

A large, dark stingray is the central focus, resting on a sandy seabed. The stingray's body is broad and flat, with a long tail extending to the right. In the upper right corner, a diver is visible, equipped with a camera and fins, observing the stingray. The water is clear, and the sand is light-colored. The overall scene is captured in a top-down perspective.

RAY OF HOPE EXPEDITIONS

Bazaruto Seascape
Africa's Marine Serengeti-

Join Andrea and Janneman on an exclusive trip exploring the best of the Bazaruto Seascape

The Place

Imagine a coastline unspoiled by development, where the largest coastal sand dunes in Africa rush down to meet the azure waters of the Indian Ocean. Imagine that this place is so untouched by man that kilometers and kilometers of coastline, stretching out as far as the eye can see, persist without a single human footprint.

In this region, a rare mixing of temperate seas from the south and tropical influences from the north results in a profusion of life, showcasing a diversity of species rarely encountered in one centralized area.

It is a complex landscape of open seas, which merge with tidal bays and shallow estuaries, which support birds and networks of dense mangroves. In the sea, dynamic oceanography and swirling ocean gyres create consistent upwelling events along a narrow continental shelf. This phenomenon forces productive waters to the surface producing massive plankton blooms which can sustain populations of the largest fish in the sea and some of the largest reptiles on earth.

The explosion of life along this coast also attracts some of the largest marine predators, from brindle bass and marlin to the mighty Orca- regulators of the ecosystem, promoters of ocean balance. Yet the warm calm waters provide the perfect habitats for gestation, birth and the rearing of young with animals traveling thousands of kilometers to reach this critical habitat. It is a place like no other. Come and bear witness to the true splendor of coastal East Africa.



The Opportunity

Our bespoke 'Ray of Hope' expeditions were created to allow the public to engage in citizen science while following MMF's manta researchers to the most remote and exciting destinations for these rays in the world. The goals of each expedition are unique but every trip is tailored to engage participants while producing high quality information for our scientific programs.

MMF researchers have been monitoring the manta rays in southern Mozambique for the last 20 years in a bid to enhance conservation efforts for these gentle giants. This is one of the only locations in the world where both species of mantas occur. While it is more likely for you to encounter our resident reef manta rays, there is always a chance we will run into more pelagic visitors like giant mantas, whale sharks, and leatherback turtles. Southern Mozambique has become one of the global hubs for manta ray research, with more scientific publications coming out of this location than almost any other place in the world. Guests travel with our research team as we do science throughout the region from photo IDing threatened marine life to performing detailed underwater transects. On research dives we will set camera traps and BRUVs, collect eDNA samples and deploy tags. All photographed mantas will be uploaded to 'Manta Matcher', the global online database, to check for previous sightings or to register new individuals.

Winter is peak bull shark season and MMF has on-going research efforts on these formidable apex predators. Get special lectures on our work from our lead researcher in the region and learn more about one of the greatest populations of bull sharks on the planet. Bazaruto is one of the best locations to see these sharks in the natural environment with no baiting or chumming.

In addition to the rich and varied dive itinerary, guests will also have the opportunity to participate in other optional activities like kayaking, kiteboarding, horseback riding, taking local dhow trips, visiting seahorse beds and cultural tours. Evenings will be spent in comfort, sampling local cuisine, listening to local music and getting research talks.

Our trips are designed for advanced divers looking to participate in something a bit more challenging and stimulating than your average dive trip. We recommend that you brush up on your diving skills and be in good health in order to capitalize on the experience. We limit the guests on our expeditions to ensure that you get the most out of your time with us and have the best possible encounters with wildlife. Our expeditions are living breathing adventures. We go where the conditions tell us to go, we often alter our schedule to capitalize on wildlife sightings, and we approach things with a positive spirit of exploration, knowing that we sometimes have to travel far to experience the best. The ocean is not a zoo but we always strive to provide the most stimulating and fun trips possible.



Expedition Guides

Andrea Marshall

Dr. Andrea Marshall is a world-renowned expert on manta rays, a passionate underwater photographer and a National Geographic Explorer. Andrea, dubbed the 'Queen of Mantas' in 2009 by the BBC in the Natural World documentary by the same name, was the first person in the world to receive a PhD on the ecology of these mysterious animals. Today Andrea oversees global research on manta rays as the principal scientist of the Marine Megafauna Foundation's manta ray program. MMF is a not-for-profit organization which spearheads conservation efforts for our ocean giants across the world through rigorous research programs and the application of sound management practices. Andrea lives with her family in southern Mozambique but spends much of the year conducting research around the world.

Believing it to be an important seasonal aggregation area for giant manta rays Andrea and her team have been working off the coast of Myanmar and Thailand since 2011. She is currently encouraging the creation of a formal research and monitoring program in the region with the hope of safeguarding this population from exploitation.

She and her husband Janneman started Ray of Hope Expeditions as a way to creatively support costly international field research. They are passionate about sharing experiences with the public and creating an army of citizen scientists around the world who are able to assist research groups with data collection in meaningful ways.

Janneman Conradie

Janneman Conradie is a marine conservationist specializing in aerial surveillance and technical diving. Using these specialist skills he helps MMF teams to monitor and capture data in some of the most remote and challenging environments on the planet. Janneman also over-sees project logistics for many of MMF's field expeditions ensuring their teams are using the most efficient and state of the art technologies to execute their research.

As professional underwater and aerial cameraman, Janneman always has some type of camera in hand. He has filmed with some of the best in the business and worked on projects with the likes of National Geographic and the BBC. Now with his own production company, Janneman is passionately committed to capturing compelling imagery and sharing stories that inspire. In addition to being one of our expert guides, he is onboard to help participants learn more about the technical side of taking photos and videos for fun and for science.



Expedition Itinerary

During this expedition we will explore various parts of the Bazaruto Seascape, including dives within the Bazaruto Archipelago National Park and the Vilanculos Coastal Wildlife Sanctuary. This is a large seascape and there is no real itinerary, we will tailor our daily dive trips according to the conditions and the best animal life.

We will make two dives a day but will also leave a few hours open for ocean safaris where we have a chance to see and have encounters with humpback whales, pods of dolphin (spinner, pan-tropical spotted dolphins, Indian Ocean bottlenose, and humpback), dugong, and if we are exceptionally lucky leatherback turtles.

*** This is a suggested schedule and one that has worked well for us in the past. Opportunistic changes in this schedule or itinerary due to conditions, animal presence, foul weather and/or research requirements are at the discretion of the Captain, the Cruise Director and the Dive Expedition Leader.*



Expedition Details

Price Available on Request

Includes:

8 day/ 9 night experience in the Bazaruto Archipelago National Park and surrounding area
Breakfast and boat lunch
Filtered water and cold non-alcoholic beverage selection on boat
2 dives a day and a 2-3 hours of ocean safari
Tanks, airfills, weights (*free nitrox for qualified divers*)
Research talks and activities with Marine Megafauna Foundation biologists
\$200 built-in donation to the Marine Megafauna Foundation
MMF 'Ray of Hope Expedition' gift

Excludes:

International or domestic flights
Accommodation (*many options available- we can help advice based on your budget*)
Dive Gear Rental (*if required*)
Dinners
Gratuity (*not required but encouraged for local staff*)
Travel Insurance** (*dive insurance required, general travel insurance is highly recommended*)

** **Ray of Hope Expeditions** takes no responsibility for scheduling or itinerary changes due to changing weather, political situations, natural disasters or other events beyond our control. Travel insurance is strongly recommended. A DAN or comparable diving accident insurance policy is required for unanticipated evacuations or treatments that may not be covered by your regular insurance. Proof of policy is required in advance.

