

An interdisciplinary, inter-professional and international floating university project named “*École bleu outremer, Cap sur l’Océan Indien*”

A project fully in line with the main objectives of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainability Development (2021-2030)

Rationale

The main objectives of the floating university project are as follows:

- Raise awareness and provide society with information about the main scientific questions at stake in marine science and sustainability science
- Take advantage of a flagship oceanographic campaign to train young people in different professional sectors, gathered on board a research vessel (from logistics to science), through shared activities
- Allow overseas territories and their educational programmes to benefit from the unique resources of the French Oceanographic Fleet
- Allow attending of students and trainees from other countries of the oceanic basin, as well as "marine science ambassadors" from these countries

The project is designed to be conducted again in another oceanic basin. The first edition is scheduled to take place in summer 2022 (dates 29 June – 22 July), in the southwestern part of the Indian Ocean, an incredibly resourceful area in terms of marine biodiversity.

A transformative and shared vision

The 2017 Global Ocean Science Report stressed great disparities in access to resources, technologies and research infrastructures in marine science over the world. This is why a core objective of the UN Decade of Ocean Science is to improve the scientific knowledge base through capacity development in regions and groups that are presently limited in capacity and capability.

- * The floating university project fully matches this objective, by giving an opportunity to young people native from the Indian Ocean basin to experience an oceanographic campaign, to share activities with and to learn from renowned scientists, to enrich their level of knowledge about the ocean, and therefore to envisage their future in a new way;
- * The project is resolutely inter-professional and will gather participants from a wide range of business sectors (scientific, technological, maritime), all embarked aboard a research vessel and all essential to the success of the campaign.

2022 edition on board the R/V Marion Dufresne: south-western basin of the Indian Ocean

Organisation and objectives

The main objectives of the first edition of the floating university are:

- Train young people based in the chosen area in their respective scientific and maritime branches of activity, by allowing them to benefit from the resources and tools provided (R/V Marion Dufresne);
- Raise awareness on the various professional activities and sectors gathered on board;
- Raise awareness on climate change and its consequences among the people embarked but also more widely, thanks to the involvement of “marine science ambassadors”.

The project is carried by Ifremer jointly with several partners based in the Indian Ocean: IRD, CNRS, university of La Réunion, TAAF (French Southern and Antarctic territories), Mayotte CUFR (Research and Training Centre in Mayotte working closely with several universities), Mayotte Marine Natural Park, as well as Louis Dreyfus Armateurs (R/V Marion Dufresne’s ship manager).

Participation to the project would be open, through a call for applications, to the following types of participants (around 80 embarked persons in total, in 2 legs):

- Scientific students (Master to PhD level) with a joint supervising team
- Trainees in maritime careers and their supervisors
- Young creators or artists from art schools
- « Marine science ambassadors » from countries of the South Western Indian Ocean area. Nina Wambiji from Kenya already accepted to be an ambassador

Programme of the campaign

A 19-day campaign is envisaged at that stage, organised in two legs: Le Port La Réunion – Longoni Mayotte (leg 1, 11 days), Longoni – Longoni (leg 2, 7 days).

An inter-professional project

Trainees in maritime careers (mechanics, technicians operating the instruments, cooks ...) as well as Master students and PhD students in marine sciences will benefit from:

- training sessions fitted to their careers or degrees (lectures, classes ...);
- but also sessions where students and trainees will introduce themselves and their various careers to each other, stressing the role of every participant and the complementarity of the various professional sectors and expertise areas;
- as well as « initiation sessions » aiming at discovering the various work stations on board (engines, laboratories, kitchens ...).

An interdisciplinary project

The area and journey chosen for the campaign (La Réunion - Mayotte) will allow participating students to be trained in ocean physics, chemistry, biology, ecology, with a strong focus on biodiversity and the seismic activity around Mayotte. The methods and tools that will be used will fully take advantage of the multiple possibilities offered by R/V Marion Dufresne, both at sea and during transits and stopovers.

The scientific questions at stake are strongly related to issues with a great societal impact: conservation biology, fishing resources, pollution, biodiversity exploitation, monitoring and management of marine protected areas, climate change.

An international project

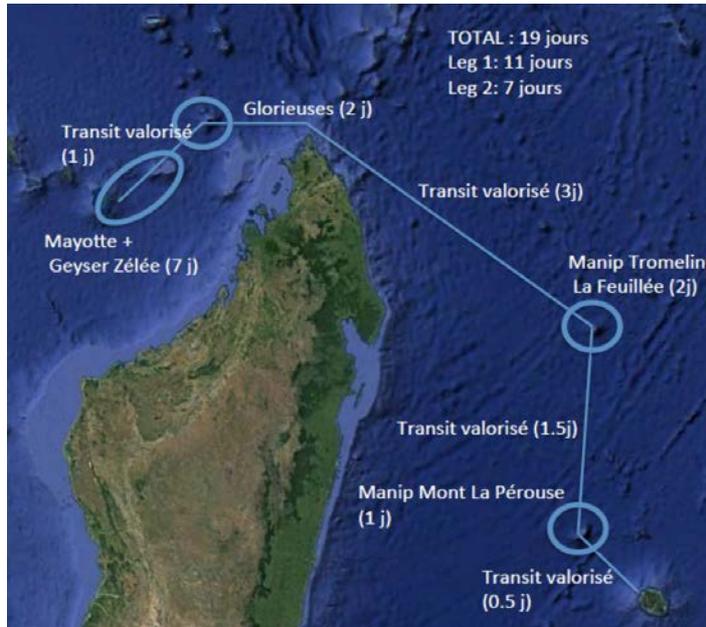
In addition to students and trainees from the French overseas territories of the area (universities of La Reunion and Mayotte), students and trainees from other countries of the oceanic basin will be invited on board, where possible (Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya), as well as "marine science young ambassadors" from these countries, who could benefit from the first two objectives of the floating university and therefore be aware of the importance of ocean sciences.

WIOMSA (<https://www.wiomsa.org/>) was contacted to help implement the selection process of the 10 international students. They must be identified early 2022 in order to settle the administrative constraints before embarking on board.

The project will have an impact wider than the sole group of participants, through communication and awareness raising actions that could be organised before, during and after the campaign itself with local partners (school projects with teachers, visits of the vessel during stopovers, press conferences, lectures ...)

It is also planned to invite a YouTuber on board in order to share this unique experience with a wider public, and keep memory of the project.

As far as « marine science young ambassadors » are concerned, this project will represent a unique opportunity to better understand how to take science into account in decision-making processes and management plans, with the shared objective of a clean, safe and resilient ocean.



Projected scenario: ca. 22 days, 2 legs

leg 1 = Le Port (La Réunion) – Longoni (Mayotte), dates 06/29-07/08*

leg 2 will be coupled with MAYOBS campaign = Longoni – Longoni (Mayotte), dates 07/10-07/22*

<https://campagnes.flotteoceanographique.fr/series/291/index.htm>

**Dates could change by a few days*



RV Marion Dufresne from the French oceanographic fleet

<https://www.flotteoceanographique.fr/Nos-moyens/Navires-engins-et-equipements-mobiles/Navires-hauturiers/Marion-Dufresne>