

A new generation of endangered sea turtles protected in Greece: TUI Care Foundation launches fourth phase of conservation initiative

- *TUI Turtle Aid Greece has already protected over 800,000 hatchlings across critical nesting beaches in Rethymno and Chania in Crete*
- *New phase supports almost 30 beachfront businesses in implementing turtle-friendly practices and trains over 800 community members in marine conservation*
- *Initiative engages 20,000 visitors and locals through over 850 awareness activities and experiential excursions across northern Crete*

Berlin, 29 October 2026. *The beaches of Rethymno and Chania in northern Crete are vital nesting grounds for endangered loggerhead sea turtles (Caretta caretta). However, as tourism infrastructure expands along these coastal areas, this rich natural heritage faces growing pressure from beachfront activities, artificial lighting, and human disturbance during the nesting season. To help protect endangered sea turtles, the TUI Care Foundation, in partnership with ARCHELON, is launching a new one-year conservation project that empowers local communities and tourism businesses to safeguard marine turtle populations. The project is set to establish nest monitoring and protection programmes across 24 kilometres of nesting beaches, turtle-friendly best practices for coastal businesses, and environmental education activities reaching over 20,000 people across the region.*

This fourth phase of TUI Turtle Aid Greece builds on a successful collaboration between the two organisations that began in 2018, protecting almost 2,000 nests and over 800,000 hatchlings and certifying eight hotels in turtle-friendly practices. The initiative continues to address tourism-related pressures on nesting habitats by building local conservation capacity, protecting critical nesting habitats and integrating sea turtle conservation into tourism operations.

The project will implement daily nest monitoring and protection activities across 24 kilometres of nesting beaches in Rethymno and Chania throughout the nesting season. Trained field teams will conduct morning surveys to locate and mark new nests, safeguard an estimated 250 additional nests with appropriate protective caging where necessary, and monitor incubation success to ensure approximately 18,000 hatchlings reach the sea safely. The programme will provide ongoing support for eight hotels participating in the TUI Turtle Friendly Tourism Certification scheme, a global framework developed by the TUI Care Foundation and validated by independent and local sea turtle conservation organisations such as ARCHELON in Greece and EKAD in Türkiye for beachfront hotels and tourism businesses. The certification recognises establishments that actively reduce their impact on sea turtle habitats, for example by adapting lighting, protecting nesting beaches and training staff in conservation practices. The programme's support consists in training workshops reaching over 200 employees, as well as working with 20 additional coastal businesses through presentations, one-to-one meetings, and on-site awareness activities.

Environmental education activities will engage 500 local schoolchildren across 10 schools through classroom presentations and beach visits, whilst public awareness campaigns will reach over 20,000 visitors and local community members through two information kiosks operating throughout the tourist season in Rethymno and Chania respectively, as well as public presentations, guided beach walks and public nest excavations. Workshops will bring together 100 local and regional authority representatives to strengthen collaboration between conservation practitioners, tourism operators, coastal communities and government agencies. Additionally, the project will support the TUI Turtle Aid Network to further enhance the certification model for coastal businesses.

Overall, TUI Turtle Aid Greece will directly benefit coastal communities, tourism businesses and conservation practitioners across northern Crete and protect critical marine habitats spanning 1.4 million square metres.

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This project is part of the global TUI Turtle Aid Programme, which shows how tourism, conservation and community engagement can work together to protect sea turtles. By combining on-the-ground conservation with education, partnerships and innovative initiatives such as the turtle-friendly certification, the programme supports conservation activities across multiple destinations worldwide.

About the TUI Care Foundation

Building on the potential of tourism as a force for good, the TUI Care Foundation supports and initiates projects which create new opportunities and contribute to thriving communities in tourism destinations all over the world. Connecting holidaymakers to good causes, it supports education and training opportunities for young people; drives the protection of natural habitats and the marine environment; and helps local communities to thrive sustainably and benefit from tourism. The TUI Care Foundation builds on strong partnerships with local and international organisations to create meaningful and long-lasting impact. The independent charitable organisation was founded by TUI, one of the world's leading tourism businesses, and is based in the Netherlands.

About ARCHELON

ARCHELON (the Sea Turtle Protection Society of Greece) is a non-profit conservation organisation dedicated to the protection of sea turtles and their habitats in Greece. Its mission is to conserve marine turtle populations through scientific monitoring and research, habitat protection and restoration, the development and implementation of conservation measures, the rescue and rehabilitation of sick and injured turtles, and public awareness and environmental education. Working closely with government authorities, local communities, tourism stakeholders, fishermen, and other organisations, ARCHELON promotes collaborative approaches to nature conservation and contributes to national and international efforts to safeguard marine biodiversity and ensure the long-term survival of sea turtles.

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