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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 - Secrets of Madagascar



### Tour Essentials

<b>Accommodation:</b>	Comfortable hotel/lodge accommodation with private bathrooms
<b>Included Meals:</b>	Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
<b>Group Size:</b>	Maximum group size 12
<b>Start Point:</b>	Antananarivo
<b>End Point:</b>	Antananarivo
<b>Transport:</b>	4WD and minibuses, river boat and domestic flights
<b>Country Visited:</b>	Madagascar
<b>Optional Extensions:</b>	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

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. 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 Pangalanes 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

### 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 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-



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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** (*Approximate driving time: four to five hours*)

Today there's a short morning city tour of the capital before driving to Andasibe. Along the way we stop at a reptile reserve with a good collection of Madagascar's many chameleon species. On arrival at Andasibe we visit to a private sanctuary for some close-up encounters with lemurs. On arrival there's a night walk in the forest looking out for nocturnal wildlife. Overnight Andasibe Hotel 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** (*Approximate driving time: four to five hours*)

Andasibe is probably the best national park in Madagascar and a great place to watch Indri, the island's largest lemur species. Accompanied by an expert guide, we take a morning walk through the forest in search of this enigmatic creature, and other indigenous wildlife. In the afternoon we visit a lemur sanctuary. Do not be alarmed if lemurs jump onto you during the visit – they are simply curious by nature. We return to Antananarivo in the afternoon. Overnight Gassy Country House 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**

(*One-hour domestic flight. Approximate driving time: two hours*)

Fly west across the island to Morondava, a coastal town with a laid-back atmosphere and home to many of Madagascar's diverse ethnic groups. On the ground, our route to the remote village of Kirindy takes in stands of majestic baobabs and the remarkable limestone tower karst of Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park. On arrival, a night walk in Kirindy Reserve provides the best opportunity to observe the elusive cat-like Fossa as well as nocturnal lemur species. Overnight at the Relais du Kirindy or similar. (BD)

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

### **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



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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** (*Approximate driving time: six to eight hours*)

Today an early start precedes a full day on the road and on the water. The ferry crossing of the Tsiribihina River offers insights on the practicalities of life in rural Madagascar few visitors experience. Continuing, it's not long before we board another ferry for a short crossing of the Manambolo River. Arriving in Bekopaka mid-afternoon, the Petit Tsingy Circuit, a two hour walk through a labyrinth of tower karst, offers a good overview of Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park. Overnight at Hotel 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. The park's deep canyons and gorges are home to striking wildlife, including Von der Decken's sifaka and such avian highlights as Madagascar fish eagle. Overnight Soleil du Tsingy Lodge or similar (BD)

**Please note:** *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.

**Day 8: Bekopaka – Avenue of the Baobabs - Morondava** (*Approximate driving time: ten to twelve hours*)



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There's no avoiding it, this is a long day of road travel. However, after an early start we stop at the excellent, if unfortunately named, restaurant of Le Mad Zebu, where Chef Onja is renowned across Madagascar for superlative cuisine. We take our time to enjoy lunch. Continuing south, around sunset our next stop is the 'Avenue of the Baobabs' where imposing 800-year-old trees, vestiges of extensive forests, line the road to provide photographers with an iconic image of Madagascar. Overnight Baobab Café hotel or similar. (BL)

**Day 9: Morondava – Miandrivazo** (Approximate driving time: six hours)

Today we pass through varied landscapes, from the very dry west to the red soil and rice fields around Miandrivazo. Situated on the Tsiribihina River, Miandrivazo's fertile soils are cultivated in earnest to grow rice, corn, manioc, and beans, as well as cotton and tobacco. On arrival the rest of the day is free to relax or explore independently. Overnight at 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** (Approximate driving time: five to six hours)

During today's journey changes in ethnicity become apparent in the features of local people as Asian heritage becomes more prominent. Founded by Norwegians in 1856, Antsirabe is home to Madagascar's brewing industry. Arriving at our hotel, there may be time for a cold beer at the bar... 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**

(Approximate driving time: eight to nine hours)

Journeying south, after around four hours, we stop in Ambositra, a centre for Madagascar's wood carving industry and home to the Zafimaniry tribe whose heritage as wood workers is ages old. A further four hours' drive brings us to Ranomafana National Park. An optional night walk on the park's outskirts will search out nocturnal wildlife. 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, observing its many species of lemurs, reptiles and birds. The afternoon is free 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.

**Ranomafana National Park**

Ranomafana is considered to be one of Madagascar's most beautiful National Parks, and was established in



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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**

*(Approximate driving time: nine to ten hours)*

Our first stop today, after three to four hours of variable traffic and road conditions, is the community run reserve of Anja Park. Here, among stunning scenery are some of the best opportunities to see Ring-tailed lemurs. We Arrive in Isalo late afternoon, again depending upon traffic and conditions. Overnight at 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**

The moonscape of Isalo National Park is an otherworldly landscape for walking. It's even more memorable as a place to take a dip in a perfectly formed natural swimming pool, fringed with lush vegetation. Having dried off, as light fades we hike to a dramatic rock arch to witness the setting sun over a remarkable landscape. Overnight at 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** *(Approximate driving time: seven to eight hours)*

Travelling through the land of the Mahafaly, we stop near Tulear to examine some of this nomadic people's characteristically elaborate tombs. Continuing towards the coast, the landscape is extremely dry and dominated by forests of cacti and other hardy vegetation. However, in just over an hour we arrive at our beachfront hotel in Ifaty. There's time to soak in the idyllic scenery and watch fishermen head to sea as the sun dips low into the golden water of the Indian Ocean. This is a truly beautiful part of Madagascar and a great place to relax. 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 -Vezo, 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.

### **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



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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 to relax or explore. Ifaty has a great coral reef and offers good diving and easy snorkelling. If you're visiting between July and August, a highlight is the migration of Humpback whales heading north to the Mozambique Channel. Ashore, the nearby village of Mangily is an easy walk, and provides an insight into the daily life of the Vezo fishing community. All excursions can be booked through the hotel and are paid locally. 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: 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**

There's free time prior to airport transfers though optional excursions exist for those with late flights. Day use of rooms at Gassy Country House until 6pm is available for those booked on Air France's later departure. (B)

#### **Pre and Post Tour Extensions**

##### **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 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)

##### **Optional post tour extension - Mikea Forest Beach Extension** (Available for August and October departures only)

###### **Post tour Day 16 – Ifaty – Tsiandamba or Andravona** (Approximate driving time: two to three hours)



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After breakfast, we drive north to the wild and well protected Mikea Forest, home of the Mikea people. The afternoon is free to relax, pay a visit to the local Vezo fishing village or hire a snorkel and explore the varied marine life. Accommodation is at Five Senses Lodge ([www.fivesenseslodge.com](http://www.fivesenseslodge.com)) or Mikea Lodge ([www.mikealodge.com](http://www.mikealodge.com)), both superb properties with direct access to the large white sandy beach. Overnight at Five Senses Lodge or Mikea Lodge. (BD)

#### **Post tour Days 17 and 18 – Tsiandamba or Andravona**

These two days are flexible. On arrival guests may choose from a menu of activities available at the lodges. Contact us for further details of what's on offer and prices. Those in search of a good day's hiking can head to Kirindy Mitea National Park, excellent for endemic vegetation and abundant birdlife. Overnight at Five Senses Lodge or Mikea Lodge. (BD)

#### **Post tour Day 19 – Tsiandamba or Andravona - Tulear** (*Approximate driving time: two to three hours*)

A free morning allows time to soak up some tranquillity before departing for the frenetic city of Tulear. Near the city, it is possible to visit the Arboretum of Antsokay, which encompasses a wide variety of endemic plant life. Overnight at Moringa Hotel. (B)

#### **Post tour Day 20 – Tulear - Antananarivo** (*One-hour domestic flight*)

After breakfast transfer to the airport for flights to Antananarivo. Those booked on Air France's later departure can freshen up at a hotel near the airport. Those whose flights leave earlier are strongly advised to book an extra night in Antananarivo prior to departure. The delightful vagaries of travel in Madagascar must be clear to all by now... Please contact us for advice and information. Day use at Gassy Country House or similar. (B)

#### **Optional post tour extension - Pangalanes Wildlife Extension**

##### **Day 17 – Extension to the East Coast** (*Palmarium*)

A short early morning domestic flight to Tamatave is proceeded by road travel parallel to the Canal des Pangalanes. This historically important collection of rivers and artificial lakes was once used to transport spices to the port of Tamatave. Today, the waterway's charm comes from the life of small villages dotted along its shore. At the village of Manombato we take to the water ourselves, boarding an express boat for the one-and-a-half-hour journey to Ankanin'ny Nofy, a peaceful village located on the bank of Ampitabe Lake. Overnight at Le Palmarium hotel, one of the most welcoming properties in the area. (B)

##### **Day 18 – Ankanin'ny Nofy**

Today we walk in the 46 Hectare private reserve managed by the Palmarium hotel. Among the many endemic plants and trees numerous lemur species have found sanctuary, including bouffant Coquerel's sifaka. After dark, a guided night walk seeks out some habituated Black-and-white Ruffed lemurs and, if possible, the bizarre and ever-elusive Aye-Aye. Overnight at Le Palmarium hotel. (B)

##### **Day 19 – Ankanin'ny Nofy**

A full day to relax or explore the local surroundings. Apart from strolling on the white sand beaches of Lake Manombato, there's a walk to the village of Andranokoditra, built on a narrow strip of land separating 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. If venturing farther afield it's possible to visit to the experimental reserve of Vohibola, which protects one of the last primary forests on the east coast, and is entirely managed by local communities. Overnight at Le Palmarium hotel. (B)

##### **Day 20 – Ankanin'ny Nofy – Antananarivo**





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After breakfast, take the express boat to Manambato where a private vehicle will be waiting for the transfer to Antananarivo. Freshen up at a hotel near the airport before onward flights. (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 tour with a driver  
Services of English-speaking guides and local park/reserve guides  
Daily Breakfast (B) and occasional Lunches (L) and Dinners (D) as per the itinerary  
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

### 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

## Important Information

### Foreign Travel Advice 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 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.



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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 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



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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.

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
- 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.

**Local Currency:** Ariary (MGA)

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Euros, US Dollars, Pound Sterling

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

## 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



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optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country.

### 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 (or the equivalent in USD - \$38 to \$40) 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.

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](http://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.

#### 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).



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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.

**To limit unnecessary plastic waste, we do ask you to bring your own water bottle or flask that you can fill in with drinkable water for the whole length of stay.**

### **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.



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### **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 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

