

QUICK FACTS

Location	Mafia Island, Tanzania.
Pick up point	Mafia Island - FLY in via Dar es Salaam (DAR) or Zanzibar
Duration	Join this project for 2 to 12 weeks.
Main activities	Learn about whale shark behaviour, observe & identify, assist with community projects.
Working routine	Variable hours - You will be busy for 6 days each week.
Who can join?	Interns aged 18 years or older on arrival in reasonable health. Younger interns must be accompanied by a legal guardian and will need to have their parents sign a liability release.
When can I join?	At any time between 01 October to end before 28 February each year.

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Orientation	Comprehensive project brief on arrival with ongoing training.
Accommodation	Traditional thatched houses around the camp - 2 interns per room. Upgrades to private room or stilt houses are possible.
Food	Three meals of fresh local food are prepared by our cooks daily - lots of fruit and seafood such as fish, octopus and squid, and also chicken and beef. Vegetarian and vegan diets or a gluten-free diet are not a problem.
Mandatory Skills and Theory Classes	You will learn about skin diving, first aid, coral reef ecology, whale shark biology and more.
Community Participation	You will participate in one or more local development projects such as teaching English, swimming lessons and whale shark conservation awareness.
Conservation Projects	You will be challenged to come up with strategies to deal with a variety of conservation issues such as plastic pollution of the ocean and beach erosion. Altogether you are expected to put in 10 hours a week on community and/or conservation projects.
Support	Full support is provided by the internship program manager, camp manager and Marine Biologist and all the camp staff..

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This exciting and varied program provides a unique opportunity to interact with whale sharks on a daily basis while gaining valuable skills and experience in both marine conservation and the tourism industry, by helping those working in the whale shark tourism industry and the marine biologists and program staff who are doing whale shark research and conservation.

You will live and work on a tropical island in the Indian Ocean, just off the coast of Tanzania.

During your stay you will:

- Participate in a series of courses, including first aid and marine biology.
- Help plan and execute daily whale shark tourism excursions.
- Manage tourist participation in the global spot pattern photo ID project.
- Learn to recognize individual whale sharks and ID them.
- Be actively involved in one or more community development project or conservation project such as; teaching English, swimming lessons, whale shark conservation awareness, plastics awareness, and beach erosion.

At sea, interns are deployed on boats in pairs. You will share your knowledge of marine life and brief tourists, crew sailing boats, spot whale sharks, make observations, take video and photographs and collect data on the whale sharks encountered. You will develop organizational skills, planning excursions and preparing boats.

Mandatory Skills and Theory Classes

Volunteers will take part in the following (at no additional cost):

- Theory and practice of skin diving
- Introductory photography and videography
- Introductory coral reef ecology
- Tropical Indo-Pacific fish identification
- Whale shark biology
- Ongoing whale shark research
- Other marine conservation issues in Mafia
- First aid, including marine envenomations and stings and marine accidents

Additional skills

You do not need any diving qualifications to join this project, but if you would like to increase your skill set further you can include one of the PADI Scuba diving courses during your stay. A PADI Open Water course can be booked for around US\$500 including manuals & certification. Ask us for more details if this is of interest to you.

WHO CAN JOIN?

- You must be 18 years or older on arrival and be in good health. We will send you a Medical Questionnaire that must be completed before you arrive.
 - You should be able to swim and be comfortable in water - you do not need a diving qualification.
 - You must be ready and able to share living space with other volunteers.
 - To aid communication, you must be able speak and understand English.
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GETTING THERE

The Kitu Kiblu Whale Shark Conservation Project is based on Mafia Island in the Indian Ocean, twenty miles off the coast of Tanzania, opposite the delta of the mighty Rufiji River, which flows through the Selous, the biggest wildlife park in Africa.

Mafia was once the site of a flourishing trading entrepot, between the Sultanates of Kilwa and Zanzibar, where ivory, gold and slaves from southern Africa were traded and shipped away to India and the Middle East. The ruins of these bustling ports are still visible today.

Mafia Island is an untrammelled archipelago, becoming renowned for its corals, Marine Park and excellent diving. The islands of the archipelago have the ruins of ancient trading towns, remote beaches where turtles nest, forests, hidden pools and more to explore. We arrange fun day excursions on Mafia Island and the surrounding islands as part of the program. These are charged at cost.

With white sandy beaches, dazzling aquamarine waters and refreshingly few tourists, Mafia is often described as Zanzibar 30 years ago. A laid-back eco-alternative with few hotels, no shops and no ATMs (credit cards are accepted at the up-market lodges). Whale sharks, Humpback Whales and Turtles can be found in the waters surrounding Mafia Island.

If you are making your own way to Mafia Island...

- You should aim to arrive at Mafia Island on your chosen start date. You can arrange to stay extra nights with us, if you need to.
 - To do this, we would recommend arriving in Dar es Salaam or Zanzibar in the early hours of the same morning so that you will be ready to catch either the early morning or afternoon flight to Mafia Island. Alternatively you can arrive the day before (or even earlier and stay overnight in Dar Es Salaam or Zanzibar. Zanzibar is far more interesting and convenient to overnight or spend a few days.
 - A member of the project team will be there to welcome you when you land at Mafia.
 - We can provide you with all the information you need to book your return flights between Dar es Salaam/Zanzibar and Mafia. We are able to assist with cheap flights every morning from either Dar or Zanzibar.
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ACCOMMODATION

Our camp is situated amongst the trees of an old coconut, mango and cashew nut plantation on Mafia Island's western shore. Six steps lead to the Indian Ocean, a refreshing snorkel and stunning sunsets. Mafia's main town Kilindoni is a ten minute walk away, and the hospital five. Permanent residents include bush babies, monkeys, elephant shrews, squirrels, mongoose, chameleons and even a pair of duiker.

Traditional thatched houses of different sizes make up our cosy camp. These shared, same sex dorms can house two people per room. We provide a bed, pillows and mosquito nets and basic bed linen. You should bring your own towels or buy one in Mafia. In bush style, our camp features open-air showers.

Food Three meals of fresh local food are prepared by our cooks daily, including a lot of fruit and seafood such as fish, octopus and squid but also chicken and beef; food is important to productivity and we try to eat well. For your refreshment we provide tea, coffee and bottled water. We also provide 24 hour security by our friendly Maasai watchmen.

The camp runs on mains and solar power so you will be able to recharge batteries, laptops etc.

Cell phone reception and Internet access is possible at the camp, though the 2G signal is weak. We have free WiFi access in camp but the speed is disappointing.

On site we have medical/first aid supplies, and the hospital is only 500 metres away.

WHALE SHARK CONSERVATION

This project supports important ongoing marine conservation efforts and hosts research projects in an effort to learn more about whale sharks. Recently we have hosted a team of researchers affiliated to the King Abdul University (KAUST) and the University of Queensland, funded by WWF, looking at oceanographic factors influencing the occurrence and distribution of whale sharks in the Mafia channel. In previous years we have supported other WWF-funded whale shark research in Mafia.

Through our internship program we contribute to the global spot-pattern photo identification project, which seeks to map the migration of whale sharks. Whale shark spot-patterns are like fingerprints. They can be used to identify individuals and therefore enable one to add their location to a worldwide database. The attraction of this method is that it does not involve tagging or otherwise interfering with the animals.

Whale Shark Basics

- The whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*) is the world's largest fish. Whale sharks in Mafia have been measured up to 9 meters in length. The biggest ever measured was over 20 meters in length and 34 tons in weight.
 - Whale sharks are thought to live over 100 years.
 - Whale sharks are filter feeders, feeding mainly on plankton. They occasionally eat sardines, anchovies, mackerel and even small tuna.
 - They are cartilaginous fish (rays and sharks) and not whales; that part of the name comes from their size and diet. Despite their huge mouth they are gentle and they will not harm you.
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- Like other sharks they have a 'production line' of many rows of teeth, but in this case these are tiny and cannot hurt you.
 - Whale sharks are most often seen in tropical/sub tropical regions. They are able swimmers: One satellite-tagged whale shark travelled over 13,000km in 37 months and achieved speeds of 3.9kmph.
 - Although they are often seen feeding at the surface, whale sharks are thought to spend the majority of their lives in the depths of the ocean. The deepest whale shark dive recorded is 1928m.
 - Mafia Island Aggregation: Whale Sharks are solitary; they travel alone but aggregate in a few locations around the world, Mafia Island is one of these. The sharks feed here on the surface from September to April when they are easily seen and studied.
 - Sex and Reproduction: You can tell the sex of a whale shark by it's appearance. The males have 'claspers', external organs somewhat analogous to a penis, between the two pelvic fins.
 - These sharks reach sexual maturity at about 7 to 8m in length (after 20 to 30 years). They are Ovoviparous which means that they lay eggs but retain them in the uterus until they hatch and they then give birth to live young.
 - A sexually mature female may have more than 300 eggs and embryos at various stages of foetal development in her two uteri at any one time. It is postulated that the females may mate very few times in their lives and can store sperm.
 - The majority of the whale sharks aggregating in Mafia are not yet sexually mature and 4 out of 5 are male. The reason for this specificity of sex and age in the group is still unknown.
 - Unlike many other fish, sharks (and whale sharks) are not known to be 'sequentially hermaphroditic; i.e. they do not change their sex during their lifetime.
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HEALTH & SAFETY

- Malaria is the main health issue along the coast of Tanzania, so you should seek advice from a doctor competent and up-to-date with tropical medicine.
 - Although the Yellow Fever vaccine is no longer required, you may be asked for one at the airport anyway, so we recommend that you arrange this with your doctor at home and bring the certificate with you.
 - Bring medication just in case you suffer from stomach upsets while your body adjusts to the change in food and water during the first few days of your trip.
 - At the coast and on the water, the sun can be dangerous. You will be wise to wear hats in the heat of the day and make use of a good sun block and reputable (water resistant) sun tan lotion or cream. A rash vest provides good cover and is recommended on the boat and while snorkelling with the whale sharks.
 - Health insurance is a must (including cover for boating and water sports)
 - We will provide you with a basic medical questionnaire that must be completed before you join.
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WEATHER

Mafia Island has a relatively dry tropical climate with approximately 1,800 mm of rain each year divided into two seasons of 'long' rains in late March-May and 'short' rains in November-early December. Temperatures are mild, even when we speak of the 'hot' season, as the temperature in Mafia rarely exceeds 30 degrees C. It is the humidity level that often causes visitors to feel they are hot, especially when the breeze drops and it is very calm.

- October - Cool and dry with pleasant temperatures and excellent weather
- November - Short rains, but often unreliable running into December
- December - March Hot season, mainly dry with showers and increasing humidity

Whale sharks are reliably present on the surface from the beginning of October to the end of February. If possible it is best to avoid the Christmas/New Year rush of tourists.

CURRENCY & BUDGETING

- You should bring US\$ with you and exchange them for Tanzanian Shillings (TSH) when you arrive in Dar es Salaam or Zanzibar. Always use a Bureau de Change (at the INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL OF THE airport when exchanging dollars. DO NOT BE TEMPTED TO CHANGE CURRENCY ON THE STREET. YOU WILL BE RIPPED OFF!)
- As an approximation, US\$1 = TSH2200, and TSH1000 = 45c
- You won't need much while you're on Mafia Island, unless you often visit the Mafia Island Marine Park which costs \$23,60 per day to access. When not visiting the park for recreation, budget for between \$5 to \$10 per day to allow for the odd beer. A beer will cost you \$2 at the camp. A mobile SIM card costs about 60c, and internet via usb modem costs about 50c per day. There is slow WiFi in camp.
- You can use your credit card for major items on the island, and you can now draw cash at the island's two ATMs.

VISAS

Most nationalities (e.g. USA, UK, Netherlands, Germany, Australia etc) can purchase an Ordinary Tourist Visa for \$50 (\$100 for US citizens) on arrival in Dar es Salaam. Visa application forms are available on your flight, or at the Arrivals terminal. Your Visa will be valid for up to 3 months. Please ensure your passport has at least 3 blank pages, and is valid for at least 6 months after your arrival date. On this project you will be classified as an intern so an ordinary tourist visa is all you will need to join.

DO NOT DECLARE YOURSELF AS A VOLUNTEER ON ARRIVAL! You are an intern, not a volunteer. A volunteer visa is \$300 minimum and difficult to get.

WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY GO?

We believe that it is important for you to know how your money is spent and ensure that your fee is structured to give you maximum value for money.

As you will see from the chart and fee breakdown below, the majority of your fee goes towards your project to cover your accommodation, food, training, supervision, equipment & activities. All prices are shown in United States Dollars (USD).

For a 3-week stay @ \$1800	
\$1130	Project: Research Support (\$205) Food and Accommodation (\$400) Staff costs (\$525)
\$425	Office Administration
\$245	VAT & Banking

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

Your participation in the spot pattern identification and other photographic/videographic in-water research depends on you being moderately fit (and working to get fitter). To fully participate in this program you must be willing and able to learn free diving and work at it to acquire the skill set that is required to do the in-water research tasks **BUT you also need decent equipment**. We can rent you the gear but an investment in decent tools, namely polarized sunglasses, good fins (35cm blade length or longer), a low-profile mask that fits you properly, a simple snorkel, a dive belt and weight, a point and shoot waterproof camera (preferably that can take video) and some reef shoes goes a long way towards making sure that you are fully involved and so get maximum benefit from your time on the program. If you have a GoPro or a drone...bring them

Hand Baggage: Normal limit 5-7kg depending on airline	
	Passport
	Tickets
	Insurance Policy
	Mobile Phone
	Contact Numbers
	Wallet/Purse
	\$50 for your Visa which can be purchased on arrival at Dar Es Salaam. Bring enough US\$ for your stay on Mafia Island – budget approx \$5-10 per day.
	Credit Cards (Don't forget your PIN's) – There are ATM's in Dar Es Salaam airport
	Photo ID Driving Licence or International Driving Licence (if you plan to hire a car anytime)
	Toiletries/Make-up – Be aware of limits on the quantities of fluids that can be carried in hand baggage.
	Waterproof camera , Film/Card, batteries, or GoPro, preferably with waterproof housing.
	Polarised Sunglasses
	iPod / mp3 player – don't forget your charger
	If you wear glasses or contact lenses, be sure to bring an extra pair.
Main Bag: Limited to 15kg for flights between Dar Es Salaam and Mafia Island.	
	Casual / long lightweight trousers
	Shorts / Skirts / Beach-shorts / Bikini
	Long sleeve lightweight shirts / T-Shirts
	Trainers / Beach Sandals / Flip flops and waterproof footwear for walking in the sea.
	Sun hat
	Underwear and socks, preferably white socks (mosquitoes hate white)
	Washing Gear & Toiletry bag, Toothbrush, Paste
	High quality mask, snorkel and fins (blade length no less than 35cm)
	Free diving belt with 1kg weight (optional, but highly recommended)
	Rash vest and/or 3mm Shorty wetsuit or buy one of our rashies
	Waterproof bag ('dry bag' to keep your electronics dry at sea)
	2 towels

