

Ludivine Ammonna

NATURE SEYCHELLES
CONSERVATION BOOT CAMP
HANDBOOK



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The CBC is a **unique** and **exclusive** program based on **Cousin Island Special Reserve** a **multiple award winning & world renowned** nature reserve



When I came up with the concept of the **Conservation Boot Camp** I took into account several competencies and character qualities needed in the 21st century. If you embark on the Conservation Boot Camp journey I believe you can acquire a dozen fundamental proficiencies or skills.

Dr Nirmal Shah,
Chief Executive, Nature Seychelles

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» Ghost Crab. Photo: Ludivine Ammon



About
**Nature Seychelles &
Cousin Island Special Reserve**

Cousin Island is one the **world's
greatest conservation success stories.**

BirdLife

About Nature Seychelles & Cousin Island Special Reserve, Seychelles

This document will introduce you to the Conservation Boot Camp program and will help you understand the magic and reality of working on an island. In 2017, Nature Seychelles launched the world's first Conservation Boot Camp, a unique and exclusive immersive conservation learning program based on the beautiful Cousin Island Special Reserve, one of the world's great conservation success stories. Let's talk about the NGO and the island first...

Nature Seychelles: The Multiple Award Winning Conservation Organisation

Nature Seychelles is a leading, award winning, non-profit Association registered under the laws of Seychelles. We have taken over the long running programme of outstanding work by Birdlife International, which operated in Seychelles since 1968.

» Our head office is at The Sanctuary at Roche Caiman
Photo: Nature Seychelles



We have successfully implemented many outstanding projects in Seychelles and work with regional and international partners and donors including BirdLife International, The World Bank, The Global Environment Facility (GEF), IUCN, the RSPB, WWF, WIOMSA and many others. Nature Seychelles undertakes a large suite of activities including the following:

- Conservation of threatened species
- Conservation and restoration of natural habitats
- Education and Awareness programmes
- Capacity Development

Nature Seychelles' Head Office is located on Mahe at the Centre for Environment and Education at Roche Caiman. The Sanctuary - the site of the office - is the only managed urban wetland in the Seychelles. It is located 3km from Victoria, the capital of Seychelles. Nature Seychelles also has a centre at Amitie on Praslin Island. The CORAL centre - which hosts Nature Seychelles' Reef Rescuers program, a coral reef restoration project - is less than a 10 minute walk from the Praslin Airport.

» The CORAL centre at Amitie, Praslin. Photo: Nature Seychelles





Cousin Island: The island that belongs to birds, humans are welcome.

Cousin Island lies 2km off the coast of Praslin, the second largest island in the Seychelles. Cousin is one of the world's first whole island and sea reserves.

This granitic island and surrounding sea area was made a **Nature Reserve** when it was bought in **1968 by the International Council for Bird Preservation (now BirdLife International)** in order to protect the last tiny population

of a near extinct endemic bird species, the **Seychelles warbler (*Acrocephalus seychellensis*)**.

The entire island, including the **400 metres of water** surrounding the island, was also declared a **'Special Reserve'** by the Seychelles Government in **1975**. The island is now **managed by Nature Seychelles**.

» The island was bought to protect the Seychelles warbler
Photo: Charli Davies





Cousin has attracted international attention in several fields including **science**, **protected area management** and **ecotourism**.

In the field of science many articles have been published on **research** carried out on the island in some of the **leading scientific journals** of the world, including **Science** and **Nature**.

In 2001, an internationally registered field station was opened for the purpose of lodging students and researchers. As a **protected area** it has been used as a **model** in several countries including La


Reunion and Tanzania. Case studies of Cousin have been published by international organizations such as the World Conservation Union.

Cousin was the first reserve in Africa to be chosen to become part of the International Biodiversity Observation Year (IBOY). It was the only site in Seychelles to be chosen by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in its Management Effectiveness study project of Marine Protected Areas. Cousin was chosen as a Demonstration Site of the International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN).

Cousin has received the **'Tourism for Tomorrow - Highly Commended'** Award for the outstanding work carried out on the island in the field of responsible tourism. It has won the prestigious **Conde Nast Traveler Ecotourism Award**. Cousin has been the subject of several articles and case studies focusing on eco-tourism.

- ❖ Cousin's ecotourism has won global awards. Photo: Serge Marizy
- ❖ It is a model for MPA management. Photo: Chloe Shute



A close-up photograph of a Seychelles magpie robin splashing in shallow water. The bird is dark blue-black with a prominent white patch on its wing. Water droplets are captured in mid-air around the bird, creating a dynamic and energetic scene. The background is a blurred mix of green and brown, suggesting a natural, possibly forested, habitat.

Species & Habitat

You are rewarded with superb close up views of the **wildlife** on the island, **birds**, **crabs**, **tortoises** and **geckos** to name a few

Tripadvisor review, April 2018

» Seychelles magpie robin. Photo: Arne van Eerden

Despite its small size, Cousin boasts a **diversity** and **abundance** of **species** and **habitats**.

The plateau area has been transformed from a monoculture of coconuts into what is possibly the best-restored forest on a granitic island. This has taken some 50 years.

This forest is dominated by **Mapou** (*Pisonia grandis*), **Indian mulberry** (*Morinda citrifolia*) and **Bwa sousouri** (*Ochrosia oppositifolia*).

There are wetlands where fresh water attracts dragonflies, moorhens, caecilians and the Seychelles terrapin; **the hill** is an ideal nesting site for large populations of **shearwaters**, **tropicbirds** and **bridled terns**; on the **seashore** several species of **crabs** and **shorebirds** abound.

Five of Seychelles eleven endemic land birds are found on Cousin Island. These are the **Seychelles warbler** (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*) **Seychelles magpie robin** (*Copsychus seychellarum*), **Seychelles sunbird** (*Nectarinia dussumieri*), **Seychelles fody** (*Foudia sechellarum*), and **Seychelles blue pigeon** (*Alectroenas pulcherrima*).



Aldabra giant tortoise. (Peter Chadwick)



White tern. (Alec Taylor)



Seychelles fody. (Peter Chadwick)



Seychelles skink. (Dave Rogers)



Hermit crab. (Alec Taylor)



Ochrosia oppositifolia. (Nature Seychelles)

Conservation Program

The conservation program on Cousin involves **research, monitoring and management of threatened endemic wildlife** and their **habitats**.

Turtle Monitoring

The largest population of **Hawksbill turtle** (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) remaining in the Western Indian Ocean occurs in Seychelles, where an estimated 1,230-1,740 females nested annually in the early 1980s. Since then, however, populations have declined due to widespread harvesting of nesting females during the 30 years prior to 1994, when a total legal ban on turtle harvest was implemented. An exception to the downward trend is the population at Cousin Island. **Turtle monitoring** has been in operation on Cousin **since 1972**. It has therefore the **longest running monitoring program** for Hawksbill turtles in the world. Numbers have **increased 8 fold** since the conservation program started against a backdrop of historical population decline in Seychelles.

Seychelles Magpie Robin Recovery

This charismatic bird, originally found in great numbers on several islands, was in 1990 down to a population of only 23 birds on Frégate Island, making it one of the most critically endangered species in the world. A special recovery program was established leading to the eventual translocation of several birds to Cousin, Cousine, Aride and Denis islands. Today, the Cousin island population is between 45-50.

The **Seychelles Magpie Robin Recovery Team (SMART)**, **coordinated by Nature Seychelles**, ensures the continuous **monitoring and conservation management** of these birds. Each Island is responsible for monitoring their birds and every 6 months a meeting is held to share news and data and make necessary conservation management decisions.

On Cousin the birds are monitored to keep continuous records of their behaviour and breeding biology.

- » Hawksbill turtle monitoring. Photo: Yan Coquet
- » Magpie robin nestbox and chicks. Photo: Rachel Cartwright



Seychelles Warbler Recovery And Research

The warbler is a world famous example of how science and conservation can go hand-in-hand. It provides an exceptional, natural system in which to study important questions relating to animal health, evolution and ecology. Each year a team of researchers from the **Seychelles Warbler Group** come to Cousin to continue the research and monitoring of the Seychelles warbler. Continuous intensive monitoring and **research spanning over 30 years** has allowed the team to investigate many aspects of the warbler.

Seabird Population & Breeding Census

Cousin is an **important breeding area** for some **species of seabird** in particular the **White tern, White-tailed tropicbird, Brown and Lesser noddys, Bridled terns, Tropical shearwaters and Wedge-tailed shearwaters**. Some birds are year-round breeders, others have particular breeding seasons. Seabirds are a critical part of the oceans food web and can be used as bio-indicators of changes in the oceans. Throughout the year **seabird population censuses** are carried out in order to gain a long-

term data set allowing for trends to be discovered.

Marine Conservation

A study into the **effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)** in Seychelles has shown that only Cousin is not poached to any substantive degree. The success of Cousin in reducing poaching is due in part to its small size, but also to the local management's unique relationship with local communities and fishers, and both direct and indirect economic benefits to the local economy through eco-tourism. Studies have shown that prior to the coral bleaching the reefs in the Cousin Reserve contained 60% more of the commonly fished species than any other marine reserve in the granitic islands of Seychelles. The bumphead parrotfish (*Bolpometopon muricatum*), which has been exterminated in many parts of the world, is still found in large groups.

- » Seychelles warbler research
Photo: Arne van Eerden
- » White-tailed tropicbird monitoring.
Photo: Carole Bennett
- » Marine monitoring
Photo: Paul Anstey



Ecotourism

Cousin Island has become one of the Seychelles **most visited ecotourism destinations**, providing a unique experience, due to the combination of vast numbers of birds in close proximity, **unspoilt tropical island** and forest and the management of the operations through the island wardens. Tourists come to the island during scheduled visiting hours from Monday to Friday. Schools, film crews, researchers and other special groups come occasionally by special permission. Access is by sea. Landing on the island is only permitted via the reserve boat and only on open days. **Cousin wardens guide all tourists.**



» Tourists on Cousin Island Photo: Nature Seychelles



About The Conservation Boot Camp

The **CBC** is a real **asset** for my future career.

Hobitina Hanitrarimbola,
Participant, Madagascar

» CBC participants from Madagascar Photo: Yan Coquet

About The Program

The Conservation Boot Camp program is a great opportunity for **recent graduates** and those who wish to **bolster their career in conservation** or others who wish to take a break from their desk job and experience conservation of a tropical island paradise. Participants gain much coveted practical experience through **“learning by doing”** with field staff and researchers on a world renowned and award-winning protected area.

This program is a well filled schedule with as main course the birds (seabirds, land birds and endemic birds) and reptiles (Skinks, tortoises and turtles) conservation programs. Vegetation monitoring is an important part of the program too. Some side activities help improve the island running, some help to understand the environment in which this biodiversity exists and others just bring more fun on the island.

» Aldabra giant tortoise census
Photo: Jim Yule



What You Get Out Of The Program

1. Be trained in **monitoring techniques** and gain **field methodology skills**.
2. Gain exposure to, and be involved in, **eco-guiding** and other **ecotourism activities** and meet visitors from all over the world
3. **Interact** with **researchers** and **local conservation staff**
4. Meet the **Nature Seychelles' Chief Executive**, a renowned and award winning Seychellois environmentalist.
5. Be involved in the activities of an **award winning NGO**
6. Be immersed in the work of an **award-winning** land and sea **Protected Area**
7. Live and experience a **tropical paradise**
8. Be exposed to work with **sea birds** and/or **sea turtles**
9. Live amongst other **rare species** and in restored indigenous forest.
10. Experience a **new culture**, meet new people and share a **wonderful travel experience**
11. **Contribute** to some of the longest running **data sets** in the world
12. Receive 2 limited edition **Conservation Boot Camp T Shirts** and 2 Nature Seychelles board shorts.

13. Receive a **Certificate of Participation** in the Conservation Boot Camp. Nature Seychelles is a registered Private Education and Training Institution under the Seychelles' Education

(Private Education Institutions) Regulations 2005 and as such can legally provide courses and issue certificates.

Competencies



The Team

The Conservation Boot Camp **Program Coordinator**, Yan Coquet, is the **focal point** of the program. He helps the program participants prepare their arrival, get integrated in the program, in the team and in the island ecosystem. He will answer to any participant's request, question or emergency needs. He is the boot camper's guide while they are in the program.

The **Reserve Science Coordinator**, Kara Beggs, manages all the **scientific work** on Cousin Island Special Reserve. She leads on all conservation work on the island

The **Chief Warden**, Dailus Laurence, is in charge of the Reserve and manages the warden team. This team **runs the logistics of the island**, leads the daily guided tours and helps in the island conservation work. Without them, no conservation program can happen on the island. Dailus handles the integration of the participants into the daily ecotourism program.

» Dailus Laurence (L), Claire Waters (C), Yan Coquet (R)



The Scientific Programs

Turtle Nest Monitoring (October to February)

The **Hawksbill turtle** season is the intense part of the year as patrols need to be done 7 times a day all around the island. **Patrolling** means noting down all turtle tracks, **observing** turtles on land until they lay eggs and leave the island (this can take hours), **measuring** turtle carapace and counting eggs when possible, identifying each stage of nesting, **tagging** if the turtle is untagged and **marking** the **nest** site. At the end of patrols, **data** needs to be entered in the computer.

Another part of the **turtle nest monitoring program** is determining the reproduction success by excavating nests after the eggs hatched. Dead hatchlings are often found. This is not the happiest part of the monitoring but it is important to monitor. One of the most satisfying moment is when you see the hatchlings rush towards the sea to begin their life adventure. Although some turtles start to arrive for laying from around September peak season is between November and January.

Seabird Breeding Success

(February to October)

Many factors have been shown to contribute to breeding success in seabirds: age and physical condition of individuals, the position of the nest in a colony, colony size and density, the availability of food, competition, predation, social behavior, nest site and habitat quality.

By **annually monitoring breeding success** of these key species - White tail tropicbird, White tern, Lesser noddy and Brown noddy - it is possible to determine when there is a significant change in percentage breeding success, which may merit direct conservation action or further research. This happens all-round the island and in the forest and this is a moment of interaction with these birds.

- » Hawksbill turtle hatchlings. Photo: April Burt
- » Lesser noddy. Photo: Peter Chadwick



Census

Seabirds

February to June;

June to October

Seabirds are more threatened than any other group of birds and during the past couple of decades their populations have decreased. **Two censuses** are performed annually (coinciding with the two monsoon seasons) for **year-round breeders**. This happens in the forest mainly during the day and in the evening.

Skinks & Geckos

June

Cousin Island has 3 species of endemic skinks: **Seychelles' skink**, **Wright's skink** and **Burrowing skink** and 2 genera of geckos, **Phelsuma (day gecko)** and **Ailuronyx (bronze gecko)**. One of the 5 studies carried out to estimate population density for the two skink species concluded that it had the highest biomass recorded for any lizard population worldwide (Brooke & Houston 1983).

- » White-tailed tropicbird chick
Photo: Caitlin Schindler
- » Green gecko.
Photo: Dave Rogers



Land birds

April

Among the resident land birds we have the introduced, the native and the endemic species.

The census also takes place in the forest for several days for these species : Seychelles magpie-robin (*Copsychus sechellarum*), Seychelles sunbird (*Nectarinia dussumieri*), Seychelles fody (*Foudia sechellarum*), Seychelles blue pigeon (*Alectroenas pulcherrima*) and the Seychelles warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*), Madagascan turtle dove (*Streptopelia picturata/rostrata*), the Barred ground dove (*Geopelia striata*) and Common moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*).

For the endemic Seychelles magpie robin, ringing is also part the conservation program all year round.

Tortoises

August - September

In a recent report by Gerlach et al. (2013) it was stated that Cousin Island does not support a regular breeding population, however, tortoise hatchlings have been found over several years (Burt 2013 & 2014, Sanchez 2015).

Each year a census is carried out on Cousin in order to evaluate the tortoise population. It has been estimated that Cousin has a potential capacity of 160-240 individuals (Gerlach et al. 2013) therefore has a lot of room for growth. The whole island is searched for tortoises. Measurement of the carapace are taken, plot location recorded and sex estimated.

» Seychelles sunbird
Photo: Ludivine Ammon

» Aldabra giant tortoise
Photo: Ludivine Ammon



Vegetation / Island Maintenance And Beach Profiling

Vegetation in all habitats on Cousin has been left to regenerate naturally, although on the plateau the once dominating coconut trees have been gradually removed to make space for native woodland species. The gradual changes in the vegetation of the different habitats is monitored to assess the impact of these changes on the biodiversity dependent on it. One of the activities we carry out all year round is **invasive species removal** to clear the way for endemic vegetation to flourish.

The beach on Cousin is subject to drastic changes when the wind changes direction. We have the south east trade winds blowing from May to September and the Northern west trade winds from October to March.

Beach profile monitoring is done to understand Cousin coastal dynamics. Measuring changes in the beach and in the distribution of sand on the beach helps us to see **trends in beach erosion and accretion**.

This data is used to inform beach management decisions, such as

changing the boat embarkation zone and which shelters to use for visitors.

We also ensure the **grid markers** and the **beach markers** are at the right place and in place for mapping and zoning of the island.

- » Invasive plant removal
Photo: Yan Coquet
- » Beach clean up
Photo: Kara Beggs
- » Beach profile monitoring
Photo: Yan Coquet



Immersion Into Ecotourism

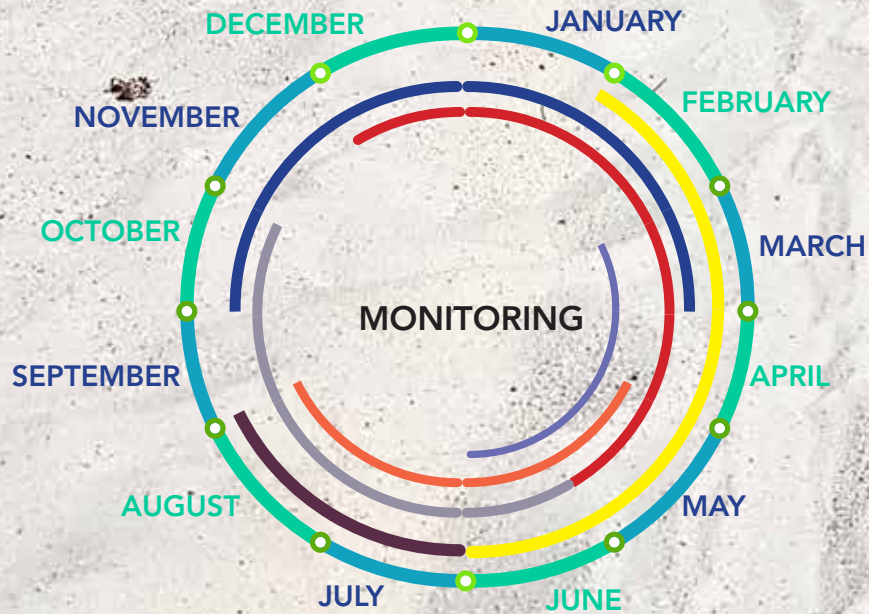
Guided tours for visitors is an important activity for the Reserve. The program participants are involved in interacting with the groups of tourists while they are waiting for their guide to start the tour. This is the occasion to talk about their personal experience to the tourist, answer some of their questions and talk about Conservation Boot Camp and about Cousin.

The participants also have the opportunity to lead a guided tour seconded by a warden if s/ he and the Program Coordinator feel the participant is ready for this adventure. To be able to do so, weekly participation in the guided tour is necessary. Being trained on wildlife conservation is one thing, being able to explain it to a group of people is another thing. Guiding is about sharing the passion with other people.

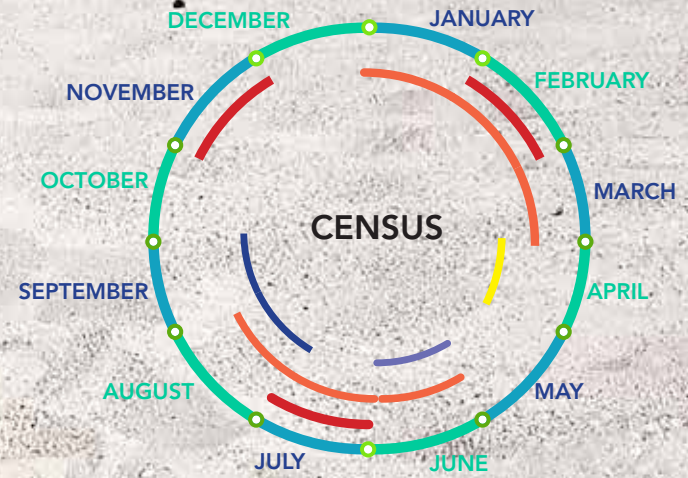
» CBC Participant engaging with tourist Photo: Yan Coquet



CBC Program Calendar



- Seabird breeding success: White-tailed tropicbird & White tern
- Turtle nest monitoring
- Turtle hatchling success
- Beach markers
- Seabird breeding success: Lesser Noddy & Brown Noddy
- Island grid markers
- Sooty tern hill clearance



- Seabird census
- Landbird census
- Bridled tern census
- Tortoise census
- Skink census



Working Hours

The normal working hours out of turtle season are between **5 – 7 hours, daily on weekdays**. During turtle season, we can reach 9 hours of work daily with one day off including weekends. See previous page for an overview of the conservation work 2019 planning.

Side Activities Monthly project

Time permitting, each CBC group on the island may work on a small project **contributing to the improvement of the island** management. This project will be agreed on by the CBC team, the program coordinator and island manager. It can be related to waste management, energy consumption logistical facilities, security improvement or even a short training for local staff in a relevant subject (if the CBC participants have the required skills). A brief report on the activity should be finalized by the group of participants within the month if possible.

This is team work and may include other island staff but must be led by the CBC participants. The work and results can be published online by Nature Seychelles when completed.

Blog and Article Writing

We ask participants to share their point of view or summarize their stay if they can in **articles** we can publish online. It should be between **300 to 500 words with some pictures** that represents what you want to express and share. It normally takes some minutes while you relax in front of a sunset or in a hammock. Please submit the article to the program coordinator.

- » Project can provide solutions to problems Photo: Kara Beggs
- » Participants contribute a blog post Photo: Yan Coquet



Island and House Running

There is some other field work to be done like **raking all the paths** once a month for the guided tour, taking **record** of the **solar power system daily** - yes we are solar powered at 87.5 % and the 12.5% is powered by a generator most of the days.

Your muscles will get more developed by **pushing the boat** when doing boat **supply runs** and by carrying your water jerry cans.

Concerning the **house (field centre)** running, living with other people logically implies **sharing tasks** and responsibilities with general respectful habits. You will be introduced to these once on the island.

» Field centre
Photo: Arne van Eerden



Entertainment

Yes, after all these activities and hard work, it's **time to relax** and enjoy our proposed activities to take the most out of the island beauty.

The 400 meters of water around the island is a marine protected area where snorkeling is a must. Bring your gear and we will organize group snorkeling sessions. **DO NOT go out on your own** or unsupervised.

We have above our head a magnificent night sky. **Star gazing** is one of our favorite evening activities after dinner.

During the month, you can have a **week end off the island** (at your own expense) if not in turtle season.

As you can see there is a sort of equilibrium in the program because we think this is the best condition to optimize the Cousin Island experience.

» Water sports
Photo: Jovani Raffin

Beautiful fish seen when
snorkelling
Photo: Yan Coquet





Administration and Logistics

“
Going abroad was a bit daunting, but it's an **experience** I shall **cherish**

Onja Miandrimanana
Participant, Madagascar

CBC participants with the Coordinator Photo: Yan Coquet

Participation Cost

The participation cost for the Conservation Boot Camp is **1000 Euros per person**. This cost covers **accommodation** (including water, gas and electricity), **pick up and drop off at Praslin airport** or at **Grand Anse, supply boat trips to Praslin, supervision, training and field work equipment**. All participants are given **2 T-shirts** with the CBC logo and **2 Nature Seychelles shorts**. Since Nature Seychelles is a not-for-profit organization we would like you to know how your fee is broken down: 20 euros/day for stay (includes accommodation, electricity, water, cooking gas and scheduled boat trips (the same amount we charge researchers and graduate students). The rest is for the actual CBC activities including a full time CBC Program Coordinator, administrative, marketing, equipment and materials costs. The money left goes directly into our conservation programs for the Reserve.

NOTE: Your Booking is only confirmed once payment has been made. Once payment is made it is 50% refundable for cancellation before the 3 weeks preceding arrival and 0% refundable for cancellation beyond the 3 weeks preceding arrival.

Visa, Travel Documents And Insurance

You will not need a visa to come to Seychelles but a **visitor's permit** will be allocated to the participant on **Nature Seychelles'** individual requests to the **Seychelles Immigration office**. The visitors' permit will be given for 40 days (ample time to allow for flights in and out). To obtain this Visitor's permit, you will need to **send us your flight details** (both arrival and departure) and a **copy of your passport at least 2 weeks before your departure** to Seychelles. This is extremely important as we need to inform immigration authorities of your arrival well beforehand. You will need to book your flight dates accordingly to the program dates.

If you want to extend your stay in Seychelles that would be your personal choice, outside our program, and you will have to go to the immigration office on Mahe to see if it possible to extend your visitor's visa. Due to lack of capacity on our side we cannot assist in this. It is important to have the appropriate travel/medical insurance for your stay.

» Air Seychelles plane on Praslin
Photo: Liz Mwambui





How To Get To Cousin

The program starts, for most of the groups, on the 1st Monday of the month. We meet on **Monday morning at 8.30a.m at Praslin airport** or at **Grand Anse jetty** where you will **meet Yan Coquet, the program coordinator**.

It is advised to **book your flight straight to Praslin** (including the international and internal flight Mahe-Praslin). When you arrive on Mahé, you can either take a 15

minutes flight to Praslin or a 1 hour ferry. The flight is more convenient as you can go from the international terminal to the domestic terminal very easily.

The **ferry can be less expensive**, however the **ferry port is a taxi ride from the airport** and factoring in taxi costs it comes to almost the same cost as a flight. Once you arrive on Praslin, you will need to take another taxi from the Praslin ferry port to the airport.

If you plan to arrive on Praslin during the weekend, we recommend that you book a

guesthouse or hotel near Grand Anse or Amitie, Praslin.

There are good rates online. You can also catch an early plane from Mahe on Monday morning. From the airport we then take you to the **boat driven** by one of our **experienced wardens to land on Cousin Island**.

Links that can help you find guest houses :

- [tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com)
- seychelles.travel/en/plan-your-visit/accommodation
- [booking.com](https://www.booking.com)

Discounted accommodation can also be negotiated at local guest houses by prior arrangement with the CBC coordinator.

» Location of Praslin airport
Photo: Google earth

Budget

Food/beverage money, approximately **200 euros per month** (150 euros should be enough for your food budget). If you have dietary restrictions please note that **Seychelles is primarily a fish eating nation**. The fish is extremely fresh and tasty. **Supermarkets stock meat items** but please note some may be more expensive than what you are used to. **Fresh vegetables and fruits are available in shops and local markets** but the range of items available may be limited owing to **seasonal availability** and cost.

We **don't recommend** bringing loads of cash with you; just bring a little in your own currency. ATMs can be found at the **airports** (Mahé and Praslin) and in the main part of **Grande Anse** (on Praslin) where we shop. They can also be found in just about all the main towns on Mahé and Praslin. Spending money for weekends away (cheapest place to stay will be around 30 euros per night). Travel to and from Praslin - needs to be booked in advance in order to make arrival arrangements.

» Supply run on the island
Photo: Matthias Malmqvist



Living On The Island



Cousin Island is a **feast for the senses**. A thriving **carnival of colour and light**...

Toria Hare
Participant, England

CBC participants exploring the island Photo: Annam Raza

Health And Safety

Seychelles is relatively safe in comparison with other regional countries. There is no cyclone season, and there are few, if any, serious ailments prevalent in the country. The Tsunami did not greatly affect Cousin, but the ensuing disturbed weather and tidal patterns have caused some impact to both infrastructure and habitats.

We do have certified first aiders on the island and first aid kits distributed all-round the island but **bring your own supply of medicines, especially prescriptions, including vitamins and other supplements.**

The boat to Grande Anse, Praslin where there is a hospital as well as private doctors, takes 10 minutes by the Reserve boat. There is a helicopter emergency landing strip on Cousin in case of emergency on the island. A list of precautions and dos and don'ts is provided to all participants to avoid emergencies.

Supply Boat Trips

There are **regular and scheduled boat trips for shopping, cooking gas, fuel and water supply.** These are normally on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays afternoon.

To save on fuel, time and human resources **boats do not run to and from Praslin outside these timings** unless the Chief Warden determines there is an emergency. For Conservation Boot Camp participants, arriving and leaving boat trips will be made as described above (How To Get to Cousin).

» Supply run
Photo: Charlotte Courriere



Communication

There is no telephone call box or land line, fax machine or copier on the island. The senior staff do have mobile phones for work use and the local staff have their own personal phones.

It is recommended that participants bring their **own mobile telephone** and **obtain a pre-paid SIM card** here in **Seychelles**.

This **can be purchased** in many shops on Mahe and Praslin. It would provide you with a number and credit for both local and international calls. The sim card can be easily topped up. Participants are also responsible for their **internet access** which can be **purchased in Grande Anse** as well as the top ups for the phones.

Accommodation

The **field centre** is the building where you will be **staying** and **living**.

There are **3 rooms** (with single beds and bunk beds), a **bathroom**, a **kitchen**, a **living room** and a **patio to share** with other participants. Each **participant is responsible for their cooking and laundry** (handwash).

Mosquito nets, fans, and mosquito repellent coils are provided. Water is pumped from the island natural water stock.

No hot water is available and showers are to be taken when necessary particularly during the dry season. Solar power provides energy. When the system is down, the generator will be run in the evening for 2 to 3 hours so make sure things go onto charge then.

You are expected to be very **conscious** and **minimal** with your **water** and **energy usage**.

Water is a scarce resource on the island and there is an **ecofriendly long-drop/pit toilet** which stands next to the field centre at the edge of the forest. There are others all-round the island.

» Accommodation at the Field Centre Photos: Yan Coquet



Program Guidelines

1. Turtle patrolling starts early October and continues until 2 weeks after the last turtle has come up to lay (usually early March). If you are participating in the Conservation Boot Camp during this time you will be on your feet up to 6 days a week. You have signed up to learn about conservation on an island with the highest nesting density of hawksbills in the Western Indian Ocean and the task of monitoring them is a challenging but great opportunity.
2. Early turtle season (October) will start with beach patrols, consisting of walking around the island in the hot sun to look for tracks and turtles. Ensure you have a good water container, lunch box, rain jacket, and a small rucksack to use.
3. As well as the turtle monitoring there will be other general tasks that everyone on the island participates in, such as raking the paths, pumping water at the well, filling up water containers from Praslin Island and helping with boats and tourists.
4. Typical days start around 7 or 8am and entail a full day until around 5 pm. Occasionally, there may be certain seabird censuses at night.
5. If you are unwell you must tell your team and the Program coordinator in order to rearrange your shifts. Do not suffer in silence or push yourself too hard.
6. If you do not enjoy the program /find it too hard and cannot keep to your schedule, then you will have to cut your stay short.
7. Each week you will get the chance to go to Praslin and do your food shopping. The program coordinator will arrange boat trip shifts.

» A day runs from 8am-5pm
Photo: Charlotte Courriere



Regulations

1. **Comply with written** and verbal instructions given by the **Program Coordinator, Science Coordinator** and **Chief Warden**.
2. **Drug use is illegal** in the Seychelles and **will not be tolerated**. If you are found or suspected of using, you will be asked to leave the program immediately with no refund.
3. Refrain from **excessive** use of **alcohol**.
4. As a communal house all participants should pull their weight with cooking, cleaning, rubbish and water collection. You are expected to **keep the field centre** / kitchen / patio / outside of the house **tidy and clean**, always keeping in mind that this is a nature reserve.
5. You will most likely become friends with the Cousin wardens and that will be part of the CBC experience. Please note it is Nature Seychelles' explicit policy that staff not get involved in sexual relationships with students, researchers and the Conservation Boot Camp participants.
6. Please **do not interact** with the **media** without **prior consultation** with the Program Coordinator.
7. Please do not make **unauthorised use of houses and equipment**, including boats and computers.
8. Please **do not take/remove/transfer** Nature Seychelles **property** without authorization.
9. **Do not start any fires**.
10. Please **do not touch, harass or chase the wildlife**. You are immersed in nature and you can enjoy it without adding unnecessary stress. **Never ride or sit on the tortoises**.
11. We are a Special Reserve and you will be learning to live sustainably. We practice what we preach. While shells around the island are beautiful, we leave them there as they have a huge ecological role in this ecosystem. Please **do not take corals and other natural items**
12. Nature Seychelles allows no overnight visitors except for full-time Nature Seychelles staff with permission of the Chief Executive. Please **do not invite your friends and family for overnight stays** on Cousin. **Day visits** by family are possible but **must be arranged** with the Island's Chief Warden.

» Leave nothing but footprints
Photo: Matthias Malmqvist



Pre-departue checklist

Essential

- Passport/Travel documents/ Travel
- Personal insurance cover
- Water bottle
- Strong mosquito repellent (recommndable with DEET)
- Camera
- Sunglasses (2 if one gets lost)
- Flip-flops and spare flip-flops
- Aqua shoes or trainers
- Unlocked phone to put local sim in
- Light raincoat
- Sun hat (s)
- Sun lotion/ after sun
- Towel(s)
- Bed sheets and Pillow case
- Torch/ Head torch and Batteries
- Light long sleeved tops and trousers
- Toiletries
- Medicine and personal first aid kit – antiseptic cream, anti-histamine, pain killers, Imodium, anti-fungal cream and any prescription medication you may require.
- Shorts and tops for leisure and travel (note for your stay on Cousin you will be given 2 Conservation Boot Camp T shirts and 2 Nature Seychelles shorts)

* Other Suggestions

- Laptop – for personal use, films, music etc.
- Memory stick or external hard drive
- Books
- Underwater camera
- Walking sandals
- Ipod & headphones
- Rash vest (for snorkelling)
- Board shorts
- Binoculars
- Snorkel with fins (we do not provide these)
- Hand sanitizer
- Light jumper/ Hoodie (for cool evenings)
- Penknife
- Vitamins
- Travel board games, puzzle book
- Watch – preferably waterproof
- Baby powder
- Cook book/simple recipes
- Swim wear
- Any favourite food items
- Tupperware and sealable sandwich bags
- Small mirror
- Dry bag
- Personal stationary – including permanent marker

(* Suggested by participants and students)

» Suggested items include binoculars
Photo: Charlotte Courriere





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PARTICIPANTS STORIES

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