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Mozambique Marine Research & Whale Shark Conservation

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: Mozambique Marine Research & Whale Shark Conservation **Trip Code:** MOWS **Duration:** From 17 days

Trip Highlights

- Learn about the amazing marine life of Mozambique
- Bag yourself a PADI qualification
- Snorkel and scuba whilst conducting your research
- Spend your free time exploring the beautiful Mozambique
- You may get the chance to work with whale sharks!



Overview

Into all things marine? Get stuck in on our marine conservation project in Mozambique and get the opportunity to gain a PADI qualification, conduct all important research on the local area, and if you're lucky- the chance to swim with whale sharks too!

On the marine conservation side of the project, you'll be gathering data on the beautiful coral reefs and whale sharks, and to get a closer look, you'll also scuba and snorkel off the coast of Tofo in Mozambique. The concerns of the project do change throughout the year, so check out our itinerary guide to get a closer look of what you'll be up to!

Destination Info

Mozambique is set on the stunning indian ocean, so if you're looking for crystal clear seas, lovely hot weather and your own slice of paradise, this is the place to come!

The country is relatively undiscovered, so it's not full to the brim with tourists and tacky shops. Mozambique provides an authentic African experience, which is great to experience for yourself when you get some free time away from the project!

Itinerary



If you're into all things marine, biology and seafife (as well as lovin' all things tropical and beach!) then this project is for you! There are so many elements that'll make up your time with us, so prepare yourselves- you're going to have an awesome time!

The whale shark component of the project involves joining boat launches (under the guidance of the project co-ordinator) on ocean safaris to snorkel with the whale sharks. You'll be taking underwater photos and getting stuck in gathering a load of information- including the GPS location, size and sex and an identification of the sharks, which is incredibly valuable in helping aid the survival of the speices.

You'll also help out on other parts of our marine project, which will vary depending on the time of year you choose to depart.



Although day to day activities will vary on the 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 of the research from the previous day

10:00 – Walk over to the dive centre 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, you'll start to snorkel- whilst gathering info and taking photos of the mammal. Photos enable us to identify individual sharks around the world!

13:00 – Lunch

14:00 – Depending on the time of year, you'll get stuck into your next activity.

15:30 – Work generally ends around 3.30pm, but this is flexible. Sometimes it can be later, sometimes it can be earlier- so be prepared to take everything as it comes!



June-August

During this three month period you'll help to monitor the numbers of humpback whales on their seasonal migration up and down the coast. (This involves beach based observation, and keeping your eyes peeled for these stunning mammals!). Although their numbers have increased, these whales are still vulnerable and your work will help provide some key information to help improve the conservation of the humpback in the future.

October-February

Over this period of time, you'll help monitor the progress of loggerhead turtles and in particular their nesting habits. Over the last few years, a large amount of loggerhead, leatherback and hawksbill turtles have nested on our beaches, but their nesting has declined dramatically recently due to poaching. We'll also patrol the beaches at night, and raise awareness by talking to the fisherman in the area.

Accommodation

Volunteers are accommodated in a shared volunteer house. There are dorm style bedrooms, a kitchen upstairs and downstairs and a communal lounge. Bed, mattress, sheet and pillows will be provided (a sleeping bag is needed during winter i.e. May-August). There are communal toilet and shower facilities. You will need to do your own laundry by hand. The house is situated in Tofo village 100m from the beach. Tofo's center is within 200m, where there is a market, some very basic shops, a few restaurants and bars and a number of beach activities available.

Please note: There are no mosquito nets provided so you will need to take one with you.

Programme Services and Facilities

Although Mozambique's civil war ended in the 90s, due to the length of the unrest, development in Mozambique came to a stand still and the country is still very much in development stage. Some of the basic facilities that you might be used to at home (banks, internet cafes, supermarkets) will not be available to you in quite the same way. Life in Mozambique will most probably be very different to what you are used to at home – expect the unexpected and learn as much as you can. Travelling through unfamiliar locations is usually an inspiring and life changing experience. Make the most of your experience!

Internet

Internet is available at the project in the town of Tofo and Inhambane for around 60 Rand per hour

Telephone

The international dialling code for Mozambique is +258.

To place an outgoing, direct dialled international call, dial +44 for the UK, followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap Experience dial +44 1892 516164.

There is mobile phone signal in Mozambique; however, coverage is limited, especially outside of major towns. If you are taking your phone with you, please ensure that it is set up for roaming. It is also a good idea to get your phone unlocked, so that you can purchase a local SIM card which will give you better signal and will allow you to call and text home cheaply.

Laundry

There is not a washing machine available at your accommodation but there is a washing tub that can be used to hand wash your clothes.

Electricity

Mozambique uses 220V – 240V electricity, and 120V devices will burn out if used without a power converter, so please do not bring things like hairdryers and straighteners without a transformer.

There are three different types of plug sockets found in Mozambique. There are the type that accept two flat blades, also those that take two round pins, and finally, those with two round prongs and one larger round prong. The official and most common of the three is the one that takes two round pins.

Banking

There is a bank in the town of Inhambane, which is 20mins away on a bus. You can change US dollars and South African Rands in cash at the banks but you cannot cash travellers cheques. We suggest you bring cash in South African Rands or US Dollars. You can change both of these currencies to local Mozambican Metical when you arrive in Mozambique.

There are a few ATM cash machines in the town of Inhambane that accept most credit and debit cards. Visa and MasterCard are accepted as well as networks including Maestro, Plus and Visa Electron. The ATMs will issue Mozambican Metical.

Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are all included in your programme price. Breakfasts generally consist of cereals and toast, lunches usually sandwiches and salads, whilst dinners will be a cooked meal. All meals are prepared by volunteers on a rotation basis.

What's Included

- All accommodation
- All meals
- Pick-up and drop-off at Maputo Airport
- PADI Open Water course (or advanced course, or research dives for an equivalent value)
- Use of project equipment
- Full support of the project coordinator
- 24-hour support number



What's Not Included

- All flights
- Travel Insurance
- Visas
- Telephone, internet, extra food and drinks, weekend activities
- Mosquito nets
- Anti-malarial tablets- avoid Lariam, Mefliam and Mefloquine



Is This Trip For You?

Please note that if you have a medical condition or injury, you may be required to obtain a 'Fit to Dive' letter from your Doctor to declare that you are able to dive with your condition. Please double check with our team as to whether a letter is required for you to participate in this programme.

Malaria Prophylaxis

Any volunteers taking LARIUM, MEFLOQUIN or MEFLIAM will not be permitted to dive as it causes increased risks. You should advise your doctor that you are going on a dive holiday and request another suitable anti-malarial other than Larium.

You may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. However, you will still have the full support of your in-country team and those at the project. If you are looking for a group volunteering experience we have plenty of options for you to consider.

Additional Information

Important information

If you are joining the programme for 2 weeks, you will need to already hold a diving qualification of at least PADI Open Water.

Dive accredited volunteers not requiring/wanting a dive course but who have NOT logged a dive within 6 months of beginning their project MUST complete a SCUBA REVIEW before they can participate in their research dives. The Scuba Review consists of a theory pool session and a practical dive. This can be done before the start of the programme or in Tofo with the dive centre.

The cost of a Scuba Review is 3400 Meticals (payable to the dive centre) or one programme dive plus 1900 Meticals (again, payable to the dive centre). This cost is NOT included in the program fee, and volunteers are liable to pay this amount to the dive operator on completion of the Scuba Review. Please note these prices are subject to change.

Volunteers must bring their dive cards with them as proof.

It is important to remember that Whale Sharks are wild animals and as such it is not possible to guarantee the number of Whale Shark sightings during each encounter or dive.

Scuba Medical

To take part in the this programme you will need to complete the following medical questionnaire; [PADI Medical Statement](#). If you answer no to all questions then you will just need to take the form to the project with you. If you answer yes to any of the questions on page one or are over 45 years of age then you will need to get a doctors report to take to the project with you. Please note that if any circumstances change after the doctors report you will need a new report.

What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and therefore, you may not need all of the listed items.

Also, please be aware that the weather can change considerably from winter to summer. In winter the evenings can get cold, the temperature sometimes falling down to 15°C. Therefore please look at the climate chart for the period that you are travelling and ensure that you pack accordingly, for example in the colder period you will need jumpers and a warm coat for the nights.

Personal Admin

- Your passport – You cannot go anywhere without this and in some countries you cannot even enter National Parks without one
- Airline tickets and a copy of your flight itinerary
- Two passport photos for your visa application
- Insurance certificate and policy document – these are very important for you to be aware of what you are and are not covered for on your trip. They are also necessary to have when making a claim.
- Vaccination card from your GP – you may be asked when entering a country to prove that you have had required vaccinations
- A copy of all credit card and bank account numbers, as well as international contact numbers to cancel lost or stolen cards
- Your pre-departure information with useful and emergency contact numbers
- Secure, waterproof bag for documents and money: sealable plastic bags will do
- If you already hold a dive qualification, then please bring your dive card/s, log book and certification as proof.

General

- Camera with film and batteries
- Notebook and pens
- Pocket knife - optional
- Binoculars for spotting marine life from the shore
- Water bottle
- Sleeping bag (make sure it is suitable for the season in which you are travelling - Summer: September to April / Winter: May to August)
- Sleeping bag liner: for hot nights or as an extra layer in your sleeping bag
- Beach towel
- Sewing kit
- Personal hygiene kit
- Toiletries
- Towel
- Mosquito net
- Sunglasses (high UV protection)
- Sun cream (high factor needed)
- Sun hat / Bandana
- Small torch (head torch is preferable) plus extra batteries and bulbs
- Day pack/rucksack for everyday use
- Mobile phone – set for roaming or unlocked so you can buy a local SIM card on arrival
- Personal stereo
- Sewing kit and pocket knife for general use
- Travel wash for clothes
- Travel Guide, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guide
- The evenings can be quiet so bring books, cards, board games etc to play

Clothing

- Hiking boots or trainers
- Sandals or flip flops
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers (for the wet season Nov-April)
- Fleece type pullover (it can get cold at night)
- Long trousers

- Sets of outdoor loose fitting cotton clothes with full arm and leg cover for cooler mornings and evenings
- Three pairs of shorts for Project work
- T-shirts/vest tops for project work
- Casual clothes for the weekends
- Swimwear
- Underwear – enough for at least seven days, possibly more
- Pyjamas/nightwear

Medical Kit

- Hand sanitiser and wet wipes
- Anti-malarial tablets (Any volunteers taking LARIUM (including any of its derivatives i.e. MEFLOQUIN) will not be permitted to dive as it causes increased risks. You should advise your doctor that you are going on a dive holiday and request another suitable anti-malarial other than Larium.)
- Personal First Aid Kit
- Personal medication e.g. prescription drugs/inhalers
- Painkillers
- Contact lenses and solution if necessary
- Plasters
- Lip Balm with SPF
- Tweezers (not in hand luggage!)
- Scissors (not in hand luggage!)
- Sanitary products for women if necessary
- Mosquito repellent (ensure it contains DEET or equivalent)
- Antihistamine tablets
- Rehydration salt sachets
- Ear Plugs – in case you sleep close to a snorer!

If you suffer from seasickness think about tablets for boat based research

Please note: Please pack as lightly and compactly as possible as space and weight is limited. Ideally you should not have more than 22kg of luggage and should be able to fit everything into a 60 litre backpack plus one small day pack.

Minimum Age

Minimum age of 17 years (with parental/ guardian consent), maximum decided on potential participants health and physical ability.

Minimum Numbers

There are no minimum numbers on the trip.

Please note: you may be the only volunteer at your chosen project at any one time. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact us

Flights

Your flight to Mozambique should arrive at Maputo (MPM) Airport on your programme start date, and your return flight should be arranged for your programme end date.

To receive the included transfer from Maputo airport to your accommodation your flight will need to arrive on the

programme start date and depart on your programme end date.

To book your flights, please contact your sales advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your online account or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

FAQs

1. Do I need to have any diving experience?

If you are only staying on the programme for 2 weeks, you must already hold a PADI diving qualification. For programmes of 3 weeks or more you will do a diving course (either PADI open water or PADI Advanced Open Water) on the first week you are there. If you already have a diving certificate (PADI) you will get extra diving instead of the dive course.

2. Do you I need to take my own diving equipment?

No – they supply all the equipment you need, however you can take your own equipment if you prefer. If you have your own underwater camera and housing, you can also take this with you.

3. Are mosquito nets provided?

No, you will need to take your own mosquito nets with you.

4. How much money will I need to budget for the programme?

Approximately £50 per week for snacks and drink will be enough. If you are planning on doing a bit of shopping in local Curio markets, you will need to budget more.

5. When is the best time to dive with the Whales Sharks?

The best time to go is between October to March.

6. Do I need special insurance to participate?

Our Adventure Policy will cover this programme. Please see our insurance pages for further information.

7. When is the Turtle season?

Typically the Turtle nesting season runs from November to February. Whilst the hatching season generally runs from December to February.

8. Will I need a sleeping bag?

Yes you will need to take a sleeping bag.

9. Is there a safe/safety deposit box?

Yes, there will be one available for you to use.

Police Check

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa, insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

Mozambique's national currency is the metical (plural – meticais) 'MT'. It's divided into 100 subunits called centavos. Coin denominations come in MT 10, 5, 2 and 1, and centavos 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1. The notes denominations come in MT 1,000, 500, 200, 100, 50 and 20.

The new metical replaced the old metical in July 2006 at a rate of 1000 old meticais to 1 new metical.

All cities and large towns have access to ATMs, commonly operated by the Banco Internacional de Mozambique (BIM) and all accept Visa but not MasterCard.

The South African rand is a commonly accepted currency in southern Mozambique and there is easy access to change US dollars in most banks without paying a commission.

Traveller's cheques are easily changed at any Standard Bank branch but a minimum commission of US\$30 will be charged. Please note that the original purchase receipt will be needed when changing cheques and it's always advised to have your passport to hand.

You'll find your money goes a pretty long way if you purchase local foods and drinks.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant \$2.91
Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) \$2.07
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.65
Water (0.33 litre bottle) \$0.28

(Prices quoted in US Dollars)

Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a full passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information offered below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

All travellers except nationals of South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Botswana require a visa for entry into Mozambique.

Travellers are able to purchase an entry visa for up to 30 days on all major boarder crossings and international airports. However it's advised to apply for a visa before you departure your country to ensure entry.

Visa courier service

For those of you who would prefer a specialist company to take care of your visa needs, we have teamed up Visa Central who can offer you assistance and advice when arranging your visa/s for your time away; making your preparations for your trip easier and more straight forward.

To investigate costs for this service [click here](#) to select the country or countries that you wish to travel to.

If the visa form requires details of addresses/inviters/referees you will find all this information on your Online Account once you have booked.

Cultural Considerations

Religion

Most of Mozambique's people still maintain their indigenous beliefs, although a large proportion of people are Muslims and Christians/Roman Catholics.

Clothing

Always try to dress appropriately; some occasions will require conservative dress, so shoulders and legs covered. It is a good idea to bring light weight trousers and light weight long skirts for girls.

Smoking and Alcohol

Smoking and drinking is tolerated in Mozambique and you will find that you will be able to get imported beer cheaply in most establishments. There are many nice local beers to try too.

However, please respect other volunteers. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact on your volunteer work during the week. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated on the project.

Drugs

It is absolutely forbidden to bring drugs into Mozambique. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs. If you get caught there is little chance that you will walk away without punishment. As in most countries, Mozambique has very strict rules when it comes to the possession of drugs. All drugs, including 'soft' drugs like marijuana, are illegal. Please do NOT use any illegal substances whilst travelling – it is not worth the risk and is not acceptable at the project.

Greeting

Pleasantries are taken seriously and using 'hello' and 'goodbye' can go a long way to making friends and being accepted. Please take the time to learn a few local words (see our language section) and show that you are keen to fit in. There is also a big emphasis on shaking hands. The Western way of doing this will be fine, but you are likely to pick up a few local variations!

Above all, Mozambique's people are easy-going - any social errors are unlikely to cause offence, so please do not worry!

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

Tourists are always targets for pickpockets and thieves. Please educate yourself about Africa and Mozambique in particular, before you leave, so that you can be alert for all types of situations. General travel safety rules are outlined below:

- Avoid travelling alone, especially at night
- Find out where the unsafe areas are and avoid them
- When travelling keep all-important documents and valuables in a safe place, like an inner hidden pocket or money belt
- Carry only as much cash as you think you will need for the day

- Don't wear expensive jewellery or watches
- Be wary of people who seem too friendly too fast
- Keep cameras out of sight. Always keep bags and purses in your sight
- Before swimming, ask how safe the area is

In addition, you will be working outdoors, in an unfamiliar community and environment. Please respect the advice given to you by the expedition leaders. Listen to your expedition leaders and respect the local rules and customs at all times!

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

Language Guide

The official language spoken in Mozambique is Portuguese. Significant amounts of people still speak indigenous languages such as Swahili, Makua-Lomwe, Tsonga and Shona.

Here are some useful phrases to remember when you get to Mozambique. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

English - Portuguese

Hello - *Ola*

How are you? - *Como esta*

I'm fine - *Bem (well or o.k.)*

Thank you (very much) - *Obrigado/a*

Please - *Faca favor*

Yes / No - *Sim/Nao*

Goodbye - *Adeus*

English - Swahili

Hello - *Salama/Jambo*

How are you? - *Hujambo*

I'm fine - *Sijambo*

Thank you (very much) - *Asanta (sana)*

Please - *Tafadhali*

Yes / No - *Ndiyo / Hapana*

Goodbye - *Kwa heri*

Food & Drink

Food in Mozambique is appetizing. Be prepared to try something new! The staple diet is more traditional food, including cassava (upshwa) and maize (xima). Fish is plentiful in Mozambique and you will find that crayfish and prawns are on most menus and are very good value.

The traditional staple diet in Africa is meat and carbohydrates. If you are a vegetarian you will be catered for with lots of fresh root vegetables such as yams and potatoes and fruits. However, please be aware that your meals towards the end of your programme may become a little repetitive so perhaps it may be worth buying a few of your favourite snacks whilst you are in Africa.

Public Holidays

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from locals who use long weekends to get away from the big towns.

To view a list of the public holidays for Mozambique, please see the link below:

<http://www.worldtravelguide.net/mozambique/public-holidays>

Weather

Southern East Africa has a very tropical climate, dominated by the wet and dry seasons. For both seasons, you will need to bring outdoor clothing preferably neutral in colour as well as a hat and sun block; the sun can be very harsh to your skin.

April-September: Dry Season: Nights and early mornings can be cold, especially during the winter months of May to August.

October-March: Wet Season: Days and nights can get very hot and sticky. You need light clothes although there might be a day the temperature drops so ensure you also bring a sweater. It's a time of heavy rain, especially between mid-November and mid February so bring a raincoat, waterproof shoes and plenty of clothes you can change into just in case you get caught in the rain. It is a beautiful season; everything turns green and you may witness many young animals appearing.

Time

Mozambique is two hours ahead of GMT.

In Africa, time is not a priority like it is in much of the western world – there is a saying that Africa works to 'Africa Time', which basically means you must exercise a lot of patience! If a boat is due to leave at 12pm, don't be surprised if it still hasn't a couple of hours later... keep an open mind, and arrive 'Expecting the unexpected'.

Electricity

Electricity in Mozambique uses 220 volts, 50Hz. If your device does not run on these rates, you'll need a voltage converter.

Outlets across Mozambique generally accept the following plug types:



Two round pins

Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as we make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of recommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

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