



The Science Exchange 2019 Mexico Description

Internship duties:

Turtles normally lay their nests on the beach after dark, and therefore much of the project work is done during 3-6 hour shifts at night. Project participants pair up and walk the beach or use all-terrain vehicles with an insured driver searching for nesting turtles. When a turtle is found, she undergoes a brief health assessment, biometrics are recorded, and the newly laid eggs are either transferred to a hatchery or marked and left *in situ*. In either case the eggs are monitored until they hatch, then nests are excavated to determine hatching success rates. Live hatchlings are released to the sea. Early morning walks are also undertaken to count turtle tracks and check the status of *in situ* nests.

Aside from working with nesting turtles about 5 to 6 nights per week, project participants may be requested to partake in camp/hatchery upkeep and construction, which can include carrying heavy items, shoveling sand, and other strenuous physical activities. It is extremely hot in these areas and rains during the “summer”. Be prepared for insects, snakes, and other critters to share your living space.

During your free time you can enjoy these beautiful environments which may include hiking, horseback riding, swimming, fishing, surfing, snorkeling, kayaking, bird watching, reading, writing in your journal, playing soccer, and socializing with the locals.

Research:

When you are not on turtle camp duty and with permission from your Site Supervisor, you will complete assignments for the academic portion of the course. You will be part of a multi-year international research project collecting data on the following topic:

- Climate change impacts on the nesting beach and incubation houses

During the last weeks of the internship The Science Exchange will help you analyze the data you collected and come up with results and conclusions.

The Science Exchange staff will work with you via email and Skype weekly to complete your homework assignments and the required 10-15-page paper due before you return home.

Research skills you will acquire:

- Use of the scientific method
- Random sampling
- Data exploration and analysis
- Scientific writing and presentation

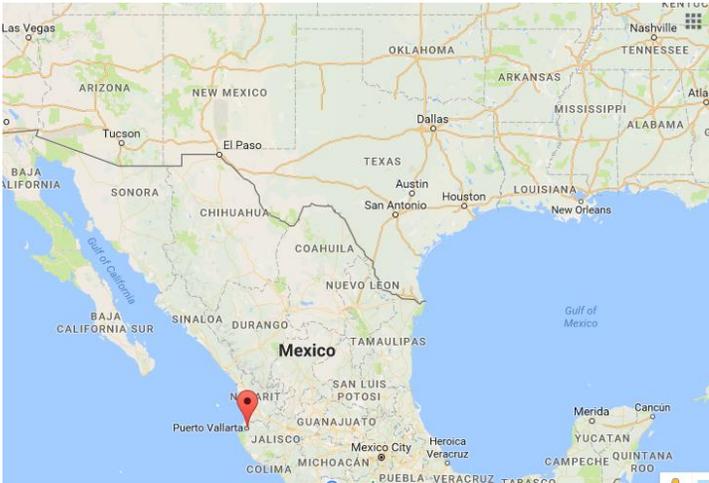
Other important skills:

- Spanish conversation
- Networking and resume building
- International teamwork

Location:

The region around Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico is a safe, modern tourist destination where about 35,000 U.S. and Canadian expatriates reside year-round. Your research will take place at a site within two hours drive of Puerto Vallarta Airport (see map and photos). The turtle program has an education and monitoring program for international and local volunteers. The town has tropical forests and an estuary that attract abundant wildlife and add to the natural beauty of the coast.

Map and photos:



Airport code PVR



Apartments



Interns working with a turtle



Sunset with friends



Surf



Volunteers

Schedule:

For the maximum cultural immersion and to collect sufficient data, we expect interns to work about 8 weeks in the field.

Package:

\$4990 Includes: 8 weeks room and board, international health and travel insurance, airport pick up and drop off, orientations, field training, research equipment, field and first aid supplies, Spanish tutoring, a donation to the local community or camp, the Science Exchange fees, and all academic materials.

\$4490 after Scholarships: two \$250 scholarships per intern can be deducted from the price if The Science Exchange Advisory Board approves two short essays submitted by the due dates. The first is a background of the study site and research topic, and the second is the final research paper. Instructions will be emailed ~two weeks before the due dates.

Packages do not include:

- International flights
- Side trips/spending money
- College credits

NOTE: you may receive academic credits at San Diego State University for an additional **\$860 for 3 units of credit**. You can get credits in Biology Special Studies, Latin American Special Studies, and other subjects. If your home university offers similar internship credits we can modify your research project and syllabus to meet their requirements.

Compare to other programs: Earthwatch charges \$2875 for 9 days of volunteering with sea turtles in Costa Rica (covers only room and board). The School for Field Studies charges \$6,350 for only 30 days in their marine biology summer course in the Caribbean.