

Volunteer expeditions 2023

Monitoring the Open Sea



ALNITAK

Balearic Islands: MEDTOP "Bon Coeur"

SINCE 1990 ALNITAK HAS BEEN CONDUCTING OPEN SEA EXPEDITIONS FOCUSING ON TOP PELAGICS (WHALES, DOLPHINS, TURTLES, ELASMOBRANCHS, TUNAS, MANTAS AND BIRDS) AND HUMAN ACTIVITIES. THESE 11-DAY EXPEDITIONS ARE INTENSIVE, WEATHER-DEPENDANT AND NO TWO EXPEDITIONS ARE THE SAME. VOLUNTEERS JOINING ARE INTEGRATED QUICKLY AS PART OF THE CREW, EXPERIENCING OUR DAILY LIVES AS RESEARCHERS.



Our impact

All our projects are “applied science” which means we pursue tangible outcomes for conservation. Over the years we can highlight some of Alnitak’s accomplishments:

- Design, management and monitoring of 14 MPAs both in the Mediterranean and beyond.
- Reconfiguration of IMO traffic separation schemes. Mitigating the risk of turtle bycatch (over 95% - estimated between 20 and 30,000 loggerhead turtles per year in long-lining).
- Mitigation of the risk of noise pollution.
- Contributing to species management plans, for example of the endangered Mediterranean common dolphin.
- “Train the trainers” programmes for fishers, scientists and stakeholders in the EU, Africa and Latin America
- Contributing to policy frameworks, actively cooperating with UNDP GEF, FAO GEF, ACCOBAMS, NOAA, etc.



WE SUBDIVIDE OUR WORK INTO TWO LARGE PROGRAMMES: **MEDTOP** - SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS USING TOP PELAGICS AS UMBRELLA SPECIES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE OPEN SEA ECOSYSTEM, AND **TODOS POR LA MAR** - ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN PRACTICAL AND TANGIBLE CONSERVATION. ALNITAK PARTNERS WITH INSTITUTES SUCH AS THE US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, NOAA, THE BALEARIC ISLANDS COASTAL OBSERVING AND FORECASTING SYSTEM (SOCIB), OCEANCARE, SPANISH INSTITUTE OF OCEANOGRAPHY (IEO), IFREMER, EXETER UNIVERSITY AND MANY MORE. RESULTS FROM EXPEDITIONS CONTRIBUTE DIRECTLY TO ONGOING RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION PROJECTS.



Balearic Islands · Cabrera Archipelago National Park



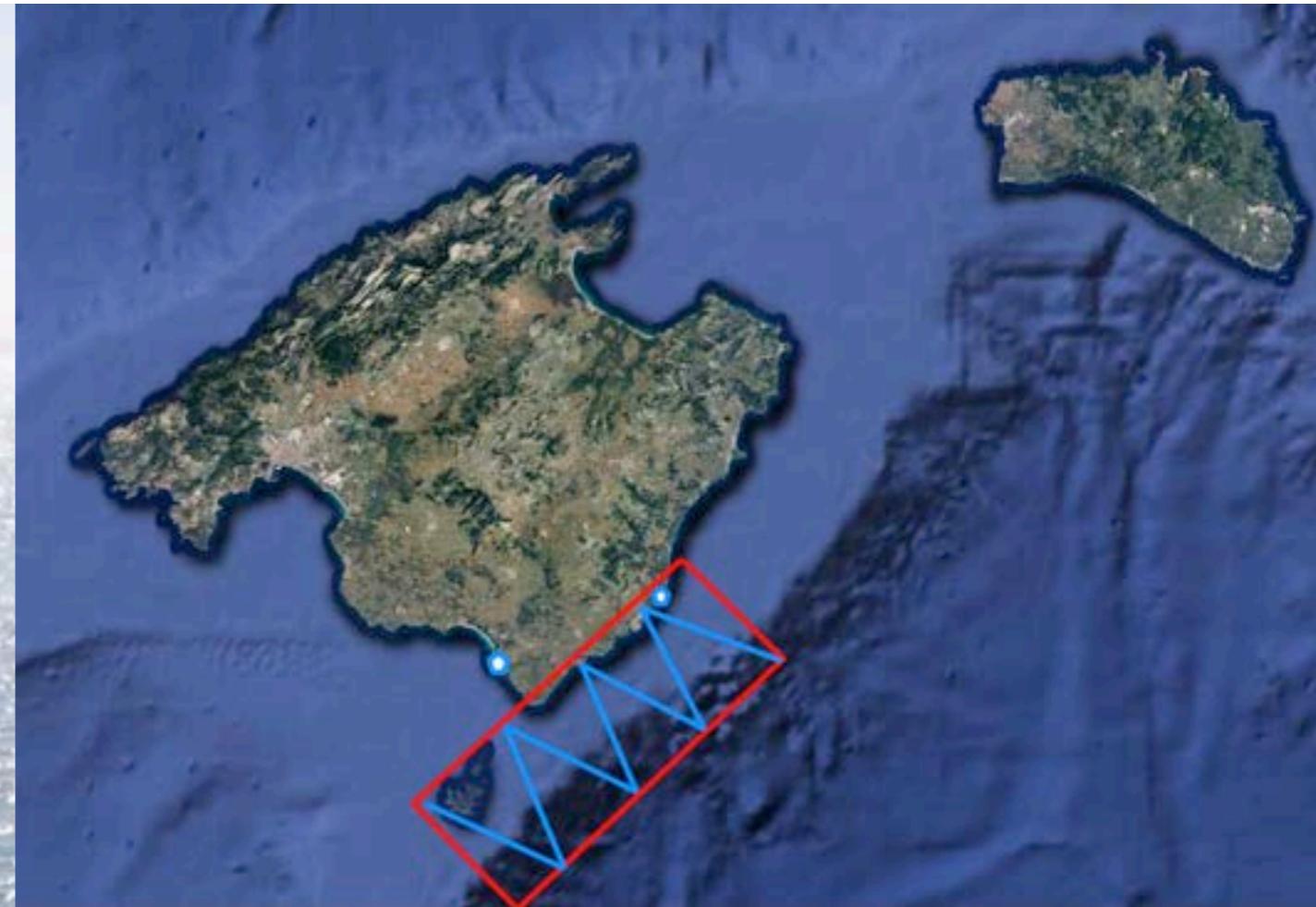
A new chapter begins for Alnitak with the first ever expeditions on board RV Bon Coeur focusing on the waters to the south of Mallorca and in particular the Cabrera Archipelago National Park.

Requiring special permits to do our research here, the National Park's waters are home to a variety of species. We often see sperm whales and manta rays, but our main focus is on Risso's dolphins and loggerhead turtles. The Risso's dolphins were recently classed as Endangered by the IUCN in the Mediterranean Sea, and we will try to take as much data and imagery as possible from encounters. In the case of loggerhead turtles, our main goal is to tag them with satellite trackers which allows us to learn about their ecology. We will also be reporting on drifting ghost gear, such as "ghost FADs" which are rudimentary artefacts that often entangle and kill turtles and cetaceans.

Volunteers will live and work on board as part of the team, will receive ongoing training and guidance, while immersing themselves in the day-to-day tasks including research and navigation, but also participate in cleaning, cooking and more.

The main island within the Park and our base camp will be Cabrera Mayor, which has an enclosed Bay with a very small settlement: a military barracks, camp site, museum, a few houses, and the fabled Cantina bar, where we will sometimes raise a glass after a long day's work.

MEDTOP “BON COEUR” EXPEDITIONS

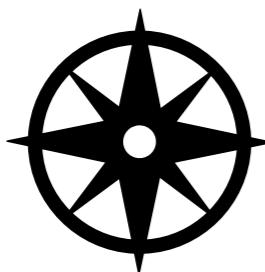


- * 11 days (10 nights) living and working on board. Typical ratio is 6-7 volunteers and 2 Alnitak team members.
- * An economic contribution of 1100 EUROS from the volunteer to cover costs while on board plus supporting the scientific programs.
- * Working at sea using every moment of daylight possible, maximising our search effort when conditions allow us to (sea states 0 and 1).
- * Full safety briefings and training in research methods and sailing manoeuvres.
- * Upon signing up you will receive a BRIEFING document with further details as well as a check-list of appropriate things to pack, and other information to enhance your experience.



Volunteers joining are integrated quickly as part of the crew, experiencing our daily lives as researchers and sailors. This is not a tour or pleasure cruise, If you have trouble adapting to living in small quarters, waking up early, and working long hours, this may not be an Expedition for you. However, if you are looking for a true adventure dictated by the weather, meeting like-minded people, working with a small dedicated team, conducting important research and tackling modern-day conservation issues, we have a bunk bed ready waiting for you.

Coming on board Bon Coeur is embracing a wondrous adventure in a beautiful, but often harsh environment. Volunteers who come on board contribute to ongoing projects by becoming part of a working team, which sometimes entails waking up early, long survey days and some physical exertion. However, this makes it fully immersive. You effectively become an assistant researcher and deckhand, learn from hands-on experiences, and you leave having made your direct contribution to marine conservation.

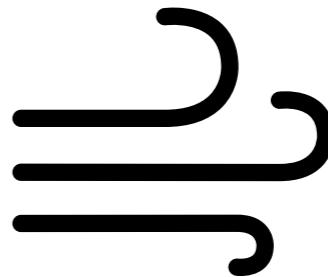


Day 1

We typically meet at 17:00 close to the port at a café /restaurant where we have an “ice breaker” drink together prior to embarking. Sometimes *Bon Coeur* is in a port (close to the meting point) or on occasions it may be anchored in a bay and we will have to go with our rib.

This will be your first day meeting everyone and becoming accustomed to the ship: selecting your bunk bed, organising your belongings, learning how everything works (including our infamous “toilet talk”). Additional instructions will be provided by the researcher and skipper regarding the weather forecast, expedition objectives and planned activities.





On occasions weather conditions may not be ideal for surveying (windy and/or wavy) therefore we will have to stay back. Most importantly it is also a matter of safety.

Please be flexible with last minute changes in plans as our work is weather dependant. There are different tasks which we might need help with: processing scientific data, sorting multimedia, boat maintenance, as well as other duties

Alternatively, we may decide to visit coastal areas and do a beach clean up. Sometimes we may also organise presentations below deck as there is a lot of theory behind these expeditions.

"A clean ship is a happy ship!" is one of our mottos on board *Bon Coeur*, which is why it's important that everyone contributes to the ongoing "house" chores. These include preparing meals, cleaning the galley and bathroom, scrubbing the deck, washing the dishes after each meal etc. and are vital for the overall hygiene of the ship as well as well-being of its inhabitants. While on expedition, *Bon Coeur* is our home-away-from-home and together we strive to keep it as organised and clean as possible!



Day 2 to Day 10 - Monitoring the Open Sea/Boat Maintenance/ Other Activities

If the weather conditions are suitable, the engines may start as early as 4:00 AM to ensure we are out in deep waters by sunrise (this doesn't necessarily mean that you need to be up for this, but you are welcome to experience this night voyage if you wish). The day officially begins at around 7:00 AM for breakfast, surveys also begin at this same time. Those on watch will be expected to be in their positions on time. During the first day, the crew will guide you through the tasks you will help us with while on board: navigation/surveying/data entry/cooking/cleaning/boat maintenance, etc...

During your stay with us there will be ONE OFF day for both the Alnitak team and volunteers. Alnitak's team uses this "OFF day" to carry out office work. We are a very small team therefore please respect this assigned time the team will need in order do continue with their "land" based work.

Day 11 - Disembarkation day

Last day onboard, although we welcome mutineers! Departure times must be communicated to ensure we are back in harbour on time in order to meet everyone's travel arrangements. Even though this is a farewell, from this day onwards you will be part of the *Bon Coeur* family and we hope you stay in touch... or even join us again! No two expeditions are the same, and some volunteers have made an expedition part of their yearly plans!



Quick reference sign-up checklist:

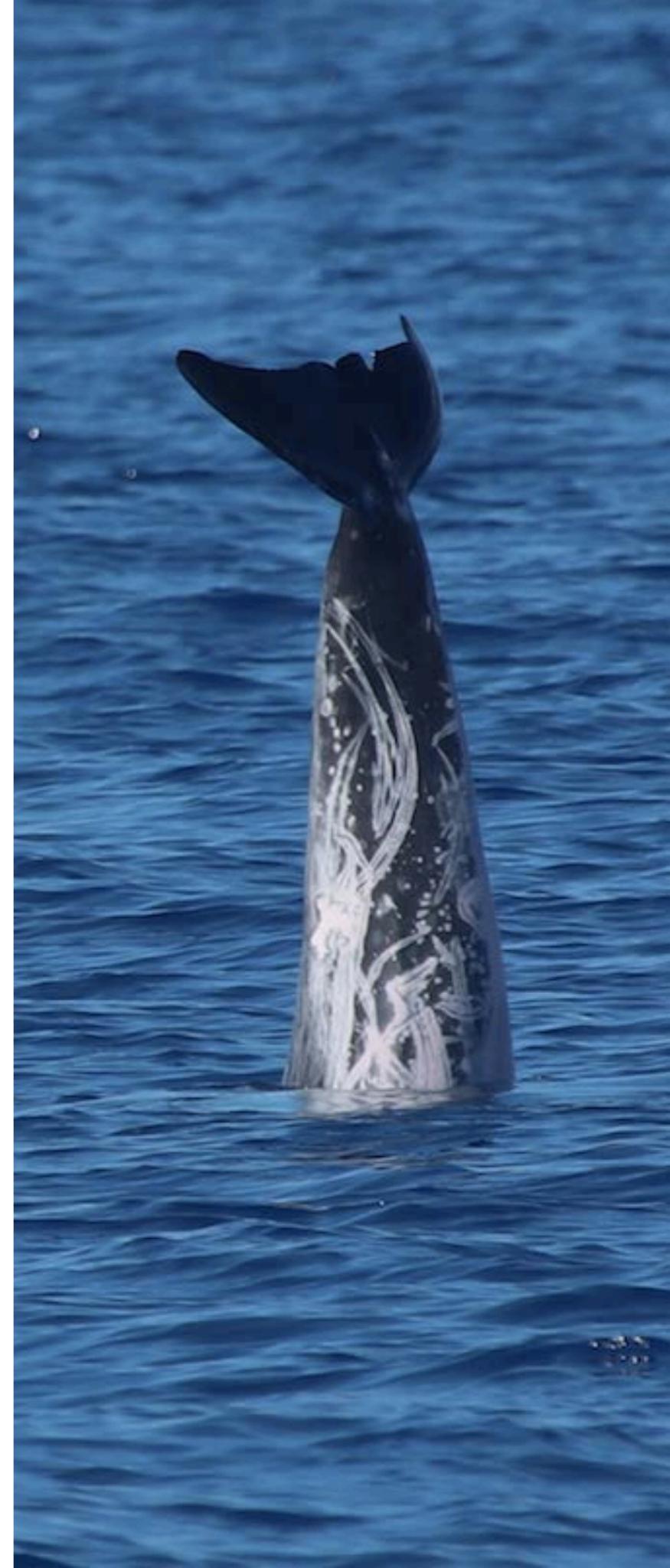
- 1) Visit our alnitak.org website
- 2) Click on "Get Involved - Join the crew as volunteer"
- 3) Fill out and submit the online application
- 4) Make the deposit

...and you're done! You will receive an email from us within 48 hours.

Upon signing up you will receive a **BRIEFING** document with further details as well as a check-list of appropriate things to pack, and other information to enhance your experience as well as our policy which are important documents to read through.

You will also be asked to fill in online forms regarding diet, health information, etc. so everything is ready pre-departure.

Our email: info@alnitak.org



Frequently Asked Questions

How is Alnitak committed to my safety?

Risk is an inherent part of our work. Which is why volunteers are given a safety briefing upon embarking and project staff are trained in appropriate emergency response procedures. If needed and despite sailing in open waters, we can typically get a helicopter in under 30 minutes for a quick transfer to hospital.

Do I need to have any prior scientific or sailing knowledge?

No, you will be taught everything you need to know on board. Part of the immersive experience is to partake directly in sailing manoeuvres and scientific research.

What kind of physical shape do I need to be in?

Most volunteers are able to embark, and we have had volunteers aged 80+. However, prepare for long days at sea. These expeditions are no pleasure cruise, and there is a “rough and tough” aspect when living on Bon Coeur.

What is included in the cost of my contribution?

When you join, you do more than contribute your valuable time and effort. Your contribution is also vital to help cover project costs, crew, locally sourced food, and other key expenses which get us out of the port and into the open sea.

How does my contribution make an impact?

All Alnitak’s research is applied science, so data collected on these expeditions is used to inform environmental policy-makers and for management plans.

Can I travel alone?

Yes! One of the great thing about Alnitak expeditions is that you get thrown in with a community of like-minded adventurers who have signed up to make a tangible contribution to marine conservation.

How old do you have to be to volunteer?

Some volunteer opportunities will require a minimum age of 18 although on occasions we take on volunteers of at least 16 years of age. Volunteers under the age of 18 must send along a signed Permission Form by a parent/guardian in order to participate.