

BOLIVIA ANIMAL SANCTUARY PROJECT

- Work with jaguars, pumas and monkeys in the Amazon Jungle
- Gain hands on experience at Bolivia's only animal rehabilitation sanctuary
- Develop much-needed facilities to improve each animal's standard of living
- Help to combat the effects of the illegal trade in endangered species

The Bolivian Amazon Rainforest is known for its vast biodiversity with over 2000 species of plants, more than 80 species of mammals and around 650 types of birds. Among these species are many endangered animals. Sadly it has become increasingly fashionable for these animals to be used as pets or circus performers, the sale of which makes thousands of pounds in western markets. Volunteers are urgently needed to improve the lives of these beautiful creatures and to help to combat this illegal trade. Quest are working with the community foundation of Inti Wara Yassi, the only sanctuary of its kind in the whole of Bolivia. The sanctuary strives to enhance the animals' quality of life and where possible reintroduce them into the wild where possible. This is an immensely valuable project, a world away from anything you've ever seen before.

PLEASE NOTE: Due to a change in our insurance policy working with the big cats is entirely optional and to be undertaken at your own risk, you will not be covered for any liability incurred if you choose to work with the big cats. However, your personal insurance does still cover you for any medical issues related to working with cats.

Activities: Caring for monkeys, parrots, jaguars and pumas. Feeding animals, clearing out enclosures, accompanying them on walks through the forest, assisting the on-site vet, developing new enclosures and infrastructure for the new sanctuary.

Team size: 10 -16 people

For: Gap Year and University students

Duration: 6 weeks: 3 weeks each at two sanctuaries in different locations.

Departs: Late June/early July; please contact the office for further details

Cost: £1000 + £850 project donation
Includes all accommodation, travel insurance, food, activities, in-country travel, local tipping, airport transfers, Quest leaders, £850 contribution to your project to cover short and medium-term costs and long-term ongoing support. Excludes international flights.



Project details

A rare opportunity to gain hands on experience looking after endangered species such as monkeys, jaguars, and pumas rescued from illegal traders in the heart of the Bolivian jungle. At the only two sanctuaries of their kind in the Amazon, volunteers will work with animals, rehabilitate them back into the wild where possible, and develop the much-needed facilities to improve each animal's standard of living.

Where?

One of the wonderful aspects of this project is that volunteers get to live and work in two different locations in the Bolivian Amazon Rainforest. The original sanctuary, Parque Machia is located in Villa Tunari, a laid back tropical Bolivian village located between the towns of Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. Ambue Ari, the new park is located 7 Km from the picturesque village of Santa Maria. It is a magical place and with the children from the local communities working at the park too, it will make for a truly unforgettable and unique experience.

The Problem

Over the past few years, the Bolivian government has made an effort to step up the control of the transport of endangered animals from the rain forests to the cities. Most roads leaving the jungle now have military checkpoints that confiscate any animals passing through. Initially the animals were simply released back into the wild as there was nowhere for them to go. This is often like signing the animals' death sentence as many are already partly domesticated or may have been taken from their mothers at a young age. Having a lack of natural instinct means that these innocent animals will often only survive for a few hours back in their natural habitat.

The Solution

In 1996 the community foundation of Inti Wara Yassi was granted control over 36 hectares of forested land near Villa Tunari with the initial aim to provide a home for confiscated animals and abandoned tropical pets. The sanctuary was also used to create ecological awareness amongst the public and to rehabilitate the animals where possible. Those who are beyond rehabilitation remain at the park to see out their days in a comfortable living environment. Recent developments however have led to the threat of Parque Machia being confiscated from the foundation, and so in 2003 Quest helped to finance the purchase of the new secure park, where the animals would be able to live for years to come.

Project Itinerary

Days 1-2: Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Team arrives in the city of Santa Cruz. Orientation and preparation.

Days 3-4: Transfer to Santa Maria

The team travels by public bus to Santa Maria. Welcome dinner and rest in the volunteer bunk house ready for the next day where you will be given a guided tour, and be introduced to the local staff and the animals

Days 5-21: Volunteering at Ambue Ari

The team will set to work to improve the sanctuaries infrastructure. Each volunteer will be given the chance to walk with at least one of the pumas or jaguars alongside a Bolivian volunteer whilst at Ambue Ari.

Days 22-23: Transfer to Santa Cruz, and Villa Tunari

Transfer by public bus to Santa Cruz, where you can check your emails, and phone home. After a night's rest the team travels to Villa Tunari, ready for a tour of the sanctuary, when you will also be allocated an animal / group of animals to take care of.

Days 23-41: Volunteering at Parque Machia

Each volunteer will look after a monkey, bird, cat, or other animal for the duration of their stay in Villa Tunari.

Day 42: End of Project

Transfer to Santa Cruz for those returning home.

Food & drink

Food will mainly be prepared for the team by local staff, but you will also get the chance to eat out at local restaurants and sample the colourful markets and cook for yourselves.

Accommodation

One of the wonderful aspects about this project is that volunteers get to live and work in two different locations. Whilst at Parque Machia your stay will be in the volunteer "Casa" on the edge of the jungle, a two-minute walk from the village of Villa Tunari. Volunteers usually share a simple room with between 1 and 3 other Quest volunteers whereas at Ambue Ari you will be staying in a traditional wooden sided building with a thatched roof, in the picturesque village of Santa Maria. The accommodation here is very rustic, and volunteers will be sleeping in bunk beds.

Weather

The Amazon rainforest is hot and humid, although June-August are slightly cooler months, offering pleasant day and night temperatures with sunny skies. You are provided with a detailed kit list to ensure that you are suitably prepared.

Leaders

Your Project Leader will be with you for the entire duration of your Quest and is there to make sure everything runs smoothly, safely and to give maximum reward to all those involved. We are incredibly picky about selecting our leaders and you can guarantee that they will be some of the most experienced, passionate, enthusiastic and up for it people you will ever meet. They are also a really good laugh and have heaps of knowledge that you can tap into. Leaders receive Quest training every year. All leaders are Wilderness First Aid trained and speak Spanish.

Preparation

Quest provides Pre-Departure Training in the UK for all team members. It covers Responsible Travel, Cultural Awareness, Health & Hygiene, Risk Assessment, Teamwork and Onward Travel. It also provides you with the opportunity to meet the rest of your team and your leaders before going overseas.

Vaccinations

We provide a full list of vaccinations required for this expedition. You will also need to take malarial prophylactics for the duration of the project.

Responsible Travel

Responsible Travel is an ethos that should be at the heart of all travel. For all of us at Quest it is about making a tangible 'positive impact' on both man and the environment with everything that we and our clients do. We ensure that we make a positive impact on communities and environments that we are lucky enough to visit.

Recommended reading

Inca Cola by Matthew Parris

Touching the Void by Joe Simpson

The Silver River by Ben Richards

The Motorcycle Diaries by Ernesto 'Che' Guevara



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