



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Madagascan wildlife with a twist - Tailormade

Tour Duration – 20 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
- ✓ Look for the Indri lemur and listen to its haunting call at Andasibe National Park
- ✓ Diverse landscapes from rainforest to semi desert
- ✓ Spot many endemic birds and radiated tortoises in and Berenty
- ✓ Experience the interesting cultural diversity of the Central Highlands
- ✓ Travel off the beaten track to the very south of the island





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Tour Essentials

Accommodation: Mix of simple but comfortable hotels, lodges and tented camps, with private bathrooms
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), occasional Lunches (L) and Dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Private tour with an English-speaking driver and local guides in reserves and parks
Start Point: Antananarivo
End Point: Antananarivo
Transport: Private 4WD road transport (or sedan car for airport transfers) and two domestic flights
Country visited: Madagascar



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Madagascan wildlife with a twist – Tailormade tour

The island of Madagascar occupies a unique place, both culturally and geographically, within Africa. Separated from the mainland millions of years ago, its fauna has developed very differently from the rest of the continent's wildlife, and it is home to countless species found nowhere else on earth. Its people are an intriguing mix of Malay and African ancestry, with complex patterns of beliefs and an unusual history. On this trip we take in the very best of this enigmatic and alluring land. Our journey takes us to superb national parks, including the bizarre moonscape of Isalo and the lush rainforests of Ranomafana, home to countless species of lemurs including the rare golden bamboo lemur, only discovered by scientists in 1986. We spend time in Andasibe, one of the best places in Madagascar to see the curious indri, the largest species of lemur, and spend time taking walks through the forest in search of endemic wildlife. Finally, we spend time in the very south of the island, nearby Berenty, an unspoilt area, very little visited by tourists yet and utterly amazing for birdwatching and wildlife encounters. This is guaranteed to be a unique experience and a nice and relaxing end to the trip – 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 passion and knowledge of 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. 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 transfer you to the hotel. Depending on your time of arrival, you may have time to explore the city. No meals or guided activities are included today. Overnight Gassy Country House.

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.





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Tana has unusual French and Asian inspired architecture with winding cobblestone streets and staircases that create a medieval impression. The large open-air Zoma market has been disbanded, which means there is now plenty of room to walk around Araben ny Fahaleovantena (Avenue de l'Independence), the capital's main street. Other attractions include the colourful daily flower market on the edge of Lake Anosy and the botanical and zoological gardens, where you can see the egg and 3m-tall skeleton of the extinct aepyornis, or elephant bird. Sadly, the Rova (Queen's Palace) burned to the ground in 1996. Though virtually nothing remains at the site, there are nice views of the city from the hill where the palace once stood. Antananarivo does not have too much in the way of conventional sightseeing, but if you enjoy walking around, watching local scenes and experiencing the laid-back atmosphere that is prevalent here, the city is a very pleasant place – interesting markets, colonial buildings and many craft shops make it a great place to explore.

Day 2: Antananarivo – Andasibe National Park (Overall driving time today: approx. 4 hours)

Depart after breakfast and drive eastward towards Andasibe National Park, descending from the 'hauts plateaux' through a landscape of verdant rice terraces and scattered villages, a route which effortlessly blends dramatic views, snapshots of bustling local life, glassy lakes and as we approach Andasibe, stunning primary forest. During the drive, 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 bad luck. Also briefly stop in Manjakandriana, an important agricultural city, supplying dairy and vegetables to the whole region. En route, we visit Pyereras Reptile reserve to get up close to its rare chameleons, snakes and frogs. On arrival at Andasibe, check-in your hotel before to take a guided dusk walk on the edge of the forest, in the V.O.I.M.M.A. community reserve, in search of nocturnal creatures. Overnight Vakona Lodge. (B)

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! 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.

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 its haunting cry before you see it! 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. This afternoon, visit a private island sanctuary where you can get up close to lemurs - the lemurs may get very close and even jump on you but please note that this is perfectly safe. Overnight Vakona Lodge. (B)

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.



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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.

Day 4: Mantadia National Park

This morning we will take a walk inside Mantadia National Park, neighbour to Andasibe National Park forming part of an important regional wildlife corridor. Several walks are possible here, ranging from 2 to 4 hours, on which you can observe endemic fauna and flora, waterfalls, and gain an insight into the local culture by passing through several holy places. This afternoon you can either relax or visit a Betsimisaraka village, experiencing first-hand their tribal crafts, skills, customs and dances. Alternatively, you can choose to visit a Mitsinjo reforestation project and contribute to enhancing this vital ecosystem. Overnight Vakona Lodge. (B)

Mantadia National Park

Created in 1989, it has the same climate and altitude but is much larger than Andasibe National Park. Due to its difficult access, it is less visited than Andasibe thus wilder and denser. The primary forests of Andasibe-Mantadia display a dense humid forest covered with lians, moss, fern tress and over 120 orchids species are blooming between September and January. Here one can observe more than 1,200 plants, endemic to the island such as Pandanus, Ravinala palm-tree, Tambourissa, Bamboos and some precious wood, such as Palissandre and Rosewood. A vast array of wildlife diversity exists: 17 mammal species, 117 birds species - many of them endemic, such as the Madagascar yellow brow, Madagascar baza, Madagascar wagtail or the Madagascar serpent-eagle-, 51 species of reptiles (among them the biggest chameleon of the island, the boa a and many leaf-tailed geckos), and 84 species of amphibians. Apart from the Indri, other lemur species inhabits these forests, such as woody lemur, grey bamboo lemur, diademmed sifaka, brown lemur, red mouse-lemur, red-bellied lemur, black and white ruffed lemur and even the elusive aye-aye although you are unlikely to see it.

Mitsinjo Reforestation Project

Visit our tree plantation project close to Andasibe where we spend about 2 hours with a local guide. Widespread habitat degradation and deforestation has sadly 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!



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Day 5: Andasibe National Park – Antsirabe (Overall driving time today: approx. 7 hours)

After breakfast, we depart southwards to Antsirabe, crossing the highlands through rural scenery, valleys, rice paddies and vegetable plantations. Our journey takes us to Antsirabe, founded by Norwegians in 1856 and home to Madagascar's brewing industry. If time permits, we can take a short city tour to get a sense of this important highland city. Overnight Chambres du Voyageur. (B)

Antsirabe

The unusual city of Antsirabe ("Place of Much Salt"), an elegant European-styled city, residing at 1500m above sea level and boasts the reputation as the centre of Madagascar's beer production. Founded by a Norwegian in 1856, it is the only Malagasy place which really feels and looks like a European municipality. Its 100,000 inhabitants enjoy a temperate climate and consequently fruits and vegetables which favour cooler condition are grown here. 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. Known also as a city of handcrafts, it is characterised by its scatterings of artisan shops and mini-industries.

Day 6: Antsirabe – Ambositra – Ranomafana National Park (Overall driving time today: approx. 6- 7 hours)

This morning explore points of interest in Antsirabe and the surrounding villages. You may choose to visit some nearby craft shops, such as a Zebu horn workshop, where you will marvel at the transformation of Zebu horn into artisanal decoration. Thereafter continue along the RN7 south to Ranomafana. Overnight Centrest Sejour Hotel. (B)

Day 7: Ranomafana National Park

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

Ranomafana National Park

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

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 wildlife including lemurs.

Day 8: Ranomafana – Fianarantsoa - Anja Reserve – Andringitra (Overall driving time today: approx. 6 hours)

After breakfast, continue the journey south, stopping briefly in Fianarantsoa, the second city of Madagascar. Visit the attractive workshop of Pierrot Men, one of the most well-known photographers in the country. Continue to Anja Park, a community run private reserve situated in stunning scenery with great opportunities to see playful ring-tailed lemurs. From there, we fork onto a track towards the imposing mountains of the Andringitra Massif, where we will spend the next two nights of this adventure. Overnight Tsara Camp. (BD)

Day 9: Andringitra and Tsaranoro Valley

Access to Andringitra and the Tsaranoro Valley will involve touring round the tracks in a 4x4 and taking in some of the abundant highlights of these exceptional environs. You may choose to enter Andringitra National Park, or rather explore the delights of the Tsaranoro Valley. The Valley boasts a hotter, drier climate and is accessible all year round. Trekking opportunities abound, from low-level to ambitious mountainous routes.



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At every turn, photographic opportunities present themselves in the guise of glorious vistas. If you wish, there are walks to a local waterfall where views of the sunset across the plain make for a stunning end to a day of exploring the area. Overnight Tsara Camp (BD)

Andringitra

The valley below Andringitra National Park, dotted with mango trees and abundant in zebu pasture, gives way to the huge granite outcrops of the National Park itself. Since the 1920s, the 311 km² of inaccessible wilderness has been protected and it still manages to preserve a blend of rainforest, montane forest and high-altitude vegetation for the few visitors to tread so far off the usual RN7 tourist routes. Historically, it is held as a sacred place by the Bara tribe, being a place of ritualised burial and it was here that acts of mass suicide took place when the Merina tribe were seeking to force dominion over the whole island. The climate here can be varied, so warm-weather gear may sometimes need supplementing with waterproofs and, at nights, thermals and fleeces! The fauna here draws keen naturalists, offering 108 species of recorded birds, including Pollen's vanga and the Madagascar blue pigeon, 34 types of reptile, an astonishing 55 frog species, 55 different types of mammal and an impressive 13 lemur species. The Ring-tailed lemurs of Andringitra which populate the valley are distinct from those you might have spotted elsewhere, having adapted their colour, size and fur to the empty rocky environment in which they live. The few visitors who do make it as far as Andringitra are drawn by the dramatic landscapes and so the park offers a great range of treks, even as far as the summit of Pic Boby, the highest

Day 10: Andringitra – Ranohira (Isalo) (Overall driving time today: approx. 4 hours)

Depart after breakfast flanking the Andringitra massif, which serves as a transition between the green highlands and the arid south. Pass through Ihosy the capital of the Bara tribe and from there the landscape transforms with huge granite blocks dotting the spacious and empty plains marking the gateway to the far south. Drive through the "plateau de Horombe", a vast empty savannah where we shall likely observe herds of zebu, accompanied by armed Bara men, cattle raisers who are intrinsically linked with the zebu. By late afternoon, arrive at the village of Ranohira, gateway to Isalo National Park, where you check into the bungalows at Satrana Lodge which nestle against the rocky slopes and look across this beautiful landscape. The Lodge has an excellent restaurant and fabulous swimming pool from which you may wish to enjoy one of nature's stunning sunsets. Overnight Satrana Lodge. (B)

Isalo National Park

The Isalo National Park's 815 km square area was created in the 1960s and is comprised of the entire stretch of the Isalo Massif. A spectacular landscape, with its eroded sandstone dome, cut by deep canyons, it makes for the most breath-taking scenery and hence is the most visited national park in the country. Reminiscent of The Grand Canyon in the USA, its geological layers lend it the appearance of a relief map. The sandstone has been eroded into exotic shapes, pillars, towers, and is cut through by impressive gorges and canyons. Vegetation is concentrated in the sheltered canyon bottoms where streams still flow. These wooded areas dominated by the fire-resistant Tapia-tree, on which a Malagasy endemic silkworm feeds. On the cliffs and rocks are several endemic succulents including the elephant's foot and the localised endemic Isalo Aloe. The balance of nature here is intriguingly harmonious: plants have adapted perfectly to the harsh and dry climate of Isalo. Pachypodium, which grow in the rocks, have some of the succulent qualities of cacti, having specialist water-storing roots and trunks which ensures survival without water for many months. For animal lovers you may encounter ring-tailed and brown lemurs, many types lizard, and the exceptional jewelled chameleon: in all, Isalo proudly boasts 82 species of birds, 33 species of reptiles, 15 species of frogs and 14 species of mammals. The massif is also the place where the Bara tribe buries its dead, first in temporary graves, pausing to raise enough silver, then into definitive tombs. The tribe were essentially the last to lose their independence, resisting the national amalgamation under the Merina, and only falling into submission during the French colonisation. Traditionally there were a warlike group, whose young men only attained manhood by rustling cattle from neighbours!



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Day 11: Isalo National Park

After breakfast, take a guided half day or if you prefer, a full day excursion within Isalo National Park. There are various options including a trail to the top of the mountain, where a fantastic panoramic view of the eroded environment is to be admired, with its kaleidoscope of rock shades, shifting from ochre to russet to blue-grey. From here you might choose to visit the natural swimming pool, and then perhaps head on to reach "the Canyon des Singes". A most profitable area if you enjoy bird watching is the oasis and forested area around Relais de la Reine: here we may spot Benson's rock-thrush, lesser vasa parrot, Madagascar coucal, Madagascar bee-eater and even Giant coua. The walk can be tailored to how you feel on the day. At the end of the afternoon you may wish to visit the Fenetre d'Isalo, a natural rock formation in the shape of an exquisitely airy window, where one can experience an atmospheric sunset framed magnificently between the rocks. Overnight Satrana Lodge. (B)

Walk in Isalo National Park

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 local guide will explain these to you so you can decide the best viewing platform.

Day 12: Isalo – Zombitse National Park – Reniala Reserve – Ifaty (Overall driving time today: approx. 6-7 hours)

Leaving Isalo behind we travel for 1 hour to a village at the centre of the burgeoning sapphire industry where you will have a stop. From here continue to the protected forest-island of Zombitse National Park, which hosts many birding wonders, perhaps the highlight of which is the terrestrial Appert's Greenbul, one of Madagascar's rarest endemics. You will notice the landscape change with spiny forest becoming more prominent. Also stop to admire the colourful tombs of the Mahafaly people and take a short-guided tour in the Reniala Reserve, a typical dry and thorny bush only seen in the southern part of the country, where we will find some Baobab samples and other special native trees. Continue along the coast to reach your 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 glowing waters of the Mozambique Channel. This is a truly beautiful part of Madagascar and a great place to relax. Overnight Le Paradisier Hotel. (B)

Day 13: Ifaty at leisure

Today is at leisure to either 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 through the Mozambique Channel. 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. Alternatively relax on the beach or by the pool. Overnight Le Paradisier Hotel. (B)

Day 14: Ifaty – Arboretum d'Antsokay - Tuléar (Overall driving time today: approx. 1.5 hours)

This morning is at leisure for you to relax or to take a local excursion from the hotel. Depart after lunch back to Tuléar, where we visit the interesting Arboretum d'Antsokay. Overnight Moringa Hotel. (B)

Arboretum d'Antsokay

Located 12 km south-East from Tuléar, the arboretum is a botanical garden created by a Swiss botanist Hermann Petignat thirty years ago. On a surface of 40 hectares, surrounded by vegetal hedges, the purpose of this garden is to conserve the most threatened endemic plants species from Madagascar, by reproducing and multiplying either by seeding, cutting or transplantation process, and also to preserve most of them from constant deforestation and bush fires.



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The Antsokay Arboretum is entirely focussed on conservation of the plants from the south western part of Madagascar and is working in close collaboration with worldwide environment preservation institutions. More than 1000 plants species, mostly endemic to the region have been recorded with 100 species of Euphorbia, 60 species of Kalanchoe. Many birds can also be seen.

Day 15: Tulear – Fort-Dauphin (Domestic flight) - Berenty (Overall driving time today: approx. 5 hours)

Transfer to the airport for a domestic flight to Fort-Dauphin. After landing, we continue to Berenty. Here we back into a more humid zone and the landscape is characterised with fields of rice, palms and mango plantations. Passing the Anosy Mountain chain we pass back into a drier zone arriving in Berenty by late afternoon. Overnight Berenty Lodge. (BD)

Day 16: Berenty Reserve

At dawn, enjoy a birding expedition with a local guide inside Berenty Private Reserve, where 83 bird species are listed. Birds of prey are particularly prominent and 9 species are recorded with Madagascar Buzzard probably the most common raptor visible. Other unique species to look out for are Hook-Billed Vanga and Crested and Giant Coua. The forest is divided into two distinct sections: the spiny forest and the semi-dry forest. Sisal plantations surround the reserve. After lunch, you can take another walk in the reserve and spot the endangered radiated tortoises. Berenty is also the only reserve where one can see almost all the fauna and flora of the south of Madagascar. It is also known as the kingdom of lemurs as you can easily spot Maki ring-tailed lemurs, and the dancing lemurs known as Sifaka, among other species. Overnight Berenty Lodge. (BD)

Berenty Reserve

Berenty is an active sisal estate, a part of which has been conserved in its original state by the de Heaulme family. The habitat comprises spiny forest, frontage onto the Mandrare River, and most importantly, a 100-hectare patch of deciduous gallery forest that contains excellent walking tracks.

Day 17: Berenty – Andohahela National Park - Fort-Dauphin (Overall driving time today: approx. 6 hours)

This morning, back to Fort-Dauphin stopping at Andohahela National Park to stretch your legs. Later, in Fort Dauphin be sure not to miss the sunset from the pristine beach at Libanona point. Overnight La Croix du Sud Hotel (BD)

Andohahela National Park

The park is located in the far south-east of Madagascar, 40 km northwest of Fort Dauphin and 30 km as the crow flies west of the Indian Ocean. It is located in the Anosy Region and straddles the two districts of Fort-Dauphin and Amboasary-Sud. It is surrounded by the villages of Tsimelaha, Mangatsiaka, Malio, Ihazofotsy and Manangotry. It is also the only protected area in Madagascar with dense humid forest south of the Tropic of Capricorn, which is rare worldwide; as well as a transitional "formation" between the eastern and southern ecoregions. It is a considerable reservoir of water, and with the development of ecotourism, it represents great economic and conservation potential for the region.

Day 18: Fort Dauphin – Lokaro Bay (Overall driving time today: approx. 1.5 hours)

After breakfast, drive to Lanirano Lake where you take a boat excursion along a narrow channel of the Aroyos lagoon. Observe the lush aquatic vegetation and the many species of birds and navigate across Ambavarano Lake and the mangroves. Reaching the village of Evatra, admire the picturesque creeks and fishermen in their small pirogues. A short walk brings you to the Col, from where vistas over the village and the mouth of the lake flowing into the sea are simply exquisite. Return to Fort-Dauphin by late afternoon. Overnight La Croix du Sud Hotel. (BD)



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Day 19: Fort Dauphin – Antananarivo (Domestic flight)

Time at leisure until your transfer to the local airport for a flight to Tana. On arrival, transfer to the hotel. Overnight Gassy Country House. (B)

Day 20: Departure from Madagascar

Any remaining time today is at leisure prior to airport transfers though optional excursions can be arranged if you are booked on a late flight. A hotel room will be available for you to freshen up for those with late evening departures, or you may wish to extend your stay further of course. (B)

Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure airport transfers
Domestic flights from Tulear to Fort Dauphin and from Fort Dauphin to Antananarivo
All accommodation as per the itinerary, or similar
Transport throughout the tour
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.



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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 we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'.

Accommodation Rating

The accommodation on this tailor-made adventure is of a simple but very much comfortable accommodation with private bathrooms. A mixture of small-scale lodges, eco concept hotels and permanent tented camps, all with private bathroom.

Food & Drink

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

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. 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. 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.



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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.

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.

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.



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It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country.

Visa Information

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. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on [best practice when travelling with medicines](#). For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Yellow Fever

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



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Preparing for your tour

Climate

Madagascar, being a large country, has many different climatic variations but it is generally felt that the best time to visit is between May and November, which are the winter months. Outside of these months rain can be heavy and there are frequently cyclones. The temperature on the island is usually pleasant, ranging from the low twenties to the low thirties (Celsius). Please note that during the winter months of June - August it can be cool/cold at night especially in the highlands 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. 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 most locations, although could be very limited along the west coast. 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 generally 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 in case of any showers. A hat is essential. Some of the lodges have swimming pools so bring your swimwear.

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.



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Footwear

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

Wildlife Expectations

On this tour you have the opportunity to see quite a large 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.

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 16th July 2020.