

Saving 1 million turtles worldwide: Launch of new global TUI Turtle Aid programme

- Integrated multifaceted initiative to protect sea turtles
- First partnerships with local NGOs in Greece, Turkey and Cape Verde
- Programme will further expand its global footprint and develop innovative ways to protect endangered animals

Berlin, 20 June 2018. As one of the TUI Care Foundation's key environmental programmes, TUI Turtle Aid will protect the welfare of 1 million new-born turtles by 2020. To kick off the programme the foundation has now joined forces with local organisations on Cape Verde, Turkey and Greece. In the months to come the programme will be expanded to more regions all over the world. It will also entail innovative research and protection methods which will help to protect the endangered global sea turtle population.

TUI Care Foundation
Pariser Platz 6a
10117 Berlin

www.tuicarefoundation.com

The world recently celebrated the Sea Turtle Day on 16th June. This date aims to raise awareness for these ancient creatures reminding us of their importance for our ecosystem. Sea turtles are a globally protected species and conservation studies have been carried out for decades in many countries.

Sea turtles eat and live in the water but move to the land to lay their eggs. Consequently they are exposed to numerous threats. From suffocation due to ingesting plastic bags as they confuse them with jellyfishes -on which they regularly feed - to poachers who hunt them down or irresponsible beach use that may lead to the destruction of turtle nests and the killing of hatchlings. Furthermore, bycatch, coastal development, climate change, consumption and (illegal) trade are also critical factors. Despite intensive work, many of these key threats to sea turtle populations still remain.

As a matter of fact, six of the seven marine turtle species are today considered critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. Moreover, according to experts, only 1 in 1000 baby turtles survives to adulthood under natural conditions.

To kick off the TUI Turtle Aid programme TUI Care Foundation has initiated partnerships with local organisations on the Cape Verdean islands of Sal and Boa Vista, in Greece as well as in Turkey to protect the environment of sea turtles - Project Biodiversity and BIOS.CV on the two islands of Cape Verde, Archelon in Greece and DEKAMER in Turkey.

The beautiful coastlines of Cape Verde, Greece and Turkey are not only popular destinations to visit but also host large populations of sea turtles. These turtles fulfil vital functions in the various marine ecosystems, contributing to the health of the ocean environment. Such functions range from maintaining productive coral reef ecosystems and seagrass beds, to transporting essential nutrients from the oceans to the beaches and coastal dunes.

The project regions are selected in order to maximize the impact of the programme on the global sea turtle population. For example, the Cape Verde archipelago supports the third largest Loggerhead nesting populations in the world, and the second most important in the Atlantic Ocean overall. Five of the seven existing marine turtle species can be found in the Cape Verdean waters. Various threats, such as poachers, by-catch, as well as climate change - that is causing severe egg mortality on the nesting beaches - have also made of Cape Verde the host to one of the eleven most threatened populations of sea turtles in the world.

In order to tackle these problems, TUI Care Foundation supports local projects which aim to protect turtle's nests on the beaches, increase hatchling survival rate and engage the community and local stakeholders in protecting Sal Island's marine turtle population. In addition, ongoing outreach and engagement programmes help to strengthen local capacity in terms of on turtle conservation competencies.

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Activities undertaken include early morning and night patrols, as well as relocation of doomed nests into hatcheries, rehabilitation of sick or injured turtles, and environmental educational programmes in schools. Local tour guides are also taught about best practices on turtle watching excursions and stands are placed in partnering hotels where volunteers raise awareness of the importance of protecting turtles and give practical advice to visitors to help them enjoy their holidays in a responsible manner. The involvement of hotel partners is crucial in order to foster responsible beach use, waste management and promote sustainable excursions.

With recently-approved legislation expanding the scope of national protection for sea turtles and their nesting areas, 2018 marks a pivotal moment for sea turtle conservation in Cape Verde. Support from the TUI Care Foundation will provide critical resources to ensure both organisations can continue to build on existing programmes and further broaden their impact.

The TUI Turtle Aid project in Greece not only engages in monitoring and research, but also in public awareness. Actions include assessment of impacts of climate change in Loggerhead sub-populations and info contributions to the photo identification database of sea turtles of the Mediterranean. Public awareness activities for schools and local communities will be offered to visitors to the Sea Turtle Rescue Centre in Glyfada and in other coastal urban centres close to nesting beaches, such as Kalamata, Kyllini and Heraklion. Most importantly however, conservationists will liaise with local enterprises and the tourism industry in Chania Bay and Rethymnon Bay on Crete and South Kyparissiakos Bay in the Peloponnese, for the implementation of management measures on the Loggerhead nesting beaches. It is expected that more than 60.000 loggerhead hatchlings per year will be successfully entering the Mediterranean from those beaches.

On the beaches of Dalyan, Dalaman-Sarıgerme and Fethiye in Turkey the project to protect and rehabilitate sea turtles lays a special emphasis on involving the various stakeholder groups in the turtle protection activities - from national and regional government to local businesses and visitors. As part of the project, injured turtles found along the Mediterranean coast of Turkey are also brought to a rescue centre to

receive medical treatment and support rehabilitation. DEKAMER also develops many international research and conservation projects, including the satellite tracking of turtles, sex ratio estimation of turtles under global warming, genetic differences of sea turtles on various beaches and mitigation studies on fisheries by-catch issues, among others.

Further activities of the TUI Turtle Aid programme will be launched in the course of the year.

About TUI Care Foundation

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Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates partnerships and projects which create new opportunities for the young generation and contribute to thriving destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, the TUI Care Foundation fosters education and training initiatives to open up new opportunities and perspectives for young people, the protection of the natural environment in holiday destinations and sustainable livelihoods in thriving destinations where local communities can benefit even more from tourism. TUI Care Foundation works global and acts local - it builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long lasting impact. The charitable foundation values transparency and the efficient use of funds. Therefore, 100% of the donations go to partners and projects with all operating costs of the foundation covered by TUI. TUI Care Foundation was founded by TUI, the world's leading tourism business, and is based in the Netherlands.

Contact:

TUI Care Foundation
Christian Rapp, Head of Media Relations
+49 511 – 566 6028
christian.rapp@tui.com