

Archaeology at your Fingertips - Volunteer with Earthwatch

By Jane Stanfield, Where Is She Heading

Remember when you started college and your parents encouraged you to study broadly during your first two years? Did you listen, or did you jump exclusively into your field of study and spent as little time as possible on “those electives?” I ignored them and jumped.

If you are like me, perhaps you had so many diverse interests, that you finally had to pick one thing to study in order to get out of school and get a job. You got your degree and are in your career, but do find yourself looking out the window and wishing? Do you often say “I wonder what it would have been like if I had studied X? Me too, but take heart because all is not lost.

If the sciences; biology, zoology, earth science, archaeology or anthropology, were missed during college, you can go back and explore them without the rigors of a second or third degree. You can volunteer with Earthwatch.

I had delved into science, animal science to be exact, but I had missed archaeology, anthropology, and the explorations of cultures and histories outside of my own. When I found out about Earthwatch and their scientific and cultural expeditions on five of the six continents, I jumped again.

Earthwatch was established in 1971 and has four main offices in the US, the UK, Japan and Australia. Each year over 2000 volunteers assist on 50 projects around the globe. For this articleranging from the endangered fosa on Mandagascar, Neolithic remains in Thailand, climate change in the artic outside of Churchhill Manitoba, Project Manta in Australia, or Cultural Heritage on Easter Island. Pick a continent, or a type of project and go on online to see where you can go and what you can do.

PROJECT SELECTION

How are the project selected?

How long are they? Three types: under 5 days, 6-10 or 11-16 days in length. At times sequential placements can be joined for a longer stay with a possible reduction in rates for the longer placements.

Where are they located? Based on every continent except Antarctica with an ever changing mix of number and locations based on the needs of the scientists heading the research.

How are they funded? Partially by corporate sponsorships but largely from the expedition fees paid by each volunteer.

How much do they cost?

Where does the money go?

HOW ARE VOLUNTEERS UTILIZED

Expedition funds

Pre trip information

On site training

Evening activities

Project Structure

Who else will be there? Because Earthwatch has office on 4 continents, it attracts men, women and children from many countries and backgrounds

Age range – children as young as 10 may join family teams, teens can either join parents or participate on teen only teams between 16 and 18. There is no upper age limit. People are eligible for projects based on medical history.

Schools and teachers – Earthwatch offers scholarships to educators and high school students. If selected, they are offered a place on specific projects, usually during the summer vacation period.

Corporate education – Earthwatch has programs especially designed for companies who are interested in educating their workforce about the impact of global environmental issues and their impact on the business world.

What might you do on an volunteer project?

Ecosystem services - biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, sustainable forestry, freshwater

Climate change - adaptation, mitigation

Oceans - coastal ecosystems, marine biodiversity conservation

Cultural heritage - sacred landscapes, indigenous knowledge systems

How can you help the scientists?

you measure **you** photograph **you** identify **you** excavate **you** document **you** explore

Why is it important to consider an Earthwatch volunteer project?
you count...

Earthwatch Institute - United States (Assists and places volunteers from in North America)

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