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Tour Notes

Secrets of Madagascar

Tour Duration – 18 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●●○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○ | Culture ●●●○ | History ●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●●●

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Incredible endemic flora and fauna and an opportunity to see different lemur species
- ✓ Travel off the beaten track to the incredible Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park
- ✓ Marvel at ancient majestic Baobab trees
- ✓ Diverse landscapes from the rainforest of Ranomafana to the semi desert of Isalo
- ✓ Spend time on the beautiful Mozambique Channel at Ifaty
- ✓ See the incredible Indri Indri at Andasibe National Park and hear its haunting call
- ✓ Experience the interesting cultural diversity of the Central Highlands





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	Comfortable hotel/lodge accommodation with private bathrooms
Included Meals:	Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size:	Maximum group size 12
Start Point:	Antananarivo – you can arrive any time on day 1
End Point:	Antananarivo – you can depart any time on day 18
Transport:	4WD and minibuses, river boat and domestic flights
Country Visited:	Madagascar
Optional Extensions:	Pre-tour Anjozorobe Forest Corridor extension Post tour Pangalanes Wildlife extension Post tour Mikea Forest beach extension Beach stay extension in Ifaty or Anakao (on request)



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Secrets of Madagascar

The island of Madagascar occupies a unique place, both culturally and geographically, within Africa. Separated from the mainland millions of years ago, its fauna has developed very differently from the rest of the continent's wildlife, and it is home to countless species found nowhere else on earth. Its people are an intriguing mix of Malay and African ancestry, with complex patterns of beliefs and an unusual history. On this trip we take in the very best of this enigmatic and alluring land. Our journey takes us to the little visited Tsingy de Bemaraha Reserve, recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site on account of its amazing rock formations, yet virtually unknown to the outside world until twenty years ago – few other operators take the trouble to reach this area, but it is without a doubt one of the highlights of Madagascar. We also visit superb national parks, including the bizarre moonscape of Isalo and the lush rainforests of Ranomafana, home to countless species of lemurs including the rare golden bamboo lemur, only discovered by scientists in 1986. We also visit Andasibe, one of the best places in Madagascar to see the curious indri, the largest species of lemur, and spend time taking walks through the forest in search of endemic wildlife. Finally, we spend time at Ifaty on the coast – a relaxing end to the trip. If you have more time to spare why not extend your stay by the beach with our Mikea Forest Beach Extension or try one of our other extensions to either the pristine forest of Anjozorobe or go tropical on the East Coast with our Pangalananes Wildlife Experience. Madagascar is unlike anywhere else on earth – join us to experience its diverse charms on a trip that will challenge what you thought you knew about Africa.

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used. Although we try to be as accurate as possible, distances and timings indicated in the itinerary are meant as guidelines only and can substantially vary from one departure to another one depending on local safety initiatives, road conditions, road traffic and other unforeseen events.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your main Secrets of Madagascar tour but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

On the pre and post tour extension to Mikea, Anjozorobe or Pangalananes as well as for any of the beach extensions, you will not have an accompanying guide. You will have the services of a local park/reserve guide.

Itinerary

Optional Pre-Tour Extension – Anjozorobe Forest Corridor (4D/3N)

[Pre-tour] Day 1: Arrive in Antananarivo

Arrive in Antananarivo. On arrival transfer to the hotel. Overnight Gassy Country House Hotel or similar. No meals are included today.



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Note: For those arriving before 3pm into Antananarivo it is possible to travel straight to Anjozorobe at an extra cost. Please contact us for a quote or for arranging any other activities in Tana.

[Pre-tour] Day 2: Antananarivo – Anjozorobe (Overall driving time: 4 hours)

Depart after breakfast and our first stop is the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga (UNESCO), a significant symbol to the culture and people of Madagascar. We then journey to Anjozorobe Forest Corridor where you can relax or take walks in the surrounds of the beautiful forest. Overnight Akiba Lodge (BLD)

Ambohimanga (UNESCO)

The Royal Hill of Ambohimanga consists of a royal city and burial site, and an ensemble of sacred places. It is associated with strong feelings of national identity, and has maintained its spiritual and sacred character both in ritual practice and the popular imagination for the past 500 years. It remains a place of worship to which pilgrims come from Madagascar and elsewhere.

Anjozorobe Forest Corridor

Anjozorobe is home to one of the last large and unfragmented remnants of the central highland's natural ecosystems. Two types of forest are present: high altitude humid forest (over 1500 m) and mountain humid forest (800 - 1500 m). The corridor is still of sufficient size and integrity to guard safe populations of plant and animal life. Anjozorobe is the richest known forest highland sites for biodiversity of flora and fauna. Anjozorobe is somewhat of a hidden gem and despite its beautiful forest and biodiversity receives relatively few visitors compared to more famous parks in Madagascar.

[Pre-tour] Day 3: Anjozorobe

A full day to relax in the surrounds of the beautiful forest of Anjozorobe. There will also be the opportunity to take walks in the forest with a local guide to get your first taste of some of the magnificent flora and fauna of Madagascar. The forest has an abundance of plant and animal life. It may be possible for you to spot the beautiful Indri Lemur as well as other flora and fauna. Overnight Akiba Lodge (BLD)

[Pre-tour] Day 4: Anjozorobe – Antananarivo (Overall driving time: 3-4 hours)

After an optional early morning walk in the forest the rest of the morning is at leisure before returning to Antananarivo in the afternoon. This is Day 1 (arrival day) of the main tour. (BL)

Main Group Tour

Day 1: Arrival in Antananarivo

Arrive in Antananarivo and transfer to the hotel conveniently situated in the vicinity of the airport. Depending on your time of arrival, you may have time to explore the city. Overnight Gassy Country House Hotel or similar. No meals are included today.

Antananarivo

Antananarivo, commonly known as Tana, is the capital and largest city in Madagascar. The name Antananarivo means 'the City of the Thousands', a reference to the thousand warriors of King Andrianjaka, who established Tana as the capital city of the Merina tribe and accorded it a sacred status. The city was largely chosen for its privileged location – being on high ground (1,370m) and surrounded by marsh made it easy to defend and thus a natural choice for the capital. Tana has unusual French and Asian inspired architecture with winding cobblestone streets and staircases that create a medieval impression. The large open-air Zoma market has been disbanded, which means there is now plenty of room to walk around Araben ny Fahaleovantena (Avenue de l'Independence), the capital's main street. Other attractions include the colourful daily flower market on the edge of Lake Anosy and the botanical and zoological gardens, where you can see the egg and 3m-tall skeleton of the extinct aepyornis, or elephant bird. Sadly, the Rova (Queen's Palace) burned to the ground in 1996. Though virtually nothing remains at the site, there are nice views of the



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city from the hill where the palace once stood. Antananarivo does not have too much in the way of conventional sightseeing, but if you enjoy walking around, watching local scenes and experiencing the laid-back atmosphere that is prevalent here, the city is a very pleasant place – interesting markets, colonial buildings and many craft shops make it a great place to explore.

Day 2: Antananarivo - Andasibe (Overall driving time: approx. 5-6 hours)

This morning enjoy a short city tour of the capital before we drive to Andasibe through lush vegetation, stopping en route at a private reptile reserve to get up close to some of Madagascar's many species of chameleon. On arrival at Andasibe we visit a private sanctuary where you can get up close to Lemurs - the lemurs may jump on you but please note that this is perfectly safe. This evening there will be an opportunity to take a walk in the forest looking for nocturnal creatures. Overnight Vakona Lodge or similar. (BD)

Andasibe National Park

Andasibe National Park is home to some of the best of Madagascar's wildlife, including the endangered aye-aye, bamboo lemurs, chameleons, and the indri, which was named by mistake when Pierre Sonnerat, a French naturalist, was exploring the island, a local guide spotted the animal and pointed at it, shouting "Indri", which means "look at that" in Malagasy. Sonnerat assumed the guide was giving him the local name, and ever since then the largest species of lemur has been known as the indri, even to Malagasy speakers. These beautiful animals have black and white markings and pale green eyes, and live in the tree canopy. The park itself contains montane forest and a wealth of plant and birdlife.

Day 3: Andasibe National Park – Antananarivo (Overall driving time: approx. 5-6 hours)

Andasibe is probably the best national park in Madagascar and a good place to watch the indri, the largest species of lemur on the island. We take a morning walk through the forest in search of this enigmatic creature as well as other wildlife, accompanied by an expert guide. After the walk, time permitting we highly recommend you to take part in our reforestation project with the Mitsinjo local association (optional) where you are guaranteed to learn a lot about the Malagasy unique biodiversity; an excellent complement to your tour. Return to Antananarivo in the late afternoon. Overnight Gassy Country House Hotel or similar. (BD)

Andasibe National Park Walk

The walk in Andasibe National Park is along marked trails and involves walking up and down hill. At times it may be necessary to leave the trails to see the wildlife. Total walking time is approx. 3 hours.

Mitsinjo Reforestation Project

Visit our tree plantation project close to Andasibe where we spend about 2 hours with the local guide. Widespread habitat degradation and deforestation has recently led to Madagascar's unique wildlife being confined to small fragments of their former habitats. This project at Mitsinjo promotes reforestation and rainforest restoration and small rainforest fragments are being linked up by the planting of corridors, allowing the movement and growth of the endemic animal populations. Maintaining up to five tree nurseries at a time, Mitsinjo produces an annual average of 30,000 seedlings of up to 100 endemic species of rainforest trees per nursery.

Day 4: Antananarivo - Morondava – Kirindy (1-hour domestic flight; overall driving time: approx. 2 hours)

Fly west across the island to Morondava, a coastal town with a laid-back atmosphere and home to many of Madagascar's different ethnic groups. On arrival, we start our journey to the Tsingy de Bemaraha passing majestic Baobabs en route to the remote village of Kirindy for the night. This evening we enjoy a night walk in Kirindy Reserve which has the best opportunity for viewing the elusive Fossa as well as nocturnal lemurs. Overnight Relais du Kirindy or similar (BD)

Note: In Kirindy, electricity is available only between 05:00-07:00hrs and 19:00-22:00hrs.



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Lemurs

Lemurs are a special group of primates found only on Madagascar and the Comoros Islands. There are fifty species of lemurs, seventeen of which are on the endangered species list. Lemurs are prosimians, or primitive primates. They are social animals with long limbs, flexible toes and fingers, and long noses. Habitat loss is the main threat to lemurs today, as people clear their native forests for farmland. How and when lemurs became separated from the monkey family is unclear. Although it was once thought that lemurs were on Madagascar when the island separated from Africa, recent advances have shown that Madagascar was separated from Africa by hundreds of kilometres before lemurs evolved. Accordingly, the ancestors of Madagascar's lemurs must have crossed over from Africa on floating vegetation early in primate evolution and become isolated from Africa. Once on Madagascar, the lemurs evolved into about 50 different species. Then, about 2,000 years ago, the first human settlers arrived on Madagascar from the Malaysian-Indonesian area. By the time the Europeans who wrote about the natural history of the island reached Madagascar in the mid-1600s, 15 species of lemurs had become extinct.

Day 5: Kirindy – Bekopaka (Overall driving time: approx. 6-8 hours)

An early start and a full day of travelling by car and boat to cross the Tsiribihina River with great opportunities to see a side of rural Madagascar that few other visitors experience. Continue the journey to Bekopaka and again take to the water to cross the Manambolo. For safety reasons, a convoy may be organised locally departing from Kirindy. Arrive in Bekopaka in the afternoon, time depending on the time departure (this will be decided locally and your guide will keep you informed). Overnight Olympe du Bemaraha or similar (BL*) – * Picnic lunch

Note: In Bekopaka, electricity is available only between 05:00-07:00hrs and 19:00-22:00hrs.

Days 6 and 7: Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park

Spend today and tomorrow exploring the remarkable World Heritage Site of Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park, a bizarre landscape of eroded limestone pinnacles and one of the most scenic areas in all of Madagascar. On the first day, embark a local canoe and explore part of the Manambolo Gorge and its caves and then continue with a gentle walk along take the Petit Tsingy circuit which gives you a first very good overview of the Tsingy du Bemaraha. The following day we take the Grand Tsingy circuit where boardwalks and ladders between the pinnacles allow us to explore the area, replete with deep canyons and gorges and home to several species of lemurs and birds. Overnight Olympe du Bemaraha or similar. (BD)

Please note that although the Grand Tsingy circuit is a highlight for most people, some people may find it challenging. There are two paths that can be taken – the Grand Tsingy and a shorter version of the Grand Tsingy. The full Grand Tsingy path involves going through caves and some narrow canyons, and harnesses may be used for safety reasons. You also have to go up ladders attached to rocks to reach different levels. It is not rock climbing. People of a reasonable fitness should have no problem but it is not advisable for those not comfortable with going up ladders or those who suffer from vertigo or uncomfortable with exposure to drops. Your guide will explain the difference between the paths so that you can choose the more suitable option.

Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park

Only gazetted as a national park in 1998, Tsingy de Bemaraha contains some of the most unusual landscape in the country, comprised of limestone karst pillars and pinnacles that seem to form stone forests. Its lakes, forests and swamps are home to many endangered species including the stump tailed chameleon and Decken's sifaka. The flora consists of a dry western deciduous forest, and plants typical to dry limestone areas, such as species of Aloe and the baobab *Andasonia*, as well as the red-flowered and rather flamboyant tree *Delonix regia*, widely planted in the tropics. Madagascar's sole native banana *Musa perrieri* also occurs here.





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Day 8: Bekopaka – Avenue of the Baobabs - Morondava (Overall driving time: approx. 10–12 hours)

An early start and a full day of driving back to Morondava. We stop for lunch at the restaurant Le Mad Zebu, where the Chef Onja is renowned in the whole country for its excellent cuisine. Continuing our drive south, we then stop en route around sunset at the 'Avenue of the Baobabs' where these imposing trees up to 800 years old line the road and provide an iconic snapshot of Madagascar, giving hints of the extensive forest that once covered this part of the island. Overnight Laguna Beach Hotel or similar (BL)

Day 9: Morondava – Miandrivazo (Overall driving time: approx. 6 hours)

After breakfast, drive towards Miandrivazo. En route experience varied landscapes and the transition from the very dry west to the red soil and rice fields around Miandrivazo. Situated on the Tsiribihina River, Miandrivazo is a very fertile region for cotton, corn, manioc, beans, tobacco and rice. The rest of the day is at leisure either to enjoy the countryside or relax at the hotel. Overnight Princesse Tsiribihina or similar (BD)

Note: At Princesse Tsiribihina, electricity is available between 06:00-10:00hrs and 18:00-22:00hrs. There is no Internet access in Miandrivazo.

Day 10: Miandrivazo - Antsirabe (Overall driving time: approx. 5-6 hours)

Continue the journey to Antsirabe. You will also notice changes on the features of the local people as Asian heritage becomes more prominent. We finish the day in Antsirabe, founded by Norwegians in 1856 and home to Madagascar's brewing industry. Overnight Royal Palace or similar (BD)

Antsirabe

The city of Antsirabe has about 100,000 inhabitants, and was founded by Norwegian missionaries in the late 18th century, who were attracted by the pleasant climate. It lies on the slopes of the nation's second highest peak, Tsiafajavona, in the Ankaratra Mountains, and has nearby thermal springs, locally renowned for their healing properties. The city is also known as the centre of Madagascar's brewing industry, and indeed you will smell the brewery on the way into town.

Day 11: Antsirabe - Ambositra – Ranomafana National Park (Overall driving time: approx. 8–9 hours)

In the morning, short city tour and visit of several local workshops in Antsirabe before continuing south where we first stop in Ambositra, the centre of Madagascar's wood carving industry and home to the Zafimaniry tribe. We then continue to Ranomafana National Park and, at on arrival, you will be able to take an optional night walk on the on the outskirts of the park to search for nocturnal creatures Overnight Centrest Sejour or similar (BD)

Ambositra

Ambositra, meaning 'the place of the eunuchs' (supposedly because the Merina tribe castrated all defeated warriors of the local tribe), is an excellent place to see examples of Malagasy wood carvings, and is the capital of the Zafimaniry tribe. The local houses boast intricately carved balconies, panels and shutters.

Day 12: Ranomafana National Park

We spend the morning exploring the rainforests of Ranomafana in search of its many species of lemurs, reptiles and birds. The afternoon is at leisure for you to relax or enjoy a walk in the village and surroundings. Overnight Centrest Sejour or similar (BD)

Walk in Ranomafana National Park

The walk in Ranomafana National Park can take approx. 4-5 hours. The walk is along marked trails which include many steps, and it may be necessary to leave the trails to search for the lemurs.



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Ranomafana National Park

Ranomafana is considered to be one of Madagascar's most beautiful National Parks, and was established in the early 1990s to protect the newly discovered golden bamboo lemur, as well as the very rare greater bamboo lemur. The park is covered with forest, and in higher areas moss and lichens cover the trees, giving it a prehistoric feel. Exotic plants such as orchids, as well as mountains, waterfalls and natural hot springs, make this endangered forest a charming and unusual place to discover.

Day 13: Ranomafana – Fianarantsoa - Anja - Isalo National Park (Overall driving time: approx. 9–10 hours)

Leaving Ranomafana behind we head to Isalo. We stop in Fianarantsoa, the second largest town of the country where we can enjoy the panoramic views. We continue to Anja Park, a community run reserve situated in stunning scenery with great opportunities to see ring-tailed lemurs. Arrive in Isalo in the late afternoon. Overnight Satrana Lodge or similar. (BL*) – * Picnic lunch

Note: At Satrana Lodge, electricity is only available between 06:00-10:00hrs and 18:00-22:00hrs.

Day 14: Isalo National Park

We spend today walking through the moonscape of Isalo National Park, stopping at the perfectly formed 'natural swimming pool', fringed with lush vegetation and a great place for a dip. Later we head to a stunning rock arch to watch the sunset over this dramatic landscape. Overnight Satrana Lodge or similar. (BL*) – * Picnic lunch

Isalo National Park

Isalo National Park, in the south of the country, is largely made up of interestingly-shaped sandstone rocks, and is a world away from the lushness of some of Madagascar's other parks. The park is renowned for the colours of the surrounding terrain and impressive panoramic views, as well as a sense of utter tranquillity. It is also a sacred area to the local Bara tribe, who use caves in the cliffs as burial chambers. We will be walking for much of the day at Isalo so you should be prepared for this.

The walk to the natural swimming pool is 3km both ways and the trail is climbing steps and heading upwards for about 1km, then flat for 1km and finally descending to the natural pool. Whilst walking along the flat part of the route you can climb the rocks to the view point. There are 2 areas you can climb to depending on how comfortable you are with heights. Your guide will explain these to you so you can decide the best viewing platform.

Day 15: Isalo – Tuléar - Ifaty (Overall driving time: approx. 7–8 hours)

Leaving Isalo behind we head to Tulear. Travelling through the land of the Mahafaly people, we can stop to see the traditional tombs used for burying their dead. From Tulear we transfer to Ifaty on the coast (approx. 1 hour). The region around Ifaty is extremely dry and dominated by 'spiny forest' of cacti and other plants that thrive in arid environments. Our accommodation is situated idyllically on a gorgeous beach overlooking the Indian Ocean, where we can watch the local fishermen take boats out as the sun sets. This is a truly beautiful part of Madagascar and a great place to relax or explore. Overnight Hotel La Mira or similar. (BD)

Tuléar

Located in the Deep South, crossed by the "Tropic of Capricorne" and bathed by the Canal de Mozambique, Tulear used to be one of the main harbours of Madagascar during colonial time. Different tribes -Vevo, Sakalava, Masikoro and Antandroy- managed to intermingle in Tuléar, making it a cosmopolitan city with different cultures and traditions which are all based on the cult of ancestors.



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Ifaty

On the south-west coast of Madagascar, looking out over the Mozambique Channel lays Ifaty, an idyllic sun-soaked part of Madagascar. Home to the local Vezo people, Ifaty is an excellent place for snorkelling, diving, or just relaxing and watching the waves lap the shore. Pirogues manned by local fishermen move up and down the coastline, bringing their catches back to land to sell in the local markets, and you'll soon find yourself slipping into an easy pace of life. There are also plenty of other options for the more energetic, including trips to local nature reserves, boat trips to spot whales and other marine life, and walks to local villages.

Day 16: Ifaty

A day at leisure to relax or explore. Ifaty is also home to coral reef and offers good diving and snorkelling opportunities. It's also possible to take a walk to the nearby village of Mangily where we can get a good insight into the life of the local Vezo fishing community. All excursions can be booked through the hotel and are payable locally. July and August are the best months to see the migration of the humpback whales. Overnight Hotel La Mira or similar. (BD)

PLEASE NOTE THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO EXTEND YOUR STAY EITHER HERE AT IFATY OR FURTHER UP THE COAST TO TSIANDAMBA OR ANDRAVONA – PLEASE SEE THE POST-TOUR BEACH EXTENSION DETAILS BELOW. PLEASE CONTACT US FOR ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS.

Day 17: Ifaty – Tuléar - Antananarivo (Overall driving time: approx. 1 hour; 1-hour domestic flight)

Time at leisure until the transfer to Tuléar on due time to catch a flight back to Antananarivo. Overnight Gassy Country House Hotel or similar (BD)

Day 18: Departure from Madagascar

Time at leisure until your transfer to the airport and your onward flight. Please note optional excursions are possible for those with late flights. Day use available at Gassy Country House Hotel until late afternoon for clients travelling on the Air France or Kenya Airways overnight flight. (B)

Post-tour Extension - Mikea Forest Beach Extension

[Post tour] Day 17: Ifaty – Tsiandamba or Andravona (Overall driving time: 2-3 hours)

After breakfast, we drive north to the wild and well preserved Mikea Forest, the home of the Mikea people. You have the option to stay either at the Five Senses Lodge (www.fivesenseslodge.com) or at the Mikea Lodge (www.mikealodge.com), both superb accommodation with direct access to a large white sandy beach. This afternoon is at leisure either to relax or to start exploring the impressive marine life or pay a visit to the local Vezo fishing village. Overnight at Five Senses Lodge or Mikea Lodge (BD)

Tsiandamba

Located on one of the best lagoons of the south west, the lodge has direct access to a stunning white sandy beach. Many excursions can be arranged locally at your own expense, such as a visit to a Vezo village in order to experience authentic coastal life or a walk in the spiny bush and baobab forest nearby. From June to September, humpback whales come and give birth in the temperate waters of the Mozambique Channel, so you can enjoy the magnificent spectacle of whale watching.

Andravona

Andravona lies on a large white sandy beach, and features a spiny forest with impressive baobabs which makes it ideal for photography. If you wish to experience the real life of the primitive "Mikea" tribe, you can ask the lodge to take you to the "Mikéa forest", a thorny bush with endemic spiny vegetation and baobabs. This forest hosts the last remaining members of the Mikea tribe and is the only place where we can meet and experience the Mikea's life, a primitive tribe who have little contact with the outside world and who still exist





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through hunting bees. Another option is just to enjoy a walk along the Vezo fisherman village. Do not miss the return of fishermen from the sea and watch the animated show of women and children waiting to fetch the fish.

[Post tour] Days 18 and 19: Tsiandamba or Andravona

The next two days are at leisure for you to enjoy the activities which are available at the lodge. You will be able to choose your activities on arrival. For further details about activities available and prices, please contact us. For those wanting to have an active day we can hike inside the Kirindy Mitea National Park, excellent for its endemic vegetation and abundant birdlife. Overnight at Five Senses Lodge or Mikea Lodge (BD)

[Post tour] Day 20: Tuléar (Overall driving time: 2-3 hours)

Morning at leisure until we depart from our little piece of heaven to reach the frenetic city of Tulear. This afternoon it is possible to visit the Arboretum of Antsokay, which offer a large variety of local endemic flora and trees. Overnight at Moringa Hotel (B)

Arboretum d'Antsokay

Located 12 km south-east from Tulear, the Arboretum d'Antsokay is a botanical garden created 30 years ago by the Swiss botanist Hermann Petignat. On a surface of 40 hectares, surrounded by vegetal hedges, the Arboretum aims to preserve and conserve the most threatened plants species, but also to preserve most of them from constant deforestation and bush fires. The Arboretum is entirely dedicated to the conservation of the plants from the south western part of Madagascar and is working in close collaboration with worldwide environment preservation institutions. More than 1,000 plants species, mostly endemic to the region can be observed, of which a 100 species of Euphorbia and 60 species of Kalanchoe.

[Post tour] Day 21: Antananarivo (1-hour domestic flight) – Departure from Madagascar

After breakfast, transfer to the airport to catch a flight back to Antananarivo. For travellers flying home in the evening with Air France, you can freshen up at the hotel near the airport before your journey home. For those travelling on day time flights, we strongly advise an extra night in Antananarivo and depart the day after – please contact us for advice. Day use at Gassy Country House Hotel or similar (B)

Post-tour Extension – Pangalanes Wildlife

[Post tour] Day 18: Antananarivo – Flight to Tamatave

Today is at leisure before you are transferred to the airport for an evening flight to Tamatave. On arrival you will be transferred to your hotel for an overnight stay. Overnight Calypso Hotel or similar (B)

Due to domestic flight schedules it is not possible to transfer to Ankanin'ny Nofy on the same day as flying to Tamatave.

Le Canal des Pangalanes – The Pangalanes Channel

Consisting of a succession of natural rivers and man-made channels, this amazing channel extends for 650km along the east coast and is separated from the ocean by a strip of land. The canal was born out of economic necessity when, in 1886, the French settlers decided to link artificial canals between every lake between Tamatave and Farafangana so that it would be possible to transport goods by inland navigation to the port of Tamatave, from where ships sailed to Europe. Completed in 1901, the Canal des Pangalanes (Pangalanes Channel) was thereafter used for a few decades to transport agricultural products such as wild pepper, cloves, vanilla, cashew nuts, bananas, lychees, and vanilla. It was progressively abandoned after independence in 1960. Now little used, the canal reveals a peaceful and lacustrine side of the country. In



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addition to the tranquility of its banks and picturesque landscapes it is blessed with beautiful white-sandy beaches that border the waters of its lakes.

Palmarium Reserve (Ankanin'ny Nofy)

Ankanin'ny Nofy literally translates as the "nest of dreams". It is a truly enchanting haven located on the shores of Lake Ampitabe and is home to fine sandy beaches, lush forests, mangroves, scattered orchids and carnivorous plants and the huge Palmarium reserve. This is a protected area which shelters nearly 100 000 palm trees as well as reptiles, amphibians, crocodiles and more than ten species of lemur, all endemic to Madagascar. It is possible to spot the enchanting Indri Indri with its haunting call, mouse and crowned lemurs and also the elusive and endangered Aye-Aye. This is surely one of the most attractive spots on the East coast. The Palmarium Hotel offers nice and comfortable bungalows with private bathroom and hot water facilities by the shores of Lake Ampitabe. The restaurant offers international and Malagasy cuisine, with a great choice of fresh seafood, zebu, locally grown fruit and vegetables and home-made bread, deserts and jams. This nature retreat comes highly recommended by our team!

[Post tour] Day 19: Tamatave - Ankanin'ny Nofy (Palmarium)

This morning travel south along the Canal des Pangalanes (*Pangalanes Channel*), a fascinating and historically important collection of natural rivers and artificial lakes. Until independence, the Canal des Pangalanes was used to transport local spices and fruit to the commercial port of Tamatave. Today, the canal's charm mainly comes from the small villages on the banks of the Canal. Arrive in the traditional village of Manombato and transfer by express boat to Ankanin'ny Nofy, a peaceful village located on the bank of Ampitabe Lake. This afternoon take a walk into the private reserve managed by the Palmarium. This is a 46-hectare private wildlife park in which you can spot many species of lemur, including fluffy Coquerel's sifaka, as well as a hundred species of endemic plants and trees. At nightfall and equipped with your headlamp, you will then go for a guided night walk and try to spot some very tame black and white ruffed lemurs and if possible the elusive Aye-Aye ! Overnight at Le Palmarium hotel (B)

[Pot tour] Day 20: Ankanin'ny Nofy (Palmarium)

Today is a full day to relax or explore the local environment. Apart from strolling on the white sand beaches alongside Lake Manombato, you can walk to the stunning village of Andranokoditra, built on the narrow strip of land dividing the canal from the Indian Ocean. Along the path admire the many carnivorous pitcher plants, and appreciate a peaceful and slow-paced side of Madagascar. You may also consider a visit to the experimental reserve of Vohibola, which protects one of the last Eastern littoral forest, and is entirely managed by local communities, favouring sustainable tourism. Overnight at Le Palmarium hotel (B)

[Post tour] Day 21: Ankanin'ny Nofy – Departure from Antananarivo

After breakfast, transfer by express boat to Manambato (approx. 1.5 hour), where a private driver will welcome you and drive you back to Antananarivo in the afternoon. You can freshen up at the hotel Gassy Country House Hotel near the airport before your journey home (B).

Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure airport transfers

Domestic flights (2) from Antananarivo to Morondava and Tuléar to Antananarivo

All accommodation as per the itinerary, or similar

Transport throughout the main tour with the services of a professional driver (not applicable to pre-post-tour extension)



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Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader (not applicable to pre-post-tour extension)

Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Two Litres of mineral water per person per day (not applicable to pre-post-tour extension)

Excluded:

International flights

Travel Insurance

Visa (available on arrival at the airport – currently 35 EUR per person or the equivalent in USD - \$38 to \$40)

Drinks

Local tipping kitty collected on arrival between 55-85 EUR (or the equivalent in GBP or USD)

Tips for main tour guide, driver and pre-post tour arrangements (discretionary)

Items of a personal nature

Extra arrangements, excursions and activities not included/mentioned in the itinerary

Important Information

Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to Madagascar to areas that we travel to. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

At Undiscovered Destinations we know our travellers prefer to stay in comfortable, mid-range accommodation. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom and when necessary air-conditioning will be provided. In general, you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have



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designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

In general, the costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more. The costs below are indicative to eating at the hotel restaurants and range depending on number of courses. Please note that Satrana Lodge in Isalo is more expensive than the other hotels.

- A lunch is £5-10
- A two-course dinner is £5-13

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general, you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

- A bottle of water is £0.50 - £0.75
- A bottle of local beer (THB) is £1 - £2
- A fresh fruit juice is £1 - £1.50

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Although not compulsory, tipping is customary in Madagascar. Accordingly, a tipping kitty is organised on arrival which covers day to day tips incurred whilst on tour. This includes tips at restaurants and hotels. It also includes tips for drivers and local guides in the national parks. Please budget 55 to 85 Euros (or the equivalent in GBP or USD) depending on the size of the group. This will be collected in Euros, Pounds or Dollars cash by your guide at the start of the tour who will then be responsible for tipping throughout your trip.

The kitty does not cover tips for your Tour Guide. At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Guide in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive. A reasonable amount to tip a guide would be between \$5-7 per day and \$3-5 per day for the driver.

For those doing pre or post-tour extensions and arrangements, please refer to the following amounts given as a general indication in local currency (MGA):

- Staff at the hotel: 10,000 to 15,000 MGA in total, per stay– usually there is a tipping box at the reception
- At a local restaurant: 5,000 to 10,000 MGA in total, per service
- Local guides in the parks and reserve: 10,000 to 20,000 MGA per visit



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- Porters: 3,000 MGA per person, per service
- Additionally, if you are happy with your driver/guide, a reasonable amount to leave would be 15,000 to 25,000 MGA per day in total.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: Madagascar's larger cities are equipped with ATMs but they can be unreliable. We recommend you get your Ariary in Tana or at the airport.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are not widely accepted as Madagascar is generally a cash economy, but those places that do accept them generally only take Visa cards. Hotels can charge a fee for any card transactions.

Local Currency: Ariary (MGA)

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros (preferred), US Dollars, Pound Sterling

Where to Exchange: Tana Airport or Gassy Country House (same exchange rate used). Your guide will advise you on arrival. Please note that the exchange counters at the airport will be available to change money for all arriving flights.

Current exchange rate at the airport (as of December 2019, and always subject to change):

- 1 EUR = 3,860 MGA (if banknotes changed are below 50 EUR) or 3,960 MGA (if banknotes changes are 50 EUR and over)
- 1 USD = 3,460 MGA (if banknotes are below 50 USD) or 3,560 MGA (if banknotes are 50 USD and over)
- 1 GBP = 4,140 MGA

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Internal Flights – Tsaradia (Air Madagascar branch)

Tsaradia / Air Madagascar flights are subject sometimes to severe delay and cancellation. Our local team will do their very best to reschedule arrangements but your understanding in advance is appreciated. Therefore, changes to the itinerary may be necessary.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance, the cost of which is not included in the price of the tour. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country.

Visa Information



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At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to Madagascar. For further details please visit the applicable website shown below;

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

When you arrive at Tana, do not join the queue for immigration, instead pass through the barrier and head to the visa counter located at the right-hand side of the arrivals hall where you can obtain your visa. You then continue to the police desk and then to baggage reclaim area.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK. We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively, UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Africa, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic around 6-8 weeks before departure for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid. We also recommend that you seek advice about malaria prophylactics.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Yellow Fever

Yellow Fever vaccination is required for travellers arriving from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission. If you can't produce a certificate, you will have to visit the Institut Pasteur in Antananarivo for vaccination.



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Preparing for your tour

Climate

Madagascar, being a large country, has many different climatic variations but it is generally felt that the best time to visit is between May and November, which are the winter months. Outside of these months rain can be heavy and there are frequently cyclones. The temperature on the island is usually pleasant, ranging from the low twenties to the low thirties (Celsius).

Please note that during the winter months of May – November it can be cool/cold at night with temperatures dropping into single figures Celsius. In general, it is hotter in the west and south-west of the country whilst Antananarivo and the Central Highlands tend to be cooler.

General Travel in Madagascar

Madagascar is not like safari destinations in Southern or Eastern Africa. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. Whilst tourists have been visiting the country for many years in small numbers the infrastructure is still not as well developed as tourist destinations in the western world or even some destinations in Africa. Things sometimes do not run according to plan. Travelling can be slow and tough going. Although we try to be as accurate as possible, distances and timings indicated in the itinerary are meant as guidelines only and can substantially vary from one departure to another one depending on local safety initiatives, road conditions, road traffic and other unforeseen events. Service at hotels and restaurants is not comparable to western standards. Please kindly travel with an open mind and if you experience any problems contact our local team on the telephone number on your tour voucher who will do their best to assist.

Access to the Internet

Kindly note that access to the Internet via Wi-Fi is available in every location on the main tour, with the exception of Miandrivazo. Wi-Fi is usually only available at the restaurant or main lobby of the accommodation and some places it may be very slow. In every instance, we cannot guarantee that Wi-Fi connection will be working when you stay at the properties.

Driving times

The driving times stated in the itinerary are given in the best of faith. Driving times may on occasion be longer due to unforeseen circumstances such as poor weather, road construction activity, mechanical problems etc. Most of the roads in Madagascar are poorly maintained and asphalt is rare. On this itinerary, the driving will be quite slow on the way to the Tsingy de Bemaraha where dirty tracks are taken.

Clothing

Madagascar is quite warm and so light clothes are generally a good idea. You should ensure that you bring warmer clothes for any cool evenings. When walking in the forest it is advisable to wear long trousers and sleeves. Madagascar has reasonably relaxed attitudes towards dress and shorts are acceptable throughout much of the country. You should bring a raincoat as although our tours run in the dry season, it can still rain in the forests, particularly Ranomafana, as well as a hat to protect yourself from the strong sun.

Equipment

Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Please bring a torch/head-torch as electricity outage can occur from time to time and also to assist with walking around hotel/lodges at night. If you use walking poles you may wish to bring them for walks in the national parks. You may also wish to bring a pair of cycling/sailing gloves for use in the Tsingy.



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Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots with closed toes and ankle support are recommended, as well as a pair of sandals for general travelling. In general, when walking you will be sticking to trails/paths but there may be times when you will leave the main footpaths in the National Parks to see the wildlife which is when good grip is particularly necessary.

Environmental Responsibility

We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment. On this tour single-use plastic bottles of water will not be handed out. Water will be provided from a large container. We kindly ask you to bring your own water bottles/flask with you on this trip. If you have any concerns please contact us.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

For the internal flights one piece of checked luggage at 20kg and one piece of hand luggage up to 5kg are allowed per person.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V/50 Hz and plugs have two round pins like most European countries.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated on 14 July 2023.