

# E-Ko Tours Internship and Volunteer Program

## Aims and Purpose of the E-Ko Tours Internship & Volunteer Program

An internship/volunteer program has been established at E-Ko to provide enthusiastic and conservation-minded individuals with the opportunity to gain valuable experience in the wildlife, adventure tourism and nature/eco-tourism industries. Volunteers and interns will gain hands-on experience and contribute to all major aspects of the business, including tours on the water, equipment maintenance, office work, marketing, conservation, research and customer service. The following document serves as an outline of what is provided and expected of any volunteer and/or intern with the company, in order to assist these individuals in achieving the goal of gaining vital experience in the wildlife and tourism industry in a safe, positive and encouraging environment.

## Expectations

### *Representing E-Ko Tours*

As a member of the E-Ko Tours team, each volunteer or intern is expected to act as a representative of the company. This includes cleanliness and presentation (uniform and appearance), and a high level of friendliness and customer service. The company prides itself on having approachable, friendly, informative, good-natured and fun staff. As a member of the team, considerably high-level customer service and representation is expected of each intern or volunteer to carry on with this tradition.

### *Duties*

Each intern or volunteer is expected to carry out duties in all aspects of the company as directed, providing such duties are safe and ethical. The company will not ask the intern/volunteer to undertake any task deemed unsafe, or that the intern/volunteer is either not qualified or trained to undertake.

### *Information and Knowledge*

All interns and volunteers will be provided with background reading and resources to better understand and expand knowledge of the wildlife, history, geography, geology, conservation, etc. of the local area. As a member of the team, volunteers and interns will be expected to learn as much as they can, and are encouraged to expand on the information provided with research conducted independently.

### *Duty of Care*

As a member of the team, all interns and volunteers will be also expected to identify hazards and risks and notify other members of staff of any potential issues to ensure

maximum safety for all customers and staff. Ultimately, the volunteers and interns are the responsibility of the guides, skippers and office staff of E-Ko Tours. Therefore, any volunteer or intern is expected to follow the directions and guidance of these full-time staff for their own safety and to gain the most out of the internship/volunteer program.

## **Duties**

### *Familiarization*

In order for any staff member, including volunteers and interns, to understand and appreciate the products E-Ko Tours provides, each member must undertake each of the core trips (morning Dolphin Swim or View Experience and afternoon Wildlife Island Sanctuary and Dolphin Cruise) as a guest. These trips are to be undertaken when first starting with the company as a part of the introduction and induction process (conditional on weather and minimum numbers of paying guests being met).

### *On the water*

As an intern and/or volunteer, there will be the opportunity to gain valuable experience on the water. Under the guidance and direction of the guides and skippers, duties may include (and are not limited to) the following:

- Assisting with customer care and interacting with customers throughout the trips
- Keeping customer enthusiasm maintained, particularly on longer dolphin swim trips
- Assisting with fitting of equipment for the dolphin swims (booties, hoods, gloves, mask/snorkels)
- Dolphin spotting
- Answering customer questions – about the trips, wildlife, history of the Sound, etc.
- Crowd control during swims (ensuring the safety and keeping viewers out of areas where the swimmers are)
- Taking photographs of customers (particularly in the water during swim trips)
- Serving hot beverages to customers during the trips
- Assisting with supervising and leading customers along the track at Motuara Island
- Assisting guides with other trips, including charter trips, cruise ship days (usually the 'Best of Sounds' tour) and All Day Tours
- Cleaning and equipment maintenance

In order to provide good quality customer service and to truly know the products, each intern/volunteer will be provided with detailed information and background reading on the wildlife, history, geology, geography, conservation efforts and quirky facts of the Queen Charlotte/Marlborough Sounds. Interns/volunteers are also encouraged to expand on the information provided and to assist E-Ko Tours in

expanding on the database of information that we have and are continuing to compile.

### *Office*

As the first port of call for any customers wanting to make an enquiry, make a booking or arrive for their pre-booked trip, staff in the office represent a vital component of the company. Conducting background organization that keeps the company rolling, work conducted in the office helps to keep the business running smoothly. Interns and Volunteers may be asked to assist office staff in a variety of tasks, including data entry for important databases, manning the office (booking customers) and greeting customers (including the morning greeting and briefing before customers leave for the morning dolphin swim trips).

### *Cleaning*

Presentation is everything, and cleanliness of both office and vessels is paramount. Volunteers and interns are expected to assist and be involved in all cleaning processes, particularly at the end of each day.

### *Marketing*

As a business, marketing our products is an important component. As a small company, most of the staff are involved in one way, shape or form with the marketing of the company. The interns and volunteers may be required to assist in some of these activities, which may include simple tasks such as dropping brochures to local businesses, or more complex tasks, such as approaching prospective agents and businesses to assist in booking guests.

## **Working Hours**

### *Volunteers*

The company understands that volunteers are giving up their own free time and will discuss and arrange with the volunteer a set number of working hours during the week where the volunteer is available while coordinating and scheduling volunteer hours according to when the company most requires the volunteer's services. Therefore, working hours will be scheduled according to mutual agreement between the volunteer and the company.

### *Interns*

Interns will work a set number of hours per week. This will usually fall between 30-40 hours per week but may vary by individual negotiation.

## **Review, Feedback and Conflict Resolution**

Each volunteer and intern will be given constant feedback throughout their time with E-Ko Tours. Staff responsible for the training and supervision of any intern or volunteer will provide regular constructive feedback both informally/verbally and formally through a set review process similar to that undertaken by all employees of E-Ko Tours. A review of the progress of each intern and volunteer will be conducted periodically and timing of such reviews will be prearranged dependent on the length of time each volunteer or intern is dedicating to the company. Conflict resolution and/or any such issues should be reported and addressed in accordance with New Zealand employment laws and as outlined in the volunteer/internship agreement and contract, a document which will be signed upon the volunteer or intern's arrival as a part of the initial induction process into the company.

## **The Team**

As a small, local and family owned and operated business the team at E-Ko Tours may be small, but each member is invaluable, appreciated, dedicated, approachable, flexible, conservation-minded and loves to have fun (that's why we're all here!).

## **Training and gaining experience**

Each volunteer and intern will be given full training in any and all tasks required of them prior to undertake tasks on their own. They will be under the full guidance and supervision of the other more senior staff members. No volunteer or intern will be asked to undertake any task that is unsafe or they are not qualified or trained to do. E-Ko Tours is a company that plays to the individual strengths of each staff member. Each staff member, including volunteers and interns, have their own set of skills, expertise, passions and ambitions, which the company acknowledges and strives to provide an environment that both nurtures the strengths of each member, in addition to utilizing such strengths to benefit the team as a whole. Although the company plays to the strengths of each member, the goal is also to assist each member in achieving their full potential, and so is also supportive in developing each and every area involved in the job. In this way, each member is flexible, assisting each other in all aspects of the business, in addition to contributing further in areas where their strengths lie. In this same tradition, each volunteer and intern will also have the opportunity to play to their strengths while receiving well-rounded training. The entire team is here to assist all volunteers and interns achieve their goals, gain valuable experience, teach and answer any questions. As a volunteer or intern the company also encourages initiative and fresh ideas, and appreciates all conscientious hard work. A volunteer or intern should never be afraid to contribute or speak up with any constructive input or if the volunteer or intern has any concerns.

## **In Summary**

E-Ko Tours is all about creating a positive and enjoyable environment for our guests, while showing them what the Queen Charlotte Sound truly has to offer. Through enthusiasm and excitement, we aim to educate and impassion our guests not just about the dolphins, but all life the sounds contain, and to have each guest take home with them a sense of caring and the conservation message. With the input and dedication of each volunteer and intern we will be one step closer to achieving this goal!