

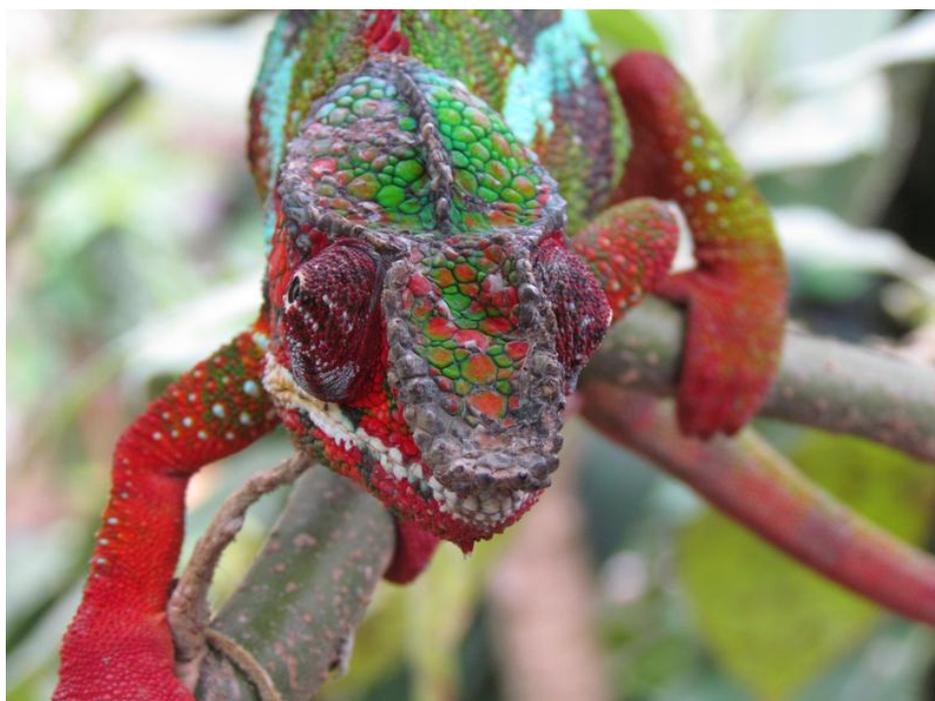


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Tour Notes

Endangered Madagascar – Northern Explorer

Tour Duration – 18 Days



Tour Rating

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

Tour Pace

Busy

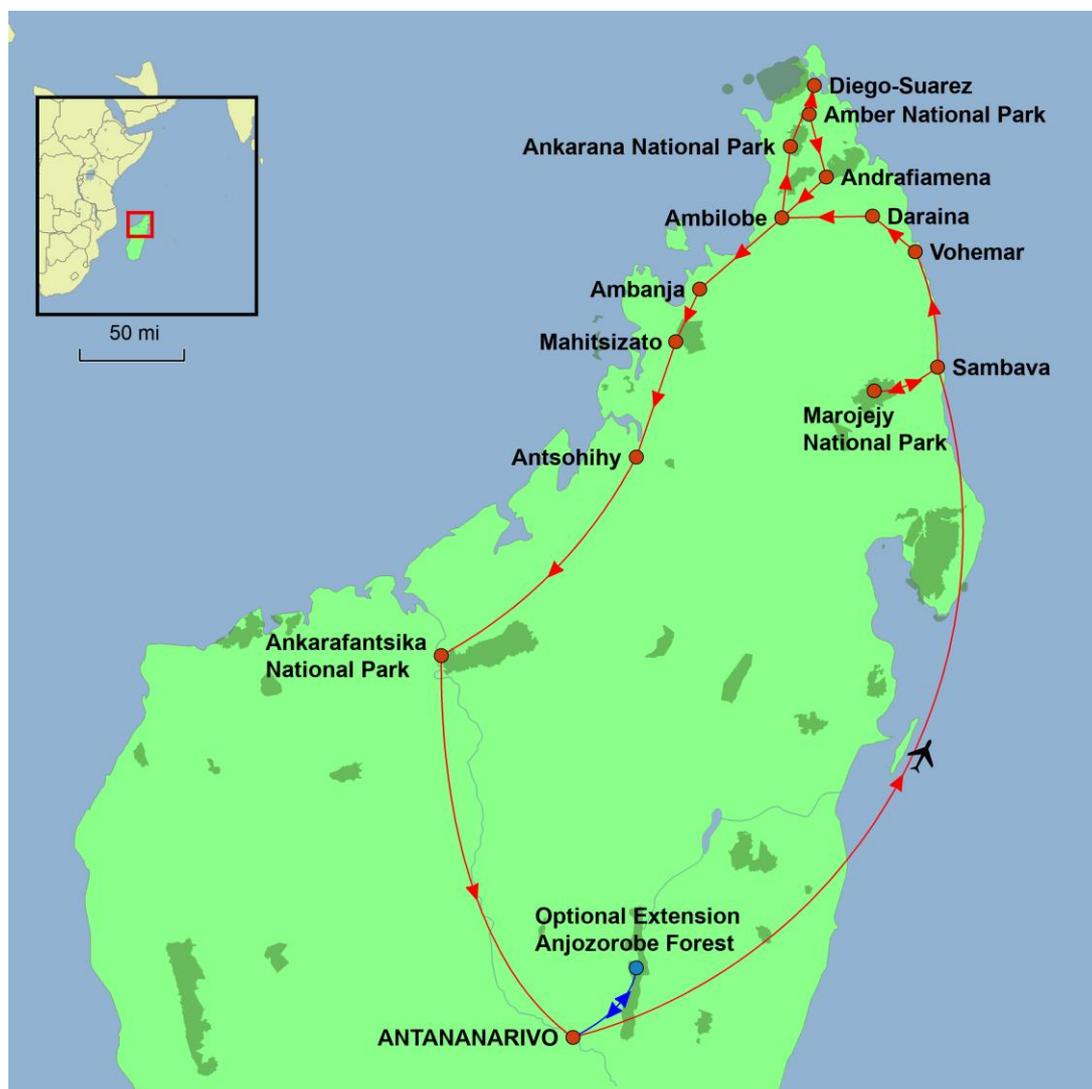
Tour Highlights

- ✓ Trek and explore Marojejy National Park, one of the most pristine parks in the country
- ✓ Track 3 of the most critically endangered primates on the planet
- ✓ Travel to the far north of Madagascar at Diego Suarez
- ✓ Explore the wonderful tropical rainforest of Amber Mountain National Park
- ✓ Experience the extraordinary spiny limestone landscape of Tsingy de l'Ankarana
- ✓ Take a tour of a huge working plantation of cocoa and vanilla in Ambanja



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Tour Map - Northern Explorer - Madagascar



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotel/lodge accommodation and 4 nights camping or basic huts
- 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
- End Point:** Antananarivo
- Transport:** 4WD or minibuses, Domestic flight Tana to Sambava
- Countries:** Madagascar
- Optional Extensions:** Pre or post tour Anjozorobe Forest and lots of other options including beach extensions





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Endangered Madagascar - Northern Explorer

Whether your interests lie in natural history or anthropology Madagascar's intensity is exquisite and almost overwhelming. In this unique island nation isolation has nurtured wildlife found nowhere else on Earth, while maintaining a human cultural reserve as rich as any in mainland Africa. If there is a destination that transcends travel bucket-list hyperbole, Madagascar is surely a strong contender. Go now.

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.

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 trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

Itinerary

Day 1 - Antananarivo

Arrive in Antananarivo and transfer to the Gassy Country House hotel or similar.

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 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 – Sambava

A morning plane to Sambava is the only flight on this overland adventure. The landscapes around Sambava are dominated by vanilla fields and coconut plantations. On arrival, if time allows, we visit a workshop to learn how vanilla is prepared on its journey from the field to the kitchen. Overnight at Mimi Hotel or similar (BD)





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Sambava

Sambava is nestled in a small bay and is sheltered by luxuriant vegetation such as bamboo, banana and palm trees. It is one of the most prosperous cities in the north and known as the capital of the vanilla triangle.

Day 3 - Sambava – Marojejy National Park

(Approximate driving time: one-and-a-half-hours. Approximate walking time: three-and-a-half to four hours - gentle uphill)

Departing at 7:30am, we are accompanied by a Marojejy park guide as we travel by 4WD to Manantenina, arriving around 9:00am. From here, after a short break, we continue along a dirt track to Mandena, as far as we can go by 4WD. Continuing on foot, it's around one hour to the entrance of Marojejy National Park. This is a steady three-kilometre walk taking in an ascent of 80 metres. From the park's entrance is a further two-and-a-half hour walk to reach Camp Mantella. Here, the ascent is nearer 270 metres, but the trails are good (though slippery under foot after rain) and there are frequent stops to observe flora and fauna. We should arrive in good time to relax and enjoy the camp's forest surroundings. Those wishing to explore farther can walk to Humbert waterfall, a two-hour return hike. Overnight wild camping or basic huts with no shower/bath facilities, and outdoor toilet (BLD)

Please note: *Marojejy National Park is a true wilderness area in Madagascar. Facilities are very basic at the camps and consist either of shared huts or camping. Outside bathroom facilities are shared. You should be well prepared for basic conditions in Marojejy National Park. Even in the dry season rain is common and trails can be slippery. From Days 3 – 6 you will be walking every day (optional Day 5). The walking times between the camps are outlined in the day to day itinerary. Walks from the camps vary depending on the wishes of the group and the state of the trails which will be determined by the local park guide. Should you wish then you can stay at camp on Day 5 if you do not wish to walk any further from Marojejia Camp.*

Fresh food is cooked for clients at the camps and in our personal experience is plentiful, hearty and delicious. You will be able to leave your main luggage in Sambava or at the Marojejy park headquarters so please pack lightly for the Marojejy experience. Ensure you have waterproof clothing, insect repellent, antiseptic wipes and any other medication you may routinely need. Ensure you have some dry clothes for time spent at camp. It is a good idea to have a waterproof cover for your small pack or have valuables kept in a plastic bag. Ensure you bring adequate numbers of batteries for your equipment as you cannot charge equipment whilst in the park.

Please bring a light sleeping bag and a sleeping inner sheet. A travel towel is advisable. You will need a head torch or torch for the camps at night. There are no shower/washing facilities at the Marojejy camps but there is an outdoor hut at each camp with western style toilet. Please note that night walks on the trails in Marojejy are no longer permitted. We will however be able to look for wildlife around camp on the nights spent in the park.

Marojejy National Park

Marojejy National Park is one of the most strikingly beautiful and wild areas of Madagascar. It is unique in the world, a place of dense jungle rainforest, sheer cliffs, and plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. Marojejy National Park comprises 60,050 hectares (148,387 acres) of land, and protects the entire Marojejy Massif. The forests, ranging from low altitude rain forest through to high altitude montane scrub, harbour an impressive list of plants and animals: at least 275 species of ferns, 35 species of palms, 149 species of amphibians and reptiles including 60 frogs such as the green climbing mantilla, leaf-tailed geckos, brookesia chameleons and lots of leeches. The park is also home to eleven species of lemurs, including the critically endangered Silky Sifaka (*Propithecus candidus*) which only occurs here. Other lemurs found here include Indri, red-bellied lemur, Eastern woolly lemur, aye-aye, bamboo lemur or Weasel sportive lemur. Birds are also very well represented with 118 species having been observed so far including the helmet vanga, Madagascar serpent-eagle, velvet asity, and the cryptic warbler.



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Day 4 - Marojejy National Park

(Approximate walking time two hours including some steep uphill sections)

Today we continue our trek to Camp Marojejia, approximately two hours mostly uphill, ascending 350 metres. The hike is tough in parts but there's plenty of time and frequent stops to enjoy the forest and look for wildlife. Hopefully we will be lucky and spot the critically endangered Silky Sifaka, a beautiful pure white lemur only found in this area and one of the planet's 25 rarest primates. Marojejia camp lies in the transition zone between lowland and montane rainforest. Located on a mountainside, it offers breath-taking views over large areas of the park. On arrival at the camp there's time to rest, though the park guide is available to accompany those wishing to explore farther. Overnight wild camping or basic huts with no shower/bath, and outdoor toilet (BLD)

Day 5 - Marojejy National Park

(Walking time depends on trail conditions and the cooperation of wildlife)

Today we explore the park on foot, searching out interesting species of flora and fauna many of which are endemic to this magnificent park. We'll be walking for around four hours but this does depend upon what we find and where... Overnight wild camping or basic huts with no shower/bath, and outdoor toilet (BLD)

Day 6 - Marojejy – Vohemar

(Approximate driving time: three hours. Approximate walking time: three to four hours' gentle descent)

Departing at 7am we descend to Camp Mantella, then onwards to Mandena and our awaiting 4WDs. It takes around one hour to drive back to Sambava for lunch. From Sambava we head to Vohemar through the green and peaceful landscape of the east for around two hours. As we travel don't be surprised as the unmistakable scent of vanilla drifts into the car from the countryside. On arrival after check-in we'll visit a vanilla plantation to learn about the processes involved in cultivating one of Madagascar's most famous export products. Overnight Baie D'Iharana or similar (BD)

Vohemar

Vohemar is situated in an attractive bay and has one of the few natural harbours on the East coast. It is also one of the main vanilla producing areas of the country.

Day 7 – Vohemar – Daraina

(Approximate driving time: three to five hours though very difficult to estimate)

After an early breakfast we continue to Daraina Reserve. The journey is unpredictable and takes between three and five hours depending upon road conditions. Please be prepared for slow going... At Daraina we walk along forest trails on the lookout for critically endangered Tattersall's Sifaka, endemic to this area, along with other lemur species and typically rich birdlife. Overnight camping or basic huts at Tattersali Camp or similar. (BLD)

Please note: *The Tattersali Camp huts are basic but quite comfortable where you will have a mattress and sheets and blankets. Some may prefer to use their sleeping bags. The huts have lights and an attached bathroom with western toilet and shower/sink which does not have hot water but plans are in the pipeline to have solar hot water system soon but it is unclear when this will be ready. There is no facility for charging camera/phone equipment so please ensure you have spare batteries.*

Daraina Reserve

The park is a mosaic of rolling hills covered with patches of deciduous and semi-evergreen forest, which is one of the richest and most ecologically sensitive areas in the north. The principal reason for its importance is the critically endangered golden-crowned sifaka, one of the world's rarest primates, that is found here and nowhere else. Other lemurs are also seen with regularity including crowned lemurs, and Sanford's brown lemurs and even, occasionally, the aye-aye. Recently a new lemur species has been discovered the "Fork-



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marked lemur". They belong to the genus or group of species, called Phaner and if confirmed as a new species, this would be only the fifth member of that group. Natural ecosystems in Daraina have been transformed and fragmented by human activities. Currently, the area presents a complex and rich mosaic of small, medium, and large forest fragments. Despite the fact that the forests found throughout the region are highly fragmented, the floral and faunal communities found in the area are rich and diverse. The reserve is managed by NGO Fanamby and the Tattersali Camp accommodation is run by people from the local community where proceeds from tourism contribute to enhancing the lives of local villagers.

Day 8 - Daraina – Ambilobe – Ankarana National Park

Approximate driving time: six to seven hours)

After an early breakfast we take a dirt track to the predominantly Muslim town of Ambilobe, a journey of around five hours. The road is a real adventure... Please be prepared for a bumpy ride. If time allows, we'll explore Ambilobe's lively and colourful market. From Ambilobe, we continue to Ankarana National Park and, time permitting, a short walk in the park before dark. Overnight Relais De L'Ankarana (BD)

Ankarana Reserve

Ankarana Special Reserve is located about 108km south of Antsiranana (Diego Suarez) and covers 18,220ha. Ankarana is known for its limestone karst pinnacles called tsingy along with its extensive cave system and network of underground rivers, some of which contain crocodiles. Dry deciduous forest is found in much of the reserve. Visitors may encounter the crowned lemur, Sanford's brown lemur, Perrier's black lemur, the northern sportive lemur and dwarf lemurs. A variety of chameleons and leaf-tailed Uroplatus geckos can also be found in the reserve.

Day 9 - Ankarana National Park

This morning we visit the limestone highlands of Tsingy D 'Ankarana. Here, erosion has created fields of tower karst giving the landscape a spiny, rocky aspect – an extraordinary spectacle. Abundant wildlife inhabits the region's forested canyons and we should have chances to see brown lemurs, geckos and non-poisonous snakes. Obviously, the terrain here can make walking challenging. However, guides will discuss different routes available. Overnight Relais De L'Ankarana or similar. (BD)

Day 10 – Ankarana National Park – Diego Suarez (Approximate driving time: four hours)

After breakfast we continue to the northernmost tip of Madagascar and the town of Diego Suarez. Here, a short city tour includes a visit to the World War II cemetery and memorial dedicated to Allied soldiers who fell during Operation Iron Clad and the Battle of Madagascar in 1942. Those that wish can take a hike in Montagne Des Francais National Park where magnificent views are afforded over three bays; Baie des Dunes, Baie des Pigeons and Sakalava Bay. During the hike it's also possible to observe several lemur species and an endemic variety of baobab tree. Overnight Le Suarez or similar. (BD)

Please note: *The hike up Montagne de Francais is steep in parts and conditions can be very hot. Please take plenty of water and wear a hat and other appropriate sun protection. For those that do not wish to walk then you can relax at the hotel.*

Day 11 - Diego Suarez – Amber Mountain National Park – Andrafiomena

(Approximate driving time: five hours)

Departing early from Diego, it's an hour's drive to Joffre Ville, a crumbling but atmospheric former retreat for the French elite. Only a few kilometres beyond Joffre Ville lies Amber Mountain National Park where we spend a few hours among the flora and fauna. The park offers many different trails and some beautiful waterfall. Shorter or longer walks are on offer – it's your choice. Later, we take a scenic journey to Andrafiomena Reserve, at the foot of the Andranomanera Protected Reserve. En route we visit the curious rock formations of Red Tsingy, the result of erosion by the Irodo River. The final leg of today's journey is a



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bumpy hour's drive along a poorly maintained track. However, on arrival, the camp's location makes it all worthwhile. Overnight Black Lemur Camp or similar. (BD)

Amber Mountain National Park

Created in 1958 this national park is located 7km's from Joffre Ville and 32kms from Diego Suarez. It is a tropical rainforest with an area of 18,200 hectares and the altitude in the park ranges from 850m – 1,485m. The park has its own microclimate which makes the flora and fauna unique. Seven species of lemur have been recorded in the park including the crowned lemur and Sanford's brown lemur which are usually easily spotted. With a high annual rainfall rate, the park is covered with upland moist tropical forest, with numerous giant tree species, smaller ferns and several orchid species.

Day 12 - Andrafiarana

After breakfast a hike led by local guides explores Andranomanera Protected Reserve, home to several species endemic to the area. The reserve encompasses 30,000 Hectares, ranging from semi-humid to dry forest. It is in the central transition zone that the very rare Perrier's sifika has found refuge. Overnight Black Lemur Camp or similar. (BD)

Day 13 – Andriafarana – Ambanja

(Approximate driving time: five hours)

This morning we travel to Ambanja, shadowing the Tsaratanana Mountains, home to Madagascar's highest peak, Mount Tsaratanana (2,876m). Arriving in Ambanja there's time to visit the local market before checking-in at our accommodation. Overnight Nour Inn or similar. (BD)

Day 14 – Ambanja – Mahitsizato - Antsohihy *(Approximate driving time: five hours)*

After breakfast we visit Millot plantation to learn about the production of cacao, coffee and vanilla, the prevalent crops in this fertile region. Continuing to the village of Mahitsizato, a local community project is dedicated to the protection of Sclater's Lemur. This critically endangered species is the only primate besides humans known to possess blue eyes. The fragmented nature of the forest makes the lemurs quite shy but local guides are very experienced and will do their best to spot them. After a picnic lunch we travel on to Antsohihy, arriving in time to explore town. Overnight Belle Vue or similar. (BD)

Mahitsizato Walk

This is a dry area of forest but there are no well-marked trails here. To see the blue-eyed lemurs we need to walk quite steeply uphill at times and sideways along a slope. As the conditions here are usually dry the walking is not particularly hazardous but care should be taken underfoot and good footwear worn. Also as we may have to push our way through dry forest long sleeves and trousers should be worn.

Day 15 - Antsohihy – Ankarafantsika *(Approximate driving time: eight hours)*

This morning we journey to Ambodromamy at the crossroads of two major highways, the North RN6 and West RN4. The village has been brought to life by local vendors whose produce is displayed by the roadside. We take the RN4 towards Majunga to reach Ampijoroa. This a Sakalava region, home to one of Madagascar's smaller ethnic groups, often identified by their characteristic tomb design. We arrive at our accommodation in the late afternoon, and subject to national park approval we plan an evening walk in search of nocturnal wildlife. Overnight Gite d'Ampijoroa or similar. (BD)

Ankarafantsika National Park

A paradise for birds, Ankarafantsika is one of the largest remaining dry deciduous forests, and forms a mosaic with extensive wetlands and provides the final refuge for numerous critically endangered and endemic species including lemurs, reptiles and birds. The forestry station campsite has numerous sought-after "campsite residents. At night a pair of Tortoroka Scops Owls normally start calling in the campsite and Madagascar Nightjars can be seen foraging on the edge of the camp or along the trails on a night walk!



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Day 16 - Ankarafantsika

For early risers there's a dawn birdwatching walk on trails around Lake Ravelobe. After breakfast we spend the day exploring the natural wealth of Ankarafantsika. The terrain here is quite flat making for easy walking. Overnight Gite d'Ampijoroa or similar. (BD)

Lake Ravelobe

One of the key features of the Lake Ravelobe is one pair of the critically endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle. With an estimated 50-100 breeding pairs remaining in the wild, this bird is on the edge of extinction. While it is exhilarating to see such a rare bird, it is equally sad to know it is disappearing so fast. The crocodiles in Lake Ravelobe are protected by fady (superstitions and taboos taken from ancient folklore) and have been known to attack unsuspecting villagers.

Day 17 - Ankarafantsika – Tana (Approximate driving time: seven hours)

Today we head back to the capital through grasslands and savannah, possibly encountering farmers and their zebu cattle herds. In Tana we enjoy a farewell dinner, reflecting on an amazing journey through an incredible country. Overnight Gassy Country House or similar. (BD)

Day 18 - Depart Madagascar

An optional dawn tour around the upper town affords views of Tana's colourful houses in soft morning light - a memorable sight before transferring to the airport for onward flights. (B)

Optional pre-tour extension – Anjozorobe Forest Corridor: four days, three nights

Pre-tour Day 1 – Arrive Antananarivo

Arrive in Antananarivo. Transfer to Gassy Country House hotel or similar. For those arriving in Antananarivo before 3:00pm it's possible to travel straight to Anjozorobe.

Pre-tour Day 2 – Antananarivo – Anjozorobe (Approximate driving time: three hours)

After breakfast depart for the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga (UNESCO), a significant cultural site for the people of Madagascar. Later, we traverse the Anjozorobe Forest Corridor with time to relax and stroll among the trees. Overnight Saha Forest Camp (BLD)

Pre-tour Day 3 – Anjozorobe

Today is dedicated to Anjozorobe. Walk with local guides and experience some of Madagascar's magnificent flora and fauna. Among an abundance of plant and animal life it may be possible to observe one of the country's largest lemurs, the Indri. Overnight Saha Forest Camp (BLD)

Pre-tour Day 4 – Anjozorobe – Antananarivo (Approximate driving time: three hours)

After an optional early morning walk there's free time before returning to Antananarivo later in the afternoon. This is Day 1 (arrival day) of the main tour. (BL)



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Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
Domestic flight from Tana to Sambava
All transports throughout the tour
All accommodation
Services of local English-speaking guide and special Local Park guides
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Travel Insurance
Visa if applicable
Drinks
Optional local tipping kitty collected on arrival by our guide between 40 - 60 euro depending on group size (or the equivalent in GBP)
Tip for main tour guide (discretionary)
Items of a personal nature

Important Information

Foreign Government Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to the areas we visit on this tour. 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





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the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

The hotels and lodges used on this tour are classified as a combination of mid-range and simple. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom (not in Marojejy National Park). In general you will find your hotel/lodge has a restaurant and/or bar.

On the Northern Explorer small group tour there are a number of days of basic conditions comprising of basic huts or camping so you should be prepared for this. Equipment for camping is provided but you should bring a sleeping bag and a sleeping sheet. At Marojejy and Daraina in addition to staying in tents there are also some basic huts but these work on a first come first serve basis so we cannot guarantee staying in the huts although we do our best to ensure clients can stay in the huts.

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

In Marojejy National Park and Daraina Reserve (4 night in totals) you may have to share accommodation (huts only) if the park and reserve are busy. If you wish to have your own sleeping arrangement then you will need to sleep in a tent – please let us know in advance.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch on occasion 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

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.

Lunch £7- £13 excluding drinks

Dinner £7- £13 excluding drinks

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.

Bottle of local beer - £1

Bottle of mineral water - £0.50 – £0.75



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Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. 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 Eur 40 to Eur 60 per person depending on the size of the group. This will be collected in euros or pounds 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.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: Madagascar's larger cities are equipped with ATMs but they can be unreliable so we do not recommend frequent use of ATMs

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are not widely accepted, but those places that do accept them generally only take Visa

Local Currency: Ariary

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros

Where to Exchange: Your guide will advise you

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.

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. 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 and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

Visitors from most countries, including UK, EU and US visitors require a visa for entering Madagascar. This is currently available on arrival for EUR 35 for most nationalities. However, visa regulations can frequently change and therefore we recommend that you check with your nearest embassy for the most up to date details.



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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 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.

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.

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.

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) depending on time of year and altitude.

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. On our Northern Explorer tour clients should be well prepared for rain in Marojejy National Park even during the drier time of May – November as the Eastern rainforests are more susceptible to rainfall.

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. 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.



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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 to avoid cuts and scratches that could become infected. Marojejy in particular has leeches (harmless generally but can be uncomfortable and cause bleeding) so tucking your socks into your shoes is advisable. Madagascar has reasonably relaxed attitudes towards dress and shorts are acceptable throughout much of the country but we would not advise wearing short sleeves and shorts when walking in the parks and reserves. You should also bring a hat to protect yourself from the strong sun. A waterproof and windproof jacket is advisable at any time of year.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Please ensure you have a torch/flashlight which is necessary for possible electricity outages which can occur in Madagascar at any time and also for the nights spent camping. If you are a keen birder we recommend you bring a pair of binoculars as the birdlife is excellent. Also for spotting lemurs higher up in the trees. A travel towel will be needed for nights spent camping on the tour.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots with good grips and ankle support are recommended, as well as a pair of sandals. 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 especially necessary. Although we predominantly travel during the dry season, climatic zones in Madagascar are such that rain cannot be ruled out and so paths in national parks can be slippery. If you usually walk with walking poles then you can consider bringing them with you on the tour.

Road Conditions and daily driving times

Road conditions on parts of the Northern Explorer tour can be poor, especially after rainfall. In particular the road from Vohemar to Daraina is particularly challenging. Our drivers are highly skilled but please be patient if the vehicle gets stuck or experiences a puncture. Where conditions dictate we will be using the appropriate vehicles but you should be prepared for challenging road conditions.

Note that the approximate driving times in the itinerary are given in good faith but should only be used as a guide as road conditions are poor and also constantly change. Due to the road conditions, it is not uncommon to experience a mechanical problem such as a puncture. Delays can also occur as sometimes if the authorities insist on tourist vehicles travelling in convoy. The driving times given are the anticipated total amount of time per day spent in the vehicle and this does not include stops for sightseeing and/or comfort breaks.

Internal flights in Madagascar

Madagascar is a huge country and as the road infrastructure is poor in many areas using flights is sometimes unavoidable. We only have 1 flight on this tour at the beginning but we must stress that flights within Madagascar 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.

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 luggage at 18kg is allowed per person.



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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 31 October 2019

