



## Diving advice

### FACTSHEET

Joining a ReefDoctor expedition in Madagascar means that you will be diving regularly during your stay. To participate in ReefDoctor dive surveys you must be a minimum of PADI Advanced Open Water Diver (or the equivalent with another agency). You will also need to make sure that you have a current diving medical, dive insurance and that you have the equipment you need (see our medical and insurance factsheets).

If you have not dived for some time consider taking a refresher. This involves visiting a swimming pool with an instructor and practising the core scuba diving skills and theory to refresh your memory. It's also a good way to try equipment you are thinking of buying, or checking that your own equipment is in good working order.

Refresher courses are available at most dive centres and clubs, but don't worry if you can't join one as we will conduct a refresher when you arrive.

Diving is a large part of life at ReefDoctor and we take it seriously. Ifaty is a remote location and so diving safety is paramount; there is no recompression chamber in Madagascar and it can take up to an hour to reach the nearest hospital, in Toliara.

ReefDoctor's diving is run under strict guidelines laid down by ReefDoctor and enforced by the Dive Officer and Boatmen. Our dives are completed in a conservative manner and we set a maximum depth limit of 30m (regardless of dive qualification or experience).

When you arrive at the ReefDoctor camp you will receive training and information for all of our dive and emergency evacuation procedures, and when that's complete you'll start to conduct underwater surveys.

You will be diving on a regular basis, usually at least one survey dive per day, five days a week – more, weather permitting. You'll have the opportunity to go on fun dives on Fridays giving you the chance to see some of the dive sites that don't feature in our survey dives. On Saturdays, our day off, we stop diving to give your body a chance to release built up nitrogen.

Diving in and around the Bay of Ranobe is stunning and there's always time to explore and see more of the local marine life. In the calm waters of the lagoon you'll see reef fishes and invertebrates including moray eels, mantis shrimp, octopus, cuttlefish and squid. On the exterior marine life broadens with the possibility of seeing turtles, sharks, napoleon wrasse, giant grouper and humpback whales (from August to November).

#### Training options

ReefDoctor teaches PADI courses and all Volunteer Research Assistants must be PADI Advanced Open Water or equivalent to participate in survey work so we complete the course when you arrive if you're not already certified.

All ReefDoctor dive training is provided FREE to Volunteer Research Assistants, however PADI's teaching regulations state that you must have the student materials required for the courses you wish take with us.

#### PADI Open Water

Unfortunately we do not have the facilities in Ifaty to teach the full Open Water course, but we can offer a referral course whereby you conduct the theory and pool training in your home country and complete a skills review and your open water dives with us in Madagascar. If you wish to take this option please arrive in Ifaty one week before the start of your volunteer placement.

**Bring with you:** Open Water student manual, PADI RDP and a certification (PIC) card.

#### PADI Advanced Open Water

The Advanced Open Water course is built in to our Volunteer Research Assistant training so don't worry if you don't already have it.

**Bring with you:** Adventures in Diving student manual, Deluxe Data Carrier, PADI RDP and a certification (PIC) card.

#### PADI Rescue Diver and EFR

From March 2007 Volunteer Research Assistants joining us for 12 weeks will have the opportunity to be certified as Rescue Divers, including the EFR course (First Aid and CPR).

**Bring with you:** Rescue Diver student manual, Diving Accident Management Work Slate, PADI RDP and a certification (PIC) card, and the EFR student manual and certification form (EFR-PIC).

## Dive equipment

It is important to make sure that you have the right dive equipment and that it is in good condition before you arrive in Madagascar. It is not possible to purchase dive equipment or spares in Madagascar so bring with you anything you might need and ensure that your equipment has been properly serviced.

While ReefDoctor does have some dive equipment available for volunteers you will need to bring some items yourself. When planning your trip let us know if you need us to help with equipment requirements and we can tell you what we can and can't help with.

If you are planning to buy your own equipment before joining us look at the advice below and visit the Dive advice links page on our website for more help on what and where to buy.

### All ReefDoctor divers need:

- Mask, snorkel and fins (ideally open-heel fins with booties)
- Wetsuit
- BCD
- Regulators and gauges (incl. air and depth)
- Weight belt (if you don't have integrated weights in your BCD)
- Dive knife
- Whistle
- Compass
- Dive watch / timer or dive computer
- Pocket DSMB (Delayed Surface Marker Buoy) for use at the surface
- PADI RDP (Recreational Dive Planner)
- Your log book and certification cards

### Mask, snorkel and fins

ReefDoctor has a selection of masks and snorkels, but ask that you bring your own. The kind you buy is down to your own personal preference but try a range to make sure you are happy with your final purchase.

We recommend open-heel fins with booties to protect your feet walking to and from the boat. We do have a small selection here but sizes are limited. If you have small feet, 5 / 38 / 7 or less (UK / European / US), bring your own fins to ensure that you get a good fit.

## Wetsuits

Your wetsuit depends on when you visit. The table below provides temperatures and wetsuit suggestions. If you feel the cold you may want to bring a thermal under-vest or opt for a thicker wetsuit. We also suggest that you bring a rash vest or light sweatshirt to wear on the boat after dives during the colder months.

Months	Season	Water temp. °C	Wetsuit
Dec - Feb	Summer	26 – 30+ (Ave. 28)	3mm shortie or steamer
Mar - May	Autumn	23 – 30 (Ave. 26)	3 – 5mm steamer
Jun - Aug	Winter	22 – 25 (Ave. 23)	5mm steamer
Sep - Nov	Spring	24 – 30 (Ave. 26)	3 – 5mm steamer

### BCDs and regulators

ReefDoctor has a range of BCDs and regulators if you do not have your own. If you are planning to use our equipment please check with us first to make sure we have the equipment and sizes you need available for your visit, we can then reserve it for you.

### Dive timer

A dive timer is an important piece of your equipment. It can be anything from a diving specific timer to a watch that can be used underwater or a dive computer. Watches suitable for underwater use do not have to be expensive. Please ensure that you bring one.

### Miscellaneous

All divers must have a dive knife, compass and, if possible, a DSMB (Delayed Surface Marker Buoy) that can be used at the surface to get attention. Also make sure you have a whistle on your BCD (if you borrow one from us it will have one) and a weight belt or pouches (if you borrow a BCD from us you will need a weight belt).

Don't forget to bring your log book, certification cards and PADI RDP – you need to plan your dives (we offer revision if you haven't used an RDP for a while).

*Please note that if you are planning to fly immediately after leaving us, you will need to stop diving for at least 24 hours before your flight*