

Madagascar Turtle Monitoring & Conservation

Escape to Madagascar – the magical island which is home to some of the world's most spectacular and least explored dive sites and help protect this iconic species.

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 and the rest of the team snorkel off the island of Nosy Be. Meaning 'Big Island' in Malagasy this location certainly lives up to its name.

During the project, you will learn how to identify both Hawksbill and Green turtles, the two species that can be found in Nosy Be. These endangered animals are poorly studied in this part of the world and with your help, we will be able to build a better understanding of the populations that live on and around the island. With the data collected, you will be able to help develop conservation efforts around Madagascar and help build a brighter future for turtles around the world.

Your days will be eventful; the work will be demanding, rewarding and fun. Your discoveries will be of huge benefit to the conservation of these gentle animals and you will gain immense satisfaction from knowing that you have helped protect these precious creatures for future generations.

The results from your investigations will supply vital information on the behaviour, sex ratios, species and population structure of turtles on the Madagascan coastline to enable the sustainable management of natural resources in the region and the protection of these and many other endangered species.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Snorkel alongside turtles in their natural environment
- Take photos of these majestic creatures to enhance our database, identify and name the new individuals recorded!
- Make new friends and return with incredible stories, photos and memories

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- Intermediate level of English
- Underwater camera

FAST FACTS

Location	The Island of Nosy Be, Madagascar
Activities	Snorkelling regularly (weather permitting) Locating and photographing the turtles present around Nosy Be Record observations of their feeding habits and behaviour patterns Swim and snorkel out to observe the various coral reef communities Swim and snorkel to find reef & commercial fish Observe the feeding habits & behaviour of a range of marine life Discover the effects of global warming on marine communities Observe the impact of the marine-curio trade on endangered marine invertebrates
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	Beach camp

WHAT DOES THE PROJECT DO?

Madagascar is an extraordinary and exotic island paradise. 165 million years of isolation have created a globally important biodiversity treasure with over 80% of species endemic to the island. But an increasing population is having a devastating impact, causing deforestation and erosion; the red soil running into the seas has led to the sadly evocative name of "the bleeding island".

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. As turtles are very understudied and often ignored as a conservation priority, Frontier is dedicated to playing a major role in the area of Nosy Be by assessing the impact of human disturbance, climate change, commercial fishing, ocean plastic and other anthropogenic pressures on turtle populations. By collecting data on species, sex, location and behaviour and compare the changes over time with water temperature, environmental disturbance and resident population Frontier aims to push towards the creation of regional conservation efforts as well as the creation of more MPAs (marine protected areas).

Record Marine Biodiversity

Through snorkelling surveys, you will photograph turtles found at our study sites around Nosy Be. This will help us to record data such as their gender, age and overall health. Because of the unique patterning of their face plates, you will be able to help identify individuals that visit us on a regular basis. If you discover a newcomer, you may even get the chance to name it!

Malagasy Culture & Communities

Working alongside the Malagasy people will give you an insight into their extraordinary culture. You may even be introduced to some of their more exotic customs such as the 'Turning of the Bones' festival. Community work includes environmental education in local schools to explain Frontier's work, and interviewing local fishermen on their catches and opinions with regards to reef health. The

data from your investigations will supply vital information on the coastline for the Madagascan National Programme.

WHAT WILL I BE DOING?

To gather the data needed you will undertake snorkel surveys (weather permitting) and then analyse the photos that you've taken back on land, with one day off each week. If you want to dive we will train you up on the Frontier camp at the start of the project. The number of dives completed each week on the project depend on the quarterly science plan and itinerary as set by the Frontier field staff.

On the survey swims, you will also be able to help us record and video the turtle's behaviour. This will give us the opportunity to study the turtles and learn about their diet and movement around them in a non-invasive manner, while still giving you the chance to get close to these amazing creatures.

You will also conduct beach surveys seeking to find the location of nesting sites throughout the area. If any turtle nests are found, you will be able to help us protect them from predators by installing structures, made from natural and recycled resources that make it difficult to access the nest. Some beaches are heavily subjected to flow of debris and plastic carried in with the tide, reducing the chances that turtles will lay their eggs on the beach, therefore Frontier conducts weekly beach cleans in order to protect marine life and encourage environmentally friendly habits like recycling or reducing single-use plastic. While you may not find a turtle nest, beach cleans will enhance the probability that someone else will!

At Frontier, we are keen to get the communities from around our projects involved too. For our turtle project, you will be engaging with locals from neighbouring villages. This will help us to gain an understanding of their knowledge of the conservation issues surrounding turtles and help us to provide communication with information on turtles.

You'll also explore the luxuriant mangrove forests and record the rich variety of organisms living there and in the other intertidal zones. Whilst diving you will discover dense sea grass beds rich sources 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 will record observations of the feeding habits and behaviour patterns of a range of marine life. You may even get to study the impact of potentially destructive fishing methods on the coral's 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. 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 may 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.

For further information about Frontier marine conservation work please refer to the publications section of this website.

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 Helville. 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 conservation programme and techniques used, as well as health and safety lectures, so make sure your medical kit is complete and start reading your safety and medical briefs.

The transfer from Nosy Be to the Frontier beach camp is by the local village boat 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! It is worth having suntan lotion at the ready as the boat trip can be in the midday sun.

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.

At the end of your stay we will transfer those of you who are on the monthly programme back to Nosy Be 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 Nosy Be from where you can continue your own independent travel or return to the UK.

WHERE WILL I BE STAYING?

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

You will be sleeping in simple communal bandas, local style dwellings and there are outdoor showers with water supplied from the local village. You cook over an open campfire, so prepare for the basic, virtually footprintless, unencumbered lifestyle!

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! Also, with luck you'll be invited to local feasts and festivals – a

great way to engage with local communities and discover local cuisine and cultures.

COSTS

1 week	US\$ 945
2 weeks	US\$ 1,295
3 weeks	US\$ 1,645
4 weeks	US\$ 2,045
5 weeks	US\$ 2,445
6 weeks	US\$ 2,745
7 weeks	US\$ 3,045
8 weeks	US\$ 3,395
10 weeks	US\$ 3,945
20 weeks	US\$ 6,795
Extra week	US\$ 345
Christmas week	US\$ 295

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 1 week

CHRISTMAS OFFER

This project is available for the special price of US\$255 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 & documentation
- Travel & medical advice & documentation
- Equipment advice

- Discounted medical kit
- Free Frontier t-shirt

In-country

- 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
- Vocational qualification diploma or certificate in Tropical Habitat Conservation available
- 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.