

Madagascar Wildlife Conservation Adventure

Course Credit Internship - Frontier

Discover, monitor and assess the huge variety of Madagascar's exotic and rare species as you trek through remote regions of this hugely exciting island with Frontier-Madagascar.

A multitude of Frontier volunteers and interns are university or college students undertaking academic study. Why not make the most of your time abroad by adding volunteer experience to your resume as well as gaining academic credit in your field of study? This internship will give you the opportunity to gain relevant work experience that will not only distinguish you viz a viz prospective employers but will also save you time and money; after all, a minimum of 4 weeks spent volunteering during your summer vacation works out a lot cheaper than another semester at college!

So how does it work? Volunteers can arrange with their academic institution to gain transferable course credit by participating in our field programmes. Both our research team in our London headquarters and overseas field staff will liaise with your academic course supervisors on your behalf to ensure that your participation contributes to your academic performance and confers course credits. Further to this, we are able to sign supporting documentation, verify your participation and provide mentoring and in country support. To sum up, Frontier will be there for you every step of the way!

The magical Island of Madagascar is famous for its bizarre assemblage of wildlife, its dramatic landscapes and its unique and varied ecosystems. No other island or place on earth boasts such a combination of species richness and endemism! For example, every native terrestrial mammal species on this huge island is found nowhere else on earth! Most famous of all of its inhabitants though are the lemurs, primitive prosimians, whose name, derived from the Roman *Lemures*, meaning 'spirits of the dead' alludes to the country's ancient cultural traditions.

There are currently 103 recognised lemur species on the island, all of which are believed to have evolved from a single colonising ancestor who reached isolated Madagascar some 50 million years ago. Sadly however, recent assessments made by the IUCN now show that lemurs are now the most endangered group of vertebrates in the world, with 94 species being classified as threatened with extinction. However, lemurs are not the only group of animals in need of help! The amphibian fauna of Madagascar is considered to be one of the greatest on earth, with 238 recognised species and another 182 candidate species currently awaiting classification. Madagascar has sadly already lost over 90% of its original forest cover though and this has put increased pressure on all of the endangered species who live here.

Madagascar is also the centre of diversity for chameleons, with almost half of this old world fauna being found exclusively on the island, including both the largest and smallest species in the world. In Madagascar, there are weird, unique and wonderful forms of life everywhere that you look and the more you discover about each of them, the more amazing they become. This sentiment was summed up perfectly by the 18th century French doctor and explorer, Joseph Philibert Commerson, in a letter to his tutor in Paris:

"Of Madagascar I can announce to naturalists that this is truly their promised land. Here nature seems to have created a special sanctuary whither she seems to have withdrawn to experiment with designs different from any she has created elsewhere. At every step, one meets more remarkable and marvellous forms of life"

Despite these tantalising early accounts, Madagascar is still an island shrouded in mystery and remains relatively un-studied to this day. Myths and legends abound in Madagascar and remain deeply embedded in the collective imagination, adding to the sense of magic surrounding the island.

So journey with us to our current location in Northern Madagascar, an area which represents a transitional habitat between the floral communities of both the East and West, an area renowned for its high species diversity and high levels of endemism, one of the most threatened forest habitats in Madagascar - the seasonal humid forests of the Sambirano biome.

The Frontier-Madagascar wildlife conservation project is currently based on the 'scented island' of Nosy Be, famous for its vanilla, ylang-ylang and mangoes. Whilst on the wildlife conservation project you'll discover a huge variety of Madagascar's exotic species, as you trek through rugged and remote regions of this hugely exciting island. Working alongside other dedicated volunteers, you'll help to monitor the distribution and abundance of many groups of animals and help assess how they are responding to human induced stress factors such as deforestation, habitat fragmentation and other forms of anthropogenic disturbance.

On this project you will directly contribute to important research, aiming to inform local government about how to manage the remaining forests and conserve their invaluable natural assets. You will learn an array of surveying techniques and have a chance to contribute to the local community through our education outreach days. But of course it is not all work and after a hard days trekking and exploration you can always take advantage of the camp's beach front location and relax on the golden beaches, snorkel in the crystal clear waters or play football against the local village!

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- We will tailor your internship to fulfill university/college requirements for independent study or course credit for your field of study
- 24/7 supervision and mentoring
- Direct liaison between your mentor and university or college tutor
- Your mentor can also provide a college reference at the end of your internship
- Help to monitor & conserve coral reefs and observe rare African marine wildlife
- Work on data from some of the world's best dive sites
- Extend your experience of tropical marine and coastal zone conservation field work

It is possible to gain academic credit in the following fields of study:

- Biological Sciences
- Coaching
- Coral Reef Conservation
- Community Health
- Conservation Biology
- Construction
- Ecology
- Ecosystem Management
- Healthcare
- Health Education
- Journalism

- Languages
- Marine Biology
- Marine Mammal Conservation
- Medical Placements
- Teaching
- Tropical Forest Conservation
- Tropical Wildlife Conservation
- Wildlife Management

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- Intermediate level of English
- Introduction to your course supervisor

FAST FACTS

Location	Madagascar Discovering rare Madagascan wildlife
Activities	Assessing the biodiversity Compiling species lists Setting up trapsites Leaf-litter surveys Mapping of vegetation Assessing human disturbance Recording how local communities use their precious natural resources Beach R &R and snorkelling at the end of your trip
Transport	Airport pickup weekly on a Monday. Alternative start dates possible, additional £50 applies for pickup, please speak to an adviser Transfer to town centre and beach camp from Nosy Be Airport weekly on a Monday
Accommodation	Communal beach camp

WHAT DOES THE PROJECT DO?

Help conserve species found nowhere else on earth

The project aims are to contribute to the current understanding of the local environment and help monitor the spectacular array of wildlife found here. Madagascar has been isolated for over 84 million years, creating a biodiversity resource of global significance, with over 80% of species found nowhere else on earth! Nosy Be's fauna includes three species of lemur, one of which, the diminutive mouse lemur (*Microcebus*), is the smallest primate on earth. Reptiles include rare turtles, snakes, geckos including the superbly camouflaged leaf-tailed gecko's (*Uroplatus*), skinks and an array of chameleons.

There is spectacular bird life on the island, with the highest levels of endemism of any similar sized area in the world, as well as some elusive tenrecs – a group of small mammals that are incredibly diverse, filling niches in aquatic, terrestrial, arboreal and fossorial environments and resembling everything from otters to hedgehogs.

Desertification & hunting

Madagascar's human population has doubled since 1960, leading to increased deforestation and overgrazing, which in turn has caused massive soil erosion and desertification. Only one tenth of the original forests remain and this situation is rapidly deteriorating as the human population continues to grow. The forests are cut down to provide nutrients and land for agriculture, as well as being used as hunting grounds in the more remote and poor communities.

Empower Malagasy communities

You will be assessing the local flora and fauna of the region through biodiversity surveys of mammals, birds, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians, with the aim of informing and educating the local government and communities. It is our goal to leave a lasting impact in the region and to help the local communities appreciate and conserve their local environment and avoid the pitfalls of over exploitation. You will interact with the community providing environmental education days. This will enable you to evaluate the impact of the human population on the wildlife and help to develop ideas allowing the community to lead more sustainable lifestyles.

WHAT WILL I BE DOING?

The main aims of the programme are to assess the biodiversity in this little studied area and compare different habitat types and the effects of human disturbance, which may take several forms. We hope to gain insights into how each species or family of animals is responding to human induced habitat modification and other anthropogenic stresses. It is our aim to discover which species are able to adapt and cope with human interaction and which species may be intolerant to any form of disturbance. By helping us to find out which species are most vulnerable to human disturbance, we can help design specific conservation action plans for better conservation management in the future and inform the local entities responsible for managing the forests.

Our current projects involve carrying out extensive surveys of the local mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians that exist in the surrounding forests. These surveys are conducted in a variety of habitat types, ranging from primary forest to plantation type habitats along a gradient of human disturbance. Our survey techniques range from setting up canopy or pitfall traps, active searches during both the day and night and behavioural surveys to collecting morphometric data on chameleons and snakes and learning how to record birds by identifying their calls. Madagascar is also one of the few tropical countries where snakes are relatively harmless and handling techniques can normally be honed without the risk of serious envenomation. In addition, we will be doing mapping of vegetation, assessing disturbance and resource use in the area to build up an accurate picture. For more details on our specific projects and methods, as well as our results so far, please see our most recent science report.

If this is your first time doing conservation work, don't worry! It will only take a short while for you to feel totally at home on camp and confident with the science work. Although the work is intense you'll find that living in such a beautiful and inaccessible environment alongside friends who share your passion for conservation will be the experience of a lifetime!

You'll find your team to be a fun, dynamic mix of ages, usually between 18 and 25, although no age limit applies, and experiences, with members who all share a passion about travelling in developing countries and saving endangered life. Your staff will be young, friendly individuals who are highly experienced in their field and many may have volunteered on a Frontier project earlier in their career.

Sample Itinerary*

06:00 - breakfast; bread, sandwiches or cebada

06:30 - bird survey

08:30 - active search for reptiles/amphibians or lemur survey

11:00 - butterfly survey

12:30 - lunch: rice and beans!

13:30 - active search for reptiles/amphibians or lemur survey

16:00 - revision or presentations

18:00 - dinner: rice and beans, or option to eat out in the village

19:00 - night walk - active search for amphibians/reptiles

**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 staff and receive some initial project briefings, including an introduction to the work programme and to the field research techniques used, as well as being given health and safety lectures, so make sure your medical kit is complete and start reading your safety and medical guides now.

You will be transferred back to the town of Nosy Be at the end of your project from where you can reach the airport or start your onward independent travel. Independent travellers arriving on dates other than weekly on a Monday can arrange a separate airport collection at an extra cost of US\$85 by contacting your volunteer advisor.

WHERE WILL I BE STAYING?

During the project you'll trek each day from the main campsite on the beach at Nosy Be, along with other Frontier volunteers and staff, to distant and remote sites in the forest to conduct the field work. We aim to provide you with a unique and memorable living experience. The Frontier field camps are designed to blend in with the surrounding natural environments. They consist of a collection of tents and shelters sometimes incorporating simple local dwellings constructed by Frontier volunteers working with local staff, using traditional building techniques and locally sourced materials. Your beach camp will make no permanent or intrusive impact on the environment and will provide you with a special home during your stay.

Life on camp is simple and fun. We believe that part of the excitement of journeying to a foreign country comes from immersing yourself with the local communities and living at one with nature. In your beach-camp your "shower" may consist of a river-pool, jug or bucket of water or wash in the sea and you will be cooking over an open fire: so prepare yourself for the simple, low footprint, unencumbered lifestyle! When you are trekking away from the base camp you may stay on a "satellite camp" which may consist of a mosquito net pitched in a remote clearing. You will help run camp from day-to-day, taking turns to cook, collect firewood, purify water, and other essential camp maintenance duties.

At the end of your period of field work you will enjoy a few days of well deserved rest and relaxation with swimming and snorkelling in the fabulous crystal clear offshore waters.

Check out our Camp Tour video!

WHAT WILL I BE EATING?

Camp food is basic and nutritious and consists largely of rice, vegetables, beans and noodles, all of which are purchased locally in order to help support the local economy. Luxuries such as chocolate, peanut butter and drinking chocolate must be imported from the local town, so make sure you stock up before heading to the field! Part of your role on camp will be to help with the cooking, so get your cookbooks out now and start practising! Also, with luck you'll be invited to local feasts and festivals – a great way to meet locals and enjoy local culture.

COSTS

4 weeks	US\$ 2,345
5 weeks	US\$ 2,695
6 weeks	US\$ 2,945
7 weeks	US\$ 3,145
8 weeks	US\$ 3,395
9 weeks	US\$ 3,645
10 weeks	US\$ 3,845
12 weeks	US\$ 4,295
20 weeks	US\$ 5,795
Extra weeks	US\$ 395

DEPARTURE DATES

Every Monday throughout the year

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

DURATION

From 4 weeks

This project is available throughout the Christmas period

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Before you go

- Pre-departure support & documentation
- 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 weekly on a Monday. Alternative start date possible, additional US\$85 applies for pickup, please speak to an adviser
- Internal ground transfers & in-transit accommodation weekly on a Monday. Alternative start dates possible
- Local orientation & training
- In-country emergency support
- 24-hour international HQ back-up
- PADI scuba diving courses available extra cost applies (subject to availability)

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.