating 8 hatched nests, diligently collecting data on the various stages of egg development within each nest.

In the cooler cloud forests of the highlands of Cerro de la Muerte, the volunteers constructed a 75-foot natural dirt staircase. This staircase, accompanied by a sturdy wooden handrail, created a safe and accessible trail leading to the designated area for the majestic Quetzal nest settings. In addition, they assisted in building a brand-new nest for the Resplendent Quetzal species. Volunteers relocated a completed nest onto a towering 25-foot wooden post within the designated natural area. The volunteers' efforts in creating a suitable habitat for the Quetzal were instrumental in supporting the preservation and well-being of these magnificent birds.



COSTA RICA VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"What a great trip. A wonderful way to experience the real Costa Rica while doing important conservation work. This was my first trip with Conservation VIP, but certainly won't be my last." Eidell

"Pura Vida" is a common phrase in Costa Rica. The direct translation is pure life. It means, everything is great, life is good, and nothing is worth getting stressed out about. That's a great way to describe this trip. This was my third Conservation VIP trip and like the others it was a fantastic and unforgettable experience." Thomas

"Though I've traveled around the world, I think this trip had more impact on me than any other. To have the privilege to witness and participate in the mysterious and wondrous cycle of watching a olive ridley sea turtle come ashore and lay her eggs, to building habitat for the eggs safe from the dangers of predation and poaching, and watching the turtles hatch, to releasing the hatchlings on the beach and seeing them in a mad scramble to the ocean touched my heart and soul deeply. It connected me back to the sheer wonder of life on this planet, and how perfectly it has adapted itself to its environs." Barbara

"The trip to Costa Rica is not my first volunteer trip with Conservation VIP, but it may well be my favorite! Every trip I've done with this organization has been amazing - but this trip touched my heart in a new way." Cindy

"Going to Costa Rica was my 5th volunteer trip with ConservationVIP and that alone should tell you something. This trip far exceeded my expectations in every regard. Although I had the itinerary, read the reviews, and had recommendations from former fellow travelers nothing prepared me for this wonderful experience." Susan



GALAPAGOS VOLUNTEER TRIP

The Galápagos Islands are a rare and distinctive collection of volcanic islands located 600 miles off the coast of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean. The combination of hot equatorial sun and cool ocean waters has nurtured rich marine and terrestrial environments. The islands are known for the unique variety of animals which inspired Darwin and continue to fascinate visitors today. Inspired by Darwin and the giant tortoises for which the islands were named, our volunteers travel slowly and closely observe in the Galápagos Islands as they care for it. Travelers on ConservationVIP's Galápagos trip volunteer on important conservation projects including sea turtle research and habitat protection for the giant tortoise.

January 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

During the trip, a total of 175 volunteer hours were devoted to orientation, job training, safety and volunteer projects. This included 120 hours of sea turtle survey and data collection. At Campo Duro we worked 12 volunteer hours (including travel and work) on giant tortoise habitat improvements. During our hikes 42 hours of trash survey and collection. Utilizing GoPro cameras at the five sea turtle survey sites, the volunteer group collected 1300 digital photographs of underwater marine life. These sea turtle and other marine life photographs supply data about sea turtle populations to support the research conducted by the University of San Francisco de Quito at the Galápagos Science Center. Facial recognition software is used to analyze the photographs, giving the researchers new data each trip.

December 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

During the trip, a total of 264 volunteer hours were devoted to job training, safety meetings, orientation, and volunteer projects: 80 hours of sea turtle survey and data collection, 96 volunteer hours dedicated to the giant tortoise habitat restoration and 88 hours of trash collection. Utilizing GoPro cameras at five survey sites, the volunteer group collected ~2700 digital photographs of underwater marine life. These sea turtle and other marine life photographs provide data about sea turtle populations to support the research conducted by the University of San Francisco de Quito at the Galápagos Science Center. Facial recognition software is used to analyze the photographs, giving the researchers new data each trip.



GALAPAGOS VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"This is my husband and my fourth trip with ConservationVIP and each trip has exceeded any of our expectations. Starting with the accommodations, the food, the adventure, and the accomplishments. This trip is an A plus." Chris

"Fantastic from beginning to end. Wonderful leader, guides, and fellow volunteers. Only problem...too much great food...how do you gain weight on a very active trip?" Ron

"What a once-in-a-lifetime experience! I was excited to go to The Galapagos, but to add in the volunteer aspect made it even more special!" Jane

"This trip was fantastic. All the accommodations, food, and activities were fantastic. I felt it was an incredible value for providing a great vacation and experience." Bob

"ConservationVIP, thank you for putting together a service program to support the wildlife, wilderness, and people that are the Galápagos Islands. CampDuro was my clear favorite experience, but everything from the leaders to the guides to the volunteers to the hotels to the food to the equipment was exceptional. This trip moved me deeply and left me in a state of deep reflection nearly every night. It was a surreal experience that leaves me with a grateful heart for the Galápagos, the experience of visiting, and the people I met along the way." Norman



MACHU PICCHU VOLUNTEER TRIP

Guided by our local Peruvian guide and experienced American trip leaders and working under the supervision of local park rangers, volunteers learn about the Inca culture and its impact while helping to preserve the Machu Picchu Sanctuary. ConservationVIP® is pleased to offer this unique and exciting opportunity to one of the world's most astounding archaeological treasures! Volunteer project sites vary in altitude from 8,000 to 11,000 feet, making this challenging for some, though past volunteers included a wide range of ages and abilities. The rewards far surpass any challenge from working at this elevation!

November 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

Ten volunteers, including ConservationVIP® Trip Leader Dr. Milagros Flores-Roman and Assistant Trip Leader and Architect Pablo Ojeda O'Neill, and Licenciado Santiago Carrasco Bellota, performed 232 total hours of volunteer work. The primary projects for the ConservationVIP volunteers during the November 2023 trip involved removing non-native grass and other plants in the Machu Picchu National Archaeological Park. Specifically, during the first three days volunteers worked removing non-native grasses at Llaqta of Machupicchu, areas of: terraces, Intimachay platforms and lower quarry, Quarries.

The last day was dedicated to volunteering at the site of the Manuel Chávez Ballón Museum Inka wall on the side of the parking, and at the road from the site museum to the Hiram Bingham Road. At the Manuel Chávez Ballón Museum the volunteers cleared "False Kion" or false ginger. This is an invasive species that the group pulled out by the root and placed in bags. Additionally, volunteers assisted the Rangers cleaning an Inca wall in front of the museum of invasive plants that threatened damaging the wall.

During the 232 hours, the volunteers pulled and collected a total of 50 large sacks of non-native vegetation, under the direct supervision of park biologist Sr. Julio Ochoa, and his staff Wilber Huillca Huillca and Safety and Rescue Staff Antonio Sinchiroca Mora.



MACHU PICCHU VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"An absolutely fantastic and one-of-a-kind trip!! It was well-organized, Millie is an amazing leader, Santiago is the best guide out there, and it was wonderful to have Pablo's insights into architecture! To learn about, and help take care of in a small way, an amazing UNESCO site such as Machu Picchu was a real privilege. I loved working with the local Peruvian staff and our group of volunteers got along fantastically. Can't recommend this trip enough!" Amy

"Absolutely amazing trip! We started with a few days in Cuzco to get acclimated to the altitude and learn more about the Incan culture, but the true highlight was the work in Machu Picchu. To be able to be part of preserving the truly breath-taking wonder that is this world heritage site is the memory of a lifetime." Pam

"It was truly an extraordinary experience." James

"The bond we made between the local workers, our guides and other adventurers will be kept for a life time. If you every wanted to see the real Peru and visit an UNESCO site, this is the must do adventure. Both my wife and I cannot wait to sign up for another trip with unique experience with Conversation VIP. Thank you, Thank you Thank you" Debbie and David



SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS VOLUNTEER TRIP

Want to plant trees to fight climate change? Join us in the Scottish Highlands and help restore the Caledonian Forest. The Scottish Highlands Volunteer Trip helps to reforest and rewild the highlands at Dundreggan Conservation Estate, located in beautiful Glen Moriston, along the 'Road to the Isles'!

Our environmental conservation projects take place at Dundreggan, a 10,000-acre expanse of wild land. Located near Loch Ness, it is a center for rewilding and a flagship forest restoration project. Dundreggan contains a remnant of the ancient Caledonian Forest and is especially noted for its exceptional juniper-birch woodland. It has been described as a haven for biodiversity, supporting many rare and endangered species.

May 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

Ten volunteers, including two trip leaders from ConservationVIP®, worked in the Scottish Highlands under the supervision of two leaders from the Scottish non-profit, Trees for Life ("TFL"). TFL's mission is to "restore the ancient Caledonian Forest to the Scottish Highlands." We worked in TFL's native tree nursery and planted native trees on part of TFL's 10,000-acre estate. We volunteered approximately 375 hours with TFL. During that time, we planted 1,255 trees on the Carn na Caorach boggy hill, 54 trees at the new Re-Wilding Centre, and 112 perennials at the new Re-Wilding Centre. We separated 800 rowan seedlings, transplanted 672 hazelnut seedlings and 344 oak seedlings, removed rocks from 125 square feet of planting beds, added dirt to 250 square feet of planting beds, and planted 240 oak seedlings in beds.



SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"I have participated in several Conservation VIP projects and this one did not disappoint! The facilities were great, the food even better. But it was the beautiful country that stole the show. It was so moving planting trees that will live for years and reseed for even more years to come. Liv and Sally, with Trees for Life, were knowledgeable, funny, patient, and great guides for the week we were together. I highly recommend this trip!" Cindy

"Amazing. Super well-run, excellent, and timely pre-trip information, great group and camaraderie. And the local staff shepherding us around daily were beyond fun, wonderful, energetic, and interesting. We learned so much about the Highlands, land maintenance, competing interests and of course, about trees. An unforgettable experience. Well done, [ConservationVIP]!" John



TANZANIA VOLUNTEER TRIP

A land vibrant in cultural diversity, world-renowned for wide-open savannahs, lush tropical mountain forests, the Great Rift Valley at the foothills of Mt. Kilimanjaro, Northern Tanzania is best known for its abundant natural resources, wildlife safaris, and home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Volunteer for reforestation and trail restoration projects near Lake Manyara National Park, part of the Great Rift Valley Escarpment, and the Rau Forest Reserve, in Moshi Town at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro. By supporting reforestation projects, you are not only planting trees, but you are also helping to mitigate global warming and climate change.

Join us as we gain an appreciation for the people, local cultural heritage, and the forest environments they call home while working to help protect, preserve, and restore these incredible ecosystems and landscapes.

November 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

Volunteers contributed a total of 862.5 hours towards the following projects: Prepared the pre-dug holes and planted 400 tree saplings around the hillsides at Gekrum village near the boundary of Lake Manyara National Park. Cleared 2.5 kilometers of brush from trails and 1 hectare of brush from a campsite in the Rau Forest Reserve. Planted 810 tree saplings in pre-dug holes in 3 locations in the Rau Forest Reserve, and 200 tree saplings and 400 Vetiver grasses at the Kiviwama Njoro Juu Spring Conservation Area. Our goal was to plant 1008 trees on this trip. Combined, we achieved 1410 trees and 400 grasses during this inaugural reforestation project! In addition, the fees paid by the volunteers for the trip encompassed the costs for both the procurement of tree-planting supplies and the acquisition of the trees and grasses that were planted during the trip.



TANZANIA VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"The opportunity to work closely with local individuals who care about their world was particularly rewarding. The hard work and commitment of local people was inspiring and I was touched by the gratitude displayed for the small contribution we made. I am impressed with the work that Maggie from Maggie's Tours is doing with local villagers near Gekrom (sp?) out of Arusha. The young women she is mentoring will benefit from her gentle guidance and leadership. I would recommend persons interested in a trip to Tanzania to consider this [ConservationVIP] opportunity." Dale

"Great camaraderie developed quickly amongst a small group of like-minded individuals. The projects provided a great opportunity to work side by side with our Tanzanian partners and to observe and participate in cultural exchanges that typical tourist trips don't allow. The tree planting and trail clearing were physically demanding but not excessively so. While many of the volunteers felt we could have done more, it was gratifying to observe how appreciative our hosts were. The project location was very well situated to allow for independent safari travel preceding or following the volunteer trip. The weather was more comfortable than anticipated in terms of temperature, humidity, and rainfall, and there were surprisingly few bothersome insects. All in all this was an excellent first-for-the-region trip." Sam

"This was definitely a trip of a lifetime for us. We were able to give back to a community that was dedicated in addressing deforestation and climate change. The village members were so appreciative of Conservation VIP volunteers who were there to help them and showed their appreciation with a celebration on our last day with them. So thoughtful of them to do so. We planted a lot of trees between the village and at the RAU National Forest, including the unique Baobab tree. For the inaugural trip to Tanzania we felt everything was run smoothly for us volunteers. We are looking forward to future trips with Conservation VIP." Raul



TORRES DEL PAINE, PATAGONIA, CHILE VOLUNTEER TRIP

Torres del Paine National Park in Patagonia, Chile's premier national park, has one of the most stunning mountain landscapes on earth. Visitors from around the world travel there to see this UNESCO Reserve of the Biosphere and to experience some of the best hiking in Patagonia.

Join our volunteer group, hiking the Park's most popular trail while you help to repair it. Our project focus is the trail to the Towers, the granite spires which give the Park its name. Since 2005, ConservationVIP® has been bringing volunteers to Torres del Paine to improve hiking trails and protect this international treasure. There's a reason National Geographic Traveler Magazine named this destination and our work there one of the top tours of a lifetime!

February 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

This group of ConservationVIP volunteers completed brushing, root removal, tread work, drainage, and new trail construction. The volunteers worked hard during these long Patagonia summer days. It was a team effort that could not go unnoticed. Hikers on the trail, guides, refugio staff and hotel staff all cheered and thanked us for the work we were doing.

Accomplishments

10 US ConservationVIP volunteers: 928 hours

40 meters of newly constructed hiker trail (tread and brushing)

100 meters of brushing on newly constructed horse trail and Cuernos trail

100 meters of trail tread widened (tread and brushing)

Improved National Park entrance (sign, photo point, access trail and interpretive area)



TORRES DEL PAINE, PATAGONIA, CHILE VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"The destination was amazing - incredible mountain scenery. The trip leaders were extremely knowledgeable & committed to the success of the project. It feels very gratifying to be a part of a multi-year project to upgrade & improve the trail to the Towers. The leaders were also very mindful of our safety & well being, particularly with the challenging weather & steep rocky eroded & muddy trails. The hotel & refugio staff were all very professional and helpful - always willing to go above & beyond."
William

"Really fun trip. A small group of dedicated people extended a beautiful, sustainable new trail, revegetated social trails and laid out and built a substantial bypass of a badly eroded major trail. The trip was organized well by its leader Garry Oye. It is complicated because at least three different organizations (CONAF, AMA and the Legacy Fund) are involved directing our efforts. We had a local guide Anita who was indispensable getting us around various hassles with the Refugios, rangers, etc. and was continually working to getting us new volunteers as well as doing a major portion of the work with us." Ralph



YOSEMITE VOLUNTEER TRIP

Volunteer with National Park Service trail crew to help improve and maintain trails in Yosemite Valley. Restore fragile natural resources damaged by visitor use, while enjoying vistas of the incredible granite walls. Yosemite Valley is 4,000 feet above sea level, which can pose a challenge for some, though past volunteers were a wide range of ages and abilities. No prior trail maintenance or restoration experience is required. We train you in all aspects of the work. As always, your education and safety are priorities. Tasks vary, but you should be able to hike up to two miles a day on mountainous terrain with some steep ascents and uneven trails, move soil or rock with a shovel, pull unwanted vegetation, and carry stones.

You may: use a pick or shovel to contour trail tread to shed water, cut and move vegetative plugs or branches to camouflage abandoned trails and slow running water, remove rocks or abandoned asphalt from the trail tread with rock bars, clip vegetation with a lopper or hand saw to improve trail safety, and/or move crushed rock or stone to create a dry walking surface.

Yosemite Valley is a wonderful place to volunteer. Conservation Volunteers International Program is pleased to offer this exciting opportunity to protect a national treasure.

May 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

Under the supervision of the NPS Trail Crew leader Eamon Schneider and his assistant Johnny Ray, the volunteer group completed 364 volunteer hours on projects which included:

- Fence repair, removal and realignment at Happy Isles, Swinging Bridge parking area, Southside Drive between Swinging Bridge and Yosemite Chapel (including up to the footbridge across the Merced), and at Yosemite Valley Visitor Center.



YOSEMITE VOLUNTEER TRIP

May 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments (Continued)

- Bridalveil Falls trail opening (removing barriers to allow for visitor access to new ADA platforms and bottom of waterfall)
- Edge work/regaining along roadways at Happy Isles and multi-use path between Swinging Bridge and Yosemite Chapel
- Resource (rails, posts and other lumber) cache organization for materials repurpose/reuse.
- Trash removal throughout worksites
- Revegetation and social trail closure at Happy Isles

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"In sum, a behind the scenes working adventure with terrific new friends and top-notch leaders, excellent food and facilities, and the incredible beauty of Yosemite Valley. You really cannot ask for a better way to give back to the park. Thanks Conservation VIP! We look forward traveling with you again!" Newton

"First time to Yosemite and first camping experience in decades. I will forever be spoiled by this experience...I look forward to my next adventure with Conservation VIP, reuniting with friends and making new ones." Nancy

"The Yosemite trip turned out to positively exceed my expectations!" Bernadine

"Good leadership and excellent Group dynamics. NPS people were fun to work with. Thank you ConservationVIP, for pulling this trip off, with such skill and grace. The Merced River was at Flood stage, and we had a trip of a lifetime, experiencing That much water flowing through in the valley. The waterfalls were memorable. May is a good time to travel to Yosemite and the camping was fun." Matt



U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS VOLUNTEER TRIP

The Virgin Islands National Park is a wonderful place to volunteer. Conservation Volunteers International Program's volunteer trip in the Virgin Islands offers an exciting opportunity to protect a national and international treasure. Volunteers help Virgin Islands National Park improve and maintain trails and restore fragile natural resources, while enjoying vistas of the beautiful Caribbean. The volunteers are teamed with experienced leaders who provide training in all aspects of the work so no prior trail maintenance or restoration experience is required.

February 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

A total of 288 volunteer hours were completed with an additional 126 hours of leader planning and leading, purchasing and meal preparation. There were an additional 82 hours by the FOVI leaders and ~9 Tuesday/Thursday walk-up volunteers. The group cleared a total of 1.5 acres on and around the Murphy Estate House, the Sieben Estate, Lameshur Bay and Annaberg plantations. They also cleared both sides of a total of 1.5 miles of trails including ~0.8 mile on the L'Esperance trail and 0.7 mile on the spur and connector trails to beautiful and secluded Europa Point.

November 2023 Volunteer Trip Accomplishments

The group cleared along both sides of ~2 miles on the Caneel Hill and Reef Bay trails. They also cleared vegetation and overgrowth on ~2 acres on the Annaberg Sugar plantation. Overall, they hiked 4.5 miles with a total of 1300' elevation gain including getting to and from the work locations. Some sections were more difficult than others with wet rock and roots, rock tripping hazards and steep elevation gains. They planted 33 native plants along Cinnamon Beach to prevent erosion by digging holes, installing fence posts and fence and watering. Tools included weed eaters, loppers, corona saws and hand clippers.



U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS VOLUNTEER TRIP

2023 Trip Review Excerpts

"This trip was very rewarding - we could see the results of our efforts as we were working, and we got thanks from the hikers on the trail for doing the work. The location was beautiful & scenic & we had time to enjoy touristy activities.... Loved this trip &, again, being with likeminded people." Kathi

"I had a great time the team leaders Mark and Susan were terrific. They made the experience that more enjoyable. Other than the bug bites, I would recommend this to anyone wanting to make a difference in regard to maintaining our national parks and historic buildings." Mac

"I can't say enough good things about my week on St. John with ConservationVIP. From start to finish it was an amazing experience. ... I'll be reflecting on this week and all that I learned for some time to come, and I highly recommend the trip!" Chris

"It was a wonderful experience. The islands are always nice to visit, especially in the winter, but the company and activities enhanced the trip greatly. ... Our trail work was gratifying especially after viewing our accomplishments each afternoon. Thanks to our leaders for all the hard work accommodating the various diets. As with most volunteer trips, our group was a joy to be with." Robert

"I thoroughly enjoyed myself and the group cruised through the week sociably, but with room for alone time as well. Leaders Mark and Susan were organized, friendly and kept things moving. Their years of experience with local personnel showed in the welcome receptions and camaraderie. The volunteer work and camping were a pleasant and sociable alternative to the usual hotel stay and our group got along really well." Robert

"The Conservation VIP trip was incredible. My whole world has opened up to a new way of vacationing & giving back. ... I highly recommend that you do a trip with Conservation VIP. They have a special program." Deepa

"This was a great way to visit and experience Virgin Island National Park. This wouldn't have been my first choice, but trip leader Mark convinced my husband and I that this is a "must do" trip. It certainly is a "first class" volunteer trip.... I can't say enough good things about this trip, Just Do It!" Susan



TORRES DEL PAINE, PATAGONIA, CHILE SPECIAL PROJECT

THE TRAIL TO THE TOWERS

In 2023, ConservationVIP Director and Trip Leader, Garry Oye, continued with the multi-year project to support building a new, sustainable trail to the Towers, which is the most heavily traveled trail in Torres del Paine National Park. The background for the project is described in his blog on our website about [the Trail to the Towers](#).

In addition to working on the trail during the February 2023 volunteer trip to Torres del Paine, Garry recruited trail construction experts from the U. S. who, together with Garry, spent extended periods of time in Torres del Paine working on the trail reconstruction efforts. The 2023 work included construction of the new hikers' trail, as well as building a new horse trail, to keep horses off the new hikers' trail in the future.



We would love to have you join us on a trip!

UPCOMING TRIPS

February '24: U.S. Virgin Islands
April '24: Scottish Highlands
May '24: Cinque Terre; Yosemite
June '24: Machu Picchu; Alaska
September '24: Costa Rica; Yosemite
October '24: Cinque Terre; Tanzania
November '24: Machu Picchu; U.S. Virgin Islands
January '25: Galapagos
Early '25: Torres del Paine National Park

MORE INFORMATION INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

Cinque Terre: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/cinque-terre/>
Costa Rica: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/costa-rica/>
Galapagos: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/galapagos-islands/>
Machu Picchu: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/machu-picchu-peru/>
Scottish Highlands: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/scottish-highlands/>
Tanzania: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/tanzania/>
Torres del Paine, Patagonia: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/torres-del-paine-patagonia/>

U.S. NATIONAL PARKS

Alaska: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/alaska/>
Yosemite: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/yosemite-national-park/>
U.S. Virgin Islands: <https://conservationvip.org/destinations/virgin-islands/>