

WHALE SHARK MARINE CONSERVATION

PROJECT

Inhambane, Mozambique



At African Impact, we see ourselves as the on-the-ground AFRICANSPECIALISTS in volunteering. We were founded over 5 years ago in Zimbabwe and have our head office in Cape Town, South Africa, with supporting operations offices in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. To date we, together with our project managers out in the field, have had the privilege of sharing Africa with over 3,000 volunteers who were determined to make a difference in the amazing communities and conservation areas in which we work.

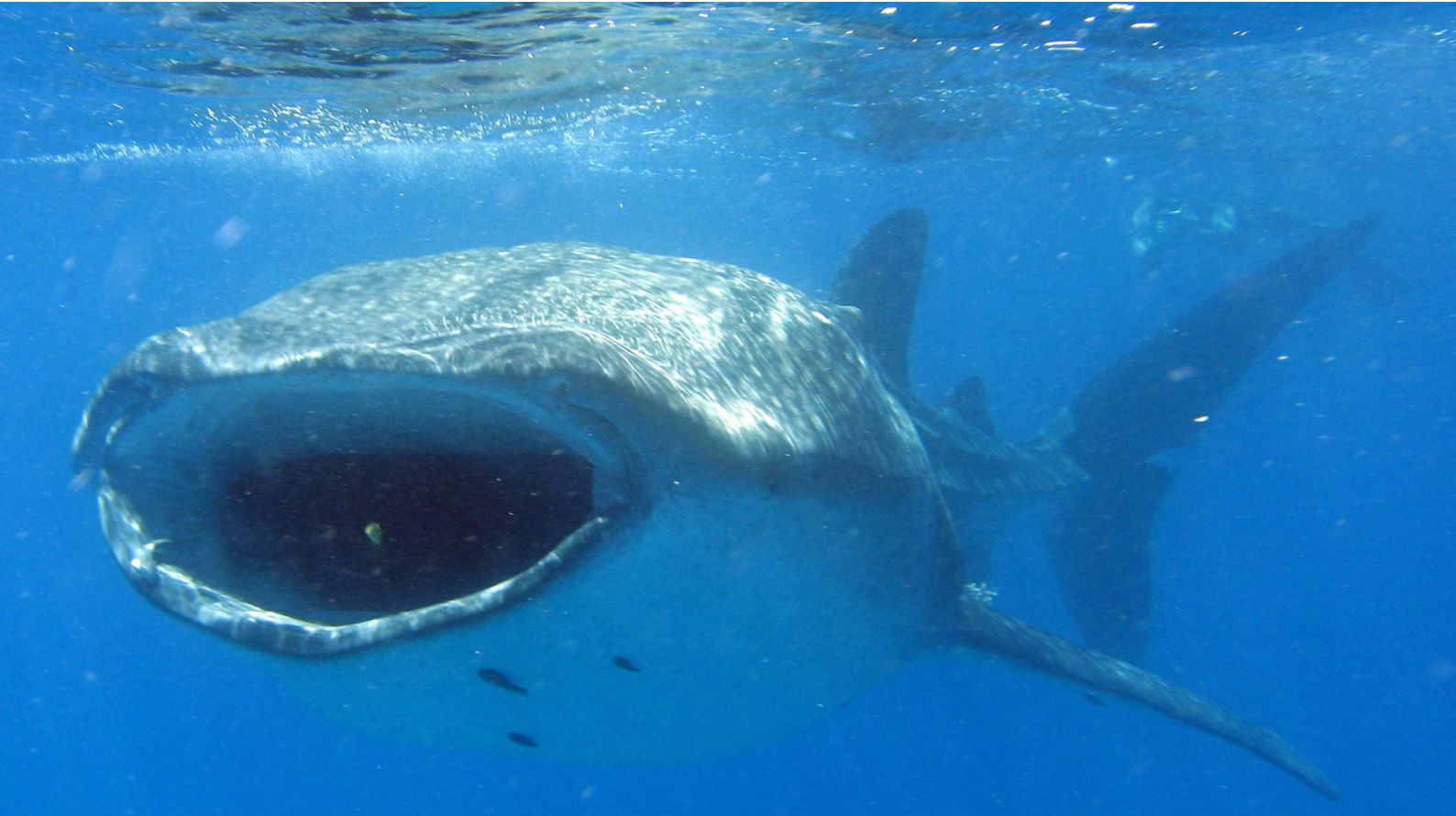
And they did... and so can you...

Based near Inhambane in the small seaside village of Tofo, you will have the opportunity to immerse yourselves in the captivating local Afro-Portuguese culture, and assist with the conservation of whale sharks.



African Impact

PHYSICAL ADDRESS 6 Carlton Close, Noordhoek, 7985, Cape Town, South Africa.
TELEPHONE +27 21 785 4319 Direct Line or CALL US TOLL FREE 0800 098 8440 (UK) 1-800-606-7185 (USA)



Project Highlights

- Dive course – a 4 day internationally recognised Open Water PADI scuba diving course or Advanced scuba diving course for volunteers already Open Water qualified
- Reef transect dives – scuba diving along line transects, above the reef to record coral condition, benthic cover and indicator species;
- Boat surveys – to locate and snorkel with whale sharks, record their position, photograph them for identification of individuals and estimate their numbers;
- Beach observation – locate whale pods, record their position and estimate their numbers; locate & record turtle nest sites (during laying season); visit turtle nest sites and record hatching success (during hatching season); record fishing catch quantities & species; assess levels of beach traffic
- Awareness and education – generate awareness about the conservation of whale sharks and manta rays and develop educational materials

More about the Whale Shark Marine Conservation Project:

Volunteer in Mozambique on the Whale Shark Marine Conservation Project and help with hands-on whale shark research, coral reef monitoring, humpbacked whale monitoring and turtle nest surveys, as well as, explore one of Africa's best scuba diving destinations.

The Whale Shark Marine Conservation Project involves gathering field data on whale sharks, coral reefs and other marine biodiversity to make recommendations for improving the conservation of marine life as well as creating general awareness about the marine environment.

Whale sharks are the oceans biggest fish and although they are sharks, are harmless to people since they feed on plankton. Whale sharks are a threatened species and are relatively easy to monitor owing to their size (up to 20m long) and swimming next to them is an awe inspiring experience! They are also good indicators of ocean productivity and can play a flagship role for the conservation of other marine creatures. Very little is known about the population dynamics and threats to whale sharks and with the increase of boat and fishing activities their feeding and migratory activities may become influenced and they are vulnerable to death or injury through boat strikes.



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The coral reefs that so much marine life is dependant on are under threat of exploitation, bleaching, alien invasive species and other ecological changes associated with tourism and other human activities. One of the components of the project is to monitor the condition of coral reefs in the Tofo area using methods based on the international reef check program. This involves doing scuba diving transects along the reefs and recording coral cover and indicator species of fish in one of Africa's best diving destinations.

Your role as a volunteer:

As a volunteer on the Whale Shark Conservation Project you will help carry out the marine research and monitoring activities for the project under the guidance of our project co-ordinator. You will join other volunteers on the project to collect the data via beach walks, boat surveys, swims and scuba dives off the coastline of Tofo in Mozambique. Volunteers are needed not only to carry out the field activities but also to help fund the project. You can expect an excellent diving, snorkeling and beach experience whilst gaining first hand marine research skills and contributing to a worthwhile project.

Volunteers help monitor whale shark numbers, behavior and ecology and take underwater identification photographs of the whale sharks. You will also join research scuba dives to help monitor the condition of coral reefs and indicator species of reef fish. At certain times of the year it you may help survey humpbacked whale numbers and turtle nesting activity as well as other indicators of the health of marine biodiversity. You may also assist with beach cleanups and other general environmental activities. You may also help upload and analyze the field data and create awareness among the general public of the importance of the marine environment.

You will start your placement with an open water scuba diving course which lasts between 4 and 6 days depending on conditions. This is a PADI international accredited course and upon completion you will get a certificate permitting you to scuba dive anywhere in the world. Those who are already licensed divers may either do the course as a refresher or an advanced course or do dives for an equivalent value. During the course & dives, you will be introduced to the activities you will be involved in and may get going with some of them. Once the course is completed you will have the time & skills to focus on the project activities.

Project activities

The whale shark component of the Whale Shark Marine Conservation Project involves joining boat launches under the guidance of our project co-ordinator on ocean safaris to snorkel with whale sharks in the open ocean. It involves taking underwater photographs for identifying the whale sharks as well as recording other ecological information. As a summary, you will collect the following information on the whale sharks:

- Date, GPS location, surface and underwater conditions
- Size, sex, scars/distinctive features, behaviour of the whale shark
- You will take an identification photograph and name each whale shark & record re-sightings



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In order to carry out these activities you will need to be a capable swimmer (able to swim 100m unassisted) and snorkeler, being able to hold your breath to dive down would be an advantage.

The coral reef monitoring involves joining boat launches under the guidance of our project co-ordinator on scuba dives and carrying out underwater data collection on indicator species of coral fish and the condition and cover of coral on the reefs. As a summary, on these research dives you may carry out the following activities:

- Reef transects recording indicator species of reef fish;
- Timed counts of the numbers of each indicator species of reef fish;
- Coral reef quadrats to assess the cover and condition of different coral groups;

In order to carry out these activities you will need to be capable of equalizing your ear pressure and willing to learn to scuba dive. A four day internationally recognized PADI open water diving course is provided as part of this project to train you to be able to carry out this coral reef monitoring. If you already have this qualification you may do an advanced open water diving course instead or, for experienced divers, you will receive a discount on your project placement fee and participate in extra research dives during orientation.

During June-August you may help monitor the numbers of humpbacked whales on their seasonal migration up and down the coast. This involves beach based observations using binoculars and boat based observations recording the numbers of whales and where possible the makeup of the pods. Although their numbers have increased these whales are still vulnerable and this work will help provide recommendations for the improved conservation of these important ocean giants.

During October-February you may help survey the nesting of turtles on beaches in the areas around Tofo. Historically, loggerhead turtles have nested here in significant numbers and although these as well as leatherback turtles and hawksbill turtles are sighted in-water, their nesting has declined dramatically owing to poaching. The surveys involve working with local community representatives to patrol the beaches at night during laying season (October-December) recording nest sites and tagging adults where possible, then visiting nests during hatching season (December-February) to record hatching success. A number of more general environmental awareness and cleanup activities will be also carried out during the project. The information collected during the field work is collated into a computer database both on-site and at the head office and some of the data is uploaded onto an international on-line database.

The project starts on the first Monday of each month with a minimum time commitment of 4 weeks, 2 weeks if you are already PADI qualified.

Start dates for 2011 are as follows:

3-Jan, 7-Feb, 7-Mar, 4-Apr, 2-May, 6-Jun, 4-Jul, 1-Aug, 5-Sep, 3-Oct, 7-Nov, 5-Dec

Start dates for 2012 are as follows:

2-Jan, 6-Feb, 5-Mar, 2-Apr, 7-May, 4-Jun, 2-Jul, 6-Aug, 3-Sep, 1-Oct, 5-Nov, 3-Dec



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A typical day in the life of a Whale Shark Marine Conservation Project Volunteer:

Although day to day activities vary on the Whaleshark Marine Conservation Project a typical day in the life of a volunteer working on the Project might be:

- 07:30 – wake up and have breakfast
- 08:30 – data entry on the computer from previous day's research work
- 10:00 – Walk over to the dive center (100meters away) and get prepared for a whale shark launch. Jump on the boat and head out to sea to find whale sharks. On finding a whale shark enter the water snorkelling next to the whale shark and take photos of the correct parts of the shark. Photos enable us to identify individual sharks around the world and track their movements, age etc.
- 13:00 – Lunch
- 14:00 – Depending on the time of year – whale counts and data collection from on top of the dunes or preparation for turtle work in the night.
- 15:30 – Work generally ends around 3.30pm but this is flexible and can sometimes be earlier and sometimes later.

(Please note daily activities may vary slightly and the above is to give an example).



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Project Travel Highlights

- Based in Tofo, you will have the opportunity to immerse yourself in the captivating local Afro-Portuguese culture and cuisine.
- Vilanculos and Inhassoro are two intriguing towns that form the gateway to the Bazaruto Archipelago. The islands of Benguera, Margeruqe and Bazaruto make up a World Heritage Site and a dugong conservation area.
- Paradise Island lives up to its name; its shores are home to some fascinating historical relics and breathtaking marine life abounds

Project Orientation

Your orientation will take place at the project base in Tofo. The orientation will entail a further introduction to staff, background information and a deeper insight into the project and the work that you will be doing.

The orientation starts with a presentation by the project co-ordinator to prepare you for your project and you will then be shown around Tofo and Inhambane. Thereafter you will do an open water scuba diving course which usually lasts between 4 and 7 days depending on conditions. This is a PADI international accredited course and upon completion you will get a certificate permitting you to scuba dive anywhere in the world. Those who are already licensed divers may either do the course as a refresher or an advanced course or alternatively receive a discount on their volunteer fee and do extra research dives during orientation. Once the course is completed you will have the time & skills to focus on the project activities.

Project Costs - 2012

2 WEEKS	4 WEEKS	6 WEEKS	8 WEEKS
€ 1,690	€ 2,775	€ 3,350	€ 3,925
\$2,340	\$3,845	\$4,635	\$5,435
£1,299	£2,135	£2,575	£3,020

Project Cost Includes

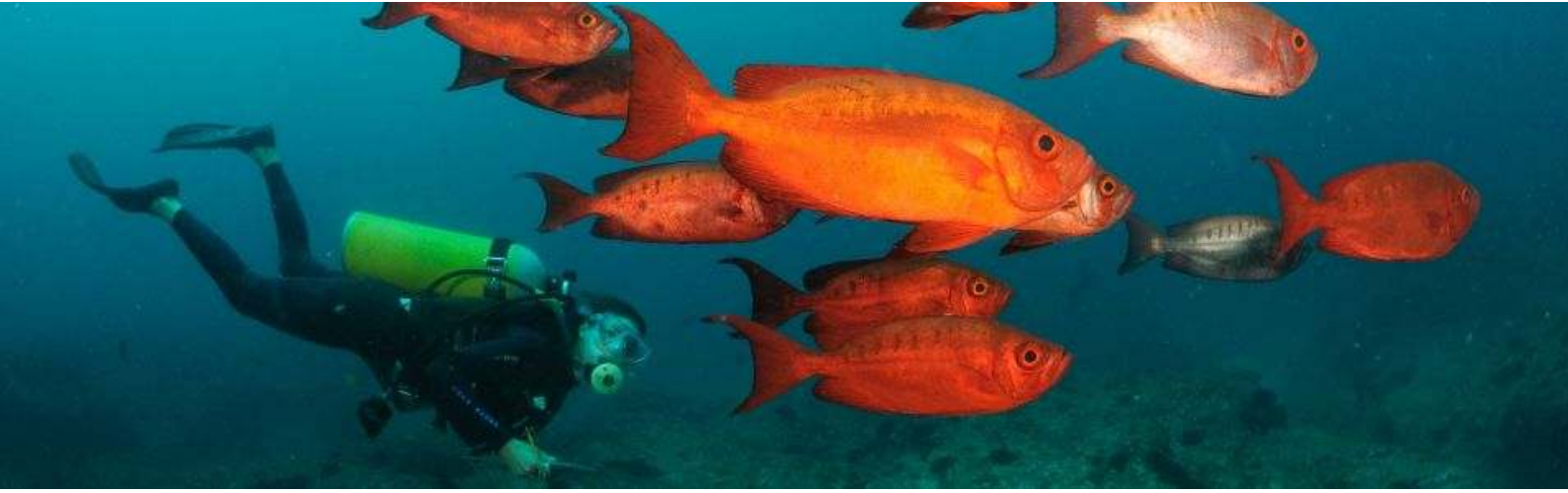
- Project Fee: this entails financing that goes directly back into the project that you are involved with. This project fee facilitates funding for items such as research materials, equipment, project facilitation and development, etc.
- PADI Open-water diving course when you arrive at the project base in Mozambique (or Advanced Course for volunteers already Open Water qualified). Experienced divers will receive a discount on their volunteer placement and extra research dives during orientation instead of a scuba diving course. Full board and lodging which includes 3 meals a day which you prepare together with other volunteers.
- Assistance in your projects by staff and volunteer coordinators. Full support from African Impact, and project managers and coordinators throughout your time on your placement.
- Comprehensive orientation on arrival.
- Transfer to and from Inhambane Airport to Tofo
- Project equipment
- Project activities including boat launches for whale shark snorkelling and research dives

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Project Cost Excludes

- Personal travel insurance for the duration of your placement, which should include cover for repatriation
- All transport by air to Johannesburg & Inhambane International Airport.
- All items of a personal nature, such as curios, gifts, clothing (work and other).
- Visa costs on arrival.
- Email/Internet and telephone calls.
- Soft drinks, wines and spirits.
- All visas for border crossings.
- Any excursions over and above your planned itinerary in Mozambique

Project Support

Throughout your stay at your placement you will have the support and guidance of experienced field leaders who are part of our greater African Impact support team, and will provide you with competent 24-hour field support and assistance.

Project Accommodation

Volunteers are accommodated in a double story volunteer house 5 minutes walk from the beach! The house is equipped with 6 twin rooms, 2 full bathrooms and 2 kitchens (plus electricity and hot running water). You will do your own laundry by hand. All bedding and mosquito nets are provided.

There are restaurants and bars nearby for evening and weekend entertainment, and Tofo's center is within easy walking distance, where there are very basic shops, a few restaurants and bars and a number of beach activities available.



Project Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are all included in your programme price. For breakfast, lunch and dinner you will be provided with food and you will take turns in preparing meals. Breakfast will generally consist of cereal and toast, lunch will usually be sandwiches and your evening meal will be a cooked meal.

Dietary preferences will be catered for where possible but you should bear in mind that the meals are basic and Tofo has limited choice for food so please be understanding of the efforts of those who have prepared the meal. Please check with us prior if you have a specific dietary need to see if we can cater for it.



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How to get there: We will meet you at the airport!

Volunteers should fly to Inhambane in Mozambique. You may do this by flying to Johannesburg in South Africa then take a connecting flight using LAM (Mozambique Airlines) to Inhambane airport on the start date where we will meet you. (Please make sure you arrange a valid visa for Mozambique prior to flying- if staying longer than 30 days be sure to get a single entry (not a multiple entry) visa). You will then be taken to Tofo using local public transport and settled into your accommodation.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU FOR A UNIQUE AND REWARDING EXPERIENCE!

Our Preferred Travel Insurance Partners

Visit <http://www.africanimpact.com/news-article/need-travel-insurance--weve-got-just-the-answer-for-you!/20100219> for a great deal on reliable travel insurance



Meet your Destination Manager!



Kirsty Coetzee will take you through the entire process of your placement, and will be available to answer any questions you may have. Based at our head office in South Africa, she was born and bred in the beautiful city of Cape Town. With a love for Africa and a passion for Conservation and Humanitarian efforts, she feels proud to be part of an organization which strives to make a difference.



Our Partners

The Happy Africa Foundation www.happyafricafoundation.org African Impact is proud to have been instrumental in the establishment of The Happy Africa Foundation in 2007 and continues to be one of the Foundations major supporters. UK Registered Charity Number: 1123529. The mission of The Happy Africa Foundation is to empower the African people through the support of community and conservation based initiatives that operate at grass roots level.



We are proudly affiliated to the UK-based Know Before You Go campaign that promotes education and knowledge-sharing amongst travelers.



African Impact is delighted to have been nominated as a 2009 World Travel Awards Finalist and see this as exciting recognition of our position as African specialists in Volunteering, with over 5 years experience in sharing Africa with travelers who have a passion for making a difference.

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