

# A-Z of Diving in Mafia

## **What is the best time of year to dive?**

Diving in Chole bay is possible throughout the year. Diving outside the bay on the walls is only possible from October to March due to the trade winds. In terms of weather and wind conditions, the absolute best months to dive In Mafia are November to February.

## **When is the best period for visibility?**

The water clarity in Mafia is not dependent on the time of year but by the type of tide we are experiencing and the weather. Within the bay, on a high tide we have excellent visibility reaching up to 30 metres, in comparison on a low tide we have a maximum of 12 metres. Outside the bay the visibility is less affected by tides but does change depending on the weather conditions. Rain can push debris into the sea which flows parallel to the walls and can cause diminished water clarity.

## **Can we dive at any time we want?**

No, the diving in Mafia is extremely tide dependent which means that dive departure times vary from day to day. It is extremely important we respect the timing of tides to ensure safety and enjoyable dive conditions.

## **Do you have strong currents?**

We plan our dives inside the bay to have as little current as possible so that the sites are accessible to all levels of divers. Outside the bay, the currents are less predictable which is why these sites are restricted to advanced divers only.

## **What is the water temperature there?**

The average water temperature here is around 26°C but it does vary depending on the time of year and the depth at which you dive. Between November and March we have warmer sea's, averaging around 29°C where as from June to September we experience temperatures slightly lower and thermoclines as cold as 24°C.

## **Do you offer Shore dives?**

We have at least 1 shore dive available every day as the diving is extremely tide dependent, changing the departure times from day to day. There are a total of 4 sites which are shallow and offer an array of macro delights such as seahorses, crabs, frogfish, nudibranches and more. We are the only dive centre which offers these types of dives.

## **Do you offer Boat dives?**

We have at least 1 boat trip per day which always leaves for 2 dives.

## **Do you have Nitrox?**

No, we do not have Nitrox yet but will be the first to introduce it to the island shortly.

## **Can any level of diver dive in Mafia?**

Our dive sites inside the bay are perfect for beginners, novices and experienced divers alike with beautiful coral formations and tropical reef fish. We welcome everyone and anyone to indulge in the relaxing diving on these reefs. Our dive sites outside the bay are strictly reserved for Advanced divers only due to depths, dive procedures and PADI standards.

## **What wetsuit should I pack for my trip?**

At the dive centre we have 3mm long and short wetsuits which our guests find quite suitable for the diving here. Those who are more susceptible to cold should consider coming with 5mm long suits.

## **Equipment?**

We rent full sets of equipment in a variety of sizes. We have scubapro regulators with MK2 DIN fitted first stages and R295 second stages. All our regulators have air gauges. We have a variety of BCD's to ensure comfort, brands consist of Scubapro and Subgear. Our wetsuits are a mixture of triboard, scubapro and subgear. We only stock closed heel fins which are aqualung, scubapro and technisub. We have aluminium tanks of 10, 11 and 12 litre capacities as well as 3 15 litre steel tanks reserved for those heavy breathers among us. They are all equipped to cater for DIN and YOKE first stage adapters.

## **Do you provide for families?**

We are able to cater to divers as young as 10 years old. We prefer to have notice in advance to ensure our equipment will be a good fit.

## **Do you cater for groups?**

Yes we can, although we do prefer to limit the group size to a maximum of 10 to ensure our high standards and personalised service are met. Adjustments to group sizes can be negotiated with Management. Groups must finalise their booking and pay at least 2

months in advance.

## **Do we need to pre-book our dives?**

Our dive centre prefers to offer a personalised service with small groups and avoid crowded boats, therefore we limit the number of dive spaces available for any given day/trip. It is always wise to pre book your diving to ensure that there is availability. We do not require an individual to pick and choose exactly which dives they would like but to at least reserve the days they wish to be diving. That being said, so long as there is available spaces we accept walk in guests and accommodate their needs however we can.

## **How big are your dive groups? Are they always led by staff?**

We have the lowest diver to guide ratio on Mafia and pride ourselves on our personalised service. You will never find more than 4 divers to 1 guide unless, guests specifically request otherwise. Dive groups are always created with diver level and experience in mind. All our dives are led by PADI Divemasters or Instructors, for an added cost, guests can also hire a private guide or private photographer.

## **What safety precautions do Mafia Diving have in place?**

We have an extensive emergency action plan in place which can be sent to those interested on request. We strictly follow PADI standards, limiting divers to the depths that their certification imposes as well as ensuring diving activities are within the scope of their training. We insist on check dives for any guest whom has not dived for 6 months. We are the only dive centre on the island with all members of dive staff trained in emergency first aid and run refreshers often. Our equipment is serviced adequately and monitored daily and our tanks have been tested as the local law states. We are also certified 'pure air' by Bauer, a testament to the cleanliness and quality of the air we provide to our guests.

## **Medical clearance, dive insurance and malaria?**

Medical clearance is not imperative in East Africa for certified divers but is a requirement for any individual wishing to start a dive course. It is extremely important that potential students fill out a medical questionnaire prior to visiting Mafia as there are no scuba diving associated Doctors on the island. When certified divers sign their waivers they are stating that they are in good medical health and take responsibility. Dive Insurance is legally not required In Africa but is highly advisable. We insist that all divers have insurance which covers them for diving activities, if they do not we can facilitate a temporary DAN insurance here on Mafia which will need to be paid for by credit card via internet. Tanzania is a malaria risk area and you should follow the advice of your Doctor as to whether or not you should take anti-malarial treatments. We strongly

recommend avoiding Doxycycline as it causes skin sensitivity to the sun, not ideal for a diving holiday. In our experience Malarone is the best choice but can cause upset stomachs and sea sickness. Make sure you travel with anti-seasickness medicine.

## **How can I pay for the diving?**

We accept all major currencies: US dollars, Euros, Swiss Francs, British Pounds and of course Tanzanian shillings. We also offer a credit card service which accepts Visa and Mastercard. We do not impose a 5% surcharge but do warn guests that the card is charged in Tanzanian shillings.

## **Whale Sharks?**

Mafia is fast becoming well known for being a great place to spot and swim with the biggest fish in the world – the whale shark. The whale shark tours are snorkel only as there are no dive sites near to where they congregate. The Whale sharks are situated on the Western side of the island where the airport is, a simple 30 minute drive from the marine park which is on the Eastern side of the island. They are found around Mafia between October and February, their time here varies on the weather and wind conditions.

## **Humpback Whales?**

Humpback whales migrate past Mafia between August and September and can be spotted out to the South where we have an incredible sandbank to stop off and picnic at. It is a full day excursion which can include scuba diving as well. We wish not to disturb these wild creatures, especially as they are with their calves, it is extremely important to not enter the water and harass them.

## **Turtle Hatching?**

The prime season for turtle hatchings is between April and September. In Mafia it is possible to witness the hatching of baby green turtles as they start their journey to the open sea. This takes place on an island called Juani which is East of Mafia, a 30 minute boat trip.

## **How do we get to Mafia?**

The easiest way to get to Mafia is by small aircraft from Dar es Salaam. There are roughly 5 flights per day with different airlines. Alternatively you can also venture to Mafia by dhow from Nyamisati – although adventurous we recommend forgoing this option as it can be dangerous and accidents are not uncommon.

## Where to stay?

We work very closely with two accommodations and can recommend several others depending on your tastes and budget.

For a high end option, Pole Pole [www.polepole.com](http://www.polepole.com) is the perfect mixture of barefoot luxury. It is a 5 minute walk from the dive centre and boasts a swimming pool and spa.

For a more lively and social environment we recommend Mafia Lodge [www.mafialodge.com](http://www.mafialodge.com) which is situated on the best beach of Eastern Mafia. Here one can find a pool table, ping pong, darts and beach volleyball and is a stone throw away from the dive base.

## Extra Advice

There is no ATM, no bank, which offers cash withdrawal facilities. The cash you arrive to Mafia with is the only cash you will have available during your stay. Considering that you must pay a marine park fee of US\$ 20 per person per day in cash, it is extremely important you plan your money before arriving.

There are no western standard hospitals or dispensaries on Mafia, therefore if you require special medicine or treatment for specific ailments, ensure you travel with enough to last you through your stay.

Mafia Island is an Islamic place making it extremely important that you wear clothes which cover your shoulders and knee's when visiting local villages and places. On the tourists beaches it is quite common and accepted to wear bikinis but please be aware that topless sunbathing is prohibited by law.

In Tanzania banks do not accept US dollars dated before the year 2006, make sure all your bills have acceptable dates otherwise businesses will have no choice to refuse them.