

Madagascar Marine Conservation & Diving

Dive in some of the least explored marine sites in the world, helping further the research and protection of these pristine ecosystems and work towards a sustainable environment in Madagascar.

Escape to Madagascar – the magical island which is home to some of the world's most spectacular and least explored dive sites. The crystal clear waters host a dazzling array of pristine marine habitats and support a huge diversity and abundance of marine creatures.

The vivid multi-coloured corals and luxuriant sea grass beds provide rich feeding grounds for an extraordinary array of colourful reef fish, rays, sea urchins, anemones, octopus and even sea turtles, while barracuda, sharks, dolphins, migrating whales and shoals of pelagics cruise the deep blue waters offshore. You can explore this exquisite, untarnished underwater world as you learn to dive off the island of Nosy Be. Meaning 'Big Island' in Malagasy, this location certainly lives up to its name.

You will discover and chart extensive areas of pristine coral, record healthy populations of fish and coral cover, and learn to identify a wide range of intertidal creatures from tiny hermit crabs to sparkling sea anemones. On shore you will explore the lush mangrove forests, the unique ecosystems which straddle the land and the ocean. You'll learn how artisanal fishing communities live and utilise the rich marine resources and about which groups of marine organisms are being harvested sustainably and which are being over exploited or hunted to extinction.

Your days will be eventful; the work will be challenging, rewarding and fun. Your discoveries will be of huge benefit to the conservation of these fabulous coral reefs and you will gain immense satisfaction from knowing that you have helped protect these precious natural resources for future generations.

The results from your investigations will supply vital information on the Madagascan coastline to enable the sustainable management of natural resources in the region and the protection of the marine wildlife.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- PADI dive training and qualifications available
- Dive in some of the world's best dive sites
- Make lifelong friends and return with incredible stories, photos and memories

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- Intermediate level of English

FAST FACTS

Location	Madagascar
Activities	Diving regularly (weather permitting) Locating, mapping and studying the coral reefs

	Underwater visual censuses of reef and commercial fish Assessment of algal and coral cover Record observations of the feeding habits and behaviour patterns of a range of marine life Line intercept transects for benthic life and indicator invertebrate species Note any indication of the impact of the marine-curio trade on endangered marine invertebrates
Transport	Airport pickup every Monday. Alternative start dates possible, additional £35 applies for pickup, please speak to an adviser Transfer to town centre and beach camp from Nosy Be Airport on first and third Monday of the month
Accommodation	Communal mixed sex bandas

WHAT DOES THE PROJECT DO?

An Exotic Island Paradise

165 million years of isolation have created a globally important biodiversity treasure with over 80% of species endemic to this island paradise. Frontier Madagascar's conservation project is located on the island of Nosy Be in the northwest Mozambique Channel. Characterised by shallow continental shelf waters, the mangrove and coral reef ecosystems are home to a diverse array of associated fauna and flora and home to many charismatic and unique marine mega and micro fauna.

Population growth and removal of foreign aid has led to chronic stress on these coastal zones as a result of socio economic anthropogenic pressures. Increased deforestation causes sedimentation to the reefs and the cutting down of mangroves for wood and building materials has removed many precious nursery areas for coral reef fauna.

The Malagasy government is now working with international conservation and aid agencies to halt this destruction and save the island's invaluable biodiversity and Frontier volunteers are an integral part of this effort.

Record Marine Biodiversity

Through SCUBA and snorkel surveys you will map coral, identify reef fish and invertebrates, study abundance of indicator fish species and possibly sight whale sharks. Diving under the supervision of a professional dive officer, you will become confident and comfortable underwater. Your results will help to evaluate the biodiversity of these waters and formulate future management plans.

Other activities include surveying mangroves, a vital buffer against storm surges caused by cyclones and an important part of the coastal ecosystem. If you are only able to join the project for 2 or 3 weeks, your involvement in the surveys and conservation work will be limited.

Malagasy Culture & Communities

Working alongside the Malagasy people will give you an insight into their extraordinary culture. You

may even be invited to some of their ceremonies, such as local weddings or the Donia street festival. Community work includes environmental awareness days in local schools and villages to explain Frontier's work and promote conserving the environment. The data from your investigations will supply vital information on the coastline for the Madagascar national programme.

WHAT WILL I BE DOING?

The marine research and conservation programme is run in association with L'Institut Halieutique et des Sciences Marine, with whom Frontier has been in partnership since 2000. This research and conservation project aims to provide the local communities, stakeholders and government bodies with the information they need to design and implement management plans for the future protection of this pristine marine ecosystem.

To gather the data needed you will undertake diving surveys and snorkel surveys (weather permitting), mangrove transects and interviews, with one day off each week. If you need dive training, we will train you up on the Frontier camp at the start of the project. Your activities will involve locating and mapping the extensive, pristine coral reefs and studying the various communities existing on them. The number of dives completed each week on the project depends on the quarterly science plan and itinerary as set by the Frontier field staff.

You'll also explore the important mangrove forests and record the rich variety of organisms living there and in the other intertidal zones. Whilst diving you will discover dense seagrass beds, a rich source of nutrients for the marine communities. You will deploy a wide range of newly learned research skills and scientific techniques, including: underwater visual census of reef and commercial fish such as trigger fish and parrot fish, assessment of algal and coral cover to determine the extent of coral bleaching and damage and line intercept transects for benthic life and indicator invertebrate species such as nudibranchs. You may even get to study the impact of potentially destructive fishing methods on the corals reefs, study the effects of global warming on marine communities or note any indication of the impact of the marine-curio trade on endangered marine invertebrates.

Whilst diving and snorkelling, you'll see an extraordinary array of animals, from colourful reef fish species to turtles, sea cucumbers to cushion stars and spiny urchins to octopuses. By the end of your project you will be capable of identifying a wide range of colourful and patterned reef organisms, as well as being an experienced and competent diver. Although the work is intense and challenging you'll get immense satisfaction from having made a valuable contribution to the conservation of this marine environment. Volunteers who join the project for less than 4 weeks will not be able to participate in the full range of project activities and surveys, but will still be able to make a valuable contribution to the work. You will return home with vast numbers of photos, lots of new friends, a wealth of fascinating stories and extraordinary memories.

You'll find your team to be a fun, dynamic mix of ages and experiences with members who all share a passion about travelling in developing countries and conserving nature. Your staff will be a friendly and welcoming group who are highly experienced in their research field and many of whom will have been Frontier volunteers at an earlier stage in their career.

Sample Itinerary*

0630: Mangrove bird survey

0700: Breakfast! - possibly warm bread, cebada (rice porridge), or sandwiches

0730: On the boat for survey diving or dive training

1200: Lunch time: beans with veg and rice (and soy sauce!)

1330: Beach clean

1500: Snorkel search for invertebrates or reef clean at the local reef

1630: Revision, presentation or quiz time

1800: Dinner time - time to review the days activities and relax with a hearty meal of rice and beans!

**This itinerary should only be considered as an example of the kind of activities and timescales to expect. Actual itineraries may vary depending on the season and the requirements of the project.*

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I ARRIVE?

Volunteers arriving weekly on a Monday will be welcomed by a Frontier representative at Nosy Be airport. From here it's a short taxi or minibus ride from the airport to the centre of the vibrant town of Hellville. If you arrive before noon, you will transfer to your project site and be introduced to the Frontier-Madagascar programme on the same day. If you arrive later in the day, you will stay overnight at the Frontier volunteer house in town and transfer to your project site the following day.

You will meet the staff and receive some initial briefings, including an introduction to the science programme and techniques used as well as health and safety lectures, so make sure that your medical kit is complete and that you have read your safety and medical briefs. All dive trainees will complete their dive theory during their time on camp. The transfer from Hellville to the Frontier camp is by small, wooden boats and depending on the weather both you and your kit will get wet, so make sure you have sufficient dry bags to waterproof all your belongings and something to waterproof yourself!

At the end of your stay we will transfer those of you who are on the monthly programme back to Hellville from the camp in time for you to head back home or continue on your independent travels. If you are joining for less than 4 weeks you will make your own arrangements to return to Hellville at the end of your stay, from where you can continue your own independent travel or return home.

Independent travellers arriving on dates other than weekly on a Monday can arrange a separate airport collection at an extra cost of US\$60 by contacting the camp staff.

WHERE WILL I BE STAYING?

Check out our Camp Tour video!

During the project you'll live in the beach camp in the village of Ambalahonko on the island of Nosy Be alongside other Frontier volunteers and staff. We aim to provide you with a unique and memorable living experience. The Frontier camp was constructed by Frontier volunteers working with local craftsmen, using traditional building techniques and locally sourced environment-friendly, building materials. The camp, which is situated in a clearing on the beach, has been designed to blend harmoniously with the surrounding landscape. Camp life is very simple, unsophisticated and fun.

You will be staying in simple communal bandas, local style dwellings, your "shower" will be a jug or a bucket of water and you cook over an open campfire, so prepare for the basic, virtually footprintless, unencumbered lifestyle! On occasions you may have to journey further to reach a remote dive site, then you will stay o a "satellite camp", basically a mosquito net pitched on a distant beach.

FRONTIER CAMP LIFE

Check out our video on [Frontier Gap Year TV](#) from Frontier-Madagascar, showing the volunteer life on this beautiful island.

WHAT WILL I BE EATING?

Food on camp is simple and nutritious and consists largely of locally sourced fresh vegetables and fruit, rice, beans and noodles, all of which are purchased from nearby communities, thereby helping to support the local economy. Luxuries such as chocolate, peanut butter and drinking chocolate are only available in the main town, so make sure you stock up before heading to your field camp.

Part of your role on camp will be to help with the cooking. Creating spectacular meals over an open campfire or baking bread in the campfire oven will become second nature, so get your cookbooks out now and start thinking up recipes! The local villagers sell homemade delicacies every day just outside camp, including banana macari, fresh bread, meat and veggie sambos. The locals also put on dinners once a week to allow you to integrate with the village and sample their food.

COSTS

1 week	US\$ 1,645
2 weeks	US\$ 1,995
3 weeks	US\$ 2,345
4 weeks	US\$ 2,595
5 weeks	US\$ 2,995
6 weeks	US\$ 3,295
7 weeks	US\$ 3,545
8 weeks	US\$ 3,845
10 weeks	US\$ 4,395
20 weeks	US\$ 6,495
Extra week	US\$ 445
Christmas Week	US\$ 445

PADI Open Water and Advanced Open Water training US\$1,156 PADI Advanced Open Water training US\$561 (at least PADI Advanced Open Water training necessary for marine surveying)

DEPARTURE DATES

Every Monday of the month

Ideally flights to Madagascar and connections to Nosy Be (Fascene) should be arranged for this arrival date.

DURATION

You can join this project for a minimum of 1 week

This project is available throughout the Christmas period

CHRISTMAS OFFER

This project is available for the special price of US\$425 per week over the Christmas period. Placements starting on the 24th or 31st of December 2018 are eligible for this price, subject to availability. Please apply using the orange button below and then tell your volunteer advisor that you wish to take part over Christmas.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Before you go

- Pre-departure support
- Travel & medical advice & documentation
- Equipment advice
- Discounted medical kit
- Free Frontier t-shirt
- UK residential briefing weekend including food, accommodation and training (extra cost applies)

In-country

Food

- Accommodation
- Airport pickup (for first Monday of the month arrivals). Alternative start dates possible, additional US\$60 applies for pickup, please speak to an adviser
- Transfer to town centre and beach camp from Nossi Be Airport on first Monday of the month. Alternative start dates available
- Local orientation and training
- Dive training PADI Open Water (2 week+) available at extra cost US\$595
- Dive training PADI Advanced Open Water (4 weeks+) available at extra cost US\$561
- In-country emergency support
- 24-hour international HQ back-up
- Dive training courses run monthly starting on the first Monday of the month. Dive training to PADI Open Water or PADI Advanced Open Water (depending on the duration of your stay) price includes PIC cards, PADI membership and use of Frontier project equipment and diving equipment, including tanks, regs, BCDs, weights, compressor etc
- Discounted further dive courses: PADI Emergency First Response (US\$221), PADI Rescue Diver (US\$595), and PADI Divemaster (US\$1,275) qualifications

AIRPORT INFORMATION

Nearest airport(s): Nossi-Be (NOS)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Call us on 020 7613 2422 (UK) / 1 949 336 8178 (US)

Mail us on info@frontier.ac.uk

Check out our social media here:

Project details were correct at the time this document was generated. Price, dates and other details are subject to change. Please see our website for current details for this project.