

Ligurian Sea VOLUNTEER COMMENTS

It was one of those weeks where the planets aligned – the weather was beautiful, the seas were mostly kind, the team of people on the boat were a great lot and the cetaceans showed themselves often enough to earn their appearance fees. Thank you indeed to the professionalism of the crew – Francesca, Viridiana, Nina and Captain Paolo – I have learnt a lot about these wonderful creatures who inhabit our oceans and remind us of both the antiquity and fragility of Planet Earth. Long may she live! Research and programs such as this will be what will save her.

Dinah (Australia)

It wasn't like a movie, there were no whales launching themselves onto the boat, no dolphins diving through hoops. It was much more real, respectful and impressive. So much to appreciate. The program takes participants on a journey that will help to sustain the Mediterranean Sea, the whales, the dolphins, other marine life and the participants themselves. The team is not only professional, knowledgeable, and organized, but also a joy to be around. Thank you to Francesca, Viridiana, Nina and Paolo.

Wendy (Australia)

An extraordinary voyage with researchers who had a wonderful ability to wrangle 11 guests, while conducting serious and important detailed research into the habits and identities of cetaceans. They generously shared their detailed knowledge of whales and dolphins and other sea life with us. The participants were “simpatico”, the food was great and the whales cooperated by revealing themselves at regular intervals. Thank you for a wonderful experience.

Mary (Canada)

As sad as it sounds, it took an experience like this for me to realize the beauty and magnificence of cetaceans and the enormous effect that humans have on their future well-being. I will remain ever vigilant and ever true regarding personal decisions I make from this moment on. Thank you crew for providing me with this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity – you've been extremely welcoming and patient, even if we have trouble reporting what types of boats are in the vicinity =). I won't let you down!

Khoa (USA)

A stellar expedition that exceeded my expectations in many ways: from the delicious meals, to the informative conversations and lectures, the opportunity to have been a

participant in these research activities has been an experience of a lifetime. Thanks for a great week of superlatives!

Julieanne (Canada)

I expected it to be good but it was so much better than good in so many different ways. Some moments of pure unadulterated joy that will last me forever. Thank you.

Judith (UK)

It's been a combination of the literary adventure of Moby Dick and the cinematic romance of The Big Blue. The voyage has been all and much more than I expected. I learned a great deal during the week thanks to both the research staff and the Captain of the M/Y Pelagos. I saw whales for the first time and to see groups of 50 and more dolphins at one time was totally awesome. To be able share all of this with my grand daughter Megan was truly the icing on the cake.

Frank (Canada)

I have had such a brilliant time onboard Pelagos! Seeing so many dolphins and whales was amazing, especially seeing the Risso's dolphins! I have learnt so much and definitely have a greater appreciation for conserving the marine environment; I won't eat tuna that has been fished using unsustainable methods again! Everyone has been so kind and welcoming and the food has been yummy! I definitely want to come back again next year!

Abbie (UK)

The project has been one of the best experiences of my life. I could have never found a better way to learn, and be close to cetaceans in their natural environment. Every day there was something new and wonderful to see or experience... not to mention the great times I had just getting to know the staff and crew. I will never forget the past week, and I thank everyone on board for the amazing memories they've given me.

Megan (Canada)

This week was one of the most spectacular times we have ever had. The wonderful

nature, the giant animals, the life on board and the patience and kindness of the researchers are only a few points that made this time so fantastic for us. We learnt a lot about the animals in the Mediterranean Sea and when we come so close to them, we felt the beauty and the uniqueness of these wonderful animals. It is a great pleasure to find people, who watch and protect them from human foolishness and unawareness. Thank you to all of the researchers. All of you do a very great job and we are glad to know you. We will come back again!

Heimo, Sabine and Angela (Germany)

Thank you for this great opportunity to be part of your research and conservation project. I have been on whale and dolphin watching cruises before, but the experience on your boat is very different. I had only very basic knowledge of cetaceans before and learned a lot from you. I admire your dedication to your work, your patience with the participants and your good sense of humor. Your contribution to cetacean conservation is very important and I wish you all the best.

Margit (Australia)

After seeing some of the most spectacular whale watching in Maui, I wasn't quite sure what to expect in the Ligurian Sea: as it turns out, this was sincerely the most extravagant experience in both whale and dolphin viewing, imaginable. We saw upwards of ten fin whales under various close conditions and pods of dolphins virtually too numerous to count. The boat itself is spacious enough for the 14 people we had on board and the food was great. It was a nice bonding experience; solitary time is also very possible-our journal pens are still burning as I write this! Thank you team Pelagos and the Team for making this trip possible! To my surprise there is quite a sea life in the Mediterranean which needs cared for.

Riki (Austria)

It was a really fantastic week. It was much better than we had expected. The weather was very good. The boat was nice. We had a lot of fun and we got a very good impression of the researchers' work. They are really professional and very passionate in their work. And in addition to that they are so polite, helpful, friendly and wonderful people. They managed to do their research and involve the participants into their work at the same time. And still, there was always time for explanation and fun! We would like to come again. Thank you and stay as you are!

Christoph and Claudia (Germany)

I would like to thank the Research Institute for providing such a beautiful, interesting and uplifting experience to the public. Many people live their lives separated from the reality of how beautiful this planet is, but giving them the opportunity to get involved in marine research and live alongside cetaceans allows them to reconnect with the natural world, which is a truly special gift. The Mediterranean is a unique and precious environment and getting the public involved helps to educate and stimulate conservation. Also, I would like to thank Francesca and her crew for the warm and welcoming atmosphere they created. When living together onboard for a week, the crew environment is really important and after only one week the Pelagos feels like home. I hope I can return to be part of yet another exciting adventure. Thank you for making this possible.

Sacha (Australia)

Well, I have to say this has been the best school project ever, better yet, best trip ever. All the natural beauty that surrounded us everyday was breath-taking. With the massive amounts of whale watching (and living to tell about it), experiencing dolphins in their natural habitat and witnessing wonderful sun rises and sun sets, it is impossible to compare all of this to anything I have done. So thank you to the entire crew who lead an amazing journey and made wonderful memories. I have learned so much and am ready to share my stories.

Stephanie (USA)

*You never know what to expect when you approach nature. Honestly I had a lot of expectations. And indeed I've had a wonderful time. It really seemed to be a perfect film script: we started with some tuna and *Velella velella* which are already amazing in themselves, followed by one of the strangest animals I've ever seen - the lurching *Mola mola* (encounter *Mola mola* ;)). After this more or less exciting barefoot experience I couldn't wait to "encounter" the whales. Like before we started small: with a lot of fantasy we spotted some dolphins at the horizon line. On the following day it begun to get interesting: suddenly there were clicks produced by two sperm whales. One of them got up really close to the boat - really incredible! A friend of mine used to say that life's great memories are made of small moments. And we've had a lot of them! The most particular one was the group of fin whales swimming next to our boat. You could even hear them breathe... It's impossible to describe the impression that such a moment left, because it was something new, something I still have to understand. And this is how the story ends - the big expectations revealed new confusing mysteries to be discovered...*

Valerie (Germany)

What an amazing experience this has been. Thank you for two great weeks of action-packed fun! I come away with an increased appreciation for the world around me and for conservation efforts on land and sea. I hope many more people get to experience the overwhelming happiness that a program like this has to offer.

Mallory (USA)

Thanks a lot for the last week. My dream became true, to see dolphins and whales, to swim in the deep blue water, to spend a night in the open sea... And I also want to thank all of you for the patience with my nephew Marcel, who is always wild and full of energy like a little dolphin....

Verena (Austria)

A very special week that I will remember always! I feel really honored to have spent this time with the team of researchers and the animals. Every sighting was a gift and the time spent with such a spectacular group of people was truly a blessing. I hope to come back again and again and believe that each time will be just as special. Thank you to the wonderful team of researchers and participants – I will remember you always!

Anne (USA)

This was my fourth and final week on Pelagos this summer. You'd think after a month I would be tired of living on a small boat, but I don't want to leave. The experiences I have had here are unforgettable. I came to this program because I wanted to gain undergraduate marine research experience, but I got so much more. I have gotten to know people from all over the world and experienced a small part of their lives, and believe me, when you're living in such small quarters you really get to know each other! The cetaceans are beautiful, evolved, complex creatures that inspire wonder, awe, and hope, and seeing them in their natural habitat has been a real privilege, but it's the memories you create and the bonds you form with people and other animals alike that define the unique experience has to offer. It has inspired me to take action for these endangered creatures and as I continue my young career I will always remember the time I spent doing research. Great work and thank you for everything.

Anna (USA)

I didn't know what to expect when I came on board, but I was met by friendly faces and

people who were ready to jump up and help anybody that needed it. I had the pleasure of being able to see some of the most elusive marine mammals that the Mediterranean Sea has to offer, from the 20 meter fin whale, to the more shy and curious long-finned pilot whales. I came on board hoping to get an experience that would not only be life-changing, but would also help me decide whether or not I want to become a marine biologist, and I have to say that not only has this helped me decide, but it has also reinforced my love for the animals, and I know that I want to do everything in my power to save the animals that we as humans share the Earth with. Thanks for everything.

Samantha Cat (Germany)

Ce fut une agréable expérience , nous avons partager des moments merveilleux avec cette team extraordinaire ! Nous avons eu la chance de voir des espèces rares dont le globicéphale, cela restera a jamais gravé dans ma mémoire. Le capitaine est extraordinaire il m'a appris des choses sur la navigation en haute mer. Une pensée à la Team, en esperant les revoirs en mer. Merci.

Chris (France)

Un grand merci à toute l'équipe pour avoir partagé de si grands moments auprès de ces animaux, et pour avoir eu la patience de nous impliquer dans les travaux, avec autant d'enthousiasme. Je garderai un excellent souvenir de cette semaine, des participants, et surtout de ces rencontres avec les Rorquals, les Cachalots et les Dauphins. J'espère que nous pourrons tous transmettre les message autour de nous pour faire la différence.

Isabelle (France)

This week has been without doubt one of the most spectacular opportunities that I have been able to enjoy. The first two days out at sea were so incredible that words just fail to describe. Seeing so many fin whales in the first couple of days was an absolute experience, as well as the striped dolphins breaching out of the water, and swimming alongside the Pelagos. The research team and crew were all true stars; they made the experience so enjoyable and unforgettable. They were incredibly friendly and made me feel really welcome, as well as being given tasks out on the field. It really has been an absolute pleasure and joy being able to take part with the research team and I thank everyone this week for one of the best experiences of my life. A totally awesome adventure.

Matt, U.K.

Thank you for such an amazing week; this trip has exceeded my expectations in every way. The research team and captain Paolo have all been so friendly, welcoming and knowledgeable. I've learnt so much and met some great people. I'm so glad that I applied to come on this trip and that I was able to get a place. A once in a lifetime experience for me and a world away from the hustle and bustle of London. I hope that I will be able to remember the sight of the fin whales and dolphins, of the sun setting over the waves and of the millions of stars that we saw on our night anchored out at sea for many years to come. Thank you again Pelagos and crew.

Sarah, U.K.

Ha sido una semana llena de emociones, tuvimos la suerte de ver muchas ballenas y delfines, tambien de hablar en varios idiomas y comer comida internacional. He aprendido o por lo menos me he dado una idea de la manera en que se realiza una investigacion oceanografica de campo. Estoy sorprendida por lo profesional, dedicados y entusiastas que son: Sabina, Alessia, Joanna, Anna, Maria, Claudia y por supuesto Paolo, son un gran equipo! Quisiera reconocer la capacidad de liderazgo que tiene Alessia, ademas de inteligente es muy calida. Nos ha hizo sentir bien en todo momento. Gracias por permitirme compartir con ustedes esta experiencia de vida maravillosa !

Erika, Mexico

Tout au long de la semaine, j'ai apprécié l'enthousiasme des sympathiques chercheuses et la gentillesse du capitaine Paolo. Quel bonheur de voir tous ces dauphins et d'apercevoir le rorqual tant attendu! Et vive la Mare Nostrum que j'apprécie depuis mon enfance.

Philippe (France)

One of the best boat trips I have ever taken – well organized and qualified tuition – lovely food and great company on board, plus the highlights on the last two days : the sperms and fins and dolphins we got to see- this really mesmerized me. I keep my fingers crossed for the organization and the work for these beautiful animals—good luck and God bless.

Uli (Germany)

Un petit coup de nageoire pour les baleines, une grande prise de conscience pour les hommes... Ma deuxième année à bord du Pelagos et toujours autant d'émerveillement,

de plaisir et surtout de belles personnes rencontrées, que ce soit les chercheurs ou les volontaires. Etant moi-même biologiste j'ai conscience des difficultés que vous pouvez rencontrer et nous voyons et recevons avec tant de plaisir votre volonté et votre passion. Un énorme merci à vous tous pour votre bonne humeur, votre gentillesse et votre professionnalisme. Et j'ai bien l'intention d'obtenir un troisième tampon sur mon diplôme. Je vous dis donc à l'année prochaine j'espère.

Laureline (France)

A cette heure, les mots manquent pour décrire cette semaine magique durant laquelle nous sommes émerveillés, avons découvert, appris. Merci à toute l'équipe de nous avoir fait partager votre quotidien et de nous avoir permis d'apporter notre minime contribution. En échange, nous rentrons un peu plus ouverts, un peu plus conscients, bien plus riches qu'au départ. Nous essaierons de ne pas tout à fait reprendre nos vies là où nous les avons laissées, de conserver ce petit supplément d'âme, de faire passer le message. Ancora grazie mille per questi 5 giorni.

Julie & Fabien (Switzerland)

We have tried, again and again, to find the Loch Ness monster in the Ligurian Sea, but in vain. However, many other cetaceans came to join us, too many to remember all of them. If you don't believe us, we strongly advise you to join the trip and spend some time contributing to the efforts. Thus aiming to enhance our environmental awareness and reduce our polluting consumerism and acts. Please carry on like this; it was a real pleasure to meet you and to discover your work and enthusiasm. One more question: why is the sea so salty?

Nicolas (France)

Mit grosser Spannung war ich in Sanremo angekommen, nachdem ich schon fast ein Jahr im Voraus gebucht hatte. Viele junge Leute und ich als der Senior der Gruppe, der den Altersschnitt brutal in die Tiefe zog, fanden sich sehr schnell zu einer Einheit zusammen. Das schlechte Wetter zu Beginn wurde durch Ersatzprogramm hervorragend genutzt und schweisste die Gruppe richtig zusammen. Im Verlauf der Woche waren neben bester Stimmung verschiedene Unterweisungen angesagt. Das Dolce Vita und nette Abende inbegriffen, aber auch anschauliche und gut zu verstehende theoretische Begleitung. Ueber 20 Begegnungen mit Pottwalen, verspielten Delphinen und anderen Meeresbewohner erfuellten einen lang ersehnten Traum. Highlight war das Schwimmen in tiefer See, bei dem es tatsaechlich ein Schwimmen mit den Walen war. Und als die Gruppe auf der einen Seite des Bootes aus dem Wasser stieg, tauchte auf der andren

Seite ein Wal auf. Ein sehr guter, erfahrener Captain, das kompetente Team, die sowohl sehr professionelle als auch menschlich herausragende Behandlung, sind besonders hervorzuheben. Vielen Dank! Weiter genau so.

Viktor (Germany)

What an amazing week this has been, not only have I gained valuable experience which can be used in my future career as a marine biologist. But also the great sightings that we have been fortunate to have seen have made this trip extra special! The striped dolphins, sperm whales and pilot whales all added to the trip. I think the work being done here is fantastic and hope that it makes an impact in the near future! Of course this trip would not have been possible if not for the excellent crew, who have been very hospitable, kind and helpful. Oh and the food was great too! Thanks a lot and hope to see you all again!

Victoria (UK)

Bye, Bye Eva, Letizia, Monica and Nino. Thank you for a very exciting week with a lot of new experiences. It has been amazing to see the striped dolphins cruising under the bow and be lucky to get the eye contact with the mammals. We also enjoyed seeing a lot of striped dolphin calves next to their mother and jumping around in the water. We were also lucky to follow some sperm whales during the week, which are incredible whales. It has been great to experience how you study the mammals and it has been exiting to learn about the mammals in the Mediterranean Sea (especially Nino's lesson with documentaries that put the research into a bigger perspective, e.g. overfishing and endangered mammals). We will take all these facts and the knowledge about how important it is to protect the environment with us back to Denmark. You all four have been an amazing team to join and you have been very open to everyone – we felt very much at home on the boat. And to Nino... don't worry, we will take action on the problem at the Far Oer Islands. Loads of kind regards.

Louise and Matilde (Denmark)

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