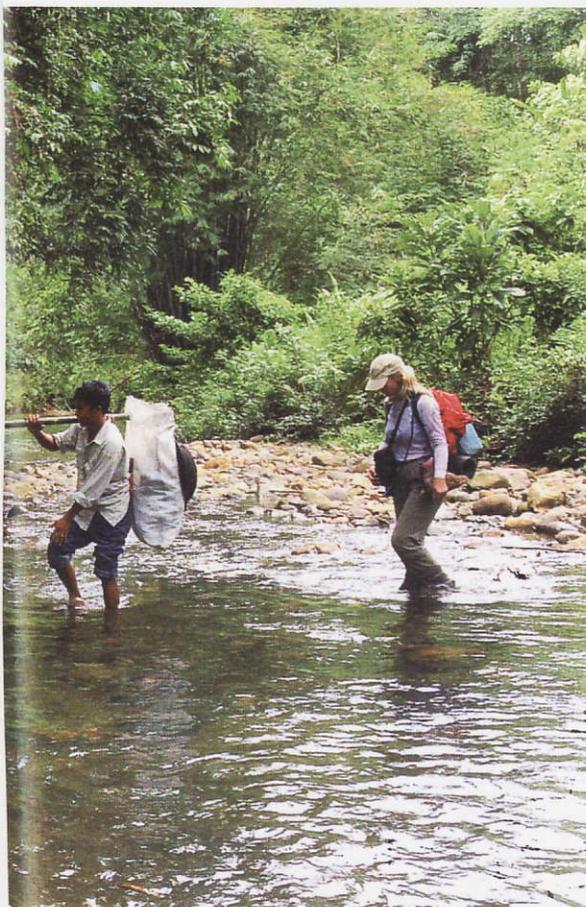


Be an ecovolunteer

Inject purpose into your vacations by taking time out to work on conservation projects.

10am: Standing in her hiking boots, a pen and compass in hand, Marie completes her first transect in the Cameroon savannah under the watchful eye of the park's ecoguard: a three-hour walk along a fixed path, during which Marie learns how to identify, count and localize every animal encountered. Every day, her observations are added to the database used to optimize the park's animal management. Thousands of kilometers away, Eric is measuring the eggs in a leatherback turtle nest. He has been monitoring the beaches of Tetiaroa, Polynesia for several nights, to count



and help to protect the breeding grounds of this endangered species.

Marie and Eric are neither vets nor biologists, but are concerned with threats to our planet's biodiversity. They have chosen to be ecovolunteers, taking two weeks of vacation time to work on conservation projects. They're not alone; associations like Planète Urgence, Réseau Ecovolunteer and Projects Abroad are thriving. The projects are wide-ranging and usually run year-round: helping farmers replant medicinal trees in Indonesia, treating orphan rhinos in South Africa, setting up ecotourism routes in Djibouti, raising awareness about ecological problems in Benin and suggesting alternative sources of revenue.

Volunteers don't need any special skills other than an open mind and an

adaptable spirit. The ecovolunteer trip is not merely an alternative type of vacation. Volunteers may work in difficult weather and live in Spartan conditions. They generally pay around €1,000 to €1,500 for two weeks (including room and board), excluding air fare and any necessary vaccinations. Insurance and visa costs are usually included.

This money finances the costs of housing the volunteer and helps with long-term funding for the projects. It's an investment, but one which most volunteers say has been "enriching," filled with encounters, knowledge acquired from scientists on site, the discovery of an exceptional environment, close proximity to animals in their natural habitats and a sense of contribution, of helping to protect a shared heritage. |