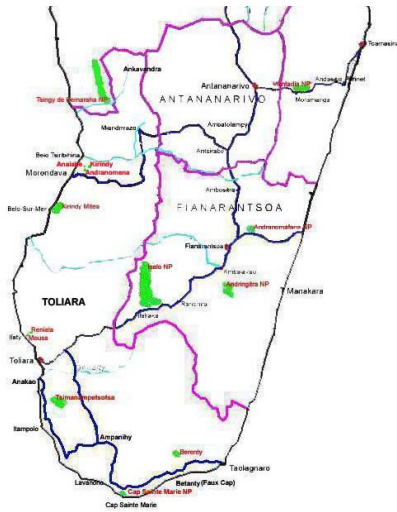


Madagascar – Focus on Nature

Daily departure on small nature and wildlife groups



14 days nature and wildlife adventure in Madagascar

On this tour we choose modest hotels and lodges with less comforts, but clean and with private facilities. Our goal is to see and enjoy as much as possible of the nature and wildlife of our country. Therefore two full days leads us in the National parks of Andasibe-Mantadia and Ranomafana to explore these as comprehensively as possible. During the next 14 days we learn about this fascinating and endangered flora and fauna of Madagascar.

Best time to visit and small group departures:

All year, best season March to November

14 days / 13 nights

From Antananarivo to Toliara

Daily departure on small nature and wildlife groups

Towns:

Antananarivo
Antsirabe
Ambositra
Fianarantsoa
Ambalavao
Toliara (Tuléar)

Highlights:

Exotic Reptile Park
Indri Reserve
Andasibe-Mantadia NP
Mitsinjo Association Forest station
Ranomafana NP
Anja Villagers Park
Fenêtre de l'Isalo
Isalo NP
Zombitse-Vohibiasa NP
Arboretum d'Antsokay
Ifaty forest and beach
Village des tortues

Small groups of nature lovers: Can start daily from Antananarivo. This tour is possible all year. The best season is from March to November. Your personal travel dates should be based on your time frame. The given prices are on a group basis. Our groups are small and international. Typically you will be sharing your experiences with between six to 12 like minded travellers and you'll have a tour manager with you. Whether you are travelling alone or with friends it's good value, and a great way to meet new people. While itinerary is scheduled there is some flexibility and you'll have plenty of privacy. This trip will appeal to travellers of all ages who enjoy meeting new people as well as experiencing new cultures.

If you prefer an individual tour please ask for an offer.

Day-by-Day itinerary

Day 1,

Touching down in Antananarivo, '*town of thousands*'

Today is an arrival day. You are free to arrive at any time. Upon arrival in Antananarivo you will be greeted by your tour manager and transferred to your hotel. The rest of the day is at leisure.

Antananarivo, mostly cut to Tana, takes its name from an episode in Malagasy history. King Andrianjaka, who had his royal palace and stronghold erected called One thousand warriors, quartered them there and he called this city Antananarivo.

Day 2,

Antananarivo – Andasibe, '*into the country of the Betsimisaraka*'

This morning we start our 140 km drive eastward through the highlands to Andasibe. On the way we will stop off at a Exotic Reptile Park. Here you can see some of the endemic chameleons, snakes, insects and reptiles of Madagascar. Andasibe, a former logging village, is the base for exploring the Andasibe-Mantadia NP, also known by its pre-colonial French name, Perinet Special Reserve. After lunch, we drive past villages belonging to the Betsimisaraka ethnic group. This group, unified from rival groups into a single entity by the son of an English pirate and a Malagasy princess, was once the most powerful group on the east coast of Madagascar with a name meaning 'the many inseparable ethnic groups'. Tonight we take a night walk to look for night active lemurs and other night active animals.

Day 3,

Andasibe-Mantadia NP, *the mythic Indri*

The eastern rainforest Reserve of Andasibe-Mantadia is one of the last strongholds of the mythical Indri-Indri lemur, the largest of all lemurs. The animals and birds are most active in the early morning and there should be good opportunities to see and hear the lemurs. The black and white coated Indri-Indri is an extraordinary Lemur, known for its wailing call. Indri's are active on and off throughout the day but are best seen in the morning. Later we visit Mantadia National Park that is as well in the region to see the Diadema Sifaka – a rare lemur of the island. Mantadia also contains a wide variety of fauna and flora in the moist mountain forest, including beautiful and varied insects, spiders, butterflies, reptiles and many orchids. After searching for the lemurs and other fauna we walk into the orchid park to admire Madagascar's beautiful flora.

**Day 4,
Mitsinjo Association Forest station**

This morning we will also rise up early to visit the Mitsinjo Association Forest station that is as well in the region to see once more the Indri. This short-tailed primate may reach an age up to 60 years and lives in families from two to six individuals. Also we hope to see chameleons, frogs and other animals. After searching for the lemurs and other fauna we walk into the orchid park to admire Madagascar's beautiful flora.

**Day 5,
Andasibe – Antsirabe**

Drive to the spa of Antsirabe. Antsirabe known as the city where we can find much minerals, across the highland landscape with its beautiful rice fields and its spectacular eroded hills called lavaka. The drive takes in lush green landscape where vegetables and fruits are farmed. En-route we stop in Ambatolampy for a short visit, a huge agricultural city and very well known as capital bay-foot production. Antsirabe, founded by Norwegian missionaries as a health retreat, is an industrial and agricultural centre. Also we find here the Star brewery, the only brewery in Madagascar. We stay for the night in centre town, our hotel is surrounded by an elegant garden.

**Day 6,
Antsirabe – Ranomafana**

Our next destination is Ranomafana National Park, where we will spend three nights. After breakfast we take a short drive to the town of Ambositra, where we will see some artwork of the Zafimaniry woodcarvers. Their carvings got recently UNESCO cultural heritage. From Ambositra we continue south. The landscape is dominated by rice fields, forests of pine and eucalyptus and rocky mountains. Ranomafana, literally meaning hot water, is a very pretty village surrounded by hills and the Namorona River.

**Day 7,
Ranomafana NP**

We will enjoy a day walk in the park embarking on a trek in the Ranomafana rainforest. Probably we will find lots of birds, frogs, lemurs and other species. We hope to see Red-bellied lemurs, Red-fronted lemurs, and Diadema Sifakas. Although present, the Golden bamboo Lemur and the Broad-nosed gentle Lemur, are more difficult to find. The park is also flora rich with orchids, tree ferns, palms mosses, trumpet flowers and stands of giant bamboo.

**Day 8,
Ranomafana NP**

Another full day to explore the Ranomafana NP. The Park covers some 41000 hectares of rolling hills, cloud forest, streams and areas of dense vegetation. The park was created in 1991 to protect the flora and fauna, in particular the Golden bamboo Lemur found in 1987 and the Greater bamboo Lemur, two of the rarest species of Madagascar's lemurs. Ranomafana is also home to 26 mammal species including 12 species of lemurs, abundant numbers of geckos, chameleons and frogs as well as not less than nearly 100 species of birds.

Day 9,

Ranomafana – Ambalavao

Leaving Ranomafana we drive through a number of small villages before reaching Sahambavy Tea Estate, the only tea plantation in Madagascar. The tea estate created in 1970, set in a pretty valley beside Lake Sahambavy, produces large quantities of tea for both export to Mombassa (Kenya) and for local consumption. A tour will take us through all aspects from picking to packaging. After lunch we drive to the nearby city of Fianarantsoa for a short city tour before we continue southward to Ambalavao. Fianarantsoa is the capital of Betsileo ethnic group. The landscape is again superb with great views of vineyards, terraced rice paddies and rocky outcrops. Ambalavao, with its brightly painted buildings, is a beautiful town. We visit nearby Soavita vineyard for wine tasting as well as the Antaimoro Paper factory. The paper factory is a vestige of the Arabian civilisation in the island. Here paper is made from scratch using the bark of the avoha bush. After a series of steps, fresh flowers are pressed into the paper to make attractive cards, envelopes and picture frames.

Day 10,

Ambalavao – Anja Park, a self-help initiative of community based mountain tourism – Ranohira

Bizarre landscapes of towering cliffs await us in the small nature reserve of Anja with superb scenery, plants, Betsileo history, caves and tombs and ring-tailed lemurs. We take a two-hour walk into the park before continuing along the road to Isalo. Passing the sleepy town of Ihosy that is the capital of the ethnic group of the Bara people. Ihosy serves as a transition between the green highlands of central Madagascar and the dry south. If time allows we catch sunset at the 'Fenêtre de l'Isalo'. This natural rock window offers the opportunity for a great sunset photo. This natural rock window, covered with green and orange lichen, offers views over the surrounding plain.

Day 11,

Isalo NP

This park is fiercely beautiful with golden plains punctuated by craggy pinnacles of terracotta rock, valleys, canyons and waterfalls. The Isalo National Park comprises the entire stretch of the Isalo massif. This huge mountain is spectacular with its eroded sandstone mountain. Our adventure begins with a trek in the Park. In this surreal park we trek through landscapes formed by centuries of erosion and fascinating sandstone formations. This massive uniform of the Jurassic era is the cradle of a particular wild nature and an exceptional landscape. We walk to the canyons, we look for ring-tailed and other lemurs. We can refresh ourselves on the way at a waterfall or a natural pool.

Day 12,

Ranohira – Zombitse-Vohibasia NP – Arboretum d'Antsokay – Toliara (Tuléar) – Ifaty

Drive to Toliara (Tuléar), the terminal of the National road N° 7. On the way we stop at Zombitse NP for a short walk in order to look for our chance to observe the Apperts Greenbul. Later we visit the Arboretum d'Antsokay for endemic plants of Madagascar, collected by a Swiss biologist over decades. On the road we experience new scenery that is comprised of the dry forest of the west, the spiny desert of the south and the spectacular baobabs. The region here is the driest part of the country. The landscape is dominated by spiny forest-like cactus and different Euphorbia plants. We stop at the Mahafaly and Antandroy tombs. These tombs are works of art, constructed by the community, to honour the deceased. From Toliara we drive north along the coast to Ifaty where our accommodation for the next two nights is.

Day 13,**Ifaty, forest and beaches**

Ifaty. Here we have a break. The coral reef represents an exceptional spot. In the western area we can find the local fauna and flora like baobabs, birds... The crystal clear water of the ocean attracts a range of wonderful coloured fish. Later we visit the 'village des tortues' an observation station for tortoises. In a natural park east of the lagoon of Ranobe this village develops, among other activities, reproduction programs. Another highlight on this excursion is the opportunity to admire and photograph the strange looking Baobab Trees of Madagascar as well as some succulents. We visit also the small museum that is attached to the centre where you may get some more information about the project.

Day 14,**Ifaty – Toliara**

Today we bid farewell to the forests of Ifaty and return to Tuléar, where our tour ends on the airport.

Prices 2012 in Euro per person.

Small nature and wildlife groups: 1750 Euro per person sharing, single room surcharge 310 Euro

This tour can start daily

Typically you will be sharing your experiences with between six to 12 like minded travellers and you'll have a tour manager with you. Whether you are travelling alone or with friends it's good value, and a great way to meet new people. While itinerary is scheduled there is some flexibility and you'll have plenty of privacy. This trip will appeal to travellers of all ages who enjoy meeting new people as well as experiencing new cultures.

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Complementary Information:

Duration of the tour: 14 days

Car or minibus: 3,5 days plus transfers

Parks: 5 days plus several tours of two or three hours, two full days in Andasibe-Mantadia and Ranomafana NP

Excursions: 1,5 days

Included:

English speaking tour manager

Overnight in the mentioned or similar hotels in double room

Half-board Day 2 – 14 and 1 ½ l of mineral water per person per day

Going by car or Minibus, all transfers

All entrance fees

Local guides in all visited parks

Tips for porters, waiters etc.

Not included:
International and domestic flights
Drinks except mentioned
Beach activities
Private expenses
Insurance

The tour can be changed according to circumstances.

This tour is customisable on a private base.

List of the hotels, lodges and camp sites
 (Information mostly from third party)

Town or place	Hotel, Lodge or camp site	Some words about the place
Antananarivo	Cheval Blanc	The authentic charm of Auberge du Cheval Blanc is ideal for a romantic getaway for the discovery of Madagascar. Close to the international airport of Ivato, the hotel is a haven of peace where you will find peace and serenity.
Andasibe	Andasibe Forest Lodge	A beautiful facility, located in the middle of the forest on a small lake. From the patio you have a direct view of the rain forest.
Antsirabe	LaVilla	LaVilla is a new hotel-restaurant in the Vakinankaratra region of Antsirabe, located on the National road 7, the axis to the south. The hotel offers its guests a nice panoramic view and swimming pool on the disposition of the travellers. In the restaurant various menus meet your expectations. The comfortable rooms, equipped with TV guarantee a pleasant stay ensures relaxation.
Ranomafana	Forêt Austral	This simple hotel is located not far from the park entrance. The practically furnished bungalows are close together. A restaurant is available.
Ambalavao	Aux Bougainvillées	A good choice. Nice, clean rooms with a good restaurant. The hotel shares the same grounds as the paper factory, travellers can enjoy their time watching at the manufacturing of the traditional Antaimoro paper.
Ranohira	Toiles d'Isalo	Rooms with all comfort, built of stone and local materials All of them have private facilities. The hotel is located out the town's centre with a good view on the Isalo massif.
Toliara-Ifaty	Solidaire Mangily	The bungalows of the Solidaire Mangily hotel are built of sandstone with an attractive bathroom, small terrace, on functional and eye-friendly interior. The panelled, individual bungalows covered with palm leaves were embedded in a larger distance from each other in a small botanical garden. Restaurant, bar, swimming pool.