

# Caribbean Marine Conservation & Diving

*Dive in azure Caribbean waters and contribute towards the vital protection of some of the most pristine and renowned marine sites in the world*

The Caribbean boasts a wealth of picture-perfect beaches, turquoise seas and intensely diverse emerald forests. The location of Frontier's Caribbean Marine Conservation project, lies at the centre of the Mesoamerican "biodiversity hotspot". Pristine subtropical forests provide a refuge for wildlife and conceal ancient Mayan ruins whilst the warm clear waters of the Caribbean lap sandy Cayes offering access to the world's second longest barrier reef and a UNESCO World Heritage Site; renowned for its spectacular snorkelling and diving.

Infused throughout is the region's Afro-Caribbean roots, creating a fabulous laid-back atmosphere.

'No shoes, no shirt, no worries' is the infamous motto for this Caribbean region, and you will have the opportunity to discover infamous barrier reefs, dive world famous sites, marvel at an extraordinary array of colourful reef fish and rays, sea urchins, anemones, octopus and even sea turtles feed at luxuriant sea grass beds. You can explore this exquisite, untarnished underwater world as you learn to dive and snorkel.

You will explore, chart and monitor extensive areas of pristine coral and vast seagrass beds, record populations of reef fish and conch, learn about the conservation efforts to protect the vulnerable West Indian manatee and assist in annual reef health check. On shore you will explore the lush fringing mangrove forests, salt marshes and littoral forests of red, white and black mangroves; the unique ecosystem which bridges the land and the ocean.

Your days will be eventful; the work will be challenging, rewarding and fun. Your discoveries will be of huge benefit to the conservation of these fabulous coral reefs and you will gain immense satisfaction from knowing that you have helped protect these precious natural resources for future generations.

The results from your investigations will supply vital baseline information on the Caribbean coastline to enable the sustainable management of natural resources in the region and the protection of the marine wildlife in partnership with the local Fisheries Department.

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- PADI dive training and qualifications available
- Dive in some of the world's best dive sites
- Take part in a long term marine monitoring and conservation project
- Make lifelong friends and return with incredible stories, photos and memories

## PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- Intermediate level of English

## FAST FACTS

<b>Location</b>	Caribbean
<b>Activities</b>	Diving regularly (weather permitting) Locating, mapping and studying coral reefs Collect baseline biodiversity data collection on fish, coral and benthic species to meet national and international protocol Opportunistic cetacean and manatee surveys Dugong, turtle & cetacean fisher surveys Reef health checks Work with local partners and conservation organisations Vegetation surveys on mangrove species Contribute to the Management Plan and the overall National Resource Management Agenda
<b>Transport</b>	Airport pickup and transfer to the project site is provided for free if you arrive on the 1st Monday of the month. If you want to join the project at any other time, you can book an airport pick up and transfer from Frontier for an additional \$120USD / £95GBP.
<b>Accommodation</b>	Beach camp

## WHAT DOES THE PROJECT DO?

Our Frontier-Caribbean project is based in the beautiful, picturesque country of Belize. Despite being distinguished from its neighbours as the only country in the region with a British colonial heritage, Belize also has strong ties to Latin America as well as to the Caribbean. With one foot firmly planted in lush interior forests and another foot in the laidback and colourful Caribbean Sea, Belize's animal and plant life are the stars of the country, thanks to conservation efforts from national and international bodies.

The Belizean government is now working with national management partners and international conservation and aid agencies to protect the country's invaluable biodiversity. Co-management partners work alongside the Belizean Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development with long term aims to protect and conserve key marine and terrestrial hotspots. This is achieved through local conservation awareness, scientific monitoring & research, community support programs and implementation of protected areas co-management plans, and Frontier volunteers are an integral part of this effort.

## Record marine biodiversity

To aid decision making and implement protected areas co-management plans, co-partners in the Caribbean require long-term environmental monitoring to be in place to meet both national and international protocols, and for the establishment of more detailed research projects that can provide vital baseline data.

Through marine SCUBA and snorkel surveys you will survey coral, benthic and fish species using a number of common methodologies currently used in the Caribbean plus taking part in simple community level assessments of these environments. Diving under the supervision of a professional dive officer, you will become confident and comfortable underwater. Your results will determine the sheer biodiversity of these waters and help formulate long term, sustainable management plans to protect this sensational island.

Other activities include surveying mangroves, a vital buffer against storm surges caused by cyclones, and an important part of the coastal ecosystem, opportunistic surveys of manatees, dugongs and cetaceans and annual surveys of conch, lobster and lionfish.

## **Caribbean culture & communities**

Working alongside the local people will give you an insight into their colourful and laidback culture. Community work includes environmental education in local schools to explain Frontier's work, and interviewing local communities on their awareness and knowledge of the local marine reserves, particularly with regards to boundaries, zones and rules and the levels of involvement of local stakeholders in decision-making.

## **WHAT WILL I BE DOING?**

Soak up the chilled out Caribbean atmosphere whilst taking part in a long term and sustainable marine research and conservation programme. The Frontier Caribbean programme is run in association with the Caribbean Fisheries Department, and this research and conservation project aims to provide the local communities, stakeholders and government bodies with the baseline biodiversity data they need to design and implement management plans for the future protection of this pristine marine ecosystem.

To gather the data needed you will undertake rapid sampling diving and snorkel surveys, underwater line and belt transects (weather permitting for all diving), mangrove point centred surveys, opportunistic mammal surveys and socio – economic surveys, with one day off each week. Your activities will involve locating and mapping the extensive, pristine coral reefs and studying the various communities existing on them. The number of dives completed each week on the project depend on the quarterly science plan and itinerary as set by the Frontier field staff. If you need dive training we will train you up on the Frontier camp at the start of the project.

Whilst diving and snorkelling in this Caribbean Odyssey, you'll see an extraordinary array of animals from colourful reef fish species to nudibranchs, sea cucumbers to cushion stars and spiny urchins to octopuses. By the end of your project you will be capable of identifying a wide range of colourful and patterned reef organisms, as well as being an experienced and competent diver. Although the work is intense and challenging you'll get immense satisfaction from having made a valuable contribution to the conservation of this marine environment.

Volunteers who join the project for less than 4 weeks may not be able to participate in the full range of project activities and surveys, but will still be able to make a valuable contribution to the work. You will return home with vast numbers of photos, lots of new friends, a wealth of fascinating stories and extraordinary memories.

You'll find your team to be a fun, dynamic mix of ages and experiences, with members who all share a passion about travelling in developing countries and conserving nature. Your staff will be a friendly and welcoming group who are highly experienced in their research field and many of whom will have been Frontier volunteers at an earlier stage in their career.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I ARRIVE?**

Volunteers arriving before 2pm (local time) on the first Monday of the month will be welcomed by a Frontier representative at Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport. From here it's a short minibus or taxi ride from the airport to Belize City where you will then transfer to the project site via water taxi and be introduced to the Frontier-Caribbean programme.

You will meet the staff, receive some initial briefings, including an introduction to the science programme and techniques used, as well as health and safety lectures, so make sure your medical kit is complete and start reading your safety and medical briefs. All dive trainees will complete their dive theory during their time on camp.

At the end of your stay we will transfer those of you who are on the monthly program back to Belize City from the camp in time for you to head back home or continue on your independent travels. If you are joining for less than 4 weeks you will make your own arrangements to return to Belize City at the end of your stay, from where you can continue your own independent travel or return home.

Independent travellers arriving on dates other than the first Monday of the month can arrange a separate airport collection (extra cost; \$120USD / US\$162GBP) by contacting the camp staff in Belize.

## **WHERE WILL I BE STAYING?**

During the project you'll live in the beach camp alongside other Frontier volunteers and staff. We aim to provide you with a unique and memorable living experience. The Frontier camp was constructed by Frontier volunteers working with local craftsmen, using traditional building techniques and locally sourced environment-friendly, building materials and tents. The camp which is situated in a clearing on the beach has been designed to blend harmoniously with the surrounding landscape. Camp life is very simple, unsophisticated and fun.

You will be staying in tents or locally built huts, your "shower" will be a jug or a bucket of water and you will cook over an open campfire: so prepare for the basic, virtually footprint less, unencumbered lifestyle! On occasions you may have to journey further to reach a remote dive site, then you will stay in a "satellite camp"; basically a mosquito net pitched on a distant beach.

## **WHAT WILL I BE EATING?**

Food on camp is simple and nutritious and consists largely of locally sourced fresh vegetables and fruit, rice, beans and noodles, all of which are purchased from nearby communities thereby helping to support the local economy. Luxuries such as chocolate, peanut butter and drinking chocolate are available in Belize City, so make sure you stock up before heading to your field camp or at nearby stalls accessible only by boat on weekends.

Part of your role on camp will be to help with the cooking. Creating spectacular meals over an open campfire or baking bread in the campfire oven will become second nature: so get your cookbooks out now and start thinking up recipes! Also, with luck you'll be invited to local feasts and festivals – a great way to engage with local communities and discover local cuisines and cultures.

## **COSTS**

1 week	US\$ 1,545
2 weeks	US\$ 1,995
3 weeks	US\$ 2,395
4 weeks	US\$ 2,845
5 weeks	US\$ 3,245
6 weeks	US\$ 3,595
7 weeks	US\$ 3,945
8 weeks	US\$ 4,245
10 weeks	US\$ 4,945
20 weeks	US\$ 7,695
Extra week	US\$ 495
Christmas Week	US\$ 445

PADI Open Water and Advanced Open Water training US\$1,232 PADI Advanced Open Water training US\$612 (at least PADI Advanced Open Water training necessary for marine surveying)

## **DEPARTURE DATES**

First and third Monday of every month.

Alternative dates available on request, at an extra cost.

Please note there is limited availability for the following dates in 2018:

- 2nd - 8th July
- 30th July - 5th August
- 6th - 12th August FULLY BOOKED

## **DURATION**

You can join this project for a minimum of 1 week

## **CHRISTMAS OFFER**

This project is available for the special price of US\$425 per week over the Christmas period. Placements starting on the 24th or 31st of December 2018 are eligible for this price, subject to availability. Please apply using the orange button below and then tell your volunteer advisor that you wish to take part over Christmas.

## **WHAT'S INCLUDED**

### **Before you go**

- Pre-departure support
- Travel & medical advice & documentation

- Equipment advice
- Discounted medical kit
- Free Frontier t-shirt
- UK residential briefing weekend including food, accommodation and training (extra cost applies)

## **In-country**

- Food
- Accommodation
- Internal ground transfers & in-transit accommodation (for volunteers arriving on the 1st Monday of the month & joining for 4+ weeks)
- Local orientation
- Project training
- Project equipment & materials
- Dive training PADI Open water US\$620
- Dive training PADI Advanced open water US\$612
- Discounted further dive courses: PADI Emergency First Response (US\$221) and PADI Rescue Diver (US\$595)
- FREE use of Frontier dive kit including Regs, tanks, BCDs, weights, compressor (personal dive kit i.e. wet suit, fins, mask, snorkel etc not included)
- In-country emergency support
- 24-hour international HQ back-up

## **AIRPORT INFORMATION**

Nearest airport(s): Belize City Goldson Intl Apt (BZE)

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Call us on 020 7613 2422 (UK) / 1 949 336 8178 (US)

Mail us on [info@frontier.ac.uk](mailto:info@frontier.ac.uk)

Check out our social media here:

*Project details were correct at the time this document was generated. Price, dates and other details are subject to change. Please see our website for current details for this project.*