

YOUR GUIDE TO A

blue ventures Expedition



We have a team of dedicated researchers and volunteers who study all aspects of the marine ecosystem. We believe that with the right knowledge, developing coastal communities can live in harmony with their marine environments.

Volunteer with us today!

"An incredible life-changing experience, where real science is combined with an eye-opening view of some of the challenges facing development today."

MATT MITCHELL, RESEARCH VOLUNTEER

"You'll learn to dive and conduct research on the coral reefs with Malagasy locals, measuring fish populations, examining bleaching effects on the reef, and monitoring mangrove swamp ecology, all against an exquisite backdrop of wild palms, blue lagoons, and white-sand beaches."

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER MAGAZINE

"We're confident that the experiences we offer are the most rewarding and worthwhile placements available in volunteer conservation today."

ALASDAIR HARRIS, RESEARCH DIRECTOR



Why Blue Ventures?

The success of our work depends on your satisfaction and enjoyment of the research carried out on our expeditions.

If you're interested in joining an expedition or volunteer conservation project, it's worth carrying out some research, as there are a number of excellent organisations offering unique and - we believe - potentially life-changing experiences working in the field of environmental conservation.

Different projects are suitable for different people. However, the quality of projects varies considerably amongst different organisations, and you should make sure that you ask a number of important questions before deciding which is the right trip for you.

Remember that an attractive website and appealing marketing do not necessarily mean that the expedition itself will meet your expectations, or give you the experience and training that you are looking for.

Since 2003, we have been working with volunteers carrying out marine conservation work at research sites in Madagascar, and in 2009 we added Leleuvia, Fiji and Tioman, Malaysia to our expeditions.

Alongside our practical conservation work, our aim is to increase awareness of the critical need for coral reef conservation and research. The dives you undertake and the data you gather whilst on an expedition are invaluable for establishing strategies aimed at sustainable management of the unique environments under investigation.

You will be totally involved from the beginning – gathering the data – to the end of the research process, where you will be involved in collating data and seeing it be put into action.

We are committed to getting you, the volunteer, involved in all aspects of our research. In order to meet this commitment, volunteer numbers on each expedition are kept low, with a high ratio of staff to volunteers.

We believe that this ensures a high standard of scientific training and support for you, regardless of your background.

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Staff: volunteers

The question that leads on from volunteer numbers is staff numbers. A number of organisations offering volunteer research opportunities and expeditions often work with large numbers of volunteers in the same programme. We feel that this can limit the learning experience, the availability of facilities, and the activities and training that you can participate in.

Blue Ventures expeditions are run by highly experienced teams of international staff working alongside local staff. In addition, there may be local scientists, and visiting researchers and students, all of whom are on-hand to assist in volunteer training and support. We believe that this ensures that volunteers have high quality guidance and support for expedition activities at all times.

Expedition living

We aim to maintain the highest possible standard of life on our expeditions by:

- ensuring that accommodation and food are of the highest standard;
- maintaining the balance between work, research and recreation, by giving you the time and space to get the most out of your stay with us.

On a Blue Ventures expedition, some days you'll work long hours in a remote and challenging environment. Consequently, we provide our volunteers with comfortable accommodation and an excellent balanced diet, cooked by local chefs.

Cost

One of the most important issues to consider when looking into overseas conservation experiences and research projects is the cost of the project and identifying exactly what that cost includes.

When investigating options for conservation expeditions, make sure that you understand what kit and equipment you will be expected to purchase before your trip. No matter how remote the environment or location, volunteering on an expedition shouldn't mean that your living conditions are neglected. If, whilst working as a conservation volunteer, you're expected to sleep in tented accommodation and cook your own food, the price of your project should reflect this. Blue Ventures volunteers receive three meals per day, cooked by experienced local chefs and live in eco-cabins overlooking the beach and lagoon.

As a not-for-profit organisation, we do our utmost to minimise volunteer costs by:

- ensuring that volunteers do not need to purchase their own SCUBA equipment in order to work with us;
- negotiating discounts with equipment suppliers and travel agents.

Talk to past volunteers

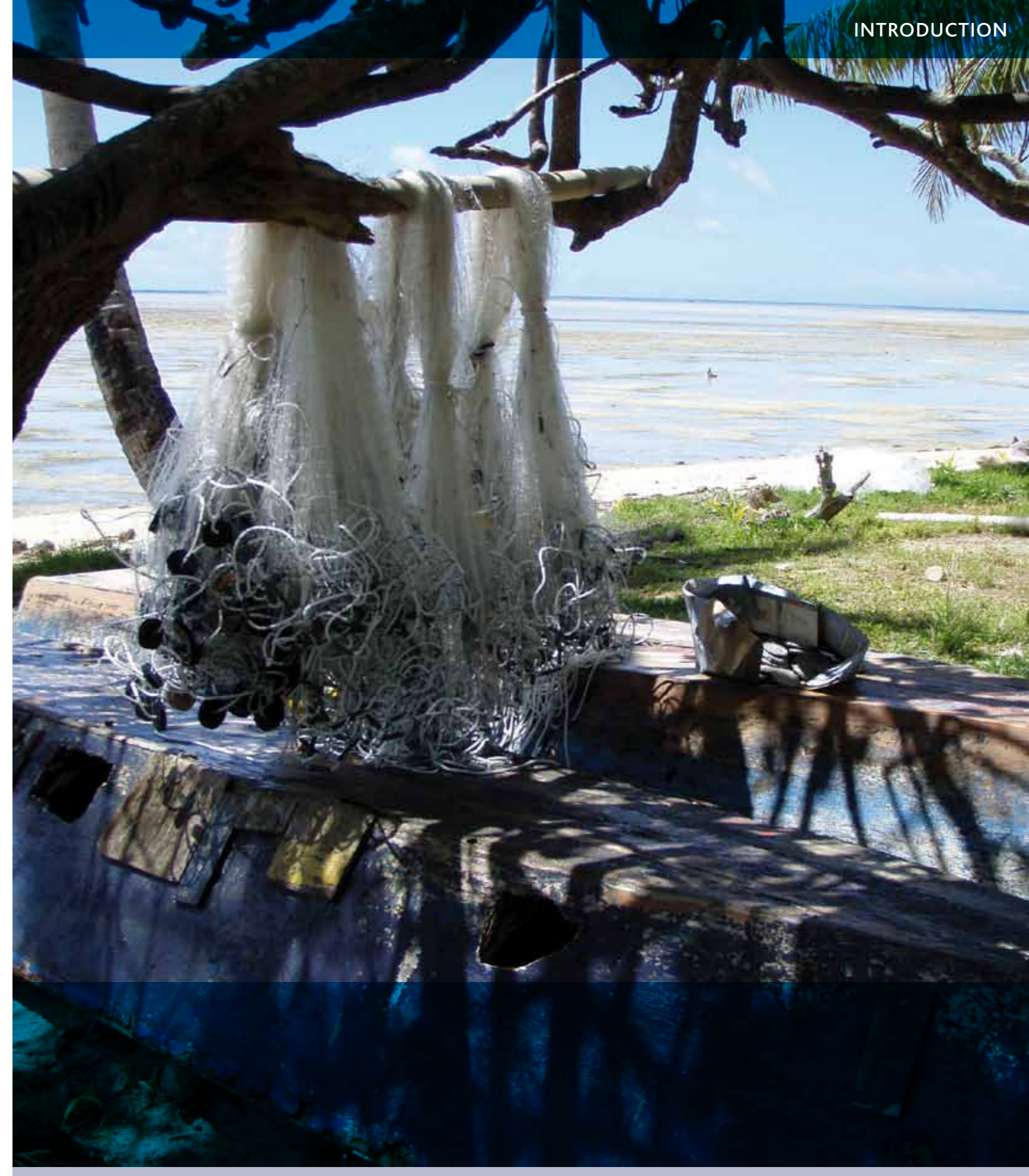
Nobody will be able to give you a better idea of whether you will enjoy the project than a past volunteer. When choosing your expedition, ask whether it's possible to speak to people who have participated in the project. Make sure that these are recent volunteers and don't be afraid to ask them detailed questions about life in the field. If you're considering participating in a diving or marine research-focused expedition, ask how often you will be diving.

An expedition is not just for people to attend, collect some data, and return home again. We are committed to providing you with new skills and enabling expedition participants to take an active role in all aspects of the expedition, including leadership and project management.

Our aim is for you to come out of the project having had a truly life-changing experience, fostering a passion and motivation to do more in the marine conservation, responsible tourism and education sector. We also hope that by the end of your time with us you'll share our love for Madagascar, Fiji or Malaysia both above and below water. This expedition guide has been written with the help of past volunteers to provide you with all the information you're likely to need before applying to join an expedition with us. We hope the material is of use to you, and hope to welcome you to a Blue Ventures expedition in the near future.

You can always find out all kinds of additional information on our website, our blog, on Facebook – for more impartial advice from past volunteers – or by dropping us a line in the London office: enquiries@blueventures.org or telephone +44 (0) 20 3176 0548.

All of our home-based staff have worked on overseas projects and expeditions with us in the past, either as expedition managers, diving or research staff. Our home staff are ideally placed to answer any questions or queries that you may have relating to an expedition – please feel free to make use of this invaluable information resource! We're always ready to help you with any queries that you might have about our projects.



"I very much appreciated the integrated research approach and I was thoroughly impressed by the way volunteers were able to integrate themselves into the broad range of conservation, education and research activities underway on site."

LEDA SMITH, RESEARCH VOLUNTEER, MADAGASCAR

"The overall experience is difficult to put in words. It will be one of the best experiences of my life and I am sometimes still speechless when friends ask how it was."

EDWIN SURTEL, RESEARCH VOLUNTEER,
MADAGASCAR

RESEARCH SITE: ANDAVADOAKA

Madagascar

The remote and tiny fishing village of Andavadoaka, located along Madagascar's southwest coast, boasts some of the most diverse and least explored marine systems on Earth.

Here, clear turquoise waters meet sandy white beaches and offer visitors a wide variety of activities from snorkelling to bird watching to trekking through legendary baobab forests. With a population of just 1,200, Andavadoaka is home to the Vezo, known as "people of the sea" for their cultural, economic and spiritual ties to the ocean waters.

So linked to the sea are they, that traditional ceremonies are regularly held thanking spiritual ancestors for the bounty the sea provides. Community members also believe that foreign visitors can "become" Vezo by learning how to properly sail their traditional canoes, called pirogues.

Because of the extreme remoteness of Andavadoaka, the area is far removed from any city sounds or sites. With its shallow lagoon, wooden huts, wandering goats and just seven hours of electricity a day, Andavadoaka feels like a private tropical paradise.

The third largest continuous coral reef system in the world is located here, extending more than 300km. The waters of Andavadoaka are home to endangered marine turtles, migrating humpback whales, spinner dolphins and more than 500 species of tropical fish and corals.

Global warming, destructive fishing practices and a growing population around Madagascar's coasts pose increasing threats to these hugely important underwater systems.

Spiny forests, described by some as the "eighth wonder of the natural world", are the main vegetative type in this eco-region. An odd combination of desert and forest,

spiny forests are endemic to Madagascar's southwest coastal areas, one of the only vegetative communities able to survive the extreme arid climate of the region. Plants here can go without water for more than a year. This forest can be seen all around Andavadoaka, and can be visited during excursions from the site. Incredible vistas with majestic baobab trees can be seen throughout the region.

A vast array of indigenous and endemic birds provides fascinating bird-watching opportunities. And, of course, there is plenty of opportunity to simply relax and sunbathe along deserted white beaches.

The climate is hot and dry all year round, and the nearest town to Andavadoaka, Morombe, is situated approximately two hours north (by 4x4 vehicle along very basic roads and tracks!).

Our research site is located some 45 km south of Morombe and 200km north of Toliara between the fishing villages of Andavadoaka and Ampasilava.

The main objective of our research programme is to survey and chart the unexplored fringing coral reefs, study their biodiversity and health, assess potential threats to these uncharted ecosystems, and develop management plans with local communities to protect their vital marine resources.

We lead expeditions to Andavadoaka where you will be trained in diving, scientific research and on-the-ground conservation. The expeditions run year-round and usually last for six weeks (although shorter and longer trips are available).

Our expeditions allow you to explore underwater worlds that few people have ever seen before. During daily diving excursions, team members encounter brilliantly

coloured starfish, sea anemones, corals and an endless array of tropical fish. Beach-side seminars teach team members how to identify marine species, calculate fish populations and collect scientific data to be used to develop conservation plans that will ensure these critical habitats remain healthy and productive for generations to come.

In the field, our resident local cooks are responsible for preparing all meals for the research team each day.

Generally meals consist of beans and rice alongside a main course of delicious seafood. We also try to arrange camping trips to remote islands in order for you to enjoy a different perspective of local life and have the opportunity to cook local produce for yourselves. The experience of cooking fresh fish and vegetables over a driftwood open fire on the beach is not to be forgotten!

Members of the expedition team live and work alongside villagers, with the opportunity to take lessons in the local language or to teach Andavadoaka school children English.

You will also participate in a number of other non-diving related research activities, such as participatory socioeconomic studies focussing on monitoring local fish catches. This involves close interaction with local communities and provides an excellent insight into the culture of the Vezo, the fishing people of western Madagascar.

The specific nature of the research undertaken when you are on site depends on a number of factors (including the weather!), and you will be fully briefed on this on arrival at the site.

All our work is carried out in close collaboration with researchers from the Institut Halieutique et des Sciences

Marines (IHSM), the University of Toliara's national marine institute, as well as a wide range of governmental and non-governmental partner organisations.

On each expedition, local scientists work closely with the team. This greatly benefits our research aims in the area, which are to identify strategies and targets that Blue Ventures, local communities and NGOs and the IHSM can work towards to develop sustainable local environmental management plans for the region's unique marine and coastal ecosystems.

These plans focus on improving the quality of life of the communities who depend on the marine resources, while maintaining the biological diversity and productivity.

Considering potential threats to the region's reefs, and as a priority within the framework of the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Madagascar, it is considered critical that data are gathered for use in local environmental management plans.

Our work also fulfils one of the priorities of the International Coral Reef Initiative (UNEP & IUCN), which is to increase the amount and availability of data on coral reefs in the western Indian Ocean.

In 2005, our work in Andavadoaka was recognised by the United Nations, when we became the first European Organisation to win a UNEP-UNDP 'SEED' award for sustainable development.

The Andavadoaka Project was chosen as a "shining example of how economic development and environmental protection can go hand-in-hand", by an international selection panel.



"The group dynamic that Blue Ventures attracts is uniquely appropriate, with no single demographic isolated and all minds eager to learn and explore."

LINDSAY BAZETT,
RESEARCH VOLUNTEER

RESEARCH SITE: LELEUVIA

Fiji

The remote and tiny island of Leleuvia, located in the Lomaiviti group in the centre of Fiji, boasts some of the most diverse and least explored marine systems on Earth. Here, the Pacific Ocean meets the white, sandy beach and offers visitors a wide variety of activities from snorkelling, touch rugby and volleyball to hiking through the rainforest.

Leleuvia is home to a small backpackers resort and our research site. The village communities that we work with are spread throughout the region, from the villages of Moturiki a few minutes away by boat to Bau Island, the most historically significant island in the archipelago, nearly forty minutes west of Leleuvia. The residents of Bau Tikina and Moturiki Island rely on the bounty the sea provides.

Because of the remoteness of Leleuvia, the area is far removed from any city sounds or sites. With its shallow lagoon, wooden cabins, wandering hermit crabs and just a few hours of electricity a day, Leleuvia feels like a blissful refuge. The waters surrounding Leleuvia are home to endangered marine turtles, reef sharks, seasonal migrating humpback whales, occasional spinner dolphins and hundreds of species of tropical fish and corals. However, global warming, destructive fishing practices and Fiji's growing population pose severe threats to these hugely important underwater systems.

Tropical forests are the main vegetative type in this eco-region and Leleuvia's interior is covered with coconut palms. Of course, once your training has been completed, there is plenty of opportunity to simply relax and sunbathe by your accommodation and on the beautiful, white beaches.

The climate is tropical and warm all year round, and the nearest town to Leleuvia, Levuka, is situated approximately 30 minutes away by boat, on the island of Ovalau.

Our research site is located 5km southwest of Ovalau adjacent to the Moturiki Passage on the water boundary separating Fiji's eastern and central divisions, home to hawksbill turtles, reef sharks and other large pelagic fish.

The main objective of our research programme in the area is to survey and chart the unexplored fringing, patch and barrier coral reefs, study their biodiversity and health, and assess potential threats to these unknown ecosystems.

We are currently carrying out a baseline assessment of 'Kubuna Waters' - the traditional waters utilised by the seventeen coastal communities of Bau Tikina. Stage two of the project will begin once the baseline assessment has been completed. This will take the form of a resource inventory of targeted species. This stage of the project will be carried out in full partnership with the Department of Fisheries, Bau Tikina and the Provincial Council of Fiji's Central Division.

In partnership with South Pacific Projects, seventeen local communities, the Department of Fisheries, and research staff from the University of the South Pacific, we lead expeditions to Leleuvia where research volunteers are trained in diving, scientific research and on-the-ground conservation. The expeditions run year-round and usually last for six weeks (although shorter and longer trips are available).

The expeditions allow participants to explore underwater worlds that few people have ever seen before. During daily diving excursions, team members encounter brilliantly coloured hard and soft corals, starfish, sea anemones and an endless array of tropical fish.

Beach-side seminars teach team members how to identify marine species, calculate fish populations and collect scientific data to be used to develop conservation management plans that will ensure these critical habitats remain healthy and productive for generations to come.

You will live and work alongside fisheries research staff, with the opportunity to take lessons in the local language or to teach Moturiki school children about environmental awareness in our Environmental Clubs, set up with the permission of the Ministry of Education.

You'll also participate in a number of other non-diving related research activities, such as participatory socioeconomic studies focusing on monitoring local fish catches. This involves close interaction with local communities and provides an excellent insight into the culture of Fiji.

The specific nature of the research undertaken when you are on site depends on a number of factors, including the weather, and you will be fully briefed on this on arrival at the site.

All our work is carried out in close collaboration with researchers from the Fijian Department of Fisheries as well as a range of governmental, non-governmental and academic partner organisations.

On each expedition, staff from our partner organisations work closely with the team. This greatly benefits our research aims in the area, which are to identify strategies and targets that Blue Ventures, local communities, NGOs and the Fisheries Department can work towards to develop sustainable local environmental management plans for the region's unique marine and coastal ecosystems. These plans focus on improving the quality of life of the communities who depend on the marine resources, while maintaining the biological diversity and productivity.

Our work also fulfils one of the priorities of the International Coral Reef Initiative (UNEP & IUCN), which is to increase the amount and availability of data on coral reefs in the Pacific Ocean.



"Amazing, impossible to describe, unlike anything or anywhere I have ever been before, a great learning experience, a true experience of a lifetime."

NICOLA REEVE, RESEARCH VOLUNTEER

RESEARCH SITE: TIOMAN ISLAND

Malaysia



Malaysia lies in the heart of Southeast Asia and is home to stunning coral reefs and dramatic forests. Our volunteer project is located on beautiful Tioman Island, one of the world's premier dive sites and an ecological hot spot. In fact, the coral reefs nestled in the waters of the Southeast Asian countries have been found to be the most diverse coral reefs in the world.

This area is known as "The Coral Triangle" as it supports more than 600 species of reef building corals, more than 3,000 species of fish and contains 75% of all coral species known to science.

Marine research and monitoring as well as community development programmes are currently being carried out by qualified international and local staff and we are looking for volunteers to take part in our programme. This is a chance to be amongst the first to volunteer on a new and exciting project and to really make your mark!

Our primary aim is to contribute to the conservation of Malaysia's valuable ecological resources. Year round monitoring of the health of Pulau Tioman's marine environment is carried out by volunteers through underwater reef surveys, as well as hands-on reef and beach clean-ups. Additional marine research is carried out by our scientists, visiting scientists and local university students.

This research is being used to investigate the effects of tourists and fishing activities on fragile reef ecosystems, and is being made available to the local communities,

government departments and universities to formulate strategies to improve and protect the island's reefs and forests, and improve the lives of the island's inhabitants. Our research site is situated in Tekek village, Pulau Tioman, and our diving operations are run through the Tioman Dive Centre. For more information on the dive centre, please visit www.tioman-dive-centre.com

Tioman is regarded as one of the world's premier diving locations and has been attracting visitors for decades. Most reefs are fringing or patch reefs and the hard coral diversity and volume is astounding.

Many sites are simply beds of staghorn, finger corals and lettuce corals that go on as far as the eye can see. Beautiful soft corals in seafan beds and soft coral gardens are prolific here.

The diversity of colourful and enchanting reef fish is very high and tunas, jacks and barracuda can often be seen hunting. Colourful nudibranchs will reward those with the patience to seek them out, but those without the inclination to search can easily spot moray eels, rays, reef sharks and plenty of green and hawksbill turtles. Whale sharks and manta rays have also been known to visit Tioman! Visibility can reach 30m and water temperature ranges from 26°C to 30°C.

The Malaysian government has designated Pulau Tioman a national marine park. However, many of the rules and regulations of the park are not followed by local

residents, tourists and dive operators.

Local people are unaware of why the area is under protection and the benefits of conserving the area. There is little long-term, in-depth research and monitoring being carried out on the island.

We believe local communities must be involved in safeguarding their own island, and must understand how they can gain from its protection and learn more about marine ecology and conservation. Therefore, raising awareness in the local community through school projects, community projects and tourist projects is a large part of our work. The main focus of the work that we conduct in all of our expeditions is in collaboration with local communities so that we can put strategies in place that help to make marine resource use more sustainable.

As a volunteer, you will spend your time on Tioman learning about the marine environment. You need no previous dive experience to take part in our expedition. We will ensure that you are trained up to PADI Advanced Open Water SCUBA diver, by our PADI qualified diving instructor. You will then be trained to identify fish and other marine organisms, learn how to conduct underwater marine surveys and receive a thorough background in marine ecology and conservation through our daily lectures, workshops and "point-out" SCUBA dives. Once fully trained in reef survey techniques, you will be collecting reef health data via survey dives. You will also take part

in community and terrestrial research projects being conducted on our site. The forests in the interior of Tioman are incredibly diverse, thriving with wildlife, yet remain under-researched. Our scientists and visiting scientists will be providing baseline data on these environments.

Throughout your stay with us, as well as training and data collection, you will have the opportunity to help out with our local community programmes. This includes teaching English in the schools to children of all ages and helping our local Liaison Officer teach environmental and conservation workshops.

You will also have the chance to help out our partner project on the other side of the island - Juara Turtle Project - which has been running a turtle sanctuary for three years. In addition, you can visit and conduct school and community programmes in Mukut village, a quiet, fishing village in the south of the island, and live in homestays, providing you with a taste of 'real' Malay culture. Local conservation is affected by global activities, such as the aquarium, fishing and shell trades. Therefore, it can only be effective through raising awareness on a global scale. As a volunteer, you will not only personally contribute to conservation and research on Tioman, but we hope you will spread the message when you return home.



"Brilliant and thoroughly fulfilling. An unforgettable experience due to the quality of the staff, the charity's aims and the site. Everything about it was amazing and something I will talk about for a long time."

MIKE COWDY, MADAGASCAR

LIFE ON A

Blue Ventures Expedition



Expedition Manager
Responsible for the day-to-day running of the camp. They are in charge of all personnel on site, and are assisted by the other staff members.

Diving Manager
A highly experienced PADI Open Water Scuba Instructor and Emergency First Response instructor, responsible for coordinating and supervising all diving activities and dive training. On arrival at the camp, the Diving Manager will brief you fully on all relevant aspects of expedition health and safety.

Field Scientists and Research Coordinators (2-5)
Manage and supervise the research undertaken during each expedition. The science team, all experienced tropical marine biologists and social scientists, are also responsible for volunteer science training at the beginning of each expedition.

What should I expect?

In addition to diving and other research work, all volunteers are involved in a wide range of aspects of the day-to-day running of the project, from kit maintenance to dive planning. There are a multitude of tasks each day that can make expedition life extremely busy, but at the same time ensure that it will be a fascinating learning experience for all.

Each day begins early and often ends quite late. There is, however, plenty of time for rest and relaxation and for taking part in other activities such as volleyball, football, snorkelling, walking, sunbathing, back-gammon, chess, reading, and simply exploring the surrounding environments. Expeditions are superb fun but hard work. An enormous amount can be gained, although this depends on how much you put in! For an idea of the kinds of experiences that people have gained on our past expeditions, please see the "Day in the life" sections on our website:

www.blueventures.org/expeditions/day-in-the-life

We're also happy to put you in touch with volunteers who have worked with us in the past, if you'd like more impartial advice!

The team

In addition to medical and support staff, we have a dedicated in-field staff team, who you will work closely with during your expedition. The team is comprised of the following members:

- Expedition Manager
- Science Director
- Diving Manager
- Field Scientists
- Local Liaison Officer
- Research Coordinators

Please visit www.blueventures.org for introductions and biographies of current overseas staff members. Science training is carried out alongside dive training as soon as volunteers arrive at the camp. The duration of the marine science training period is weather dependent, but typically lasts around 10-14 days.

Science training, taught in an informal and highly engaging manner by our field staff, has a strong practical component, and is designed to give you a broad introduction to the spectacular natural history of the region, as well as a more detailed introduction to the specifics of the work you'll be carrying out as a volunteer. The course aims to impart an excellent working knowledge of some of the issues and driving forces affecting the management and conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems in Madagascar, Fiji, or Malaysia.

You're encouraged to prepare for the expedition by taking the time to study pre-departure science training materials that are given to everyone at the time of booking an expedition. On site, you will be taught identification of the species and groups of species you are likely to encounter during the course of survey dives, and finally how to implement these skills in underwater research methodologies.

Identification skills and survey techniques are practised throughout the science training programme, and at the end of this period you will have a short test to validate the accuracy of the data that you're collecting.

Whilst on site, your general health and well-being are looked after by the camp medical officer, who will be available at all times in case of accident or emergency.

Diving

Diving at our research sites is nothing short of stunning. Varying from shallow fore-reef channels to deeper sites and sea-fan forests, the sites we visit offer experienced and new divers alike the chance to encounter a wide range of the habitats you learn about during your time with us.

As an added bonus, when conducting reconnaissance dives, there is a very good chance that you will be the first person to ever dive at that site.

Of course one of the primary considerations of such remoteness is safety. All diving is carried out according to our Diving Protocol, and under the guidance of the site Diving Manager.

Part of this protocol is that one day in every six is taken as a compulsory "no-dive" decompression day, to let you unwind from the pressure of being in the water each day. The day off is also to ensure that any residual nitrogen build-up from the week's diving is completely cleared from your system.

Another key component of our dive protocol is that all divers are trained to at least PADI Advanced Open Water standard prior to taking part in any underwater marine research activities.

For those who have never dived before, our research sites are a fantastic place to learn: why learn in a pool when you can learn in a warm, tropical ocean!

Initial dive training to Open Water level is undertaken in the first week of the expedition, giving new divers

the chance to rapidly progress to diving with the more experienced divers on survey and reconnaissance dives.

Open Water trainees can receive the PADI Open Water Crew Pack as part of their pre-departure information for a small fee. Please be sure to complete all the Knowledge Reviews prior to arrival on site and you will be well set to progress quickly through your training.

Further dive training to Advanced Open Water level ensures that all divers on the expedition are capable and confident in the water. For divers who arrive on site already trained to this level (or equivalent), your initial dives will be a chance to refresh your diving, and start to explore the reefs. If you are a qualified diver who has not dived for more than six months, we ask that you take part in a SCUBA Tune-up to refresh your skills before arriving on site.

There is also the opportunity to take your diving education further still; each expedition, several volunteers complete the Emergency First Response and Rescue Diver courses. These two courses go hand-in-hand to increase a diver's knowledge of first aid, along with techniques for locating and dealing with tired, panicked or unconscious divers.

For those who intend to stay for a second expedition, training to Divemaster level is available.

Accommodation

You have the exclusive use of a group of eco-cabins at our sites. Each eco-cabin accommodates up to four, but we can offer single and double rooms on request for a supplement.



For photographs of our sites and accommodation please visit www.blueventures.org

Food & water

"What's the food like?" We're confident that you will not be disappointed.

We're able to cater for most dietary requirements, and there are typically several vegetarians in each research group. Inform our London office of any special dietary requirements that you may have prior to your arrival in the field. Locally caught fresh fish is likely to form a major component of your diet: if you're not a fan before the expedition, you will be by the end.

Our host sites have small bars and shops with soft drinks, some alcoholic drinks, chocolate, crisps and cigarettes.

Because bottled water produces a large amount of waste plastic, we purify our own water on site using filters, iodine or chlorine.

Life outside diving

Outside of diving, expedition life is very active. There is plenty to keep you occupied, from trips around the island and various sites of interest to beach games or relaxing on our beach.

In addition, meetings of the fisheries cooperatives and Marine Protected Area (MPA) committees take place regularly to discuss progress with the management of their unique marine environments. We act as an environmental advisor and facilitator in community meetings, giving you an invaluable insight into some of the practicalities of our participatory approach to integrated coastal zone management in the region.

You will also have regular local language lessons, given by local teachers, and you are encouraged to take part in teaching English to teachers and children in weekly lessons at the village schools.

Due to the remote location of the research sites there will not be the same array of nightlife you might have at home. However, the warmth, the beach, a bar and music mean that the evenings can be as much fun as the days. Feel free to bring games to add to the site collection.

Depending on local weather and sea conditions, you should be able to complete on average one research dive per day.

However, this is only a guide, and depends on local conditions. By the end of your stay on the expedition you will be both skilled and experienced in the underwater identification of fishes, corals and invertebrates.

You will see a huge diversity of abundant marine life, both in the warm waters of the lagoons and in the deeper waters of the exterior of the reefs.

All of our underwater research is conducted within the framework of our Diving Protocol, which has been designed to take account of the frequency of dives, and kinds of dive profiles that volunteers and staff undertake on our expeditions. If you require any further information about this protocol, or if you have any further diving related queries, please contact our home diving manager at: diving@blueventures.org

Safety on camp

There are dangers associated with working both above and below the water in remote tropical environments. At Blue Ventures, safety is a priority on all of our expeditions. From before you arrive until after you leave a project, we will provide you with information and advice on all aspects of working and diving safely in the environment in which you will be based.

The camp and research vessels have VHF radios or telephones. Oxygen is carried on the dive boats and at the camp and we have a full Casualty Evacuation Plan (CASEVAC) for more serious scenarios. Health and safety protocols and evacuation plans are revised on a regular basis, and on arrival on site, you will receive a full safety briefing from the site medical officer, a qualified physician or paramedic.

Our diving staff are highly experienced divers trained in first aid and practical rescue management.

You are required to obtain a medical certificate certifying fitness to carry out SCUBA diving, prior to your departure.

"Aside from diving I was able to teach English to primary and secondary schools, as well as be involved with giving swimming lessons to the children of Andavadoaka."

ANDREW RITCHIE, MADAGASCAR



After your expedition

Where the expedition fee goes

The money you raise for participation in a project goes towards the running costs of the expeditions, including staff living expenses, local staff salaries, boat maintenance and fuel, research permits, and food.

The fee also goes towards administration costs, and most importantly, towards producing the data, research and management reports that you will have helped to create.

Some of our funds are also used to offer financial and logistical assistance to the marine institute and other partner organisations involved in marine research and coastal management in the area. This includes providing scholarships for local students and graduates to take part in our volunteer programme.

Blue Ventures is leading in a diverse range of multidisciplinary research, conservation and education initiatives in Madagascar, Fiji and Malaysia. Many of these pioneering projects involve working with local partners far beyond our research sites. Year round, our dynamic team of environmental and social scientists and educators is actively involved in working at a local level to promote community-centred marine and coastal conservation programmes.

None of this work would be possible without the financial support provided by our volunteers.

Keeping in touch

One of our main educational aims is to raise awareness of the enormous need for promoting global coral reef conservation and research.

Whilst in the field, you will make strong friendships with like-minded people from a diverse range of backgrounds, ages and nationalities, all of whom will share your interest in marine conservation.

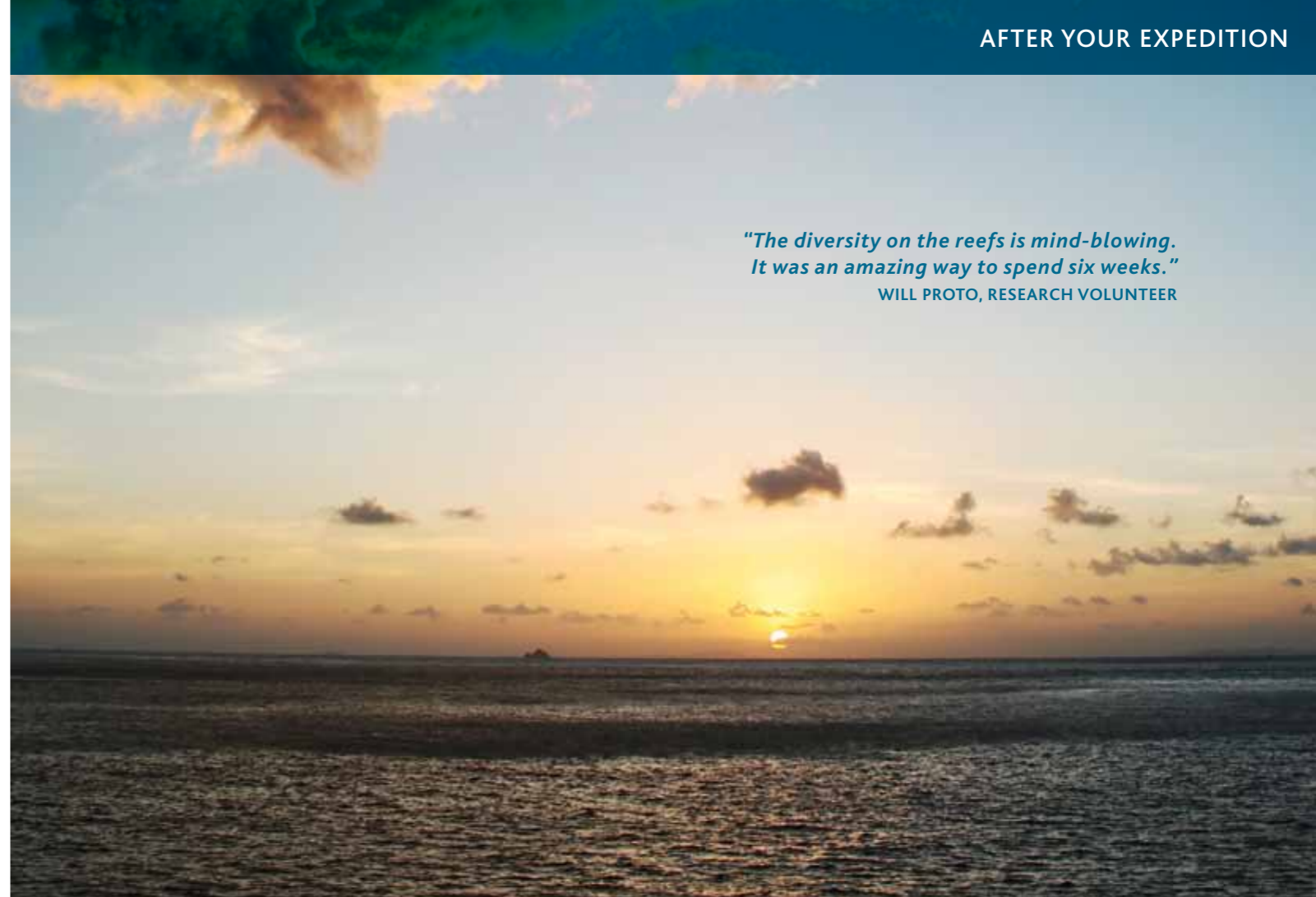
What happens when I get home?

There are numerous opportunities for you to stay in touch with your team, and to stay involved with our work, after your expedition. We keep you up to speed with project progress via newsletters, online newsfeeds, blogs, as well as social and academic gatherings of past volunteers and researchers.

If you want to get more involved with us when you return, we have a number of part-time and full-time paid and unpaid positions within the UK and abroad. This can range from working in our offices in London, to giving talks at a university, school, or dive show, to simply helping getting people on board.

Please visit the jobs section of our website for more information: www.blueventures.org/home/careers

"The diversity on the reefs is mind-blowing. It was an amazing way to spend six weeks."
WILL PROTO, RESEARCH VOLUNTEER



blue ventures

discovery through research

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Responsible Tourism Awards 2004: highly commended for "Best in a Marine Environment"



United Nations SEED Award 2005: winner, "Madagascar's first experimental community-run MPA"



Enterprising Young Brits 2005 & 2006: highly commended, "Social and Environment"



Responsible Tourism Awards 2006: highly commended for "Best Volunteering Organisation"



Skal Ecotourism Awards 2006: Winner, "General Countryside"



United Nations Development Programme Equator Prize 2006: the Village of Andavadoaka, winner (in partnership)



Responsible Tourism Awards 2007: highly commended for "Best in a Marine Environment"



Responsible Tourism Awards 2008: highly commended for "Best Volunteering Organisation"



Ashoka & National Geographic Geotourism Challenge 2008: finalist



We are a member of the Year Out Group, a not-for-profit association that promotes well-structured year out programmes and helps young people and their advisers select suitable and worthwhile projects.