

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:**

Internship at Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation

Travel Dates:

01/06/17-01/07-17

Location:

Samos, Greece

Group member(s):

Joe Thomson

Aims:

To gain experience in marine conservation and ecology in a practical and professional setting.

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

I travelled from London to Athens, and spent 2 days in Athens as a tourist prior to my connection to the island of Samos. During this time, I was mentally preparing for this adventure as it was so far outside of my comfort zone. Once I had landed in Samos, I took a taxi to the base and met the team. I was given a brief tour of the base by one of my new roommates and he introduced me to some other members of the team. The team was 60 strong at the peak of my time there, with representatives from around 25 countries, I was not the only student from our university there, which surprised me.

I had arrived on the afternoon and once I had moved into my room, the work day was over. I was shown down to 'base beach', a perfectly picturesque beach 10m from the base. My first full day of the job was spent in meetings and introductory talks, getting to know the team and the work that the institute does.

We had an initiation party that night, as there had been a large influx of recruits in the week prior. This was designed to get everyone to bond and have a really fun night, and it worked very well, everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. I was then shown into the local town, Pythagorio, for more social activities. To get around the island it is very common to hitchhike, we even got a lift from the police one night.

It was now the weekend and we were free to do as we pleased, this just involved beach trips and socialising with our new friends.

On the Monday, I had volunteered to take a trip to our secondary base on the island of Lipsi. This was my first taste of work because during the 5 hour boat journey we conducted a 'boat survey', that means we had to keep our eyes fixed on the sea, recording any sightings of marine mammals or turtles and we did see some dolphins during this survey.

On Lipsi we worked on 'The Sanctuary', this project is creating a semi natural hospice in a bay that is designed to care for ex-captive and other rescued marine mammals and turtles, until they can be released into the wild.

We also completed some surveys of sea grass '*Posidonia oceanica*' using kayaks and sonar, this was a PhD project of one of the supervisors. This involved going out into the bay on the kayaks and using the sonar to map the distribution of sea grass on the sea floor.

One of the main projects on Lipsi became 'EcoNavigation', this was a public outreach project to try and recruit boat owners to record and report sightings to us so we could use the data in our research, I was in charge of this during my time on Lipsi, we created an effective script for talking to the sailors, and informative documents to give them.

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We were meant to return to Samos after 2 days, but this turned into 6 because the work on the sanctuary took more time than anticipated, and weather delayed our return an extra day.

Upon returning to Samos and for the remainder of my time there, the work became slightly more mundane. There were many research tasks, as well as excel tasks and data analysis. I had to create an index for the huge database of documents we had as well as drawing up multiple protocols for using the new database. There was also a plastics survey project, that was collecting beach rubbish each day to see what was washing in on the tide. We continued to have lectures on marine conservation, marine zoology and the work of the institute. The EcoNavigation project also continued in Samos.

The social side of the project continued to thrive, on one of our free weekends a small group of us took a boat trip to private beach on a small island and enjoyed a barbecue prepared by the captain, who we then spent the evening with in Pythagorio.