

Marine Scientist Training

Location: Costa Rica

Duration: 4 or 10 Weeks



Who is this Course for?

This course is for anyone passionate about studying the earth's oceans and how to help protect them for years to come. You will experience top of the line professional PADI Dive training with practical science lessons and internationally recognised survey work.

This is an entry-level dive and marine conservation program meaning you can join without having any prior dive or marine conservation experience! The course is therefore ideal for those interested in getting into the field of Marine Conservation, to gain valuable experience either as a way into the industry or as a platform for further studies, and for those just wanting to learn more about the fascinating life found in our oceans whilst developing a new skill at the same time!



Project Background

Your home away from home for the duration of your course is the beautiful town of Quepos on Costa Rica's stunning Pacific coast. As well as receiving first class dive training from our awesome team at the Dive Centre, you will be getting involved with a range of local conservation initiatives to complement your training. Some examples of current ongoing projects you may be involved with include:

REEF Fish Surveys

REEFs mission is to protect biodiversity and ocean life by actively engaging and inspiring the public. During the course, you will actively take part in Fish Surveys and counts, uploading the data to REEF to be used around the world looking at diversity and numbers of residents on Coral Reefs.

Coral Watch Surveys

These surveys are performed in conjunction with the university of Queensland. Coral Watch is a program that we run on our dives that looks at the health of corals around the world. By looking at colour of individual corals and formations and comparing them we can get an indication of how healthy our marine ecosystem is.

Coral Restoration

In partnership with a local non profit partner, Marine Conservation Costa Rica (MCCR), teams assist on the restoration of coral reefs in the Manuel Antonio National Park. These complex ecosystems are vital to keep our oceans healthy, and MCCR grows coral fragments in ocean nurseries and then outplants these to the reef. To date, MCCR has managed to outplant over 300 new coral colonies onto target reefs for restoration from where they monitor their health and growth, as well survey the reef ecosystem as a whole.



Your Itinerary



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Phase One: PADI Dive Training

Week One: PADI Open Water & Advanced Training

You'll be collected on arrival at San Jose International Airport by one of our in-country staff and then transferred over to our base camp on the Pacific Coast. Your initial briefing from the Dive centre staff will prepare you for your action-packed course. Based at our PADI Educational Dive centre, you will spend the next 10 weeks working your way up the PADI qualifications.

PADI Open Water Certification: Your course begins with your entry level PADI Open Water Diver course which will teach you the basic principles of scuba diving through a combination of confined Water Dives to learn basic scuba skills and Open Water Dives to review skills and explore.

PADI Advanced Open Water Certification: On successful completion of your Open Water training, you will then move straight onto Advanced Open Water Diver course which helps divers to increase confidence and build scuba skills to become more comfortable in the water. This course builds on what you have learned and develops new capabilities such as underwater navigation, deeper water diving and buoyancy control fine tuning.



Phase Two: Marine Conservation Training

During the course of the next three weeks, you will be taught a range of science specialty courses and contribute to the ongoing reef survey work being conducted in the local marine parks.

Week Two: PADI Marine Conservation & Research

This training serves as an introduction for anyone that has an interest in marine conservation and wants to learn more about how the underwater world works and what we can do to conserve it. The program looks at ecology and identification of reef fish, invertebrates and corals. In addition to that we look at research and survey techniques for the underwater world and then complete four scuba dives, covering these subjects, By the end, you will have the opportunity to set up and complete your own survey.

Week Three: PADI Coral Restoration

Working directly with our non-profit partner, Marine Conservation Costa Rica, this week you will learn about coral biology, current threats to coral reefs and coral restoration techniques being undertaken to preserve the coral ecosystems. During this two day course, you will delve deep in to the theory of restoration programs including viability, set up and maintenance, and have an opportunity to put your new knowledge to work, identifying and measuring corals, and helping with the maintenance of coral nursery structures.

Week Four: PADI Shark Aware

Sharks are crucial to marine ecosystems, yet sharks are in a global decline. Learn about the value of sharks and what is causing the rapid loss of shark populations. The course may include two scuba dives or may be presented as a non-diving education program.

For those booked onto the 4-week course, your program ends here. You will be transferred back to San Jose airport for your flight home.



Phase Three: PADI Dive Safety Training

Week Five: Dive Safety and Emergency Response

Knowing what to do in the event of an emergency is crucial to your dive progression and this week you will complete both your PADI Emergency First Responder and Rescue Diver certifications. This training will complete your recreational dive training and prepare you for your first step into the world of being a professional diver!

PADI Emergency First Response: The EFR course is a basic First aid and emergency management course, which teaches internationally recognised first aid and lifesaving skills. Discover simple to follow first steps in Emergency care. Build your confidence and willingness to respond when faced with a medical emergency in a non-stressful learning environment.

PADI Rescue Diver: Speak with a scuba diver and they will likely describe the PADI Rescue Diver course as one of the most challenging, yet rewarding courses they have ever taken. Why? This course will teach you how to prevent and manage problems in the water. You will become a more confident diver, knowing that you can help others if needed. During this course, you learn to become a better buddy through practicing problem solving skills. Plus, you will likely enjoy some contagious laughter and fun between the focused learning. Topics include:

- Self-rescue
- Recognizing and managing stress in other divers
 - Emergency management and equipment
 - Rescuing panicked divers
 - Rescuing unresponsive divers



Phase Four: Marine Science Training

Week Six: Invertebrates

This week will focus is on the wonderful world of invertebrates and complete two further marine science certifications.

PADI Nudibranch Awareness: Nudibranchs are some of the smallest, most fascinating creatures on the coral reef. During this program, you will learn all about them including their ecology before heading out onto the reef to survey them.

PADI Octopus ecology: Discover the life of octopi on the reef. From their behaviour, life cycles and independent roles. Go out and examine a variety of various octopus species on the local reef, survey and identify for international research.



Phase Five: PADI Divemaster Internship

Week Seven: PADI Divemaster

The final 4-weeks of your course are dedicated to working your way towards completing your Divemaster certification, the first professional dive qualification and an absolute must for all budding marine scientists. Your training during this phase will become much more hands-on as you learn to become a leader and take charge of activities. A large part of your training at this stage will include assisting with live dive shop customers, which is imperative to practice your teaching skills.

PADI Divemaster Internship: Through knowledge development sessions, water skills exercises and workshops, and hands-on practical assessment, you develop the skills to organize and direct a variety of scuba diving activities. Topics and practical workshops include:

- The role and characteristics of the PADI Divemaster
- Supervising dive activities and assisting with student divers
 - Diver safety and risk management
- Divemaster conducted programs and specialized skills
 - Business of diving and your career
 - Awareness of the dive environment
 - Dive setup and management
 - Mapping an open water site
 - Conducting dive briefings
- Organizing a search and recovery project and a deep dive
 - Conducting a scuba review and skin diver course

On completion of the full 10-week course, you will be a fully qualified PADI Divemaster with a focus on Marine Science and Conservation, ready to act as an ambassador for the ocean as you develop your chosen career!



Time off in Quepos & Fun Dives

During your program, you'll have at least a couple of afternoons as flexible free time to take advantage of the many activities this part of the world has to offer. There's something for absolutely everyone – stunning beaches, abundant wildlife, adventure sports, scuba diving, cultural trips, volcanoes, thermal spas and loads more!

A popular optional trip close by is a guided trip through the Manuel Antonio National Park - which is home to a rich variety of wildlife including Sloths, monkeys, toucans, raccoons, owls and much more.

Dive centre staff will offer advice and support if you would like to go exploring further afield at your own cost. However you are of course welcome to relax at home, or visit and explore your local surroundings. You'll always have something exciting to do in this tropical gem!

There will also be several fun dives to put your new found skills into practice! The Pacific coast of Costa Rica is truly a special place to dive with chances to see an array of marine life including huge spotted eagle rays, sea turtles and playful dolphins.



What's Included



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- Pre-departure support
 - Airport pick-up
 - Local project staff
- All accommodation for the duration of the course
 - Breakfast and dinner each day
 - Project equipment and training
 - Return airport transfer
 - 24/7 emergency back-up
 - Financial bonding

Training & Certifications:

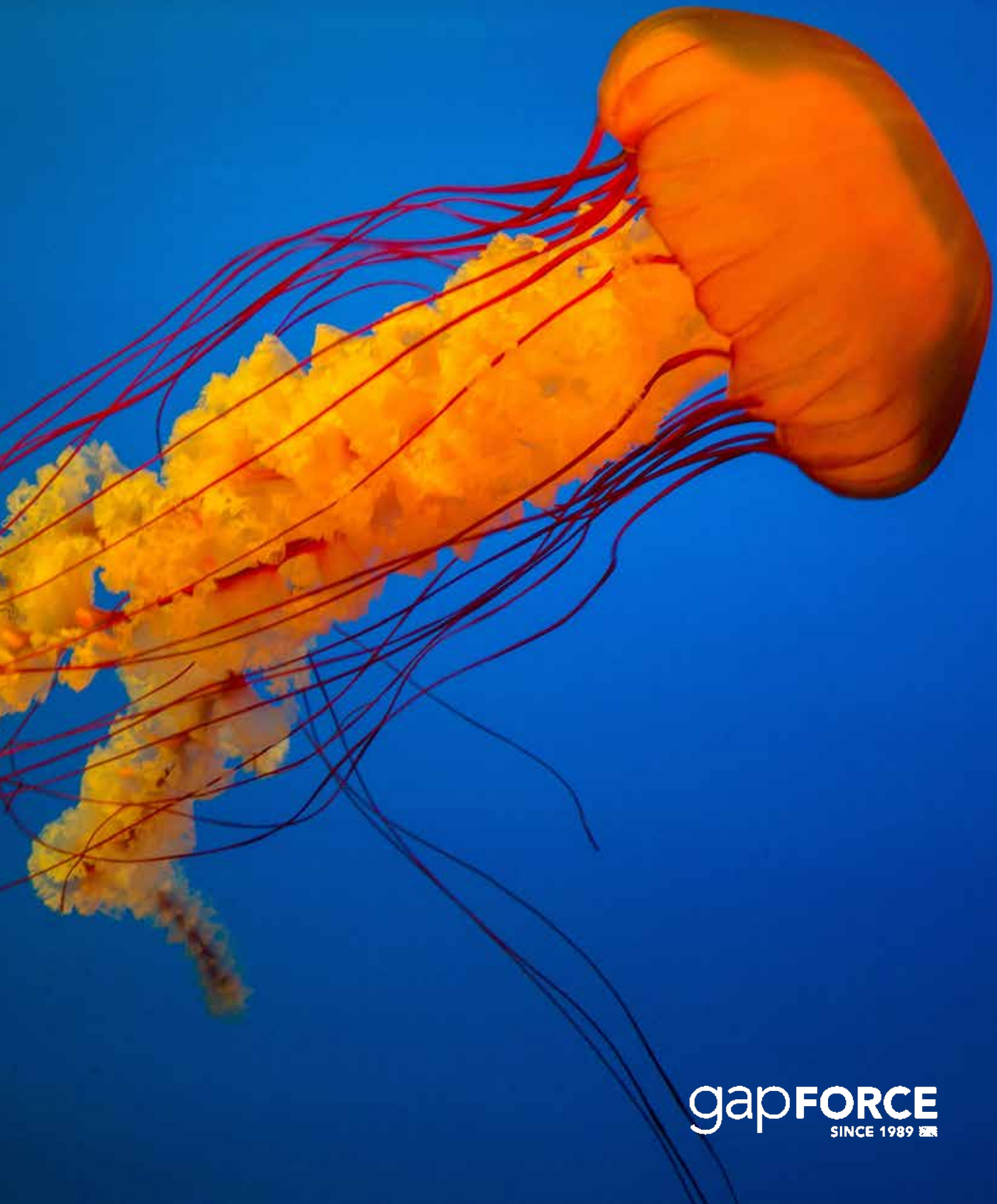
- PADI Open Water certification
 - PADI Advanced Open Water certification
- PADI Marine Conservation and Research speciality
 - PADI Coral Restoration
 - PADI AWARE Shark
- PADI Emergency First Response certification (10 week program only)
 - PADI Rescue Diver certification (10 week program only)
 - PADI Divemaster certification (10 week program only)
- PADI Nudibranch Awareness specialty (10 week program only)
 - PADI Octopus ecology speciality (10 week program only)
 - All dives and survey dives

Not Included:

- Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Visa & Vaccinations
- Spending Money
- Personal dive equipment, kit list provided upon booking
 - Lunches

Please note that due to the nature of expeditions, prices, dates and itinerary may vary. Please call for details.

Additional Information



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Accommodation

You will stay with other dive participants in a homestay within walking distance of the marina. You will be sharing single-sex bedrooms with between 2-4 beds. Bathrooms are shared with the whole house.

You will be living in the host's home, along with their family, giving you a wonderful insight into typical Costa Rican life and culture. All family members speak Spanish with only limited knowledge of English. To communicate more fully with family members, you may wish to learn a few key phrases and words of Spanish in advance or download a translation app onto your phone before you leave home.

Meals

You will be provided with breakfast and dinner every day at your homestay during the dive training (lunch at your own expense). The food will be mostly local dishes, which are known for being flavourful, yet fairly mild, with a high reliance on fresh fruits, vegetables, rice and beans.

Staff

Your dive training will be conducted by highly qualified PADI Dive Instructors, and you will also have a local supervisor at the Dive Centre who will make sure you have the best possible experience in Costa Rica. Your local supervisor also provides you with 24/7 emergency support.

Visa

It is up to you to sort out your individual visa requirements and ensure you fulfil any other entry requirements stipulated for the destination country. Please check the regulations using the advice of your home countries government before you get on the plane. Visas can take several weeks to process, so make sure you allow time for processing.

Flights

The arrival and departure airport is **Juan Santamaría International Airport** in San Jose (SJO). You are responsible for booking your own flights or transport to SJO airport. Information and advice about booking flights will be provided upon booking but please do not hesitate to contact us if you need further assistance. Do not forget to upload your flights details on your account before you go!



Climate

Costa Rica is a tropical country with two seasons: dry and green! The dry season with very little rain is generally between late December and April and the green (or wet) season runs throughout the rest of the year, but still offers on average 5 hours of daily sunshine.

Insurance

We insist that you have repatriation and medical insurance before you travel with us on our trips and expeditions. Please check that your insurance will return you to your home country in the case of any type of emergency. We also strongly recommend that your policy includes cancellation & curtailment cover. It should also insure you to dive down to 40m.

Medical

It is your responsibility to check with your own doctor or travel clinic which vaccinations are recommended for your expedition and we recommend you do this at least 2 months prior to the start of your expedition. You must also complete both a Gapforce & PADI medical form and have it signed by your GP or Doctor.

Kit

Upon booking you will be provided with a comprehensive kit list. Being prepared is of paramount importance and our advisors are happy to help with any kit related queries you may have.

Spending Money

You will need money for extra drinks and snacks, as well as for any activities not on the itinerary. We advise you to budget for \$80 - \$100 or £50 - £60 a week. Please note this is a guideline only.

Supervision and Optional Activities

During the course of your program, there will be times outside of scheduled dive activities when you are not under the direct supervision of Gapforce e.g during free time at weekends and evenings. During these times, your supervisor and other dive staff will be in the vicinity but may not be able to intervene immediately in the event of an emergency and you are therefore expected to act responsibly and be safety minded at all times. Your program supervisor will provide you with 24/7 contact details for emergencies.

Any optional activities not included in the program fee that you choose to book with local activity providers will not have been risk assessed by Gapforce and you will therefore be outside the jurisdiction of Gapforce from the moment the activity begins until you return to the group. Check with your insurer beforehand that you are covered for that particular activity.

Travel & Covid-19

Gapforce always follows the advice of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and will not run programs to a destination whilst the FCDO advises against travel for tourists.

At destinations that the FCDO considers to be safe, Gapforce will be implementing preventative measures aimed at reducing the risk of participants and leaders becoming infected. All group members will be expected to follow required safety protocols and instructions, however there will still remain a risk of exposure to the virus that could lead to infection or other consequences, such as periods of quarantine, during your program. By travelling on one of our programs, participants are confirming that they accept the risks of travel during this pandemic and will not hold Gapforce responsible if they become infected with the virus or if their program is otherwise disrupted due to Covid-19.

It is recommended that all participants have adequate insurance that covers them for covid-related incidents including medical cover, cancellation, curtailment and quarantine costs. Check you meet the entry requirements of the destination before travel. Any covid tests required before or during the program will need to be paid for by the participant if not provided free of charge by the State.

Further information on the measures and action plans that Gapforce has in place to respond to Covid-19 will be provided after booking, or on request.



Our Credentials



Here at Gapforce, we are committed to providing the highest levels of customer service, and we demonstrate this through our accreditation and membership of the following organisations:

Protected Trust Services (PTS)

Through our membership of PTS, we offer full financial protection for all customer money paid to us through Package Travel Regulations compliance and the PTS trust account. Businesses must have extensive experience in travel and undergo stringent financial and risk checks to qualify as a member of PTS. Our PTS membership number is 5482.



Year Out Group

We are a full member of the Year Out Group; an association of approved gap year organisations committed to providing high operating standards. In order to become an approved organisation, members must evidence a demanding set of criteria including liability insurance, financial protection, program authentication, risk assessments and crisis management plans.



Young Explorer's Trust (YET)

Our Gap Year and school group programs are BS 8848 compliant following an external audit of our operating standards by a panel from YET. British Standard BS 8848 are standards set "for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions and adventurous activities outside the UK". These rigorous standards provide a recognised benchmark against which to assess the acceptability of safety and general good practice on overseas expeditions.



WYSE Travel Confederation

We are a member of the World Youth Student and Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation. Their global community consists of over 600 members in 70 countries and aims "to contribute to the personal and professional growth of students and young people and positively impact our global community by fostering international understanding, responsible international travel, cultural exchange and education".



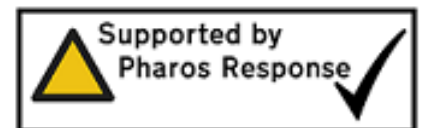
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE)

We are an Approved Activity Provider (AAP) for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, a leading youth development charity. By encouraging them to take part in new and exciting activities, the DofE Award aims "to inspire, guide and support young people in their self-development and recognise their achievements".



Pharos Response

We utilise the services of Pharos Response to ensure our staff both at home and overseas have access to comprehensive emergency and critical incident support. Through their team of experienced incident managers, Pharos Response provides 24/7 support and assistance in the event of an emergency.



Travel Aware

We've partnered with Travel Aware to ensure British nationals are better prepared for a safe and healthy trip abroad. Together with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, they provide essential travel advice and up-to-date country information for those living and travelling overseas.



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