

I really loved my time on the travelteer programme in Sri Lanka. Over the course of 2 weeks, I was able to involve myself in a range of activities at the sanctuary, on the local beaches and in the rainforest. Coming from a coastal town in Cornwall, I've always been passionate about marine conservation and so I was incredibly lucky to get the opportunity to work on projects internationally.



The primary focuses were turtle rehabilitation and cleanup, and it was lovely to be able to be so involved and hands on with both aspects - even releasing a couple of turtles during my time there.

Most days were spent at the turtle sanctuary, cleaning tanks and feeding turtles. A night watch at local hatching sites allowed us to observe and help protect nesting turtles which was invaluable in terms of helping raise the incredibly low survival rate of turtle hatchlings.

In between, we did a clean up in a variety of locations including local beaches and the rainforest. Waste in Sri Lanka is a massive concern for local

wildlife and a lot needs to be done going forward if the condition of rainforests is to be improved, however whenever we were out locals would help and engage with the litter picking.

Another major project I undertook was the plantation of mangrove seedlings. Mangrove plants are incredibly useful for offsetting carbon emissions whilst also providing coastlines with much needed reinforcement.

During monsoon season, the coast is strong and quickly erodes the local beaches and so mangrove plants are essential for ensuring the sanctuary remains protected from the violent coast

Weekends were spent at various locations across Sri Lanka, and it was completely up to you what you took part in. Anything from white water rafting to sunrise safaris with the freedom to go off on your own as well.



The local town of Hikkaduwa was an incredibly welcoming place, and all the locals were nothing but helpful and friendly. A couple of the nearby luxury hotels are also open for the volunteers so there's plenty of spots to spend your time off.

I would highly recommend doing an experience like this, especially for girls who are keen to start travelling more independently as it's a really helpful lead in to solo travel. You have a lot of independence to explore the country and do pretty much whatever interests you, but with the reassurance that there are people around to fall back on.

One thing I would encourage is not fully relying on the programme. To get the most out of an experience like this I would advise exploring the local area. Everyone's in the same boat and so it's very easy to make a group of friends who will go off to neighbouring towns and locations with you and it's just an amazing way to build independence.

**Emilie, Summer 2024**