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The Reef Doctor EcoDiver Programme Guide

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An Introduction to the EcoDiver Programme



The ReefDoctor Eco-Diver Program has been designed for those who can only join us for a limited period of time. It is a great opportunity to learn to scuba dive, or if you are already dive trained, then utilise this skill in order to learn about one of the most extensive barrier reef systems in the world and to see marine research, management, conservation and community development in action.

As a ReefDoctor Eco-Diver you will be PADI dive trained, acquire coral reef underwater identification skills and gain first hand experience in the workings of a marine conservation NGO.

Waking up to the sandy beaches in front of our project site makes an idyllic lifestyle, as does watching the sun set over the lagoon each evening. The conditions aren't five star but living simply, next to a traditional Malagasy fishing community is an incredible life experience.

Expeditions run between January to December each year (expedition dates on page 16) for 3, 4 or 5 weeks, with spaces available for 6-8 people per expedition.

Both divers and none divers are welcome. If you have never dived before the Eco-Diver program includes PADI dive training to PADI Open Water and PADI Advanced Open Water levels. If you are already certified to PADI Advanced Open Water or above you can jump straight into the 'Eco-Diving'.

Who joins?



At ReefDoctor we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to volunteer. We take people from all walks of life and from all over the world, as long as they are over the age of **18**. All we ask is that you're reasonably fit and healthy; you'll need to have passed a diving medical before your arrival. (medical forms provided by ReefDoctor upon signing up for the programme).

No prior skills are required, just a general enthusiasm to learn more about the marine environment.

The Eco-Diver programme is suitable for a wide range of people including:

- Those who wish to learn how to dive.
- Those completing a gap year.
- Marine and environmental science undergraduate students who wish to gain practical field based experience during their vacation periods (though for these people joining the Research Assistant Programme may be more beneficial).
- Those who desire a diving holiday with a difference; knowing that your financial contribution not only goes towards your time here but also towards targeted conservation to help the local communities.

A good volunteer to staff ratio ensures that we are able to devote more time to you and allows you to get the maximum experience possible out of your stay.

EcoDiver Training

Upon arrival your initial training includes a short spell to get used to the life here. A background to Madagascar, its culture and customs, particularly the local fishing communities we work with. In addition, you will receive an orientation trip of the local village of Ifaty, and an introduction to the work of ReefDoctor and it's project site.

For those with no dive certification, your first week will be dedicated to PADI open water training. In week 2 you will start your PADI advanced training which will also take a week to complete. During this second week you will also start your science training (lectures and orientation, point out dives).

If you are already dive certified to PADI Advanced level (or equivalent) you can jump straight into the science training.

In general core science training is conducted over a 2-3 week period (2 weeks if you are only with us for a 3 week expedition), though ultimately your training is ongoing throughout your expedition.



Dive Training



PADI Open Water training schedule:

- Open Water Book Work/Knowledge Reviews (x 5), Quizzes (x 4) and 1 final exam
- Confined Water Dives (Hotel Nautilus or Bamboo Club Pool)
- Confined Water Dive (lagoon dive)
- Open Water Dives x 4



We hope to complete your open water in the first week though it can take longer as it does depend on how quickly you complete the skills, exams and open water dives alongside issues such as the weather, in-water visibility, number of volunteers, equipment issues etc.
The advanced course training will ideally start from the second week.

Dive Training

PADI Advanced Open Water Course training schedule:

- Adventures in Diving Book Work/Knowledge Reviews (x 5)
- Checkout Dive (If Open Water Diver certification not received at ReefDoctor)
- Naturalist Dive
- Peak Performance Buoyancy Dive
- Navigation Dive
- Search and Recovery Dive
- Deep Dive
- Proficiency Dive(s) (Proficiency before certification)

Those certified to advanced open water or above will only need to do some refresher dives (includes basic under water skill tests and our buoyancy test).



Science Training



EcoDivers will receive lectures on the following;
NB. the list below is a summary, further information on the training provided can be found in the EcoDiver programme training schedule provided upon application:

- Introduction to ReefDoctor's Marine Research, Conservation and Management Programmes.
- Introduction to Coral Reefs.
- Introduction to Scientific Diving research methods.
- Species Identification (ID).The EcoDiver programme trains you in the underwater identification of commercially important reef species and coral reef health indicator species (fish and invertebrates).

Marine species identification learning process commences following dive certification (or straight away for those already qualified). It begins on land (with computer and literature based learning) and, as your identification skills develop, you'll practise ID observation and recognition through orientation and point-out snorkels and scuba dives. After you have grasped your ID you'll undertake practice marine survey scuba dives (practice the actual survey techniques e.g. rolling out the transect tape, buoyancy control, swim technique, ID technique). Following this, you will perform mimic marine survey scuba dives (a full survey dive where collected data is verified) though this is highly dependent on the individual's progression, dive training and duration of expedition.

Following your training…….

• Eco-Dives; diving with newly acquired marine knowledge and advance your learning of coral reef systems under the guidance of our trained science staff. EcoDiver volunteers usually undertake regular diving (weather dependent). Night dives can also be arranged along with other specialty dives (e.g. deep dive) though these do come at an extra cost (please ask for details).



• The training of marine science and environmental undergraduate students (or any quick learners who wish to progress further in their marine science learning!) can be fast tracked to undertake ReefDoctor's coral reef surveys during their time with us (providing they pass our species identification tests).

• You will also have the opportunity to assist the ReefDoctor team in some of their core research, management and conservation projects such as;

- Monitoring and maintenance work in the coral nursery and reef transplants,
- Participate in local community aquaculture initiatives e.g. help maintain algal farms
- Fisheries catch monitoring alongside the local fisheries team.
- RD kids club with environmental education etc.

• Learn the local language through our weekly Malagasy classes (French classes also available weekly)

Further information to this can be found in the programme schedule provided upon application.

Daily Life



Our working week runs from Monday to Friday. Fun dives occur on Saturdays, and Sunday is a non diving day.

The working day can start early (between 5-7 am) because we are dependant on the tides for taking the dive boat out, typically diving occurs in the morning and then again in the afternoon. We break for lunch at noon, after which we take a break for the hottest time of the day. We start again at 1.30pm with land based project work or diving.



Our days finish at around 5pm. Dinner is at 6:00pm before the sun sets – a sight that'll have you running for your camera every night and then it's time to rest and relax. Some nights you'll want the early night but on others you might wander in to the village for music and dancing.

Diving, work, and play are our main mainstays. Our schedules have plenty of time for work, fun and relaxation. After all there is no point visiting such a unique place as Madagascar without taking some time to enjoy it!

At the weekends you are free to do as you wish; simply relax in the peaceful surroundings on site, go to Toliara for shopping, walk to the popular beach resort of Mangily, visit local parks or take a long weekend to go further afield in order to visit one of the national parks (park visits are an extra cost covered by volunteers).

Local Area



We work in the Bay of Ranobe, South West Madagascar. The bay is protected from the open ocean by an extensive fringing/barrier reef system creating a shallow lagoon, 28km long by 8km wide, containing a series of patch reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves. The ReefDoctor site is located on the periphery of Ifaty village in the south of the Bay, 27km north of the main provincial town of Toliara. This is a small and traditional Malagasy fishing village; there is no mains electricity or running water, and life there is very basic.



Behind Ifaty village is the spiny forest, considered one of the most endangered habitats worldwide. The flora of our region consists of dry weather plants such as cacti, shrubs, baobab trees, tamarind trees and the infamous octopus tree. The white sandy beach outside the ReefDoctor site stretches northwards for miles. After an hour's walk you'll reach the main tourist destination for the region, Mangily.



ReefDoctor Project Site

The ReefDoctor project site is made up of two sites both situated on a white sandy beach with beautiful views of the Bay of Ranobe. The first and main site is called the RD compound. The enclosed compound is made up of one main house, 8 brick bungalows, 8 volunteer interconnected single huts, a dormitory, kitchen area, dive shed and utility room for the dive compressor and generator. The main house/office is used as the main work area for all volunteers. A generator along with solar panels and a wind turbine provides electricity for the compressor, pumping water to the house and bungalows, lighting, charging appliances and computer/internet use.

Next door to this compound is the land of the University of Toliara. Here there are 3 interconnected single huts (to sleep 6 people in total) and 2 double huts ideal for couples. This is usually the main staff and intern accommodation.
Volunteers sleep in the huts in the compound or in the dormitory. All huts are made of local sourced materials built from wood, reeds and reed roof with cement floor. The dormitory hut has dividers for privacy and plenty of windows for staying cool. Showers are taken in two enclosed wood shower stalls using water from the well. There are two wood toilet stalls housing hygienic drop toilets. For an additional cost (£200 per month, £6.66 a day), volunteers may upgrade to one of the beach front brick bungalows complete with en suite shower and toilet.

All of our meals are lovingly cooked by our chef Victor who serve up a unique mix of Western/Malagasy cuisine, which consists of the staple Malagasy diet of rice and beans, fresh vegetables, fish, meat, and fruit. Coffee is brewed every morning along with hot water for tea and the local traditional rice tea is served with each meal. The kitchen area can be used by volunteers on weekends to cook their own meals if they wish or do some baking. Our drinking water is locally sourced and treated on site.


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Camp Safety

Ensuring your safety at ReefDoctor is our top priority. There have been no serious incidents at ReefDoctor during the 13 years it has been operating in Madagascar. Whilst our project site is in a semi-remote location, hospital care is readily available in Toliara which can be accessed within an hour. We focus heavily on accident prevention; providing safety information, training and advice to all volunteers and staff when they arrive.

We have conducted a full risk assessment of our Ifaty campsite and created rules and procedures designed to promote safety and good hygiene in all aspects of our daily life. Due to our semi-remote location we have easy access to the medical care available in Mangily and Toliara. We keep standard 1st aid and diving medical supplies on site and all of our staff are trained in the provision of emergency first aid and diving emergencies.

Due to our semi-remote location we have introduced a series of safety procedures designed to minimise risk at all times. All of our diving is run under the strict guidelines laid down by PADI International with additional rules and regulations created by us for operating in our area. All rules and regulations are enforced at all times by the dive officers and boat captains. A copy of our dive regulations is given to each person entering the ReefDoctor camp, and training in our emergency procedures is completed before working diving commences. All scuba regulators are serviced annually in the UK. Our dive tanks are inspected by qualified staff on site using the best visual inspection equipment available, we are the only NGO in Madagascar with this equipment. Oxygen and first aid equipment is taken on every dive with emergency drill practices conducted monthly for staff and volunteers. We keep a 75L and 15L oxygen cylinder on camp and have two 5L tanks for use on our dive boats.

ReefDoctor's main buildings and facilities are enclosed within a secure compound which is guarded at night by three local security personnel.

Working in a remote location means that we need to ensure that when help is needed we can contact the right people quickly. For communications we keep the following charged and ready for emergency use at all times:

- VHF radios, one base station in camp and one on each dive boat;
- Mobile phones, one in camp and one in each boat;
- Emergency 1st aid materials, (neck and leg braces, spine board, bandages etc.,).

For our emergency plan and evacuation procedures, we liaise with the Divers Alert Network (DAN) in Europe and South Africa. Our evacuation plan is reviewed monthly to ensure that information is correct and training is up-to-date. All volunteers and staff receive training on the plan on arrival.

Ifaty Seasons



Month	Season (according to European seasons)	Risk of Malaria	Average Temp. C Day	Average Temp. C Night
January	Summer (cyclone)	High	36	33
February	Summer (cyclone)	High	40	35
March	Summer	High	38	30
April	Autumn	Medium	35	28
May	Autumn	Medium	30	20
June	Winter	Low	26	17
July	Winter	Low	23	15
August	Winter	Low	23	15
September	Spring	Low	25	20
October	Spring	Low	25	25
November	Spring	Medium	30	28
December	Summer	Medium	32	28

Expedition start dates 2016

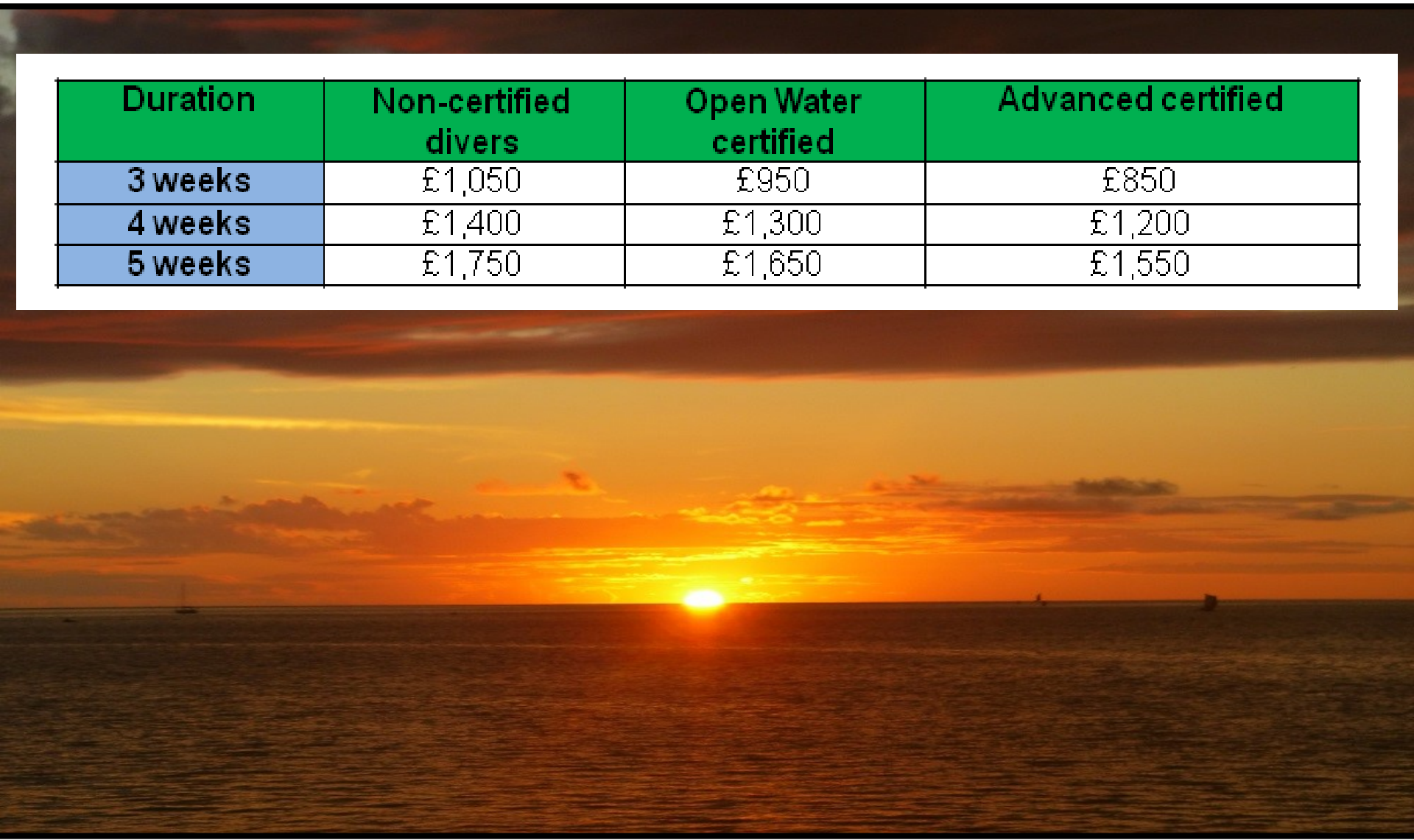
Unqualified divers	PADI Open Water and Advanced (or equivalent) qualified divers
10th Jan	18th Jan
1st March	8th March
1st May	8th May
7th June	14th June
7th July	14th July
1st Sept	8th Sept
10th Oct	18th Oct
7th Nov	14th Nov
7th Dec	14th Dec



N.B. These dates are when the program starts so you need to have arrived to our site ideally the day before. This means arriving to the capital Antananarivo 2 days before the start date.

Eco-Diver Programme/Expedition Fees

Duration	Non-certified divers	Open Water certified	Advanced certified
3 weeks	£1,050	£950	£850
4 weeks	£1,400	£1,300	£1,200
5 weeks	£1,750	£1,650	£1,550



Eco-Diver Programme/Expedition Fees

Services included in the Progamme and expedition Fees:

- Airport pick-up in Toliara and transport to the ReefDoctor site in Ifaty.
- Arrangement of hotel in the capital city Antananarivo, if required, includes free pick up by hotel from airport.
- All meals, Monday-Sunday.
- Filtered water, brewed local coffee and tea (bags) and access to gas cooking stove and oven
- Lodging: with bed sheets, pillows and mosquito net provided.
- Standard First-aid medical care.
- Electricity for charging cell phones, laptops, etc.
- Internet access on site.
- Dive training: PADI Open Water and Advanced dive certification included in the costs for all expeditions.
- Project equipment and educational materials: dive slates, paper, pens etc., all required for your working activities.
- Dive equipment, including: Buoyancy Control Device (BCD), full regulator set, weights and tanks.
- Occasional excursions to help some of our conservation partners in the area, such as HONCO (mangrove conservation and re-plantation).
- Science training: level of training will vary according to the expedition duration, dive certification and progression of the individual.
- Pre-departure support and pre-departure guides: advice on flights, equipment, Madagascar, medicals, vaccines, insurance etc.
- UK based support/communication throughout the expedition for the volunteers' friends and family.
- Fuel, equipment and staff (international and local) to make this all happen!

NB – You financial contribution not only goes to your living and work needs with us but also goes towards the other projects and local staff we employ to undertake the conservation work we do.

Eco-Diver Programme/Expedition Fees

Services NOT included in the programme and expedition fees:

- Round-trip airfare (flight ticket must be return ticket you cannot enter the country on a single flight ticket!)
- Visa (visa bought on arrival at Madagascar International airport)
- Hotel stay and food in the capital (and in Toliara if required) on arrival and departing from Madagascar.
- Taxi between hotel and airport in the capital for flight to Toliara.
- Diving medical Insurance.
- Travel insurance.
- Vaccines.
- Filling in the ReefDoctor standard recreational dive medicals (forms provided by us to be filled in by a medical professional which they can charge you to fill in so try your family doctor who should do this for free).
- PADI dive instruction manuals and PIC cards: all participants in the dive training courses **MUST** purchase their own manuals, as per PADI International Rulings May 2006, and bring these materials with you. PADI PIC-cards are required to process each level of all PADI courses we offer – for all volunteers doing these courses PIC cards cost of £30 (33 Euros) per course will be added to your expedition invoice.
- Basic dive gear - All volunteers must bring their own wetsuit, mask/snorkel, fins and booties, time piece and/or dive computer.
- Personal leisure activities and excursions (often groups of volunteers plan excursions to nearby national parks or other areas of interest).
- Anti-malaria drugs.
- Extra PADI dive courses (night dives, deep dive).

Further rundown of the additional costs will be provided upon application.

Why choose ReefDoctor?



- Up to 90% of your expedition contribution goes **directly** into our conservation work and the local economy.

- Our core staff are professionals in their respective fields, their knowledge and experience will be passed on to you throughout your expedition.

- Malagasy culture is vibrant and memorable. During your stay you'll experience it first hand; through getting to know Reef Doctor's local Malagasy staff members, visits to Ifaty village, visiting surrounding areas to participating in our other education, research and development projects.

- A ReefDoctor expedition attracts people from all walks of life and all over the world, you will make new friends with whom you will share memorable life experiences.

- Our work is part of a larger, global effort. It helps develop understanding of marine resource management in developing countries and contributes scientific information to a much wider conservation community.

- Our programmes are designed with the community at their heart; our work is directed at helping local communities develop and grow while conserving their culture and resources. A Reef Doctor expedition is all about making a difference and you'll be contributing to helping us fulfil our long term ecological and social objectives in the Bay of Ranobe.

- As a ReefDoctor volunteer you'll learn new skills, walk away with new experiences and a whole new level of scientific knowledge and ultimately you'll have contributed to helping protect threatened marine ecosystems and the future livelihoods of the local Vezo people.

To apply for the EcoDiver programme please visit our website

http://www.reefdoctor.org/reefdoctor-ecodiver

For further information or any questions:

- Email: volunteer@reefdoctor.org
- Speak directly someone from our UK headquarters:
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  +44 (0)1756 380 198
- Skype username: reefdoctor





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