

SAKATIA LODGE

Natural wonders in Madagascar

Images by Jacques Vieira, unless otherwise stated

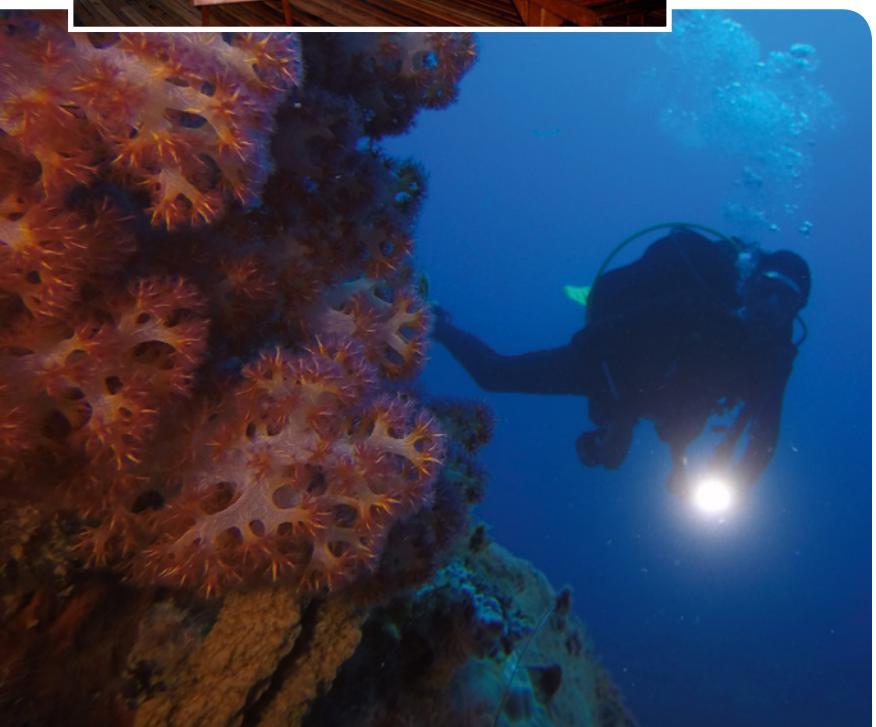


The waters surrounding Nosy Sakatia, a small island off of a small island (Nosy Be) off of the fourth largest island in the world (Madagascar), offer some of the best, most bizarre and unique diving in the world.

For most people Madagascar conjures up images of giant "upside down" baobab trees, cute lemurs, weird and wonderful fauna and flora, and all things small and strange. It also, for obvious reasons, conjures up images of fairy tale penguins (of which there are none).

As most of us are aware (thanks to the likes of Sir David Attenborough) the island's millions of years' of isolation from the continent of Gondwana means that the biodiversity and level of endemism there is extraordinary. Ninety percent of its flora and fauna are found nowhere else in the world.

Less publicised is the impressive marine diversity, particularly in the north-western part of Madagascar where the Grand Banc d'Entrée's nutrient-rich waters encourage dense and varied marine life. The reefs are covered with hard and soft corals, sponges, schools of fishes, crustaceans and a vast array of invertebrates.



To the north of Nosy Be is the Mitsio Archipelago with four islands known locally as the Four Brothers. There are over a dozen different dive sites here, ranging from beginner to advanced levels, but they are not recommended during the windy season of July to November.

In the south are the Radama Islands which are best for experienced to advanced divers. They are famous for their beautiful and untouched wall diving opportunities, as well as for the world renowned Greg's Wall, a 10m plateau with a vertical drop to 320m. For the more experienced divers, there is also a cave at Greg's Wall with an entrance at 32m and an exit at 42m with a giant pinnacle on the left as you come out of the cave. The pinnacle stands 54m high and its tip reaches the 23m mark.

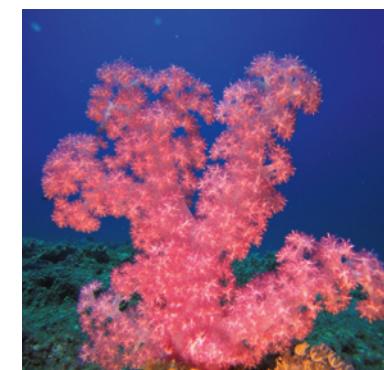
Nosy Be's waters include over 30 dive sites to choose from for both beginners and the more experienced. Divers in the know have been returning to Sakatia Lodge for over 12 years to further explore the unspoilt and uncrowded dive sites to the north and south of Nosy Be. Each and every time, new spots, rare species and virgin reefs are discovered.

Peak diving season in the Nosy Be area is from March to early July with water temperatures of 29-30°C. From mid-July until the end of October the water temperature cools down to around 26°C. During this time, it is a bit windy but the conditions are still good for diving. November, December and January are also good months for diving with water temperatures of around 29-30°C. Shark season is from September to end November.

Sakatia Dive Centre is run by Jacques Vieira. Jacques can provide beginners with a one-on-one resort dive experience in the crystal clear, calm "swimming pool" just off Nosy Sakatia. He offers full NAUI dive courses to newbies wanting to seriously explore the fascinating underwater world of scuba.

Earlier this year, Jacques created the Fluorescent Night Diver speciality course for NAUI. Though offered at some destinations, fluo diving, as it is known, is still in its infancy worldwide. Jacques is well on his way to perfecting it with Sakatia as the only dive centre in Madagascar to offer it. Nitrox, fluo and night diving for experienced and beginner divers are all catered for at Sakatia, and consideration for safety and the welfare of the reefs are of the highest priority.

Jacques, his wife Sandra, and occasionally his father Jose all go the extra mile to guide each dive, often including unexpected but treasured encounters with whale sharks, humpback whales and mantas. It is said that there is more diversity here than in the Red Sea, and at last it is just as easy to travel there. Nosy Be has become more



SUBMERGE will be taking a trip to beautiful Nosy Sakatia to experience all the wonders that the island has to offer. Look out for the feature article in the February/March 2017 issue.



accessible since Airlink established a regular, weekly, direct flight to the island from Johannesburg.

Although Sakatia Lodge is, without a doubt, the best land-based option for the complete dive experience, there is an alternative. Spend a little more money for a personalised live-aboard dive charter on *Maki Cat* – your own private group of four to six people will be treated like royalty with all meals and dives included.

Each night you will sleep in a different place – another night, another island. There is always a safe, sheltered anchorage where you will enjoy peace and quiet, calm water and chilled sundowners on the deck. You can sit back and relax and know that you will be taken care of with your own chef, skipper, dive guide and deck hand.

For more information on dive packages for individuals and dive clubs contact Shamel at MadagasCaT Charters and Travel (shamel@madagascat.co.za) or contact the lodge directly at reservations@sakatia.co.za **SM**

AREA

Nosy Be / Nosy Sakatia

CATERING

Full board on *Maki Cat* and half board at Sakatia Lodge

RESTAURANT

Yes

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Excursions to Nosy Be, Lokobe National Park, quad biking, lemur viewing, nature walks and fishing

AVERAGE COST

From R20 000 per person sharing for seven nights including flights, taxes, transfers and half board accommodation

Website

madagascat.co.za

Telephone

+27 (0)79 149 6438

GPS co-ordinates

S13 18.789 E048 09.282