

Akany Avoko Mahajanga Holiday 2009



Helping our kids to leave behind the trauma of their “pre-Akany” lives is a big part of our work at Akany Avoko. Holidays help the best moments in life happen and through your generous sponsorship Akany Avoko children were able to create some very special memories during 10 days of holiday at by the seaside at Mahajanga on the north-west coast.

In the weeks leading up to the holidays the excitement amongst the children was palpable; their heads were filled with images of glorious days playing on the beach and extra helpings of special food. Eventually the big day arrived, bags were packed and the first group left after dinner on three mini buses for a night-time adventure. Soon we were all asleep which was just well because the road to Mahajanga is like an enormous roller coaster. Along the route we saw many fires lit by farmers to coax fresh new grass for their cattle called zebu. Sadly this method of farming is responsible for much of the topsoil erosion which plagues Madagascar and is the cause of deep red gashes of erosion across the “Red Island”.



The logistics of organising not only children but everything from food and cooking utensils were a big challenge however Akany’s staff, ably assisted by the older girls, did a great job of ensuring we had everything we needed.

Everyone was divided up into families of red, blue, green and orange and we all had colour coded sun hats which made the Mahajanga residents remember our stay.

We arrived tired but excited and after locating our beds in the large two storey centre not far from the city centre. We decided a recovery day snooze would be wonderful preparation for the following day and soon everyone was in snooze mode under our mosquito nets.

It was so exciting to wake up the next day, knowing it would be our first day on the beach. Everyone crammed themselves into the buses and sang to make the drive pass quickly. There was a lot of traffic as the beach at Mahajanga is a popular Malagasy holiday destination. Imagine our delight when we saw rolling waves, wide sandy beach and lots of colourful umbrellas. There were so many of us we needed huge parasols for shade! This was what we'd all been dreaming of!



Many of the newer and younger children arrived unable to swim or scared of the water but international volunteers taught us how to float. It is so difficult to keep your head in the water for fear of gulping down a mouthful of sea water! Some even tried teaching a few girls how to swim. We did this all morning and had a break for lunch, followed by a snooze then it out to those waves again.

Later local village women sold us tasty treats of water melon and coconut sweets which were such fun to try. We had four blissful days at the beach.

At night we played games and had competitions to see which family produced the best story about the holiday so far. It's amazing how many different interpretations of the same journey existed! Prizes were awarded then we all trundled off to bed.

What else did we do? Lots! A walk through Mahajanga to the main market for a breakfast of coffee laced with loads of sugar and condensed milk and delicious rice cakes, a leisurely stroll along the seafront to see a huge baobab tree, fun selecting snacks from the myriad of street vendors who appear around dusk with their freshly baked goodies and much more.



It seemed as if fun was always around the corner as we boarded a brightly coloured pousse-pousse (rickshaw) and were pulled home by a very fit man. It was wonderful to be pulled at top speed through the streets of Mahajanga. We felt like royalty!!!!

During the remaining days we played bingo, slept prepared meals when our family was on duty and talked about what colour ice cream we'd have.

On our final evening we had a very special treat, a ride on the ferris wheel. Imagine being cocooned in a seat swaying in the summer's evening above all the holiday makers. We didn't know whether to laugh or cry it was so fun and scary! As soon as we'd finished that ride we were on horseback cantering along the foreshore, could things get any more exciting?

Of course they could! Next up were bowls of spaghetti and brochettes followed by an ice cream.



So many memories packed into a very exciting 10 days and after many days in the sun we were all tanned a much darker brown. One final trip to the market allowed us to buy fruit and presents to take home to the staff and children who had stayed behind. We added to our fruit stocks bags full of wild mangos collected from huge trees beside the road home.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this possible, you only need look at the photographs to see what a wonderful time we all had.

