

Wanted: Five Volunteers to Join Scientific Research Mission to Antarctica

- *The Antarctic Sabbatical – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to journey to the frozen frontier and help us better understand humans’ environmental impact*
- *No formal qualifications required, other than an adventurous spirit, passion for the environment and willingness to apply*
- *Part of larger Airbnb Sabbatical program designed to inspire people to take time out of their careers to give back*

Today, Airbnb and Ocean Conservancy announced the Antarctic Sabbatical, an unprecedented opportunity for five passionate individuals to travel to Earth’s most remote continent and join Antarctic Scientist Kirstie Jones-Williams on a first-of-its-kind scientific research mission in December.

The five volunteer citizen scientists will collect snow samples and study the extent to which microplastics have made their way to the interior of Antarctica. The goal of the Antarctic Sabbatical is to bring greater awareness to humans’ impact on the climate in one of the world’s least understood and most isolated ecosystems. By understanding the impact of plastic pollution generated elsewhere in the world, the citizen scientists will deliver insights on how the global community can help protect both Antarctica and the planet.

“Most people think of Antarctica as a pristine and isolated continent, but recent evidence shows that even the most remote locations are affected by plastic pollution. This expedition will help us understand the pathways of microplastics to remote regions such as Antarctica and comes at a critical time to highlight our responsibility to protect our natural world.” said Jones-Williams. “This expedition will be hard work, with scientific rigour required during unforgiving wintery conditions. We are looking for passionate individuals, with a sense of global citizenship, who are excited to be a part of the team and to return home and share our findings with the world.”

On the month-long expedition, the citizen scientists will:

- Attend an immersion training in Punta Arenas, Chile, where they will prepare themselves with courses on glaciology and field sampling as well as lab work and equipment practice.
- Fly to Antarctica to begin their scientific mission, landing on a naturally formed blue-ice runway deep within the continent where the research will be conducted.
- Collect snow samples from the interior of Antarctica and study them for foreign microfibers to determine how far waste and pollution has traveled across the world.
- Visit the South Pole, where they can walk around the globe in just a few steps.
- Get the chance to explore the beauty of Antarctic sites like the Drake Icefall, Charles Peak Windscoop, and Elephant’s Head to learn about the continent’s geography.
- Return to Chile where they will continue to study their findings and work with Ocean Conservancy to become ambassadors for protecting the oceans. In this advocacy role, they will deliver insights on how the Airbnb community and others can help minimize their collective plastic footprint to support Ocean Conservancy’s mission.

Airbnb is committed to providing the option for sustainable travel to its community at every point of the trip. To further this commitment, Airbnb is working with Ocean Conservancy to use the research findings from the Antarctic Sabbatical to inform educational and advocacy efforts. Airbnb is also conducting an environmental impact assessment to measure and understand our impact and to identify what we can do to reduce our footprint over time. These are foundational steps that will inform future commitments and our vision to be a leader in sustainable travel.

“Partnering with Airbnb on the Antarctic Sabbatical is an incredible opportunity to continue our fight against ocean plastic and raise awareness of this issue,” said Janis Searles Jones, CEO of Ocean Conservancy. “Through our annual International Coastal Cleanup, where volunteers not only collect trash from beaches and waterways around the world but also log every item in our global database, Ocean Conservancy has a long history of working with citizen scientists, and we look forward to applying the results of this expedition to global solutions.”

The Airbnb community values healthy travel, including the 64 percent of guests who chose Airbnb in 2018 because they value that it is an environmentally sustainable travel option* that makes the most of spare space in people's homes.

- Since August 2018, Airbnb has seen more than 5 million guests check in at eco-friendly listings on the platform**.
- 88 percent of Airbnb hosts around the world incorporate green practices into hosting, such as using green cleaning products, providing recycling, encouraging guests to use public transportation, and installing solar panels*.
- Guests on Airbnb are also exploring the variety of Experiences that both benefit the planet and introduce them to local experts and advocates in environmental sustainability, as the company has seen bookings for eco-friendly and sustainable Experiences increase by 196 percent over the past year**.

“Together with Ocean Conservancy, we are highlighting the problem of microplastics to encourage a global audience to give great thought to the consequences of how we live and take collective action,” said Chris Lehane, Senior Vice President of Global Policy and Communications of Airbnb. “While Airbnb is inherently more eco-friendly than other forms of travel given that people are using spaces already built, we need to continue to find ways for the platform to contribute to reducing the impact of humans on the environment. There is far more we need to do and will be looking to do as we go forward.”

The Antarctic Sabbatical follows the Italian Sabbatical, which was an urban regeneration project by Airbnb and Wonder Grottole that offered the opportunity for five volunteers to spend three months living in the historic town of Grottole in southern Italy to help revitalize a community that was facing extinction. The Sabbatical program is designed to inspire people to take advantage of earned time off to give back to the people and places around them for a life-changing experience.

To apply for the Antarctic Sabbatical, visit airbnb.com/sabbatical and complete the application form, terms apply.***

**Guest sentiment is based on nearly 12,000 responses to a voluntary survey sent to a sample of Airbnb guest accounts that had taken a trip to select countries in 2018. No payment or other incentive was provided in exchange for completing the survey.*

***Based on Airbnb internal data of year-over-year growth globally in guest arrivals to eco-friendly active listings (Eco-friendly listings are defined as the following spacetypes: 'Earthhouse', 'Yurt', 'Treehouse', 'Tent', 'Nature Lodge', 'Cabin') and Experiences bookings, comparing August 1, 2018 to August 1, 2019.*

****Before applying, carefully read the selection terms available on the website. Candidates must be over 18, available to travel to Chile and Antarctica for a month from November to December 2019 to conduct volunteer work as citizen scientists and be able to speak conversational English. The final selection of five citizen scientists will be announced on October 30. The sabbatical is open to residents in the following countries and regions: Argentina, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Dubai, France, Germany, Ireland, India, Italy, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, and US.*

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About Airbnb

Founded in 2008, Airbnb's mission is to create a world where people can belong through healthy travel that is local, authentic, diverse, inclusive and sustainable. Airbnb uniquely leverages technology to economically empower millions of people around the world to unlock and monetize their spaces, passions and talents and become hospitality entrepreneurs. Airbnb's accommodation marketplace provides access to 7 million unique places to stay in more than 100,000 cities and 191 countries and regions. With Experiences, Airbnb offers unprecedented access to local communities and interests through 40,000 unique, handcrafted activities run by hosts across 1,000+ cities around the world. Airbnb's people-to-people platform benefits all our stakeholders, including hosts, guests, employees and the communities in which we operate.

About Ocean Conservancy

Ocean Conservancy is working to protect the ocean from today's greatest global challenges. Together with their partners, they create science-based solutions for a healthy ocean and the wildlife and communities that depend on it.

About Antarctic Scientist Kirstie Jones-Williams

Antarctic Scientist Kirstie Jones-Williams specializes in investigating the impact of microplastics on polar marine zooplankton. She is earning her PhD in Biological Sciences at the University of Exeter in the UK, funded by the NERC GW4+ DTP training program.