



Andavadoaka: Where Community and Nature Join Hands

A traditional Vezo fishing pirogue sails at sunset along Andavadoaka's coastline.

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 snorkeling 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 boats called pirogues.



home to endangered marine turtles, migrating hump back whales, spinner dolphins and more than 500 species of tropical fish and corals.

Because of the remoteness of Andavadoaka (it is a two hour drive from the nearest airport), 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.

One of the few ways to experience the beauty and adventure of Andavadoaka is



through the award-winning ecotourism and conservation charity Blue Ventures. Since 2003, Blue Ventures has offered travellers from around the world the opportunity to not just dive the coral reefs of Andavadoaka, but to help protect these incredible habitats.



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

Blue Ventures leads expeditions to Andavadoaka where travellers 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 star fish, 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 amazing habitats remain healthy and productive for generations to come.

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. Volleyball and football tournaments between villagers and Blue Ventures' travellers are also regular activities.

In addition to its marine expeditions, Blue Ventures is now building an eco-lodge in Andavadoaka that will include a restaurant, a bar and 25 bungalows just a few metres from the beach. The lodge will be open to those on Blue Ventures' marine conservation expeditions or any tourists who simply want a relaxing holiday without the conservation work.

The lodge will be completed and accommodating tourists, in eco-bungalows, by July 2009 if the funding that is sought can be secured by the end of 2008. Camping sites are already available around the lodge with resident cooks preparing meals for guests. The lodge will be fully owned and operated by the village of Andavadoaka, with all profits going back to the community.

It will be powered by sustainable energy solutions, including solar and wind, which will also provide clean energy to the broader village and its citizens.

The resort will not only bring much needed jobs and revenue to Andavadoaka, but it also will offer a variety of recreational activities and educational workshops, allowing visitors to learn about the region's unique culture and environment.

Blue Ventures has trained more than 20 members of the Andavadoaka

community as eco-tour guides. These guides lead visitors on snorkelling excursions as well as treks into the incredible baobab forests where trees can measure more than 10 metres in diameter.

Tourists will be able to fish side-by-side with local villagers aboard traditional pirogues – long and narrow dugout canoes – or they can watch migrating whales from an elevated platform built on the shore of the nearby island of Nosy Hao.

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

Blue Venture can provide visitors with transportation by 4x4 vehicles from Toliara and Morombe (the location of the closest airport) to and from Andavadoaka.



Andavadoaka's sunny beaches, extraordinary marine systems and welcoming Vezo community offer visitors exciting and unique holidays throughout the entire year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON VISITING ANDAVADOAKA OR HOW TO JOIN A BLUE VENTURES EXPEDITION, PLEASE GO TO [WWW. BLUEVENTURES.ORG](http://WWW.BLUEVENTURES.ORG) OR CALL + 44 (0)20 8341 9819