Summer placement in the Maltese Archipelago

Gwyneth Tanti

2012/2013

I spent my summer placement in my own beautiful country, Malta. Being surrounded by the sea all my life, I have always been fascinated by the marine environment. Malta is known for its history, food and culture, not to mention its beaches, sea and diving sites. I choose this MSc course specifically to learn the right skills which I can eventually put into practice while working in the Maltese Islands, especially since the need for more research, management and conservation there is essential.

I was based at the University of Malta, where I quantified the socio-economic impact of jellyfish blooms on tourism. The project is quite new and unusual and I thought it would be quite challenging to work on. The University of Malta was very accommodating, together with my tutor who was very supportive. As part of my project I collaborated with the local IOI-MOC Spot the Jellyfish initiative, which is associated with the University of Malta, and uses a citizen science approach to collect data. From them I obtained the latest updates on jellyfish aggregations around the islands. The media were very interested in my project and I was interviewed for the local news (http://tvm.com.mt/news/2013/07/less-jellyfish-heading-toward-malta-study/).
One wonderful thing about my project was that during the first month I was out in the field the whole time, enjoying the weather and stunning beaches around Malta, Gozo and Comino. During that time I conducted 300 questionnaires with tourists, which gave me the opportunity to meet loads of people with different thoughts and ideas about the environment! The subsequent analysis of this data gave me the opportunity to put into practice some of the skills I learned throughout my MSc.

The questionnaire I used was created by the Med-JellyRisk initiative, and they also provided me with T-shirts of their logo to give to all my participants. The same project is also being conducted in Spain, Tunis and Italy and its results will be published in the near future.

The summer placement was definitely one of the highlights of my MSc! Having the opportunity to work with an institution and put into practice what I have learnt throughout my experience in York was very rewarding.