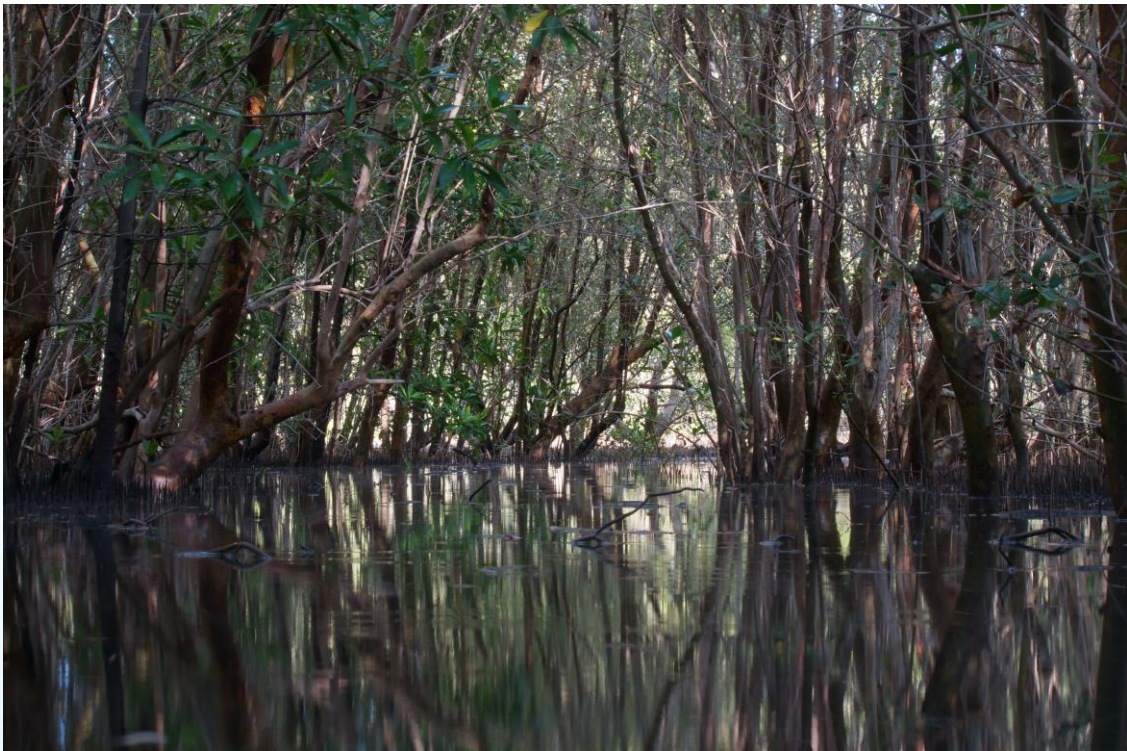




**REEFDOCTOR**  
CREATING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES



# **MANGROVE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME GUIDE**



## Introduction to the Mangrove Monitoring Volunteer Programme

Our mangrove volunteering programme is an opportunity to join the Reef Doctor Honko team, assisting in the development of our mangrove conservation programme and in the implementation of alternative livelihoods for local villages dependent on the wetland complex. The objective of this project is to provide communities with the tools, resources, and support to implement sustainable management of their resources and to secure livelihoods. This volunteering programme is aimed at people interested in coastal habitats, conservation, and social development who want to gain experience and knowledge in these fields.

As a mangrove volunteer you will contribute to mangrove research, conservation, and management at our Honko project site in Ambondrolava. Your work will help us improve our understanding of the dynamics and health of mangroves and associated coastal wetland habitats through data collection, such as flora and fauna monitoring and mapping.

Depending on the projects running during your stay, there may also be opportunities to participate in activities such as mangrove replanting and awareness-raising events. There will also be chance to contribute to the socioeconomic work of Reef Doctor Honko, such as developing educational or ecotourism materials, helping the local reed-weaving women's association, teaching English in the village, and participating in alternative livelihood programmes such as aquaculture and ecotourism.



We offer 1- to 3-month volunteering positions throughout the year. Space is limited to 2–4 people per month, so make sure to contact us in advance regarding availability. We can also provide PADI dive training (from PADI Open Water up to Rescue Diver level, and a range of speciality PADI dive courses) at an additional cost at our marine research base in Ifaty.



## Who Joins?

We recruit volunteers from all walks of life as long as they are over the age of 18. However, we do insist our volunteers are in reasonable physical fitness; most of the work comprises repetitive and strenuous activity walking through mangrove mud or across sandy dunes.

In addition, if you wish to do some dive training or recreational diving with us, you will need to have passed a diving medical before your arrival.

No prior skills are required, just a general enthusiasm to commit to becoming an integral member of our team. This programme is suitable for a wide range of people including:

- Those looking to contribute to conservation and social development on their travels.
- Those undertaking a gap year.
- Those who wish to pursue a career in ecology, conservation, and/or social development.
- Environmental science students who wish to gain practical field-based experience to complement their studies.
- Environmental science students who wish to develop and conduct a research project with us.







## Integration

Upon your arrival you will be welcomed by the Project Manager, who will support and guide you during your stay.

The team will provide you with basic Malagasy Vezo language and culture training.

Our Reef Doctor Honko team is small (5 to 6 people, mainly Malagasy nationals) but we work very closely together and will make you feel at home quickly! We also closely work and socialise with the larger, main Reef Doctor team in neighbouring Ifaty.

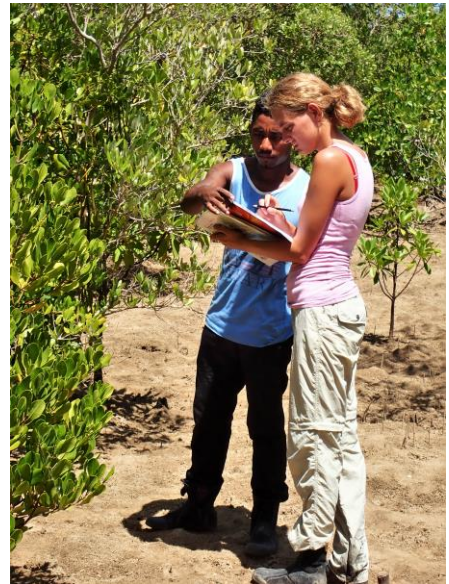




## Training

Volunteers will receive the following training:

- Introduction to our various research, conservation, and social development projects.
- Introduction to mangrove ecology and conservation.
- Mangrove species identification.
- Mangrove fish species identification.
- Theoretical and practical training on mangrove monitoring and mapping methods.
- Theoretical and practical training on GIS.
- General overview of coral reef biology, ecology, and conservation (at our marine research base in Ifaty).







## Following Your Core Training

Volunteers can expect to be involved in the following activities:

- Mangrove monitoring and data collection.
- Mangrove planting and nursery trials.
- Fish catch survey and identification of species present in the mangrove channel.
- Maintenance work in the plant nursery and planting terrestrial trees around site.
- Assist with taking care of the garden, beehives, and the project site in general.
- Develop material for outreach and educational programmes; posters/presentations/videos etc.
- Continuation of Vezo language training.
- Assist the women's association in developing new skills, marketing, and accounting.
- Visit Reef Doctor's aquaculture projects in the Bay of Ranobe, assist in a monthly sea cucumber sale.
- Help the team involve Reef Doctor Juniors in projects where possible and contribute to other education initiatives for local children.
- Assist in report writing at local, regional, and national level, as and when requested.
- Help create general project updates and work with the Communications Officer for dissemination on the website, newsletters, social networks etc.

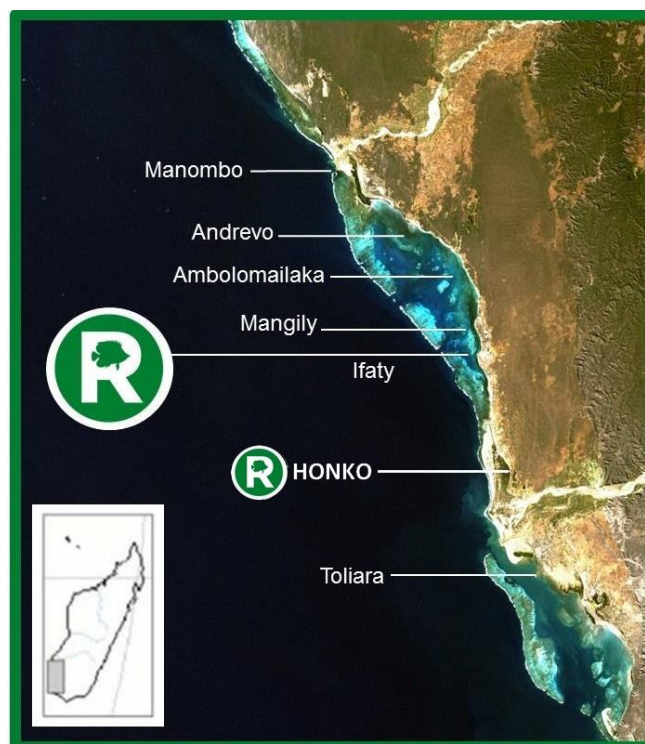




## Where We Work

We work in the Bay of Ranobe, South West Madagascar, a semi-enclosed lagoon extending from Morombe in the north to Toliara in the south. The bay is protected from the open ocean by an extensive fringing/barrier reef system creating a shallow lagoon, 32 km long and 8 km at its widest point. It consists of a diverse range of marine and coastal habitats including barrier reefs, patch reefs, reef flats, extensive seagrass beds, and mangroves. The coral reefs in this region form part of the world's largest barrier reef systems, the Toliara Barrier Reef Complex.

These ecosystems, however, are under enormous pressure from a variety of anthropogenic stressors such as over-exploitation, climate change, and sedimentation. Collectively, these stressors are causing widespread degradation to the marine habitats within the Bay of Ranobe and compromising resource availability for the local communities. As a volunteer at Reef Doctor Honko volunteer you will be helping collect data on the health and evolution of local wetlands. This data allows us to monitor the status of mangrove and wetland habitats, and associated resources and will be given to communities for them to manage their area efficiently.







The Reef Doctor Honko site is located in the village of Ambondrolava, 12 km north of Toliara, the main town in the region. Ambondrolava is a small village whose livelihood is based on the sale of vondro, a reed commonly used to build traditional Malagasy houses. We work with five villages living across the wetland: Belalanda, Belitsake, Tanambao, Ambondrolava, and Ambotsibotsike, each of them relying mainly on the mangrove for fishing, vondro, or timber wood.





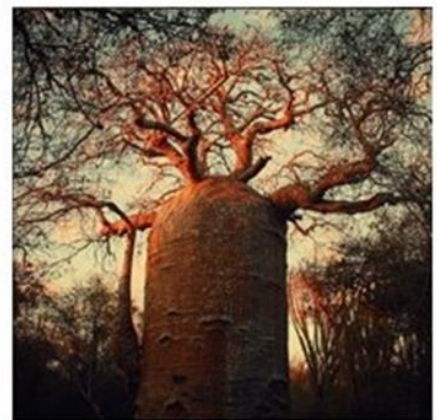
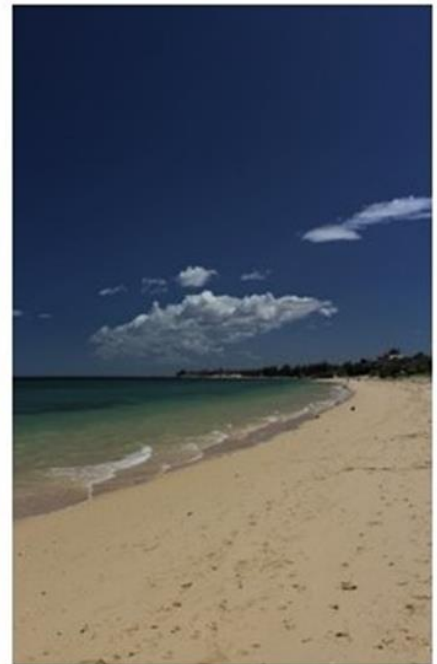


The region we are located in is very arid and desert-like. It is home to the Spiny Forest, considered one of the most unique and endangered habitats worldwide; 95% of its plant species are found nowhere else on Earth! It contains a wide range of desert plants such as cacti, shrubs, baobab trees, tamarind trees, and the infamous spiny octopus tree. This habitat also supports many animals including regionally endemic lemurs and tortoises.

After a 20-minute drive from Ambondrolava, you'll reach Mangily the main beach and diving tourist destination in the region. This region is also an important area for Humpback Whales. Every year (July–Sept), approximately 7000 of these majestic mammals migrate from the Antarctic to breed in the coastal waters off southern Madagascar.











## Reef Doctor Honko Site & Facilities



Our rustic compound is situated on the fringe of the mangrove forest, 800 m from the main road and village. Our site is made up of one main house, the volunteers' house, two wooden huts for staff, kitchen/dining area, the VOI's (local association) main office, and two plant nurseries. The main house is used as a work area for the team and volunteers; it is also used as dining room at night and kitchen. Two solar panels provide electricity with limited access during the day (charging computers/phone/batteries in turn) and for the lights in the main house at night. We have no permanent internet on site, but all the cafes and hotels in Toliara have Wi-Fi, which you can access at the weekend.



The basic volunteer house is built of cement and vondro (local reeds), it is a shared house with two bunk beds. Showers are taken in a small bathroom using water from the on-site well and there are two dry toilets.

During the week, lunch and dinner are prepared by our cook from the village. Meals are simple and locally-sourced with mainly rice, beans, vegetables/fruits, meat once a week, and fish if available in the village. At the weekends we have to cook for ourselves. Volunteers are expected to participate. Our drinking water comes from the village twice a day and is filtered before drinking.



**The conditions aren't five star, but living very simply, next to a traditional Malagasy community, is an incredible life-changing experience!**







## Daily Life

Working as a volunteer means you will be following the working times of the core staff. The normal staff working week runs from Monday to Friday, from 8h to 12h and 14h to 18h. You'll be working closely with the Project Manager and other members of the team depending on your activities.

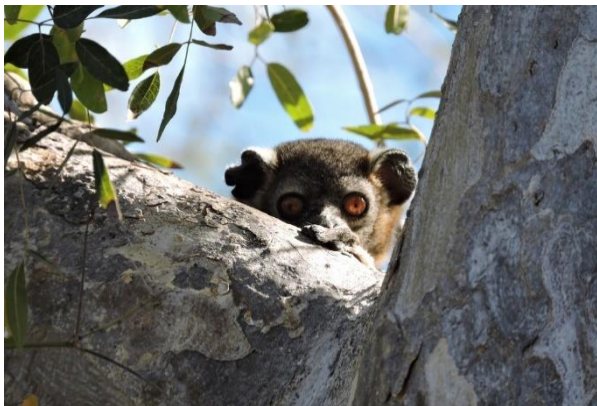






## Weekends

You are free to do as you wish at the weekend; simply relax in the peaceful surroundings on site, go into town for shopping, take a pirogue trip, walk to the popular beach resort of Mangily, visit local parks such as the Spiny Forest, or take a long weekend to go further afield in order to visit one of the regional national parks.

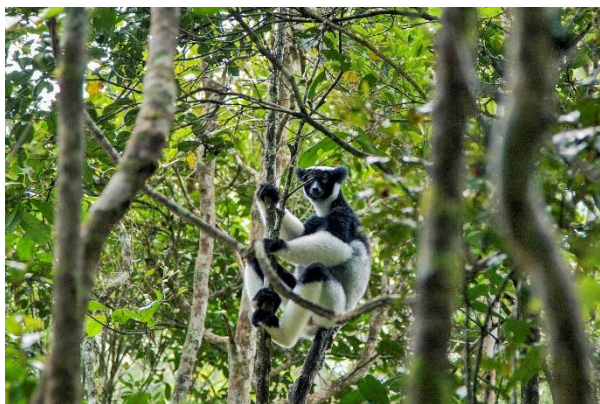






## Exploring Madagascar

Madagascar is an island of contrasts, the landscape, nature, and people change dramatically across the country; there are so many unique places to visit! Therefore, we strongly recommend to schedule in extra time and budget to explore this amazing country after your time with us.





## Safety

Ensuring your safety is our top priority. There have been no serious incidents at Reef Doctor nor at our Honko since their creation. Whilst our project site is in a semi-remote location, hospital care is readily available in Toliara, which can be accessed under an hour. We focus heavily on accident prevention; providing safety information, training, and advice to all volunteers and staff upon arrival.

We have conducted a full risk assessment of our site and created rules and procedures designed to promote safety and good hygiene in all aspects of our daily life. We keep standard first aid supplies on site and all of our staff is trained in the provision of emergency first aid and what to do in case of emergencies.







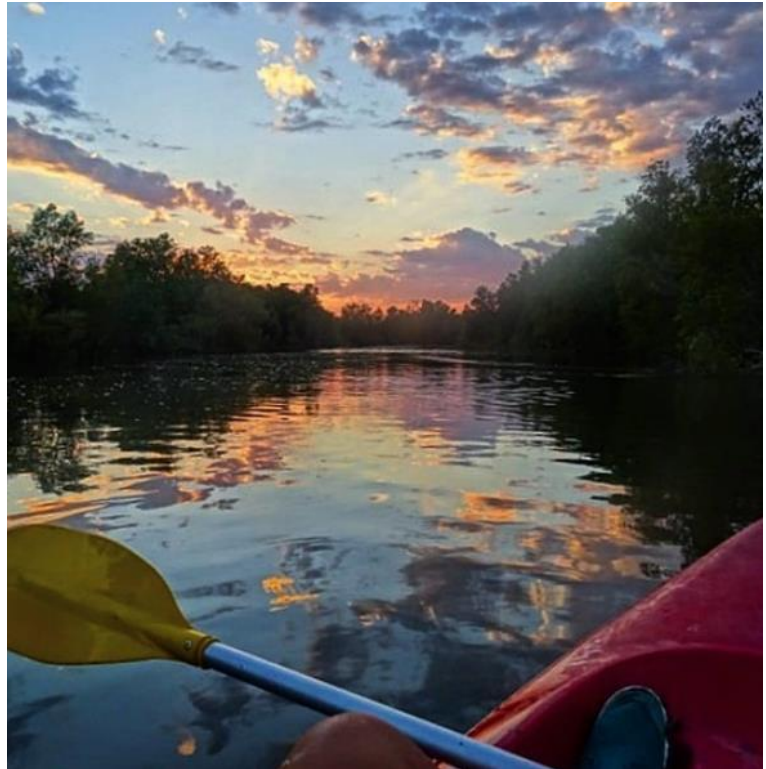
## South West Madagascar Climate

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



## Expedition Start Dates 2020

Start Date
13 <sup>th</sup> January
2 <sup>nd</sup> March
6 <sup>th</sup> April
4 <sup>th</sup> May
8 <sup>th</sup> June
6 <sup>th</sup> July
3 <sup>rd</sup> August
7 <sup>th</sup> September
5 <sup>th</sup> October
2 <sup>nd</sup> November
7 <sup>th</sup> December



**N.B.** These dates are when the programme commences, so you need to arrive at our site ideally the day before. This means arriving at the capital Antananarivo two days before the start date.





## Programme Fees 2020

**1 month: £750**

**2 months: £1250**

**3 months: £1750**

## Services Included in the Fees

- All project activity and training costs.
- Transport from Toliara to the site in Ambondrolava.
- Arrangement of hotel in the capital city Antananarivo, if required.
- All meals, Monday-Sunday.
- Filtered water, coffee, and tea.
- Lodging: bed sheets, pillows, and mosquito net provided.
- Standard first-aid medical care.
- Electricity for charging cell phones, laptops, etc (solar powered).
- Pre-departure support and pre-departure guides: advice on flights, equipment, Madagascar, medicals, vaccines, insurance etc.

**Your financial contribution not only funds your own living and work activities with us, it also contributes to our conservation projects and allows us to employ local staff to support our work.**



## Services Not Included in the Fees

- Round-trip airfare.
- Visa (bought upon arrival at airport; 1 month = €20, 2 months = €30, 3 months = €45)
- Vaccinations and anti-malarial drugs.
- For those who are interested, PADI dive training fees (this must be pre-arranged with Reef Doctor prior to departure).
- Reef Doctor standard recreational dive medicals (if applicable; forms provided by us to be filled in by a medical professional which may incur a fee).
- Diving (if applicable), travel, and medical insurance.
- Any personal excursions (often groups of staff and volunteers plan excursions to nearby national parks or other areas of interest).







## Why Become a Reef Doctor Honko Volunteer?

- On average, **80%–90%** of your internship fee goes directly into our conservation work and the local economy in Madagascar.
- Our core staff are professionals in their respective fields, their knowledge and experience will be passed on to you throughout your expedition.
- Acquire first-hand practical experience of coastal wetland habitat research and conservation, integrated coastal zone management, and social development work, which can be transferred to future employment.
- Malagasy culture is vibrant and memorable. During your stay you'll experience it first hand; through living with and working alongside local communities.
- Reef Doctor volunteering 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 coastal 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. They are 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 Reef Doctor 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 coastal ecosystems and the future livelihoods of the local people.





## Application & Contact Details



Reef Doctor has 2–4 mangrove volunteer positions available per expedition. To apply please send your motivation letter along with your C.V. to:

**[volunteer@reefdoctor.org](mailto:volunteer@reefdoctor.org)**

For further information or if you have any questions please contact us:

**Email:** [volunteer@reefdoctor.org](mailto:volunteer@reefdoctor.org)

**Speak directly to someone from our UK headquarters:**

+44 (0)7866 250 740

+44 (0)1756 380 198

**Skype username:** reefdoctor

