



**‘Lemurs, Biodiversity and Community’**  
A Community Forest Conservation Project



## What is the Azafady Conservation Programme?

Following the success of our Pioneer, Lemur Venture and Short-term programmes, Azafady launched a new volunteer scheme in 2010; the [Azafady Conservation Programme: 'Lemurs, Reptiles and Local Livelihoods'](#).

This exciting and innovative programme is a long-term community-based conservation initiative. Inspired by the Lemur Venture programme, and now incorporating a more holistic approach, it integrates conservation research on critically endangered flora and fauna with community initiatives.

The programme is based in the beautiful coastal region of Sainte Luce which is surrounded by extremely rare and threatened fragments of littoral (coastal) forest. It integrates practical hands-on conservation research on endangered flora and fauna – in particular lemurs, reptiles and amphibians – with community initiatives and environmental education, building the community's understanding of the complex habitats of which they are the stewards.

**The programme consists of 2 core modules:**

- Lemur and Biodiversity Research
- Community Conservation

The volunteer scheme is designed as a 10-week programme starting at the beginning of January, April, July and October each year, but is split into two-week blocks; allowing those of you with time constraints to still visit Madagascar and make a valuable contribution to our long-term conservation work. Volunteers can join the programme for **2, 4, 6, 8 or 10 weeks**. However, the work in each two-week block is varied and the programme is designed to combine modules allowing individuals to gain a more in depth understanding of our integrated approach to conservation. Consequently, volunteers usually stay for longer periods of time ranging from one month to the full ten weeks.



## Why Volunteer with Azafady?

Azafady is not alone in offering you the opportunity to spend time overseas. What makes us different is that the Azafady Conservation Programme is a not-for-profit scheme run by a registered charity (registered UK charity number 1079121) and Malagasy NGO. Funds generated are invested right back into our projects in Madagascar, rather than into a private company. We may not be able to offer you the glossy literature of other organisations, but what we can give you is a genuine, worthwhile volunteering experience.

The projects you will be working on during your time in Madagascar will be arranged as a result of the expressed needs of the communities in south east Madagascar and the conservation project's research priorities. Your work will be not only invaluable to the conservation of endangered species in the remaining littoral forest but also to the Malagasy people. As stated by the Mayor of Fort Dauphin:

**"For us here in this region, every extra volunteer means extra investment, extra employment and training, and a multitude of benefits."**

Azafady's project coordinators are part of an award-winning team. Azafady projects over the years have received many prestigious endorsements such as those from Sir David Attenborough, The Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Duke Lemur Centre. We have won a number of coveted awards such as the Sting and Trudie Styler Award for Conservation & Human Rights, "Best Volunteering Organisation" at the 2007 Responsible Tourism Awards, and the Prix Pictet photography commission in 2009.

The Azafady Conservation Programme is an invaluable opportunity for you to gain on-the-ground experience and practical skills that will assist you in pursuing a career in conservation work, with an organisation that has a proven track record in this field. Volunteering with us could help you to choose a new direction in life or to develop a career path you may already be on. It could be both a personal highlight and a practical stepping stone in a gap year or, for anyone at any time, a great way to go abroad for more than just a holiday.

**By joining us in Madagascar, you really will be making a difference.**



### **Azafady Volunteers**

Azafady accepts volunteers from all over the world. Volunteers come to us from the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and much of Western Europe. Our projects are open to anyone over the age of 18 and are suitable for people on gap years, career breaks, students or retirees. With 10-15 volunteers on each team, you will always find a diverse mix of people from many walks of life but each sharing Azafady's mission – to alleviate poverty, improve well-being, and preserve the unique and beautiful environments of south east Madagascar.

### **Madagascar**

Madagascar is unique and one of the most fascinating yet least-travelled areas of Africa. The sheer diversity of this island is astounding, from the people to the geography, climate, architecture and, of course, the wildlife. Brimming with endemic

fauna and flora, Madagascar's ecological importance is unrivalled anywhere else in the world. 80% of the island's plant and animal species are found nowhere else on earth and as such Madagascar has been recognised as one of the planet's top conservation priorities.

Whilst biologically rich, Madagascar is one of the economically poorest countries on earth. Over 70% of the island's population of 18 million people live on less than 1 US dollar a day. Extreme poverty poses an enormous and ongoing threat to the island's staggering biodiversity, not least through deforestation caused by slash-and-burn agriculture. Many unique species have already been lost whilst many others, including some as yet undescribed by science, face extinction.



Seeing such a beautiful country in a way that not many people even visiting Madagascar would see... It felt like a privilege to even be there in the first place. It was also amazing to meet like-minded people from around the world who value similar things as I do like conservation, volunteering and changing the world.

I saw first-hand a different way of life, even though I have been to third world countries before, I was never this close to the everyday life of the people. I had a lot of time to think and reflect on my life and my values.

**Jenn Beard,**  
**Community Conservation Volunteer,**  
**April 2010, USA**





## Module One: Lemur & Biodiversity Research

The focus of the Lemur & Biodiversity Research module is to investigate the impact of forest fragmentation on lemur, reptile and amphibian populations by collecting data in the littoral (coastal) forests in Sainte Luce, situated in south east Madagascar.

The littoral forests of Madagascar are restricted from what was once a continuous forest from the north of Vohimarina to Tolagnaro now to just a narrow band along the east coast. Currently, the state of the eastern littoral forest is severely degraded and fragmented. Since human colonisation of Madagascar some 90% of the littoral forest has been cut down and currently only 1.5% of the remaining forest is protected. Research has shown that many of the large animal species of the littoral forests have been lost and the remaining may not be able to maintain viable populations beyond 2020-2040. The forest in Sainte Luce is one of only three significant areas of southern littoral forest remaining in Madagascar.

The forest fragments in Sainte Luce range in size from 1ha - 377ha. Each, with its own unique landscape features, is vulnerable to human disturbances in slightly different ways. Research on the Azafady Conservation Programme will expand across all

the littoral forest fragments in the Sainte Luce region, providing not only an individual account of species and forest vulnerability but also an overall perspective of issues facing biodiversity across the region.

The data collected is used nationally and internationally to highlight the plight of the fauna and flora in Sainte Luce. This is particularly important as the area has been earmarked for future ilmenite mining which will remove two-thirds of the remaining littoral forest. We collect data on all lemur species within the forest fragments, but of particular interest is the Southern Woolly lemur *Avahi meridionalis*, recently described as a new species, distinct from its neighbouring cousin, the Eastern Woolly lemur *Avahi laniger* (Zaramody et al, 2006) *Avahi meridionalis* is cited by the IUCN as data deficient with populations restricted to the Andohahela reserve and Sainte Luce. Reptiles that can be found in Sainte Luce include diurnal, nocturnal, ground-dwelling and arboreal geckos, snakes and chameleons. Using these species as indicators, we can assess the vulnerability of the remaining forest fragments in Sainte Luce to degradation and provide recommendations for future conservation initiatives.



### Lemur Research Objectives:

1. To establish the density and distribution of the diurnal and nocturnal lemurs in the Sainte Luce forest fragments.
2. To investigate the influence of edge effects on lemur density and distribution in the Sainte Luce forest fragments.
3. To collect data for long-term behavioural research of the Southern Woolly lemur *Avahi meridionalis* and Brown Collared Lemur *Eulemur collaris*.

### Lemur transects:

Diurnal and nocturnal transects are walked through the dense littoral forests searching for individuals and groups of lemurs. Once spotted, volunteers are involved in collecting data on the lemur population and the surrounding habitat.

Transects cut across forest fragments to provide a representation of wildlife abundances throughout the forest incorporating both the edges and the central forest. The length of transects and the amount of data collected vary depending on the size of the fragment. Transects are spaced throughout the forest fragment and are walked at a slow pace of 1km/hr to ensure maximum potential for sightings. The transects are randomly chosen to reduce survey bias. The data to be collected on each lemur sighting includes: GPS waypoint, species identification, number of individuals, sex of individuals, perpendicular distance of lemurs from the transect, the tree species they

are inhabiting and data collection on the immediate surrounding vegetation. This data will be used to identify individuals and focal groups of Southern Woolly lemurs that later can be used in a detailed behavioural study.

### Biodiversity Research Objectives

The herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibians) within the littoral forests of Sainte Luce are highly exceptional and very diverse. The aim of our research is to update the current species lists of the herpetofauna occurring within the fragments of Sainte Luce, assess the role edge effects play in influencing the distribution of species and determine the effects fragment size has on the herpetofauna within them.

1. To establish the density and distribution of diurnal and nocturnal reptiles and amphibians in the Sainte Luce forest fragments.
2. To investigate the influence of edge effects on the reptile and amphibian populations in the Sainte Luce forest fragments.

Biodiversity data collection involves 'sweeping' the forest floor, searching for reptile and amphibian species both diurnally and nocturnally, and seeking out species inhabiting palms, logs and leaf litter. Additionally, transects searching for those species inhabiting higher ground in trees will also be surveyed separately.



### Herpetofaunal transects:

Data will be collected using already established transects that are flagged at regular intervals, any of which can be a potential start point for the herpetofauna transects. This visual encounter method is well reputed as the best method for surveying ground herpetofauna in Madagascar. Data recorded will include the GPS location, species ID and microhabitat information. Arboreal chameleon and gecko species, which will rarely be seen in the sweep surveys, require additional surveys to ensure they are equally represented in the species density estimates.

Species that can be found within the fragments include *Guibemantis punctatus*, *G. Liber*, *G. bicalcaratus*, *Gephyromantis leucocephalus* and *Heterixalus boettgeri*. The reptiles that can be found in Sainte Luce vary greatly from chameleons within the genus *Brookesia*, which comprises the smallest chameleons in the world, to those within the genus *Calumna*, which comprise the largest chameleons in the world. Some of the geckos present within the fragments include those within the genus *Phelsuma* including *P. Antanosy* which is critically endangered and endemic to specific forest fragments.

Snakes such as *Acrantophis dumerili*, one of the largest snakes in Madagascar, *Madagascarophis colubrinus* and *Ithycyphus ousi* can also be found within Sainte Luce among many others.

### Habitat Data Collection

1. How does the vegetation change across the forest fragments of Sainte Luce with particular reference to vulnerability to degradation?

In conjunction with the lemur and biodiversity research, habitat data is collected to assess the extent of human disturbance across the forest fragments.

Habitat data is collected on both sides of the transects at 100m intervals to assess the human impact and disturbance. Data is collected on the dominant tree species, the diameter at breast height (DBH) of trees, the composition of the ground vegetation, the abundance of *Pandanus* (a plant species of particular importance to reptiles in the region), and the presence of cut tree stumps.



### Typical working day

The daily schedule varies tremendously depending on study activity and location but a typical day in the field starts at 7.30am (though earlier in summer) with breakfast. Then you head into the forest to work on the module until just before midday. A typical activity is walking a lemur transect through a fragment of littoral forest – once spotted, with the help of the local guides, you will be recording critical data including the number and sex of lemurs, and sometimes observing their behaviour. Another day, you could find yourself identifying reptile and amphibian species by ‘sweeping’ through the forest floor.

After a two-hour break during the heat of the day for lunch to eat, nap, relax or sunbathe, as well as time to evaluate the morning’s progress or have a Malagasy language lesson – the afternoon work session starts around 2pm.

Afternoon sessions may be spent discussing research techniques, continuing with a lemur or reptile transect, or collecting habitat data.

Day trips might be taken when transects are far from camp, and occasional reconnaissance trips to nearby forest fragments may be made to assess the potential for future research.

Evenings are very sociable affairs and generally volunteers discuss their days amongst each other whilst having supper together at around 6pm, and then prepare for the next day. On some evenings you may find yourself doing nocturnal transects; walking through the littoral forests searching for nocturnal species of lemurs or reptiles, typically from 7pm - 11pm.



### Sample schedule \*

\*This is a sample schedule for volunteers who are joining for just one 2 week module.

If you are joining for more than one module you will usually stay in rural Sainte Luce for up to 4 weeks at a time and visit Nahampoana nature reserve at the end of your last module.

Also, please note this is an example itinerary and should be referred to as a guide only; projects vary, communities are different and every volunteer group is unique.

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
1	Arrival, setting up camp in town, banking and emailing		Introductory drinks
2	Travel from Fort Dauphin to Sainte Luce and set up camp	Walk the three hamlets to the beach	
3	Lemur transect	Reptile transect	
4	Habitat data	Lemur transect	Nocturnal Walk
5	Reptile transect	Lemur transect	
6	Reconnaissance to new forest fragment	Reconnaissance to new forest fragment	Nocturnal Lemur transect
7	OFF – sunrise at the beach	OFF – Beach	OFF
8	Lemur transect	Reptile transect	Nocturnal reptile transect
9	Reptile transect	Habitat data	Quiz night!
10	Reptile transect	Lemur transect	Nocturnal reptile transect
11	Behavioural lemur research	Behavioural lemur research	Bush party!
12	Behavioural lemur research	OFF	Debrief and nocturnal lemur transect
13	Travel from Sainte Luce back to Fort Dauphin		
14	Trip to Nahampoana reserve		Leaving Dinner



## Module Two: Community Conservation

The Community Conservation module encompasses the human dimension of conservation in the Sainte Luce region; focusing on environmental education of the children in Ambandrika village (one of the three hamlets in Sainte Luce) combined with the implementation of the fuel-efficient stove project and the planting and evaluation of the critically endangered palm, *Dypsis saintelucei*.

For conservation of natural resources to be successful it is important to take into consideration the human dimension, in particular the relationship between local livelihoods and the littoral forests. People living in Sainte Luce are highly dependent on the environment. Sainte Luce is a small coastal village and the main source of income for most families is from fishing. Previously, people supplemented their diet with bush meat from the forests, such as *Eulemur collaris*, but now rely on fish and their crops. Although people no longer capture bush meat, they still use the surrounding forest as a source of timber, firewood and medicinal plants. In summary, people living in Sainte Luce are highly dependent on the environment, from biotic factors (flora

and fauna) to abiotic factors (for example, rainfall and soil conditions required for growing crops).

### Environmental Education

Little or no environmental education is taught in schools in Sainte Luce. Any environmental knowledge that individuals and communities acquire has been passed down through the generations. Azafady works to provide long-term environmental education for the Ambandrika school in the Sainte Luce region with volunteers preparing and presenting environmental education lessons, assisted by Azafady staff and translators. We have worked with the parental association and the local school teacher to develop an environmental curriculum that will take place outside of normal school hours. The lessons follow a set scheme of work including stories, games and the lesson itself. The lessons are themed, allowing children to build on their environmental knowledge with topics such as habitats, conservation, animal adaptations and composting.



### Fuel-Efficient Stoves

Azafady has been involved in fuel-efficient stoves for many years; building, evaluating and redesigning stoves in villages throughout the Anosy region. Over the years the stove design has evolved to find the best model that reduces fuel consumption and benefits both local needs and the environment. Fuel-efficient stoves reduce the amount of fuel-wood needed by some 70%, thereby helping to protect the forests and improve standards of health by reducing smoke inhalation. Volunteers will find themselves involved in sieving the raw materials, mixing the materials together, forming bricks and constructing the stoves for members of the community who have shown an interest in trying fuel-efficient stoves.

### Endangered Palms

*Dypsis saintelucei* and *Beccariophoenix madagascariensis* are regionally endemic palm species to south east Madagascar and are listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. Although very little research has focused on these species, their IUCN status has been assigned due to low numbers and the continued loss of habitat. Locally, the palms are used as a source of food and for the construction of lobster traps.

Preliminary surveys of *D. saintelucei* in November 2007 revealed a population number of 50 adult individuals remaining in the wild. During surveys conducted between August 2008 and July

2010, previously unrecorded individuals were found yet many previously recorded individuals were dead from natural causes or human use. The surveying and documentation of these species will focus on determining population numbers remaining and will aim to gain a better understanding of the *Dypsis saintelucei* life history. Planting of *Dypsis saintelucei* saplings will be conducted in one of the larger forest fragments and evaluations will ensue to establish the effectiveness of this strategy for conserving this endangered palm species.

### Tree Planting

Tree planting is fun seasonal work which is conducted at one of Azafady's three 'Reserve Foncière pour la Reboisement' sites (Land Reserved for Reforestation) - or 'RFRs'. With more and more areas of forest under conservation status, there is a lack of available natural resources on which the surrounding local community depend. The RFRs provide an opportunity to recorrect the balance through the replanting of fast-growing native and exotic tree species important to local livelihoods for fuel and building, intermixed with fruit-bearing species to improve nutrition. Depending on what work is required at the time, volunteers may be involved with our community-managed nursery which is propagating the trees until they are ready for replanting and/or on-the-ground planting.



### Typical Working Day

The daily schedule varies tremendously depending on project priorities at the time but a typical day in the field starts at 7.30am (though earlier in summer) with breakfast. Then you will head into the forest or local community to work on the module until just before midday. A typical activity is working with local households to promote the use of fuel-efficient stoves; you will be building the stoves from scratch with the help of the Azafady staff and the local community which will involve sieving and sorting materials and then the fun (and messy!) bit of construction.

After a two-hour break during the heat of the day for lunch to eat, nap, relax or sunbathe, as well as time to evaluate

the morning's progress or have a Malagasy language lesson - the afternoon work session starts around 2pm. Afternoon sessions may be spent continuing with fuel-efficient stoves, preparing an environmental education lesson plan, running an education session, or going out into the forest to research the endangered palms.

Evenings are very sociable affairs and generally volunteers discuss their days amongst each other whilst having supper together around 6pm, and preparing for the next day. On some evenings you will find yourself doing nocturnal walks; walking through the littoral forests to get a glimpse of nocturnal species of lemurs (found by their eye-shine) or reptiles.



## Sample schedule \*

\*This is a sample schedule for volunteers who are joining for just one 2 week module.

If you are joining for more than one module you will usually stay in rural Sainte Luce for up to 4 weeks at a time and visit Nahampoana nature reserve at the end of your last module.

Also, please note this is an example itinerary and should be referred to as a guide only; projects vary, communities are different and every volunteer group is unique.

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
1	Arrival, setting up camp in town, banking and emailing		Introductory drinks
2	Travel from Fort Dauphin to Sainte Luce and set up camp	Walk the three hamlets to the beach	
3	Orientation of education module	Monitoring of <i>Dypsis saintelupei</i>	
4	Lesson preparation	Lesson (5-9yrs) and evaluation of lesson	Nocturnal Walk
5	Monitoring of <i>Dypsis saintelupei</i>	Meeting with parental association and teacher	
6	Tree nursery work – potpacking	Tree nursery work – potpacking	Nocturnal Lemur transect
7	OFF – sunrise at the beach	OFF – Beach	OFF
8	Lesson preparation	Lesson (10-15yrs) and evaluation of lesson	
9	Fuel-efficient stove evaluation	<i>Dypsis saintelupei</i> and <i>Beccariophoenix madagascariensis</i>	Quiz night!
10	Habitat data	School garden (5-9yrs)	
11	Lesson preparation	Lesson (either age) and evaluation of lesson	Bush party!
12	School garden (10-15yrs)	OFF	Debrief and nocturnal walk
13	Travel from Sainte Luce back to Fort Dauphin		
14	Trip to Nahampoana reserve		Leaving Dinner



It was the first time I'd travelled alone and my first time overseas and it couldn't have been more enjoyable or gone more smoothly. From the time I arrived in Fort Dauphin to departure I never felt scared or homesick or uncomfortable. The staff and volunteers were lovely, and we all became great friends – in fact, I didn't anticipate how sad I'd be to say goodbye when it was all over. The mountains, beaches and forests were breathtaking and so different from what I'm used to. It's cliché to say, but I'll remember the experience forever!

Sarah Randell,  
Lemur Study Volunteer  
July 2010, Australia





## Practicalities

### Living Conditions

Azafady Conservation Programme volunteers camp for the duration of the scheme and, whilst camping facilities are provided, longer-term volunteers will need to bring their own tent. When in Fort Dauphin (usually on arrival and departure), volunteers will camp at the stunning lake-side site of Lanirano which is fully equipped with flush toilets and showers, as well as electricity for charging cameras, ipods, mobile phones, etc. Laundry services are also available locally. Whilst working in the bush, toilets are 'long drop', we collect and treat water from rivers and wells, and usually there is no access to electricity. Although conditions will be more basic than you are used to, you will be camping in some of the most beautiful sites in the world – you will wake up to deserted beaches and forests teeming with wildlife right on your doorstep.

### Fort Dauphin

Azafady's Madagascar office is based in Fort Dauphin. Fort Dauphin (or Tolagnaro as it is also known) is the major town in south east Madagascar. It enjoys one of the most pleasant climates on the east coast. Built on a small peninsula, the town is bordered on three sides by beaches and backed by lush green mountains. It is a lively town offering a variety of restaurants and nightlife. You will find the people very inquisitive but a smile and 'salama' (hello) will almost always produce a smile back.

### Physical Demands

Volunteers should be prepared for physical work in a hot climate, adventurous road journeys, and long walks to reach remote and beautiful project sites. The work and lifestyle is challenging but incomparably rewarding and should be within the capabilities of any reasonably fit person. Although being in good physical shape is important, the ability to exhibit tolerance, patience and a good sense of humour when things get tough is just as essential.

### Food

A resident cook travels with the team into the bush and is responsible for preparing meals. Food is simple, but tasty and nutritionally balanced. Meals mainly consist of rice and beans supplemented with fresh fruit, vegetables, fish and eggs when available. There is always enough honey or condensed milk to satisfy any sweet tooth. A plentiful supply of treated drinking water will always be available and it is often possible to purchase soft drinks, bottled water, beer and rum from local stores, even in the remoter locations. Stocking up on soy sauce, chilli sauce and any snacks from Fort Dauphin is always a good idea before a long trip to the bush.

Whilst you are in Fort Dauphin there are some excellent restaurants serving western and Malagasy dishes at reasonable prices – think zebu steak and chips, fresh seafood and even pizza!



### Staff

A team of Malagasy staff travel and work with our volunteers at all times, primarily to ensure that the group is safe, but also as coworkers and to offer translation and advice on the Malagasy culture, facilitating communication and positive interaction with the local communities. The ACP coordinator also travels with the group with a Research Assistant. Azafady's English speaking staff, based in Fort Dauphin, are also there to ensure that all your questions are answered and problems solved. This ensures that our volunteers have full support and encouragement to understand and appreciate the very different culture and environment that the programme will take you into.

### Language

The working language used on the Azafady Conservation Programme is English. However, many of our staff speak English as their third or even fourth language and in the more rural areas, very little English is spoken at all. For this reason, you will be offered language classes in Malagasy. How much effort you put in to learning the language is up to you – the more you try, the more you will enjoy your time in Madagascar. As a minimum we expect volunteers to be able to learn the basic greetings so you can be polite. A simple “salama” (hello) or “misaotra” (thank you) will go a long way to help you earn respect in local communities.

### Orientation

Before volunteers head out to the bush we feel it is important that you are briefed on the work of Azafady and the Malagasy

culture. For this reason, during your first few days as an ACP volunteer, you will undergo a detailed orientation about Madagascar, the Anosy region, local customs and the research you will be doing. You will be briefed on the day-to-day rules that you must adhere to whilst on the programme, which cover all aspects of camp life and are there for your own safety as well as those around you. Advice will also be given on the need for cultural sensitivity when working in village communities.

Malagasy communities have a complex system of **fady (taboos)** which it is important that volunteers observe. For example, in Fort Dauphin it is **fady** to point, touch someone on the head or buy salt after dark!

### Free Time

Of course, we want you to have a good time and see as many of the things that Madagascar has to offer as possible, and for that reason we will arrange times for little tours and some visits to sights of local interest, as the programme allows. Volunteers will get a chance to visit the Nahampoana reserve for an up-close experience with sifaka and ring-tailed lemurs and there will also be opportunities to visit local markets or simply relax and surf on the stunning beaches surrounding Fort Dauphin. We will endeavour as best we can to make sure you see as much local wildlife and experience as much local culture as possible within the context of the programme and we are happy to advise you on what to do in your free time if you want more.



## Health & Safety

Whenever you travel overseas, or anywhere else for that matter, there is always a small element of risk. For Azafady, your health and safety is a priority whilst you are volunteering with us and we do everything possible to mitigate any risk factors. As part of our application procedure, you will have to complete a comprehensive set of medical forms so that we are confident you will be physically and emotionally healthy enough to participate on ACP. Prior to your departure, you will receive comprehensive briefing materials advising on all aspects of medical preparation including malaria prophylaxis, vaccinations, and general tips for staying fit and healthy.

You will also be expected to bring a comprehensive medical kit with you for minor ailments in the field. Our health and safety protocols and evacuation plans are revised on a regular basis and when you arrive in Madagascar, a detailed health and safety briefing will form part of your orientation. You will also be assigned a “sick buddy” – someone from the group who will accompany you if you are ill and help monitor your health. With more than 10 years’ experience of operating in Madagascar, our well-trained and experienced Malagasy guides who accompany the team are adept at recognizing the early signs of common illnesses. Volunteers are accompanied by at least one of our guides 24 hours a day, even in periods of “time off”, meaning that help is always on hand should it be needed. Our coordinators are trained in first aid and Azafady also employs two doctors who are available to help and advise and prescribe medication where necessary. A satellite phone travels with the

team at all times meaning that the team can always be contacted in the event of an emergency.

Azafady purchases comprehensive travel insurance for every volunteer which, in the event of any serious medical issue, would repatriate the person to a suitable medical facility (details of the policy can be provided on request). We have fantastic relationships with all the communities in which we work which, together with good transport links, means we can quickly arrange for a 4x4 to bring volunteers out of the bush in the event of illness or other emergency. Our staff in Madagascar are in regular contact with the London office, giving us updates on the status of our volunteering teams. This enables any urgent problems to be communicated immediately to a volunteer’s emergency contact. Azafady has an exemplary health and safety record and, to date, has never had to evacuate a volunteer out of Madagascar.

Madagascar is, relative to many African countries, a safe country in which to travel and work. We have not had any major security issues with volunteers in the past and all our returning volunteers comment on the warmth and hospitality of the Malagasy people. It is very, very rare to encounter any opposition from local people. For those interested in further information on safety in Madagascar then please do look at the UK Foreign Office website: [www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad). However, by the nature of this website they will emphasise negatives more than positives and therefore it is important to keep the information in context.



### Communication with home

On arrival in Fort Dauphin, we will call or email a nominated friend or relative to let them know you are safe. However, communications in Madagascar these days are much improved and it will be possible for you to stay in touch with home at intervals throughout the programme. There is mobile phone reception in Fort Dauphin and at the main campsite in Sainte Luce. It is possible to make calls and text relatively cheaply if you purchase a local mobile and sim card. Away from the main campsite in Sainte Luce the mobile phone reception could be sporadic; it is best to prepare for irregular signal so friends and family do not expect regular communication. There is a mobile phone at the campsite in Fort Dauphin which can receive incoming calls from family and friends. Emails can be accessed at the local internet café and friends and relatives can also send emails or post via the Azafady office in Fort Dauphin. Although there is no email access in the bush, you will be able to access the internet when you return to Fort Dauphin – this will be at the end of the 2 weeks if you are only joining the programme for one module, or if you are joining for a number of modules you may be in the bush for up to 4 weeks at a time.

### Travelling after the programme

We find that the majority of our volunteers do wish to see a bit more of Madagascar after the programme and will often decide

to travel with other members of the team. It is best to be a bit flexible with your travel plans – that way you can chat to our staff on arrival and find out their recommendations and see what other members of your team are planning to do. Madagascar has an extraordinary array of wildlife, landscapes, and cultures for you to explore – the Avenue of the Baobabs in Morondava, the limestone tsingy at Ankarana, the largest of the lemurs (the Indri) at Andasibe or diving amongst the coral reefs of Nosy Be are just some of the highlights to consider.

### The Team

You will be put in email contact with the other members of your team approximately 6-8 weeks prior to departure, giving you the opportunity for initial greetings before you meet in Madagascar. This will also give you an opportunity to coordinate your travel plans and discuss any last minute questions you may have. Often your travel plans may mean that you need to spend a night in Antananarivo en route – if this is the case we can help arrange hotels and airport transfers and will book volunteers in the same accommodation where possible. This enables you to share the experience of arriving in Madagascar for the first time, and gives you the opportunity to acclimatise and orientate yourselves with other volunteers.



### Flights

Azafady is able to advise you on the best routes, flight companies and travel agents to use when travelling to Madagascar. From the UK and Europe, Kenya Airways fly from London Heathrow to Madagascar via Nairobi, Air Madagascar and Air France fly from Paris, Air Mauritius flies from London to Madagascar via Mauritius, and there are also flights with Air Madagascar from Johannesburg which is serviced regularly by many airlines.

For volunteers coming from North America, Air France and Corsair fly from major cities in the US and Canada to Antananarivo via Paris, and South African Airways operates flights from the USA to Antananarivo via Johannesburg. For Australian volunteers, the easiest way to fly to Madagascar is with Air Mauritius who fly from Sydney or Perth to Antananarivo via Mauritius, or with South African Airways via Johannesburg.

All international flights will arrive in Madagascar's capital Antananarivo. You will then need to take an internal flight to Fort Dauphin (Tolagnaro) with Air Madagascar.

### How your minimum donation is spent

To have the opportunity to participate in the Azafady Conservation Programme, we ask volunteers to raise a minimum donation of £600 for their first 2-week module, £550 for their second 2-week module and £500 for all subsequent modules.

This is made up of an initial non-refundable deposit of £200 or £500 which secures your place on the scheme, and the remaining balance which is due three weeks before departure.

The minimum donation is a donation to support the charitable work of Azafady (registered charity number 1079121). Funds generated by the programme support Azafady's projects in Madagascar, with some 90% of all donations being spent in direct pursuit of our charitable aims.

Approximately 40% of Azafady's income in the last financial year was generated through volunteers – vital support to our ongoing projects in the areas of health and sanitation, sustainable livelihoods and conservation. Funds raised by volunteers together with the extra workforce that they bring have achieved fantastic things. The conservation volunteers are collecting vital data on critically endangered species which will be used in conserving the remaining littoral forest. In the past two years other Azafady volunteers have built 8 schools fitted with furniture, wells for clean drinking water, and boys' and girls' latrines, allowing access to education for some 2,000 children who previously had little or no educational opportunities, and in the rural commune of Mahatalaky 30% of the population now have access to clean drinking water provided by Azafady and the volunteer programmes.



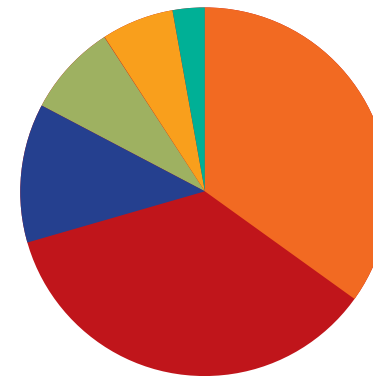
### Fundraising

Don't let the size of the required donation put you off! Azafady is there to support volunteers in raising this donation, with a wealth of fundraising experience and resources available to volunteers. All volunteers receive a substantial fundraising manual and can use resources such as raffle tickets, collection boxes, Christmas cards, posters, online fundraising pages, and even a lemur suit! You are of course welcome to simply pay the minimum donation from your own funds, although we do hope that, through fundraising activities, volunteers will assist us to raise public awareness about the threats to the people and environment of Madagascar.

Separately volunteers need to cover their own pre-departure costs including flights, visa, personal equipment, medical preparations and vaccinations, which are typically in the region of £1,000 - £1,500 (these can sometimes be fundraised too, with the prior agreement of Azafady) and a standard Country Registration fee of £95 paid to Azafady.

The Registration fee (due 3 weeks prior to departure) covers all aspects of police and commune registration costs in Madagascar, as well as compulsory inclusion in Azafady's comprehensive travel insurance policy which Azafady purchases for every volunteer (details of the policy can be provided on request).

**Charitable expenditure based upon Azafady's June 2009 Audited Accounts (full accounts available upon request). 91% of funds were spent in direct pursuit of Azafady's charitable aims.**



- Sustainable livelihoods (£178,545)
- Health-related (£177,293)
- Conservation (£62,809)
- International awareness raising (£42,661)
- General management and administration (£31,355)
- Fundraising (£14,484)



It was incredible and one of the most rewarding experiences I have taken part in. The staff were amazing and not only made me feel welcome and at home immediately but the level of knowledge and passion for the country and the work Azafady was doing made for a great experience and made all of the volunteers equally excited and enthusiastic.

**Louisa Clapton,**  
**Lemur Research & Community Conservation Volunteer**  
**May 2010, UK**





### Application Procedure

Any person aged 18 or over may join the Azafady Conservation Programme as all required skills are taught. However the programme does often attract those who are, or have been, studying related courses or are conservation professionals, and if you do have particular skills in relevant areas this will enhance your contribution.

To apply for a place on the Azafady Conservation Programme you can download an application form from the Azafady website [www.madagascar.co.uk](http://www.madagascar.co.uk) or request one from [info@azafady.org](mailto:info@azafady.org).

Complete and return your application to Azafady and we will endeavour to inform you within seven days whether we can offer you a place. Places are limited and with the success of the Conservation Programme to date, we anticipate a high demand for places.

So even if you are only thinking about joining, please complete the application form to let us know that you are interested, and to reserve your place.



**Case Study: Sara-Xaali O'Reilly Berkeley -  
Lemur Study Volunteer, April 2010, Spanish/Irish**

“Woolly,” whispers the forest guide, stressing the last syllable and lengthening it in an almost French manner, while pointing into the midst of forest cover. “Woolly – see?” And before you can spot the first Woolly lemur, he’s gone slightly off the transect line and found another. How the Malagasy guides manage to spot the back of a small grey-brown lemur clinging to a tree trunk ten – maybe more or, if you’re lucky, less – meters away from the direction in which we are walking, through a mesh of leaves, bark, palms, and vines, remains a mystery to me and certainly still seems to amaze even Azafady’s conservation staff.

After noting down the number of lemurs, their sex, their activity and reaction, and other details such as information about their surroundings and the day, it’s time to move on and continue walking slowly and silently along the previously marked transect line, stopping every 50 meters to write down GPS co-ordinates and the time.

A great deal of the work I did whilst volunteering for Azafady’s lemur studies project consisted of lemur transects; sometimes it can be a bit frustrating – when after days of pushing through rainforest in the heat of the subtropical sun not a lemur has been seen, but it’s incredibly rewarding when you do find, not just one, but maybe several in one morning. Whether you see any lemurs or not, however, transects are an opportunity to see what else the forest has to offer, and it is equally important to record any “unsuccessful” transects – although, after four weeks of them, both with lemur sightings and without, I am yet to label any so harshly – to know when species are most likely to be active and so try to better understand their behaviour and habits, their place in the ecosystem, as well as their needs and how best to protect them.

(continued on the next page)



After a morning in the forest, a hearty lunch of rice and beans is served back at camp around midday, after which you have a couple of hours free time (once the dishes are done) before a Malagasy lesson and the afternoon “shift” – usually another forest survey, down a different transect line.

Usually there is time for a good bucket shower – which, despite the brown colour of the water you pump from the well, is surprisingly inviting once the day’s work is done – before dinner and dark, which usually coincide with applaudable precision at six o’clock. After washing up there’s time to chill out and, since there can be more than one conservation module running at once, time to debrief, so everybody is kept up to date. Occasionally there is the option to go on a night walk, an excellent chance to catch a glimpse of nocturnal wildlife.

Although there isn’t a “bed-time”, everybody – from volunteers to staff – tends to start retiring to their tent fairly early (in comparison to Western standards) to get a proper rest before breakfast at 6 AM and heading back out to work around 7 AM.

If there’s one thing I regret about my time volunteering for Azafady, it’s having signed-up for too short a time: after having spent four weeks in the bush, in such an incredible place, with its amazing people (whether Azafady staff, volunteers, or locals) and the astounding wildlife, I was gutted to go home and could have happily stayed another six weeks till the scheme’s end.

