

Extensive information:

Project Adriatic Dolphins
Croatia



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Note: Annually the text of this extensive information will be developed and will be kept up with regularly in cooperation with this project. Because there can be made some changes or because there will be some changes be necessary because of certain and unexpected results, etc., it could be that this text not every time will compare in practise at this project.

Join the project with an open mind, and a flexible attitude and you will leave Croatia with unique, special and unforgettable memories!



1. Species of interest at the project

Research focused on large marine vertebrates (mostly Cetaceans, sea turtles and cartilaginous fish) with an aim to contribute to their marine environment protection and conservation. In the northern and central Adriatic the bottlenose dolphin is the only Cetacean species with permanent and stable population and the project's systematic boat surveys are aimed at this species. However, other species may occur in the region, giving the project opportunity to collect data about the visiting species. Besides Cetaceans, the crew of the project is also involved on work in research and conservation on loggerhead turtles in the Adriatic.

1.1 Bottlenose dolphin (*Tursiops truncatus*)

The bottlenose dolphin is one of the most widely distributed species in the Mediterranean. Data from research North Adriatic for 2011 suggest that the local population counts 184 resident individuals, present all year round in the study area. Their distribution changing on the season, likely due to the shift in prey distribution. Based on this research, the study area was proclaimed as part of Croatian National Ecological Network and site of Conservation and Interest of the European Union Natura 2000 Network.

In 2010 and 2013, the BWI carried out aerial surveys of the complete Adriatic Sea. These surveys confirmed that the common bottlenose dolphin is the most widely distributed species in the Adriatic sea with an abundance estimated to be around 10.000 individuals in throughout the basin.



1.2 Striped dolphin (*Stenella coeruleoalba*)

The striped dolphin is considered to be the most abundant cetacean species in the Mediterranean Sea, this also appears to be the case in the Adriatic Sea. However, they are only regular sighted in the southern part of the basin where they may occur in large herds of some hundreds of individuals. In the northern Adriatic Sea they are occasionally seen, but in smaller groups from one to three individuals. Using data from aerial surveys, the abundance is estimated to be around 20.000 individuals throughout the whole Adriatic Sea.



1.3 Common dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*)

The common dolphin has experienced a generalized and major decline in the Mediterranean region over the last 30-40 years. Today is considered regionally extinct in the Adriatic Sea. Over the last three decades, sightings in the Northern Adriatic Sea have been very rare, mostly by animals visiting by the Mediterranean Sea. The last sighting at the Cres-Lošinj research area was in 1997. During the aerial surveys not one species was recorded.

1.4 Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*)

The Fin Whale is found in the Mediterranean Sea deep waters. In the Adriatic most records rely on stranding- and sightings of stray individuals in north and central part of the basin. A few sightings occur in the central Adriatic, probably due to prey distribution. Recent research indicates that fin whales regularly enter the southern- and central Adriatic Sea, and that abundance probably depends of krill. During the aerial surveys, only one individual was observed.



1.4 Loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*)

The loggerhead sea turtle is most abundant turtle in the Mediterranean Sea. The Northern and Central Adriatic represent one of the two largest neritic habitats shared by juveniles and adult animals originating from Greece and Turkey.

Based on data from aerial surveys the abundance is estimated on around 80.000 individuals in the whole Adriatic Sea.



2. The project

The Adriatic dolphin project is the research program which aims to research population ecology, genetics, acoustics and habitats of bottlenose dolphins and other Cetacean species in the Adriatic Sea. It is the longest ongoing study of a resident population of bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) in the Mediterranean.

The research focuses on dolphin population dynamics, photo – identification, behavioural sampling, acoustic monitoring, and the collection of stranding data for genetic, forage ecology and toxicological analysis. Data is used to produce a regular report on the status and ecology of the population and to offer solutions for their effective conservation.

2.1 Research

From the research station at Veli Lošinj the project monitors the daily behaviour of the bottlenose dolphins of the region. It is now possible to identify around 580 individual dolphins with the help of different data collection like photo-identification.

The project not only focus their research on the bottlenose dolphins, but also other large marine vertebrates (mostly Cetaceans, sea turtles and cartilaginous fish) with an aim to contribute to their conservation and the protection of the marine environment. Result of research are translated into activities to raise public awareness and education.

Visual surveys:

During the visual survey all crew members search for cetaceans and other marine vertebrates. When species of interest are spotted everyone on the board gets instructions from the researchers and data collection begins. (During the sighting, the boat is drive non a minimum speed, following the code of conduct to minimize disturbance to the animals).

Photo-Identification:

During an encounter with dolphins, researchers photograph cuts and scars on the dorsal fins of dolphins. These scars occur naturally during the interactions and are unique to each dolphin, like a fingerprint. The "capture" of these fins on photograph provide an indirect non-invasive method to record the presence of the dolphin in a sighting. Data obtained using this method creates a detailed picture of the state of dolphins. Identified individuals are followed for many years, which enabled us to assess the birth and mortality rates of the dolphins, as well as their social relations.

Except photos, position of the dolphins is also recorded using GPS. Importing the data into a GIS (Geographic Information System), we link bottlenose dolphin presence with natural and anthropogenic variables. Which gives us insight in spatial distribution of dolphins and habitat use.



Other research includes:

- Behavioral sampling that includes estimation of behavior budget of the population in general, changes in behavior and behavior responses to the vessel traffic;
- Bio-acoustic research that allows the project to study the influence of the noise population on the bottlenose dolphin distribution in the study area.
- Analysis of stomach contents tells them the species of fish the dolphins eat. Comparing those to the fisherman’s catch give them a better understanding of the impact of humans on the dolphins. They combine this data with knowledge of water currents and submarine topology and input it into a Geographic Information system. This enables the project to pinpoint areas of particular importance to the dolphins, such as feeding and refuge areas.

Additionally, Blue World seeks to promote conservation of all threatened marine organisms and the entire marine environment through public awareness, education, capacity building and the sustainable development of the coastal and insular areas of the Mediterranean.

2.2 Education and public awareness

In August 2003 the Lošinj Marine Education Centre was opened. The center aims to provide educational facilities for local people and visitors. It provides a link between a scientific research and general public by presenting information and educational materials to explain biology, ecology and different marine research. Encouraging the general understanding of environmental issues represents the base of efficient nature protection which is the final aim of the project. A part from the interactive displays, educational panels and lecture facilities, the center also includes the project’s offices, conference room, laboratory and library. All lectures for volunteers will be given in this facility.

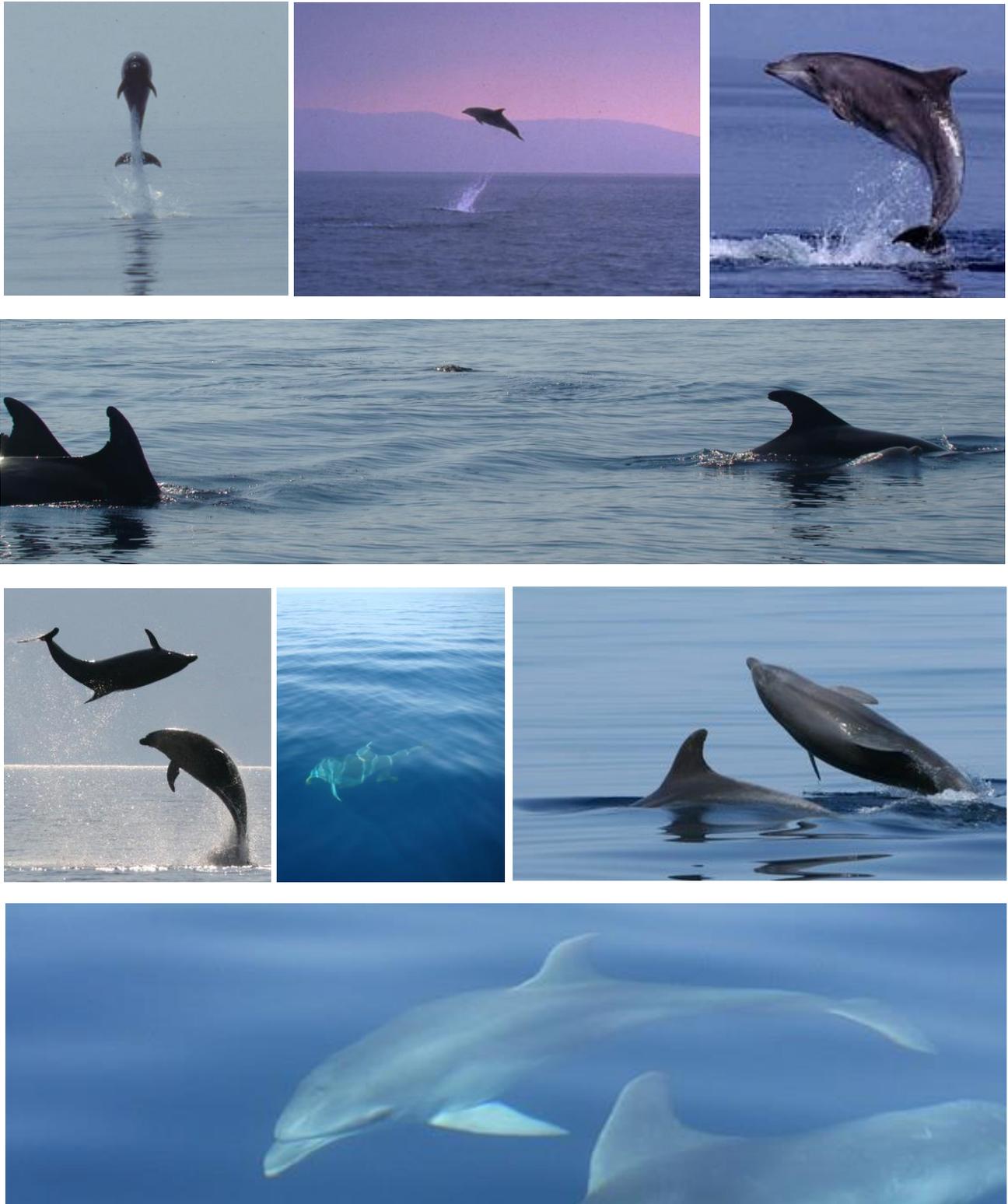
Dolphins are the symbol of a healthy marine ecology. They play an important role in promoting the general public’s concern towards the conservation of the coastal environment as a whole. For this reason a Public Awareness Program was incorporated into the principals of the project. Knowledge obtained through their research and experience is explained to the general public through articles in journals and newspapers, appearances on radio and TV shows. Public lectures and ‘Dolphin Day’ are organised as part of the project’s education commitment.

There maybe times that television crews or journalists will accompany the project staff on the sea, we ask you to be patient at these times.



The future

It is hoped that the project will expand its operations to other areas in the Adriatic and open up further avenues of research, in particular dolphin and human interactions with regards to fisheries.



3. Volunteers

The project is in need of almost everything, such as equipment, personnel and finances.

By being a volunteer on this project you will support this project's work in two ways:

1. With your donation, this contributes to the survival of the project and the continued research in this region.
2. By participating in the work with a great motivation is of great importance for this project as a whole.

Eco-volunteers are highly motivated individuals who come to join the project's research and provide great help throughout the season. During the course period eco-volunteers are educated in cetacean biology, marine conservation and scientific research techniques by the resident researchers. In addition eco-volunteers live with the researchers; they help in everyday tasks such as the preparation of meals and field base maintenance. The motivation of the people involved in the program is of great importance for the project as a whole. The funding received from volunteers is important to the survival of the project and the continued research in this region.

3.1 Period / duration

Volunteers are welcome in the period 07 May until 21 September 2018.

Arrival on Mondays and departure on Fridays.

Stage: Data:

1	07 – 18 May
2	21 May – 01 June
3	04 – 15 June
4	18 – 29 June
5	02 - 13 July
6	16 – 27 July
7	30 July – 10 August
8	13 – 24 August
9	27 August – 07 September
10	10 – 21 September

3.2 Requirements

To participate at the project there are no skills or there is no experience required in research.

However there are some other requirements to participate at this project which are:

- Minimum age for participation is 18 years old;
- Volunteers must be in good physical condition, steady on their legs and be able to swim;
- Able to tolerate hot weather and long periods on a small boat in the sun;
- No sea sickness;
- Able to communicate in English;
- Also be aware that the project director or project manager has the right of expelling you from the project (field base), in case your behaviour and attitude may obstruct the normal research activities.

Not all your colleagues will speak English fluently and you are expected to be patient. Furthermore, you should be committed to nature conservation and animal protection and have a positive attitude towards working with people from different countries.

3.3 Fees

The costs per person to participate at this project are as specified in the Global Spirits' website.

These costs include:

- Accommodation
- 3 meals a day (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and beverages (alcohol not included) in the house for the duration of the stage except for last Thursday evening dinner (usually pizza or pasta) at the restaurant in town.
- Boat fuel
- Donation to the project
- Tourist tax
- Scientific supervision during the research
- Lectures (on dolphin ecology and marine environment protection) by researchers
- Internet access at the house and office
- Certificate of attendance at the project
- Administration costs

These costs not include:

- Travel expenses to and from the project site
- Passport / visa
- Travel insurance (medical) and cancellation insurance
- Personal expenses like: souvenirs, etc.
- Any excursions undertaken by the volunteer
- Extra food and beverages consumed in restaurants and bars
- Alcoholic drinks

3.4 Accommodation

You will be hosted in Mali Lošinj. The house provides bedrooms for interns, two for volunteers, two bathrooms, kitchen, lounge, and a terrace. A single room is not available. Beds, sheets and blankets are provided. Volunteers are expected to keep their room clean and tidy.

The bathrooms are basic and will be shared by everyone.

The communal kitchen is basic, with for example: cooking facilities, fridge with a little freezer.

The house has Wi-Fi and a computer is available in office in Veli Lošinj.

Everybody at the project is expected to do his or her share in the household. The daily household duties include shopping, cooking, dish washing and general housekeeping. All participants alternate in housekeeping and cooking shifts.

There is no smoking within the accommodation.



3.5 The work / Typical day on the project

First of all, there is no typical day. Schedule may vary depending on the sea state, weather conditions and research priorities. It's important that you are flexible and bear in mind that dolphins are wild animals and work with them is not 100% predictable.

Day 1: Arrival day, no boat surveys are conducted. On this day researchers pick up the volunteers usually at the bus station of Mali Lošinj. Volunteers can use this day to relax after their trip, get familiar with the house, beaches and the town.

In the evening, a researcher will prepare dinner during which a short introduction of the program and people involved will be done.

Day 2 - 10:

- **If the weather conditions are stable**, you help researcher to board the boat in order to conduct visual monitoring during the navigation surveys. Sometimes the dolphins are located within a few minutes, however it could take several hours, so you must be patient. (Even when dolphins are not seen, the boat ride offers you an excellent opportunity to study the coastline, enjoy the sight of seabirds and, if you like, question the researchers);
- The moment the dolphins are sighted, everyone on board has a specific task to fulfil. A researcher will take photos for the photo-identification. Your task as project participant is to record data; the time, the number and breakdown of animals, their behavioral activity, surfacing and their names as the researcher calls them out. Working hours when on the sea depends of area that needs to be covered.
- After returning to the base researchers will inform the volunteers on the rest of the schedule for the day. You must have a positive attitude towards living and working in a small international group of enthusiastic people. Participants in the project are encouraged to show their interest towards all the research activities and to take part in them.
- **If the sea is not calm** or researchers have other priorities, the team remains at the Lošinj Marine Education Centre in Veli Lošinj (LMEC). You help enter data and daily lectures are offered on various aspects of cetacean biology or the marine environment. We also expected from you to assist in educational activities of the LMEC. Duties may include helping out the staff and students, taking visitors around the Centre and explaining exhibits. Working hours when in the base are usually from 10 am until 16 pm;
- Volunteers can also invited to help with computer data entering;
- You will also be required to help in every day tasks such as the preparation of meals and field base maintenance.



Day 11: Departure day, there is no fixed time for you to leave the house; no boat surveys are conducted on that day.

Working hours are usually from 10AM till 4PM. Sometimes we go out searching for dolphins early in the morning or later in the afternoon. In that case the plan is discussed and announced about one day ahead.

Sunday is designated as a free day for both volunteers and researchers.

(Sometimes, if the weather does not allow for enough surveys during the week, then we also go out on the boat on Sunday).

The atmosphere at the project is informal and relaxed and we will try to fulfil everyone's preferences. However, we are not a professional tourist organization and researchers are not tour leaders.



Remark: Some people are disappointed when they hear that this project doesn't allow them to swim with the dolphins. There are some good reasons that explain this:

It is illegal to swim with dolphins in Croatia. It is seen as physical harassment and person may be punished by a large fine.

Secondly, dolphins are wild animals that live in an environment unfamiliar to humans. In other places direct human-dolphin interactions has created dangerous situations for humans. While socializing, it is common for a dolphin to push or pull an object underwater, where the dolphin spends most of its time; bear in mind an adult bottlenose dolphin can weigh 300kg.

Moreover, since dolphins are wild animals, it is better that they don't become used to human contact. If dolphins become used to the presence of somebody in the water, they may become more vulnerable to any hostile action or physical abuse.

Dolphins are mammals similar to humans and as such there is a possibility of the transmission of disease, either from the dolphin to humans or vice versa. Diseases include herpes and pneumonia.

Finally, one of the main objectives of this project is the study of the dolphins' behavior under natural conditions. It should also be understood that, because the objective of this project is to understand the ecology and sociology of dolphins in relation to their natural environment, **no dolphin assisted therapy studies or direct human-dolphin interactions are allowed.**

Wild animals will co-exist with humans but familiarity becomes a danger to both animals and humans. Wild animals are not pets, please respect their wildness. Just looking at the beauty and elegance of the dolphins, observing the variety of their behavior without imposing on them, is a unique experience. Let the wild stay wild!

3.6 The boat

The small (6 m), low noise craft, allows the easy approach of the wild dolphins and follow them for a long time without the animals being disturbed by our presence. The craft is equipped with all safety and scientific gear.



3.7 The project staff

The project consists of an international research team with different researchers and students of biology or ecology.

It's an enthusiastic team which will be delighted to answer all your questions and will supervise you with pleasure during your stay.



4. Croatia

4.1 Geography

Croatia serves as a gateway to Eastern Europe. It lies along the east coast of the Adriatic Sea, bordering Slovenia in the west, Hungary in the north, Serbia in the east, Bosnia and Herzegovina in the south, and has a long maritime border with Italy in the Adriatic Sea.

The island of Lošinj takes part of the Cres-Lošinj archipelago, situated on the north of the Croatian Adriatic, in the Kvarner bay.



4.2 Project Location

The field base is situated in the old village of Veli Lošinj on the east coast of the island (3 km distant from Mali Lošinj, the biggest island town in Croatia).

There are two small harbours, one in the centre of Veli itself and the other in Rovenska.

The coastline of Lošinj is extremely diverse and consists of many different bays and underwater caves. The water falls to a depth of around seventy meters; the seafloor is mainly mud, with areas of sea-grass and limestone reefs. There are more than 95 species of fish found, and other top predators such as loggerhead turtles, tuna and swordfish regularly visit this area. The marine environment around Lošinj is the cleanest part of the Northern Adriatic Sea, with underwater visibility of consistently over 20 metres. Snorkelling and diving in this clear water is defiantly one of the possibilities. We encourage you to explore the island and take advantage of the untouched natural environment that surrounds you.





4.3 Climate

Croatia has a Mediterranean climate. Mediterranean climate is characterized by hot summers, many sunny days, and mild and rainy winters.

The warmest months are July and August when the air temperature is between 25° C and 35° C (77° F - 95° F) and the sea temperature reaches up to 28° C (83° F). The rain is very rare.

June and September are also very warm months with average temperatures around 25° C (77° F) and the sea surface temps between 20° C and 25° C (68° F - 77° F).

In the months April, May and October it also will be sunny but there will be more rain and windy days. In these months expect temperature between 15° C and 25° C (59° F - 77° F) and the sea temperature between 16 and 21° C (61 - 70° F).

In average there are more than 10 hours of sun daily during summer.

5. Travel information

5.1 Flight arrangements

Volunteers have to make their own travel arrangements. We advise you not to reserve your flight, train or bus before the project has confirmed your participation, (unless you will plan your participation at the project as a part of a bigger journey).

If you are unable to arrange your flight or train yourself for any reason, Global Spirit will be able to help. If you would like us to help you, please fill this in on the booking sheet.

5.2 Passport and visa

To visit Croatia you will need a valid passport, which must be officially valid, on arrival, for at least six months.

Foreign visitors do not normally require visas to enter Croatia - to check if you require a visa, visit the [Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' webpage](#) which lists the countries whose citizens do require entry visas. If you do need one, please contact the Croatian Embassy in your country for more information on how to obtain a tourist visa.

5.3 Insurances

Every volunteer is required to have a travel insurance policy (which covers extra medical costs, accidents and repatriation costs), and cancellation insurance is highly recommended. Without this travel insurance you will not be permitted to work at this project.

Global Spirit can help you arrange travel and cancellation insurance. If you would like assistance, please indicate this on the booking sheet. If you already have insurances please send a copy of the policy to Global Spirit.

5.4 Arrival

You will be responsible for arranging your own transport to the project location in Croatia. Specific directions are attached with this information sheet.

It is not possible to arrive at the research station earlier than the start date of the period or stay longer. In case you travel to Lošinj earlier you are requested to arrange for your own accommodation.

Please contact Global Spirit at least 1 week before you are due to arrive to confirm your mode of transport and time of arrival, so that a member of the crew can meet you.



6. Medical advice

As Global Spirit is not a professional medical service, we advise you to go to a local clinic or medical authority in your own country for the appropriate medical advice.

This document is provided for information purposes only.

As a participant in this project, you are responsible for yourself. Global Spirit is not held responsible/liable for any unexpected casualties. We advise you to listen to the project staff at any time.

6.1 Required vaccinations

There are no vaccinations required for working at this project.

6.2 Recommended vaccinations

You are recommended to be vaccinated against:

- DTP
- Hepatitis A

These vaccinations are not required, but are still very important to take.

6.3 Medical service

There are good medical services available in Lošinj.

If you should need a doctor you can go to the hospital of Mali Lošinj.

If you need any medication, you can obtain it from one of the pharmacies, which are also situated in Mali.



7. Personal equipment

Please try to bring no more than you need in one large bag and a backpack as space is limited in the accommodation during the summer. Take your usual summer clothes. Bear in mind that there will be a washing machine at your disposal. Summer in Croatia is hot and the sun is strong. However, there can be chilly days, especially at sea. Take in consideration the month that you are coming to Croatia and check online for weather conditions.

7.1 Essential items

Here are some essential items, which you should bring with you:

- Valid passport (and visa if required)
- Insurance documents
- Boat shoes or any other kind of shoe with smooth sole
- Swimming (and snorkelling) gear
- Beach towels
- Sunscreen (the best is SFP+50)
- A Hat or cap
- Sunglasses
- Light windproof jacket
- Long sleeves shirt and pair of jeans or trousers

7.2 Optional items

Here are some optional items, which you may choose to bring with you or will be useful:

- Laptop and camera
- Insect repellent spray or lotion
- Ear plugs for light sleepers
- An English dictionary
- At least 2 favourite recipes for the cooking rota
- A notebook
- Towel and toiletries
- Etc.



8. General information

8.1 Food and refreshments

Shared task will include meal planning and preparation. Please bring with you some recipes if you are not familiar with cooking.

Three meals per day will be served and will be provided in the house. Normally two persons a day in turn will be in charge of the cooking. Shopping is done by project staff members.

Tap water is drinkable. Other drinks are also available at the project for free (no alcohol).

There are also some local restaurants where you may choose to eat dinner, at your own expense.



8.2 Supermarkets

In the village you can find different supermarkets. There is one located about two minutes from the project base.

8.3 Laundry services

A washing machine is available at the house, which volunteers may use.

8.4 Telephone

Most mobile phones can be used, but for sure we advise you to contact your phone company or phone service in your country.

8.5 Internet access

Wifi is available and unlimited in the volunteer house in Mali Lošinj. You can also use the Wifi at the education centre of the project (LMEC) in Veli Lošinj. Also, some bars and restaurants in Mali – and Veli Lošinj offer Wi-Fi access for their guests.

8.6 Electricity

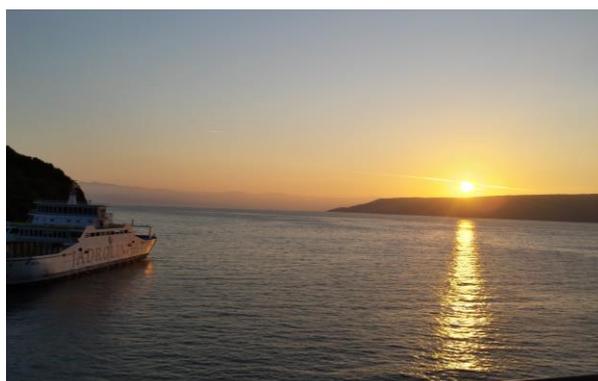
Croatia has an electricity a voltage of 220 Volt (50 Hertz). Croatia use the standard European 2-pin/round plugs.

8.7 Excursion arrangements

Lošinj is ideal for making different trips. You can arrange excursions by yourself or by travel agencies.

Some examples:

- Snorkelling and diving trips
- Trips to different villages on the island
- Mountain bike trips
- visit other islands



8.8 Currency

The monetary unit of Croatia is the Kuna, which is divided in 100 lipas.

(1 Euro is roughly 7,6 Kn and 1USD is roughly 6,5 Kn)

You can check current exchange rate on <http://www.hnb.hr/tecajn/evazeca.htm>

You can find banks in Mali Lošinj.

The banks are open on Monday – Friday from 08:30 until 12:00 then from 17:00 to 21:00

All ATM have instructions in English.

You can pin cash at one of the machines in Mali- or Veli Lošinj.

