

Wildlife and more on the Island of Madagascar

Small wildlife groups, 2650 Euro sharing: Friday, 30 March, 20 April, 18 May, 1, 15 and 29 June, 13 and 27 July, 10 and 24 August, 14 and 28 September, 12 and 26 October, 9 November 2012

17 days wildlife adventure, starting in Antananarivo



Madagascar is an island in the Indian Ocean, some 100km's from the Southern African east coast. Over millions of years, Madagascar developed a unique flora and fauna. This is the place where evolution has run wild and it has such a high degree of endemism, that it is truly a place like nowhere else on earth. Madagascar is famous for their remarkable selection of lemurs, primate's endemic to the island, birds, brilliantly coloured chameleons and lizards, tenrecs, bats and rodents. Several early evening walks are also planned for this tour, in order to experience the 'darker' side of nocturnal life. 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, doing some great photos. You will enjoy the exceptional and outstanding Malagasy wildlife on this trip.

Best time to visit and small group departures:

March to November
 Daily departure possible on private base

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Towns:

Antananarivo
 Antsirabe
 Ambohitra
 Fianarantsoa
 Ambalavao
 Toliara (Tuléar)
 Tolagnaro (Fort Dauphin)

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
 Berenty Reserve – Antandroy Museum
 Andohahela NP

It has been called the eighth continent because of its unique wildlife that has evolved in isolation for 165 million years. Madagascar's treasures include dozens of species of lemurs - a family of primates older than the monkey and a distant relative of humans – as well as several endemic birds and a colourful cast of chameleons. Three-quarters are found nowhere else in the world and are the product of millions of years of separate evolution since Madagascar broke away from Africa when the continents first formed.

In the animal kingdom there is a whole family of amphibians that is endemic. There are 223 species of amphibians of which 221 are endemic. Out of the 340 species of reptiles, 314 are endemic. 2/3 of the 100 species of true chameleons are to be found on the island. There are some 240 species of birds on the island and half of them are endemic. Perhaps it has the planet's highest endemic ratio of birds. Five bird families are unique to Madagascar. 97% of its mammals are endemic. There are some 131 species of mammals of which 31 belong to the bat phylum and all of which, except 12, are endemic.

Aside from its chameleons, the lemurs are the best known of Madagascar's animal wonders. Indeed only on this island can we find lemurs. Elsewhere in the world they were driven out of competitive edge by the monkeys. Lemur is a word that means night spirit in Latin. These pro simians colonized the island some 60 millions years ago. One cannot say how many species of lemurs there are in Madagascar today because between 1997 and 2008 some 30 new species have been found in its forests. The list runs up to 75 species as of now, though some 15 species have gone extinct. Some of these extinct species may have been the size of a gorilla. Today some of the known species are in danger of extinction and others are vulnerable.

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 – Fort Dauphin – Berenty****Flight with Air Madagascar**

Today we bid farewell to the forests of Ifaty and return to Tuléar, where we board our one hour Air Madagascar flight to (Fort Dauphin), which is beautifully situated along a curved sandy bay on the south-eastern tip of Madagascar. Upon arrival we do a quick orientation tour around Tolagnaro. Dating back to 1643 it is one of the original French settlements on the island, although shipwrecked Portuguese sailors had erected a fort here. We then travel on a bumpy journey on a badly-eroded road to Berenty Reserve, where we spend two nights in the bungalows on the edge of the forest. The journey to Berenty takes us through various vegetation zones, including high mountains, thick thorn scrubs and spiny forests.

Day 15,**Berenty**

We may be woken this morning by the sound of lemurs outside our bungalows. If you rise early you may want to take a walk from your lodge into the primary forest area of the reserve along well-maintained trails, where there is a chance to see lemurs including 'Dancing' Sifakas. After breakfast we take an organised walk into a secondary section of forest, where along the way we are likely to see more lemurs, including Dancing Sifakas and also a group of ring-tailed lemurs and brown lemurs. A particularly amusing sight is seeing ring-tailed lemurs 'sunbaking' - sitting in the sunshine with their arms spread wide and their bellies facing towards the sun. There are also endemic plants, chameleons and lots of birds. We spend time at the excellent Antandroy Museum, which showcases the life of the Tandroy people.

**Day 16,
Berenty – Tolagnaro**

The adventurous ones, who want to see more birds, can join a n early morning tour for a pre-breakfast walk in Berenty park. Birds of prey are particularly prominent and several species are recorded with Madagascar buzzard probably the more common raptor around. Other unique species in Madagascar can be seen include Hook-billed Vanga and Crested- and Giant Coua. We return for breakfast to the lodge, hopefully in time to see the ring-tailed lemurs sunbathing in front of the restaurant,t. In the afternoon we travel back to Tolagnaro where we check in our hotel.

**Day 17,
Tolagnaro – Antananarivo**
Flight with Air Madagascar

Transfer to the airport of Tolagnaro and we board our scheduled Air Madagascar flight that will take us across to Antananarivo. There, our tour ends on arrival at the airport.

Prices 2012 in Euro per person.

Small wildlife groups: 2650 Euro per person sharing, single room surcharge 650 Euro

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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.

On individual base:

Number of travellers	2	3	4	5	6	7 or 8	9 or 10	11 or 12
Price per person sharing	3600	3500	3330	3150	2850	2780	2700	2650

Single room surcharge 650 Euro

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Complementary Information:

Duration of the tour: 17 days

Car or minibus: 4,5 days

Parks: 6 days plus several tours of two or three hours, two full days in Andasibe-Mantadia and Ranomafana NP

Excursions: 2,5 days

Included:

English speaking tour manager

Overnight in the mentioned or similar hotels in double room

Meals Day 2 to 16 half-board, Day 17 breakfast 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

Not included:

International and domestic flights

Drinks except mentioned

Beach activities

Private expenses

The tour can be changed according to circumstances.

Please note: for this tour are domestic flights required that are not included in the tour price.

This tour is customisable on a private base.

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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	Orchid Hotel	The Orchid Hotel is ideally situated five minutes from Ivato airport making it a perfect hotel for one night stays or early morning departures. Built on two floors with elevator access, the rooms is spacious with has a/c, modern bathrooms, mini bar, TV, telephone, Wi-Fi, safe. Most of the rooms have impressive views over the rice paddies. Restaurant and a large terrace with great views and a huge moon shaped swimming pool. Adjacent to the pool is a gym.
Andasibe	Andasibe Hotel	Tucked in the forest of the Eastern part of the island, Andasibe Hotel, a three-star hotel will host you in comfortable and spacious bungalows. Activities provided by the Hotel: kayak, private park, swimming-pool...Enjoy the delicious dishes prepared by the Chef. After the meal, enjoy the quietness of your stay on your private terrace or profit the moment to have massage with essential oil.
Antsirabe	des Thermes	The classic establishment in town: an old hotel in colonial style in front of the baths. The rooms are huge and clean. The hotel has a pool and a nice garden. Restaurant, bar tennis. In earlier years, farmers from the East coast, hit by malaria relaxed here.
Ranomafana	Setam Lodge	The hotel is fairly new, very clean and staff were helpful. The room in our bungalow was huge with a large and comfortable bed. Superb views over the forest and not too far from the meeting point for the walks in Ranomafana Park.
Ambalavao	La Varangue Betsileo	Some kilometres outside of Ambalavao but near some authentic villages is the small hotel located, surrounded by banana and papaya in a three-acre area of peace and serenity. Panoramic view of rice fields, mountains and villages. Ambiance friendliness, a part of the good life.
Ranohira	Isalo Rock Lodge	The views from the lodge are breathtaking. All our rooms are tastefully decorated with refined, yet comfortable furniture in warm, welcoming colours. Cuisine is an eclectic mixture of European and Malagasy cuisine which changes as the seasons change. Whilst luxury abounds in the hotel with all modern amenities, Isalo is home to many species of Flora and Fauna. With Italian linen, culinary decadence are all in a day's stay at this luxurious and exclusive Lodge. Perhaps the best way to end a long day in the hot Madagascan sun is to watch the pink-and-orange sunset at the balcony.
Toliara-Ifaty	Les Dunes	In the middle of a marvellous garden with an incredible pool. Really sophisticated: lounge bar, disco, library, beach ball, horses, excellent service.
Berenty	Berenty Lodge	Berenty Lodge is set in the heart of Berenty and allows the ideal possibility for exploring the reserve. Berenty Lodge has environmentally orientated bungalows. Each of the bungalows has an en suite bathroom and is air conditioned. The main facilities at the lodge include a bar and restaurant which serves traditional Malagasy style food incorporating seafood and the catch of the day.
Tolagnaro	Croix du Sud	The rooms built in a semi circle around a pretty garden not far from centre town. They are spacious with air-conditioning, standing fan, TV, fridge and modern bathroom with shower and toilet. In each bedroom there is an alcove with a couch and chairs. Meals are served in nearby Le Dauphin hotel.