

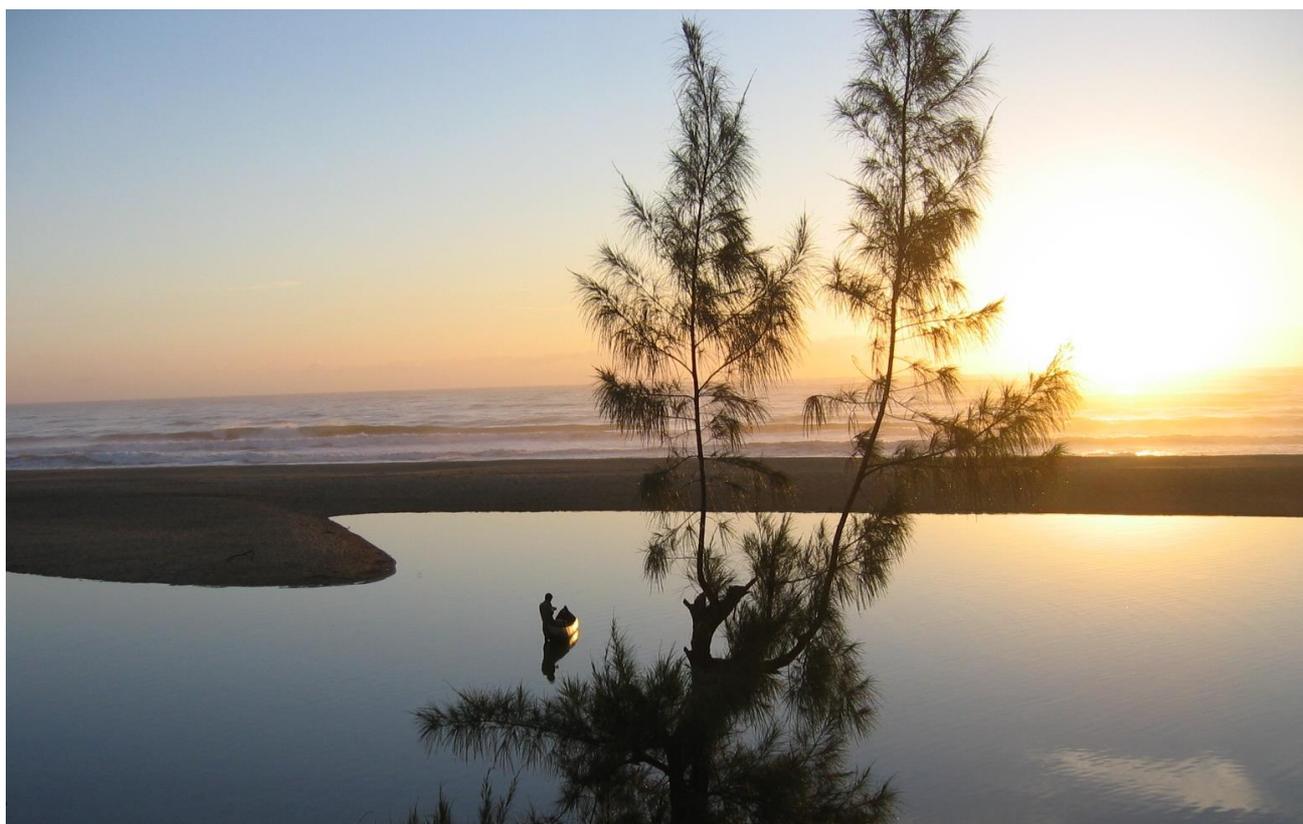


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Tour Notes

Family adventures on the Big Island - Tailormade

Tour Duration – 14 Days



Tour Rating

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

Tour Pace

Moderate/Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Incredible endemic flora and fauna and many opportunities to see a large range of lemur species
- ✓ Diverse landscapes from rainforest and mountains to limestone massifs and coastal islands
- ✓ Encounter the Betsimisaraka tribe and see some of their customs, skills and crafts
- ✓ Explore some of the course of the extraordinary feat of the colonial-period Pangalanes Canal
- ✓ Experience the fantastical tsingy features of the national parks
- ✓ Take advantage of a huge range of activities on offer from aerial wire-courses to bush golf
- ✓ Relax, snorkel and soak up the atmosphere on some of Madagascar's paradise isles



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Tour Map

Family Adventures on the Big Island – Tailormade



Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	Simple but comfortable hotel/lodge accommodation – see individual descriptions
Included Meals:	Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size:	Private tour
Start Point:	Antananarivo
End Point:	Antananarivo
Transport:	4WD and minibuses, river boat, speed boat and domestic flights
Country Visited:	Madagascar
Best Time to Travel:	July – November (travel is also possible from April – June but expect a little more rain)



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Family adventures on the Big Island

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 family friendly adventure, we take in the very best of the stunning eastern and northern reaches of this enigmatic and alluring land. Our journey takes us through the rainforest, via the intriguing villages and homes of the Betsimisaraka tribe, to the extraordinary Pangalanes Canal region on the eastern shores, which we explore, rubbing shoulders with local pirogues and fishermen. There is the chance to see the sleepy northern port of Diego Suarez, site of a little-known, key British military battle in World War II, before heading to the beautiful jungle lodges there which offer a huge range of land-based and aquatic sports, activities, nature viewing and relaxation opportunities. We also visit superb national parks, including the rainforest at Andasibe, a place abundant in lemur species, famous for the haunting call and sightings of the indri. We travel to Amber Mountain National Park where lemur diversity is equally matched by its extraordinary endemic birds, chameleons and massive tree specimens. Equally intriguing is the limestone magnificence at Ankarana National park where water erosion has created stunning tsingy formations and complex cave systems, home to hugely diverse flora and fauna, including subterranean crocodiles! Finally we spend time based on the exquisite shores of Nosy Be, taking some short but incredibly picturesque trips to the area's islands, a series of veritable paradises and a very tranquil end to the trip. 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

The day-by-day itinerary as given below is an exemplar and, upon request, has a large degree of flexibility built in. This may include additional side excursions, stop-offs en route or indeed further days to visit other sites. 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 merely 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: we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. On a private tour you can choose to have a guide accompany you throughout the tour or just travel with a professional English-speaking driver and use the services of local national park/reserve guides. It is also possible to be accompanied throughout the whole tour by a professional English-speaking guide. Just inform us of your preference.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Antananarivo

Arrive in 'Tana'. On arrival, you will be met and our representative will provide your transfer to the hotel. Depending on your time of arrival, you may have time to explore the city. There are no meals nor guided activities today. Overnight Gassy Country House, or similar.



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Accommodation Description:

Gassy Country House: Simple but comfortable small-scale hotel

Situated conveniently only 3 minutes from Ivato International Airport and 30 to 40 minutes to the centre this is a simple but comfortable small hotel designed for guests looking for comfort in a place not far from the centre and near the airport. A haven of local hospitality, guests at Gassy Country House are treated as friends rather than guests. The hotel accommodates only 30 guests and rooms are decorated vibrantly and offer a good level of comfort. Bathrooms are ensuite and some rooms have verandas. The hotel has a small swimming pool and terrace area to relax after or before a long flight. The restaurant offers a choice of European and Malagasy cuisine and there is also a small bar. WIFI is available at the hotel (connections cannot be guaranteed), as are services such as laundry. The local staff at the hotel is always happy to make local recommendations as well for eating out. The hotel accepts Visa credit card and also is able to change currency at good rates.

Antananarivo

Antananarivo, locally known affectionately as 'Tana', is the capital and largest city in Madagascar. The name Antananarivo literally translates as 'the City of the Thousands', named after the thousand warriors of King Andrianjaka, who established Tana as the capital city of the Merina tribe at the end of the 16th century. The sacred city was largely chosen for its privileged location – being on high ground (1,370m) and surrounded by marsh made it easily defensible. By 1808, it had become the island's effective capital city, as the Merina established overlordship of the whole island. Tana has idiosyncratic French and Asian inspired architecture with winding cobblestone streets and staircases that lend it a medieval air. The city is built on three essential levels, making it hilly, but very compact to explore. The main street of Araben ny Fahaleovantena (Avenue de l'Independence) is a good orientation point with sundry shops and excellent restaurants. Other attractions include the colourful daily flower market beside tranquil Lake Anosy and the botanical and zoological gardens, where you can view the egg and 3m-tall skeleton of the extinct aepyornis, or elephant bird. The Rova (Queen's Palace) burned to the ground in 1996; currently being restored, its gardens and partially renovated King's House, baths and tombs are impressive and lend you a spectacular 360° vista of the capital. Antananarivo may 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 fascinating – vibrant markets, decadent colonial buildings, deliciously stocked cafés (a must!) and many craft shops make it a great destination to delve into.

Day 2: Antananarivo – Andasibe National Park (Driving time: approximately 4 hours)

Depart after breakfast and drive eastward towards Andasibe National Park, descending from the 'hauts plateaux' through the lush green landscape of rice terraces and scattered villages, a route which lends a blend of unexpected dramatic views, snapshots of the bustling local lifestyles, glassy lakes and as we approach Andasibe, stunning primary forest. During the drive, you pause at a local waterfall, a place for "collective laundry" and indeed, highland tribal tradition dictates that, after funerals, whole families do their washing here, so the river purges away all the bad luck. A brief stop in Manjakandriana, an important agricultural city, supplying dairy and vegetables to the whole region. En route, we visit Pyrereras Reptile reserve to get up close to its rare chameleons, snakes and frogs. After checking in at the lodge, you 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. Later, take a guided dusk walk on the edge of the forest in search of nocturnal creatures. Overnight Vakona Lodge, or similar. (BL)

Accommodation description:

Vakona Lodge: Comfortable - Eco style concept

Vakona Forest Lodge is situated on a picturesque hillside that slopes down to a lake. Surrounded by lush vegetation and filled with fresh mountain air, only the sounds of frogs and other wildlife can disturb you here. Accommodation is in bungalows scattered throughout the hillside gardens, while the main building has an octagonal reception area and large dining room with huge windows overlooking the lake.



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The large outdoor dining terrace and small lounge area offer peaceful spaces in which to relax as you sip a pre- or post-dinner drink from the bar. Dotted around the hillside, the bungalows have been built and decorated in a Madagascan style. Each of them has its own terrace, so guests can feel immersed in the natural surroundings without leaving their accommodation. Inside, the bungalows are fairly basic but very comfortable, featuring a safe and a minibar. The beds are equipped with mosquito nets, while the en suite bathrooms have hot showers. Family bungalows can accommodate up to four guests. WI-FI is available at this property but connection can be slow/intermittent.

As in much of Madagascar service can be on the slow side but the restaurant fare is usually both plentiful and tasty combining local and international cuisine. There's a log fire in the centre of the restaurant, creating a cosy atmosphere in the colder months. Credit cards are not accepted. Activities on offer include canoeing, squash, trekking, horse riding, swimming, bowls, table tennis and billiards and there is a playing field for children. There is a swimming pool but usually this is only used in the warmer months from September – April as this area is quite cool during the drier winter period from May – August.

The lodge has a small wildlife reserve/crocodile farm but it is not of a good quality. There is a very nice and enjoyable wildlife sanctuary known as Lemurs Island only a short walk from the lodge which is touristy but a great chance to get really close to lemurs. In fact some will actually jump on you but it is perfectly safe. Please note that children under the age of 8 are not allowed to visit Lemurs Island.

Day 3: Andasibe National Park

Andasibe is probably the best national park in Madagascar and a good place to watch the spectacular Indri, the largest species of lemur on the island. You will probably hear it before you see it! You take a morning walk through the forest in search of this enigmatic creature as well as other wildlife, accompanied by an expert local guide. Expect to see a huge range of flora and fauna, strolling beneath the extensive canopy of trees to the backdrop of the forest chorus. In the late afternoon you can visit a Betsimisaraka village, experiencing first-hand their tribal crafts, skills, customs and dances. Alternatively you can choose to visit a local reforestation project and contribute to enhancing this vital ecosystem. Overnight Vakona Lodge, or similar. (BL)

Lemurs

Lemurs are a unique 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 native forests are cleared 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 the 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, 17 species of lemurs had become extinct.

Andasibe National Park

Andasibe National Park was created in 1989 amidst fears that logging and agriculture were rapidly destroying the rainforested east coast of Madagascar. Today its 155 square km humid forest provides sanctuary to some of the best of Madagascar's wildlife, including the endangered aye-aye, bamboo lemurs, and chameleons. Most famously, it provides excellent opportunities for spotting the indri, largest of the lemurs, mistakenly named by French naturalist Pierre Sonnerat, when a local guide pointed it out shouting "Indri" - "look at that" in Malagasy. The name stuck!



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These beautiful animals have black and white markings and pale green eyes, a spectacular whooping call and live in the tree canopy. The park itself contains montane forest and a wealth of plant and birdlife. Madagascar's geographical isolation means that many of these, from yellow-star thumb orchids and the tiny golden mantilla frog to the extraordinary giraffe-necked weevil and coral-billed nuthatch vanga, are endemics. In all, 109 species of birds, 28, species of reptile, 9 species of lemur and an almost incredible 24 species of frog make Andasibe both richly diverse and vital for wildlife.

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.

The Betsimisaraka

The dominant tribal group in Andasibe village, the Betsimisaraka people also are the second most abundant tribe in Madagascar. Their name, meaning 'The Many Inseparables' indicates both their proliferation on the island and their close-knit culture. They have their strongholds in the east and were successful traders with Asian, Arab and European visitors. Typically, they work in the rice, lychee, coffee and vanilla growing areas and often wear clothing woven from local raffia. One distinct trait is their belief in a series of 'fady' (taboo) codes and the 'kalamoro', small mischievous woodland sprites who plague their villages. The 'basesa' style of music, often sung in Betsimisaraka tongue, is played alongside traditional dances which can be played on anything from accordions to electric guitars!

Day 4: Andasibe National Park – Manambato – Akanin' Ny Nofy (Driving time: approximately 3 hours; speed boat: 1 hour)

Continuing eastwards, you stop at Brickaville, a centre of sugarcane and citrus production, before plunging into the wilder reaches, taking the dirt road to Manambato, a stunning resort on the pearlescent white sands of Lake Rasoabe. From there you enjoy a 1-hour boat to reach the idyllic retreat of Akanin' Ny Nofy. We cross a string of picturesque forest fringed lakes, before steering into the amazing Pangalanes Canal, built during the colonial period, where we can admire many birds amidst the luxuriant vegetation. At nightfall and equipped with your headlamp, enjoy a guided night walk and try to spot some very tame black and white ruffed lemurs and if possible the curious Aye-Aye. Accommodation is sympathetic to the environs: low level and rustic by design. Overnight Palmarium Hotel, or similar. (B)

Accommodation description:

Palmarium Lodge: Simple but comfortable - Eco style concept

Reached only by a boat ride along the historic Pangalanes Canal, Palmarium is set on the banks of Lake Ampitabe. The lodge is set on a small private reserve set up to preserve some of the area's unique flora and fauna. Palm trees, orchids and even carnivorous plants can be found growing in the gardens, and lemurs are easily spotted here all year round. The lodge has eleven bungalows with shared or private verandas and en suite bathrooms. The bungalows are simple inside, but with all of the essentials. They have a very natural feel, with thatched roofs, polished stone floors and white washed walls. The main lodge area has a bar and sitting room with a few board games and comfortable chairs. Next door, the restaurant serves good food in very generous portions, and the menu changes from day to day depending on what is fresh in the market. There is plenty to do at the lodge for a stay of a couple of days, from visiting the private reserve to exploring the lake system, and the lodge will be more than happy to organise these for you. This reserve is great for photographers and nature enthusiasts with 10 different lemur species resident, including sifakas and the odd Indri. It is now possible to see the curious looking Aye Aye during your stay.



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Take a 15 minute boat ride to a small island which is currently home to 6 individuals. This is an hour long set departure available for clients of the Palmarium Hotel only, departing at 17.30. WIFI is only available in the restaurant at Palmarium and this more remote part of Madagascar the connection is sometimes unreliable.

Note – *Kindly note that Palmarium is not a national park. It is a private reserve and the animals here are not wild but it is an excellent opportunity to see endemic species close up.*

Day 5: Palmarium Reserve

Palmarium is an ideal escape from the buzz of outside world in the heart of a natural paradise. Just beside the hotel, there is an excellent opportunity to really get close to many different kinds of animals – lemurs, chameleons, frogs included – inside the luxuriant rainy tropical forest private park of Palmarium Reserve. A day or night walk through the palms reveals highlights such as the indri, sifaka, ruffed and crowned lemurs that seem to have a natural curiosity for humans. With its wide tropical garden, many orchids and even the carnivorous pitcher plants can be spotted. Overnight at Palmarium Hotel, or similar. (B)

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.

Day 6: Ankanin' Ny Nofy – Tamatave – Antananarivo (Speed boat: 2 hours; Domestic flight: approximately 1 hour)

After a breath-taking view of the sun ascending over the lake at breakfast, head to the harbour. From here, embark on a spellbinding and tranquil 2-hour boat ride along the Pangalanes Canal to Tamatave. As with much of Madagascar, the journey itself is as mesmerising as the destination, with birdlife abounding and human activity in regular evidence along the shores. Transfer to the airport and fly back to Tana before the next leg of your adventure north tomorrow. Overnight Gassy Country House, or similar. (B)

Canal des Pangalanes

The ingenious waterway of the Pangalanes Canal system has its origin in colonial times: the rough Indian Ocean fringes encouraged engineers to craft this network of linked lakes, river courses and lagoons to enable trade to pass unmolested along the coast. Having fallen into disuse, the 1980s saw a revival; courses were dredged and silted passages unblocked, so that now the pirogues, fishing boats and private craft can ply their way along its meandering and delightful route. Although no longer the key trading artery of its heyday, the canal still ripples with local life: along the shores, expect to see fishermen, fish traps, cones of wood, charcoal and cassava, as well as women washing clothing and children playing beside sandy shores and thatched wooden homes.

Day 7: Antananarivo – Diego-Suarez (Domestic flight: approximately 2 hours)

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for the flight to Diego-Suarez (timings can vary). After landing, there will be time to take in a short city tour of Diego, view its extraordinary natural harbour and explore its colonial and modern history. Of particular interest is the Commonwealth war cemetery which marks the graves of those who died in a little-known, but fascinating conflict during World War II. For those that wish we can take a hike in Montagne Des Francais National Park which affords magnificent views out over the 3 Bays of Baie des Dunes, Baie des Pigeons and Sakalava Bay. During the hike it is also possible to see lemurs and endemic trees including species of the baobab tree. Afterwards, transfer to your accommodation. Overnight Mantasaly Resort, or similar. (BD)



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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.

Accommodation description:

Mantasaly Resort: Comfortable property with private beach

The Mantasaly Resort is located in the middle of the Oranjia terrestrial Reserve by the Indian Ocean. This comfortable resort is perfectly located to enjoy the wilderness of the surroundings as well as various water sports all year round. Mantasaly offers many facilities and activities suitable for families, with direct access to a private beach as well as a swimming pool and spa. All bungalows are spacious, with private bathroom and own private terrace, and are fully equipped with a minibar, a safe box and a standard fan.

Diego Suarez

Named originally after its brutal Portuguese explorer who terrorised the indigenous population in the 16th century, the town was renamed Antsiranana ("Port" in Malagasy), but is little used. The setting above a huge deep-water natural port reveals its essential purpose, though its trading successes have been restricted in modern times by a lack of a decent road link. Diego Suarez was the setting for an unheralded, but significant skirmish during World War II: as a possession of the French Empire, the Allies were concerned that the puppet Vichy-French administration were about to offer access to the burgeoning Japanese territorial aspirations, from where attacks could easily be launched on key Allied positions along the Indian Ocean. This gave birth to Operation Ironclad, where a naval taskforce invaded Diego Suarez in May 1942 and, after intense fighting – 3 posthumous Victoria Crosses were submitted – captured it and, by November, the entire island. Today, the war cemetery tells the tale of the raid and of the 312 Allied troops buried there. The rest of the town retains much of its colonial grandeur as is generally a languid and relaxing place to wander through, the highlights being the welcoming craft shops and beachside restaurants.

Day 8: Diego Suarez – Full day excursion to Jungle Park

Today, immerse yourself fully in the stunning surroundings of Jungle Park: it offers the perfect setting for the youthful or energetic to take full advantage of the superb natural environment. The park prides itself on its diversity of activities and its sustainable ecotourism. Many activities are offered on the spot: the chance to explore the local scenery comes with hiking, bird watching and climbing, whilst more strenuous pass-times such as paintballing, bush golf, caving and even a challenging high-wire and zip-wire course are available to satisfy the full family range of tastes. Overnight Mantasaly Resort, or similar. (BD)

Day 9: Diego Suarez – Joffreville – Tsingy Rouge – Ankarana (Driving time: approximately 5 hours)

After an early breakfast, drive to nearby atmospheric but crumbling Joffreville and experience the exquisite beauty and natural bounty of a morning walk in Amber Mountain (Montagne d'Ambre) National Park, notable for its wonderful waterfalls and plentiful wildlife. Then, en route to your final destination, drive down a short detour along a dirt track to the hauntingly beautiful, Tsingy Rouge. Admire these evocative russet-tinted natural sculptures resulting from seasonal erosion by the local river. From there we skirt the edge of Amber Mountain National Park and its continued opportunities for possible wildlife sightings, heading further south until we reach Ankarana National Park. Overnight Ankarana Lodge, or similar. (B)

Amber Mountain National Park

Created in 1956 this national park, located just 7 km south of Joffreville, is a tropical rainforest with an area of 182 km square. The altitude in the park ranges from 850m - 1485m and this helps to create 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. Tiny lizards, mesmerising chameleons and quite breath-taking birdlife abounds: the Madagascar paradise flycatcher and the pitta-like ground roller are two gorgeous examples, while the local endemic star (out of 35 endemic species) is the tame and easily spotted Amber Mountain rock thrush.



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With a high annual rainfall rate, the park is covered with upland moist tropical forest, with numerous giant tree species, smaller ferns and several unique orchid species. This creates dramatic karst limestone scenery, including the perpendicular magnificence of the Tsingy Ankarana. Amongst its sundry scenic highlights is "Sacred Waterfall", a splendid reward for a short stroll into the lush forest, lending excellent opportunities to spot lemurs and birds. The range of walking circuits is excellent: the Cascade Antankarana circuit is a very accessible option; the Cascade Antomboka is a little more of a challenge; other treks lead to the misty, crystal-clear crater lakes. It is also possible to ascend Amber Mountain itself and enjoy a spectacular view across the entire forest canopy.

Accommodation description:

Ankarana Lodge: Small scale comfortable property

This simple and small but comfortable hotel is the most convenient location from which to visit Ankarana Special Reserve, and offers lovely views of the surrounding dry deciduous forest. It has a handful of well-furnished air-conditioned bungalows made of stone and wood, all with en-suite bathrooms, and a lovely swimming pool which offers a welcome respite from the heat in the afternoons. In the evening lemurs and chameleons can often be seen around the Lodge so take a head torch! The cuisine is European / French-inspired. WIFI is available in the restaurant area only (connections cannot be guaranteed) and credit cards are not accepted.

Day 10: Ankarana Special Reserve

After breakfast, you start your day exploration of the "Tsingy Ankarana", where erosion of limestone highlands has conjured up a landscape of fantastic proportions, with spires and arêtes of karst scenery all around. The vegetation itself is as idiosyncratic as the Tsingy itself. A wander through the forest beneath the dizzying canopy, you will be surrounded by a huge range of trees, from figs, and palms to superb specimens of the Madagascan baobab. The park offers a huge range of trails and is stuff of dreams for adventure and wildlife lovers. Each new corner reveals geographically isolated and distinct landscape features and possible wildlife sightings. Only explored in detail in the 1960s, the cave systems in particular offer opportunities for investigation, either on or below the surface of the plethora of limestone features. Overnight Ankarana Lodge, or similar. (B)

Ankarana Special Reserve

Ankarana Special Reserve is located about 2 hours south of Diego Suarez (Antsiranana) and covers around 183 km square, rising dramatically from the surrounding savanna landscape. Experiencing 2000mm mostly seasonal rainfall per annum, Ankarana is known for its spectacularly formed limestone karst pinnacles called tsingy along with its extensive cave system and network of underground rivers, some of which contain the world's only subterranean crocodiles. Profuse, dry deciduous forest is found in much of the reserve and this habitat is one of the most densely populated primate regions in the world: visitors may encounter the crowned lemur, Sanford's brown lemur, Perrier's black lemur, the northern sportive lemur, the crowned and dwarf lemurs. A variety of chameleons and the baffling nocturnal leaf-tailed gecko can also be found in the reserve. Ankarana also boasts over 100 species of birds and the villain of the 'Madagascar' animated film, the fossa. The cave system itself is steeped in local legend and history, providing the Antankarana with safe refuge during the 18th century tribal wars. It is easy to see how, as the deep chasms and intricate passages harbour heavy vegetation and an abundance of wildlife.

Day 11: Ankarana – Ankify – Nosy Be (Driving time: approximately 3 hours; boat: 1 hour)

Travel to Ambanja, passing alongside the stunning Tsaratanana Mountains which is home to Maromokotro, the highest peak in the country. The route reveals a seemingly infinite maze of ridges and peaks, stretching as far as the eye can see, and offers an abundance of photography opportunities. Continue to welcoming Cyrille plantation, an ethical co-operative style farm, which offers an excellent explanation of the crops such as cacao, coffee and vanilla that are prevalent in this fertile region of Madagascar. A short trip north leads to Ankify, a small picturesque harbour surrounded by hillsides of small fruit plantations.



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From here take the speed boat to Nosy Be, the seascape opening up to reveal glorious sandy shores and sumptuous islands. On arrival transfer to your hotel in Nosy Be. Overnight Home the Residence Madagascar, or similar. (BD)

Accommodation Description:

Home the Residence Madagascar

Much more than a hotel, Home the Residence Madagascar offers you exotic and comfortable air conditioned villas having, each, a large tropical garden, a swimming pool and / or Jacuzzi. The immediate proximity to the sea and all the recreational facilities will ensure for families a great experience on Nosy Be. The restaurant faces the sea and a large infinity pool. The hotel has a bar, a pool table, a beach volleyball court and pétanque. Guests also have access to spa treatments at the Banyan Nosy Be Spa. WIFI is available at this property (connections cannot be guaranteed) and visa credit card is accepted.

Day 12: Nosy Be – Excursion to Nosy Komba (Boat: 15 minutes) and Nosy Tanikely (Boat: 15 minutes)

Today imbibe the stunning marine environment and tranquil isles, accessible only by boat. First stop is Nosy Komba (literally 'island of lemurs'). Black lemurs are easily seen here and guided walks, local handicrafts and even tribal dancing are all available. Continue to Nosy Tanikely, a tiny island with a matching light house, but hugely blessed in its marine and island wildlife. The idyllic white sands and exquisite turquoise shallows make it a veritable paradise: an ideal spot for watersports such as diving, fishing, and especially snorkelling where, with relative ease, you can see an amazing variety of corals, starfish, anemones, every colour and shape of fish, turtles and lobsters. Even a stroll on the dazzling shoreline can afford views of flying foxes and an array of birdlife. Return to Nosy Be at the end of the afternoon. Overnight Home the Residence Madagascar, or similar. (BD)

Day 13: Nosy Be – Excursion to Nosy Iranja (Boat: 1.5 hours)

Nosy Iranja, located to the southwest of Nosy Be, is referred to as "Turtles' Island" after the visiting hawksbill and green turtles that bury their eggs in its immaculate white beaches. This flawless sanctuary, two tiny islands linked by an ivory sandbar, is also home to unique fauna and flora that live in gentle tranquillity surrounded by azure seas and natural coral reefs, teeming with exotic fish and even offering a vantage point for viewing passing humpback whales. Sun kissed beaches; an abundance of nature and a tropical climate provide the perfect setting for an unforgettable visit to this paradise. The island also boasts an intriguing lighthouse, designed by the famous Gustave Eiffel of Eiffel Tower fame. Back to Nosy Be by 2.00 pm, allowing time to enjoy some relaxation beside the shores of the Indian Ocean at the hotel. Overnight Home the Residence Madagascar, or similar. (BD)

Note – *It is possible to extend the number of days you spend at Nosy Be – contact us for prices.*

Day 14: Nosy Be – Departure from Madagascar

Today transfer to the airport at Nosy Be for your onward flight connection. (B)

Note – *It is possible to extend your stay in the islands or fly back to Tana for further adventures in Madagascar.*



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Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure airport transfers
Domestic flights from Tamatave to Antananarivo and from Antananarivo – Diego Suarez
All accommodation as per the itinerary
Services of English-speaking driver
Services of English-speaking local guides in parks/reserves
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 (available on arrival at the airport – currently 35 EUR per person)
Drinks
Tips (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.

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.





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Accommodation Rating

Accommodation on this tour is on the whole comfortable but not luxurious. Descriptions of accommodation are provided in the itinerary.

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.

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Service Standards

Please note that standards of service in much of Africa are not comparable to those of more developed countries, especially in the more off the beaten track locations. Service is often slow and lacks the same attention to detail, and your patience and understanding will be appreciated.

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.

Lunch £5- £10 excluding drinks

Dinner £5- £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 (THB) £1 - £2

Bottle of mineral water £0.50 – £0.75

Fresh fruit juice £1 - £1.50



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Tippling – Guide and Drivers

Although not compulsory, tipping is customary in Madagascar. If you are satisfied with the services you receive, please consider leaving a tip. Please, also bear in mind that waiters and bar staff in the regions are generally much lower paid than in Antananarivo.

The following represents an approximate guide for tipping in local currency (Malagasy Ariary - MGA):

- Staff at the hotel: 10,000 to 15,000 MGA per family – there is often a tip box at reception of the hotel where you can leave a tip.
- At a local restaurant: 5,000 to 10,000 MGA per table for the waiter/waitress
- Local guides in the parks and reserve: 10,000 to 20,000 MGA per local guide per family
- Porters: 3,000 MGA per porter
- Additionally, if you are happy with your English-speaking driver, a reasonable amount to tip is considered 15,000 to 25,000 MGA per day per family.

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

Local Currency: Ariary

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.

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Current exchange rate at the airport (as of January 2020, 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.



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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. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers 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 (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 your country. 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.



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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.

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.

On this family adventure of Madagascar the optimum time for travel is July – November. From April – June it is perfectly possible to enjoy this tour but you will likely see more rain interspersed with lots of sunshine. 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 significantly. 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. Service at hotels and restaurants is often not comparable to western standards and WIFI signal can be intermittent or not be working at times. 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 should be available in all locations. 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.

Clothing

Madagascar is quite warm in general and so light clothes are generally a good idea. You should ensure that you bring warmer clothes for any cool evenings particularly in the middle of winter (July – August). 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.



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You should bring a raincoat for any downpours which can occur anytime in Madagascar. It is essential to wear 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.

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.

Wildlife Expectations

On this tour you have the opportunity to see quite a good amount of wildlife. However please bear in mind these animals are wild and we certainly cannot guarantee sightings. Access is also dependent on weather conditions.

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.

Taking presents/gifts to Madagascar

If you wish to take something with you to donate whilst in Madagascar then we recommend that you bring items that are useful for use in schools. This could be exercise books, paper (plain or lined), pens, pencils, post it notes, and English reading story books are also appreciated. Your guide for the tour will facilitate a suitable place to donate your items on the tour. We do not encourage giving sweets or money to the local people.

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 26th June 2020.