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A new way to test drive a volunteer vacation

Sampler Days give participants a taste of a volunteer vacations in just one day.

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Photo: [sulix/sxc.com](#)

Want to get a taste of [voluntourism](#) without having to give up your entire vacation to do it? You've probably heard by now about voluntourism — volunteer vacations for tourists that let folks spend their holidays rebuilding trails or surveying wildlife in parks and conservation areas around the world. Packages generally include meals, simple lodging, spectacular views and an amazing opportunity to be part of a program to preserve and protect the natural world.

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What a great idea, right? Except that most of these vacation packages require a one- to two-week commitment at minimum. That may be more time than some folks can dedicate to a volunteer project. So it's precisely for this reason that one tour company, Biosphere Expeditions, has launched a new series of volunteer vacations that can be "sampled" in just one day.

Biosphere Expeditions "[Sampler Days](#)" have been a hit in Europe for the past few years, so the group is bringing them to U.S. parks for 2012. Sampler Days will give folks the chance to be part of a small team of volunteers and conservationists while learning techniques used in wildlife conservation research and data collection. Volunteers will

learn how to identify plants and animals, interpret animal tracks, use telemetry equipment, and even set up wildlife camera traps.

Sounds like a full day!

Here's the lineup of U.S. Sampler Day opportunities coming up:

- Minnewaska State Park in New York: May 20, 2012
- Lory State Park in Colorado: May 27, 2012
- Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks in California: Fall 2012 — date to be announced

announced.

Check out the website for an [overview](#) and [availability info](#) for each Sampler Day opportunity.