



adventure  
associates

# Madagascar – A Lost World

A BOUTIQUE ADVENTURE TO AN EXOTIC LAND

## EXPEDITION MANUAL



# Welcome

## Madagascar is truly a lost world!

Thanks to its long isolation from neighbouring continents, Madagascar is home to some 2,300 species of plants and animals, many of which are found nowhere else on Earth.

Adventurous travellers have driven its rugged 4WD tracks for years in search of dancing lemurs, eye-spinning chameleons, and that strange mix between cat and mongoose – the predatory fossa.

Packed into the planet's fourth-largest island is a landscape so diverse it astounds. Central highlands run nearly the entire 1580km length, separating the tropical, rain-forested lowlands in the east from the drier, rain-shadowed lands in the west.

Sandstone canyons and red-rock formations, forests of limestone pinnacles some 300m high, idyllic tropical islands, chains of freshwater lakes and mangrove lowlands create habitats, not just for strange reptiles and mammals, but for

breathhtakingly beautiful birds and a rich collection of plants, including Darwin's orchid – the world's rarest.

But perhaps the island's greatest secret is also its most obvious – the warm and friendly people. The Malagasy are proud of their heritage and are keen to share their art, handicrafts, food and music (both spicy).

We are excited to offer two expeditions to explore this incredible island each year. Our small groups will travel by plane, minibus, 4WD, canoe, boat, on foot and maybe even pousse-pousse (rickshaws) to fully experience Madagascar's cultural and natural wonders.

While Madagascar's most intriguing jewels are often found tucked away in remote regions that are often challenging to reach, we've chosen the most comfortable (luxurious even) places for you to rest at day's end.



Darwin's orchid  
*Angraecum Sesquipedale*



Panther chameleon

## PROPOSED ITINERARY

An in-depth exploration of the "eighth continent" takes us to the southwest to visit spectacular spiny forest reserves where lemurs dance and swing through the trees. Limestone pinnacles and caves of Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park, and not to mention the spectacular Avenue des Baobabs.

The highlands offer thermal pools, sandstone canyons and handicraft markets featuring traditional woodwork and papermaking. In the east we cruise freshwater lakes and lagoons to stunning Lake Ampitabe in the heart of the Panganales Canal. Before flying back to Tana. Throughout this adventure we encounter lemurs, chameleons, amazing birds and plants found nowhere else.

Our 6-day extension follows on from "A Lost World" to uncover the northern tip of Madagascar. This journey visits the magnificent Montagne d'Ambre National Park, Ankarana Special Reserve, the "red Tsingy" plus many more wonders of nature and unique wildlife of the area.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Adventure Associate escort & local English-speaking guide
- All accommodation at the best available hotels & lodges
- All meals from dinner day 1 to breakfast day 24–29
- Bottled water throughout the tour
- All transfers, 4WD's (3 people per vehicle) boat trips & domestic flights
- All sightseeing, entrance and park fees
- All service charges and taxes
- Gratuities for guides & drivers, except on Northern Exposure

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International airfares and taxes
- Visa costs, vaccinations & medical expenses
- Personal travel insurance
- Other meals & sightseeing not specified in the itinerary
- Personal gratuities/tips
- Personal expenses
- Gratuities for guides & drivers on the Northern Exposure tour



Adventure Associates group at  
The Baobab Avenue.

**PROPOSED ITINERARY – A LOST WORLD**

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

**Days 1-2**

Arrive Tana (Antananarivo) Madagascar's capital. On arrival in Tana you will be met at the airport and transferred to our group hotel. **D** We will enjoy 2 nights in Tana (Antananarivo), Madagascar's capital, visiting the many wonderful and interesting sites of this great Malagasy city. **B, L, D**

**Day 3**

We fly south to the coastal city of Tulear the southern capital, known as "The White City" or "Sun City". The city offers bright colours and a rhythmic ambience made by the Tsapiky music. Then drive 25km north to the quaint fishing village of Ifaty. **B, L, D**

**Day 4**

We spend the morning visiting the Honko's mangrove conservation site

and learn about the regions ecology and culture before heading back to the hotel for lunch and a nice swim in the pool or sea. In the afternoon we visit the Reniala (spiny forest) Reserve. **B, L, D**

**Day 5**

After breakfast we drive back to Tulear where we visit a private Arboretum – a botanical garden specialising in the flora and fauna of SW Madagascar. The Arboretum was created around 1980, on the initiative of a Swiss amateur botanist, Hermann Pétignat who died in 2000. There are almost 900 species of plants, 90% endemic to the region. After lunch, we pass through Sakaraha in the Atsimo-Adrefana region, where we should start to see baobabs, cotton growing and roadside painted tombs. We continue driving towards Isalo National Park passing through wild-west style towns, which in recent years have become the makeshift homes of sapphire hunters. **B, L, D**



Honko Mangrove project



Southwest coast



Walking in Isalo NP

The old part of Tana



**Days 6-7**

These days will be dedicated to exploring the NP of Isalo, the Malagasy Colorado and sacred burial grounds for the Bara people. The park has a unique combination of deep sandstone canyons, bush plains and rare endemic plants such as – the endemic Aloe. The park comprises of the entire stretch of the Isalo Massif – a spectacular mountain chain of eroded sandstone. This strikingly beautiful reserve consists of golden plains, punctuated by craggy pinnacles of terracotta rock, valleys, canyons and waterfalls. We plan to enjoy some wonderful walking in this surreal environment and cool off in natural oasis-like swimming hole along the way. We may also make a visit to one of the Sapphire mining areas. In the afternoons you might like to take a horse ride around the nearby pagodas, enjoying the evening light before dinner. **B, L, D**

**Day 8**

We say goodbye to the palm-laced savannah scenery of the Horombe Plateau and the Bara lands where we should encounter huge numbers of Zebu (the ubiquitous humped cattle). These animals hold an almost sacred position in Malagasy life and are certainly symbolic of the prosperity of their owners.

We will have a stop at the private reserve of Anjah, sacred to the Betsileo people because their ancestors are buried in the high cliff tombs here. We might also be graced by close encounters with the cheeky ring-tailed lemurs. If time allows we would like to visit some of the charming, highland towns of Ambalavao and visit the Antaimoro hand-made paper factory. This papyrus like paper is impregnated with dried flowers. **B, L, D**

**Day 9**

We have a full day dedicated to the nature reserve of Ranomafana. We



Horse riding Isalo



Ambalavao



Ranomafana NP

500 year-old Elephant-foot plants, Isalo NP



certainly recommend waking up early for a morning walk in the park, as it is the best time for animal observation.

The Park came to the world's attention in 1986 with the discovery of the golden bamboo lemur. Ranomafana NP is also renowned for the originality and variety of both flora and fauna. There are 12 species of lemurs, 100 species of birds, 36 of which are endemic and many reptiles and butterflies.

In the afternoon, we can visit the village with its hot spring & local market, followed by a night walk inside the national park on a search for nocturnal lemurs, chameleons and frogs. **B, L, D**

**Days 10-11**

En-route we will make a stop in Ambositra to visit the handicrafts markets.

Ambositra is a small town renowned for its Zafimaniry woodcarvings and other handicrafts. The Zafimaniry people are known for the curious wooden architecture of their houses

and fine ancestral woodcarvings. They inhabit about 100 villages in the forested highlands of the southeast; their language originated from Borneo and their culture and lands are classified as UNESCO World Heritage.

Antsirabe is a beautiful city in the highlands of Madagascar. A mixture of cultures has formed the city over two centuries and is a key part of the Betsileo people, famed for their rice cultivation skills. Founded in 1872 by Norwegian missionaries, the city reflects the warmth of its people and the authenticity of its traditions.

It will be an early start today as we have a long 10-hour-drive crossing the heartland from Antsirabe to Morondava on the west coast. **B, L, D**

**Day 12**

After lunch we drive through the remarkable Avenue des Baobabs on the way to Kirindy. This cluster of towering Grandidier's baobabs is one of Madagascar's most famous views. Kirindy is simply superlative and comprises dry deciduous forests



Antsirabe



Vegetable stalls



Tsiribihina river girls

Baobab trees



– one of the most outstanding and threatened wildlife habitats in Madagascar. It is renowned for the giant jumping rat and is home to 7 species of lemur and numerous endemic reptiles. After dinner we plan a night walk through the forest. If we are lucky we may see the weird and wonderful fossa (cat-like) – the only endemic carnivorous species of Madagascar. **B, L, D**

**Day 13**

Up early for bird and wildlife viewing in Kirindy's dry forest and wetlands. We will keep an eye out for the paradise flycatcher, giant coa and Berther's mouse lemur, considered to be the smallest primate. A seven-hour drive on rough tracks, including ferrying across the languid Tsiribihina and Manambolo rivers takes us to our comfortable lodge in the heart of Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park. **B, L, D**

**Days 14-15**

We spend two days exploring

the Tsingy's (limestone plateaus dramatically eroded into pinnacles, caves and gorges) by canoe and on foot. UNESCO World Heritage-listed, Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park is home to bats, lemurs, birds and plants adapted to these spectacular 300m-high 'stone forests' – which offer fantastic views. **B, L, D**

**Days 16-17**

Drive back to Morondava, stopping for the sunset at the beautiful Avenue des Baobabs. The next morning will be at leisure to relax and enjoy the beach or visit the towns colourful bustling markets. After lunch we fly back to Tana. **B, L, D**

**Days 18-19**

After breakfast we drive to Andasibe for 2 nights, stopping in Marozevo to visit the private reserve "Pereyras" – where we'll have the opportunity for close viewing of some of the island's most extraordinary reptiles and invertebrates. We continue on to



Avenue des Baobabs



Tsingy de Bemaraha NP



Manambolo river gorges



The tsingy formations of Tsingy de Bemaraha NP

Andasibe NP for a night walk before dinner. the following day we set out to find the star of the park the indri indri; at up to 1m tall, it's the largest lemur. But there are more than a dozen other lemur species, many endemic birds and more than a hundred orchid species. We will have a full day to explore this amazing region. **B, L, D**

**Days 20-22**

After breakfast, we drive to Manambato for lunch and transfer to a longboat to take us along the Pangalanes Canal, a chain of freshwater lakes, lagoons and man-made channels to form a 600 km inland waterway. Akanin'ny Nofy (Nest of Dreams), on the white sandy shores of Lake Ampitabe, where we will spend the next 3 nights. It is a haven of forests, pitcher plants, mangroves and palms. We visit the Palmarium, a private reserve of endemic palms and vanilla bean, where lemurs, including indri indri, sifakas, crowned lemurs, and the endangered aye-aye, enjoy complete freedom. **B, L, D**

**Day 23**

After breakfast we cruise by boat to the head of the canal to Tamatave Madagascar's most important seaport. After lunch we will visit Tamatave's colourful Bazary Be markets that sells fruit, vegetables, spices, handicrafts and beautiful bouquets of flowers before flying back to Tana. **B, L, D**

**Day 24**

Our final day in Tana before transferring to the airport for your return flight home or continuing on with our Northern Exposure tour. **B**

**NORTHERN EXPOSURE PROPOSED ITINERARY**

**Days 24-25**

Fly from Tana to Antsiranana (Diego Suarez) in the extreme north where you will be met by our local guide Angelin. You'll visit the port town of Diego Suarez with its wide streets, old colonial-era buildings, and buzzy atmosphere. An early lunch at Mellville Restaurant with its amazing



Friendly brown lemurs



Pangalanes Canal



Madagascar giant day gecko



Tsingy d'Ankarana

views of the bay before driving to Ankarana Lodge. The following day visit Ankarana National Reserve. Here you'll find the impressive grey Tsingy (limestone pinnacles) which are surrounded by dry deciduous forest. Its dense forests support one of the largest and least disturbed populations of crowned lemurs. Keep an eye out for northern sportive lemur, dwarf lemurs and ring-tailed mongoose. **B, L, D**

**Day 26**

After an early breakfast, head towards Montagne d'Ambre (Amber Mountain), with a detour to visit the "Tsingy rouge" (Red Tsingy), which provides a wonderful spectacle of sculptured coloured sands shaped by the wind and rain. Depending on the time you can take a walk down into the canyon to see the red tsingy up close. **B, L, D**

**Day 27**

Today is dedicated to exploring the Amber Mountain National Park.

Established in 1958. This massif rises from the surrounding dry region forming an isolated stretch of montane rainforest covering an area of 18.200 hectares. The park offers great biodiversity: a huge tropical forest with endemic fauna and flora, luxuriant vegetation and many waterfalls and volcanic lakes. The climate is perfect, and the cool air refreshing after the heat of the lowlands. The dominant ethnic groups in this area are the Sakavala and the Antankarana. A large number of animal & reptile species inhabit the NP along with: Sanford's brown lemur, crowned lemur, lesser bamboo lemur and five species of nocturnal lemurs. **B**

**Day 28**

Morning at your leisure before fly back to Tana where you will be met and transferred to your hotel. **B, L, D**

**Day 29**

Final day in Tana before transferring to the airport for your flight home. **B**



Ring-tailed mongoose



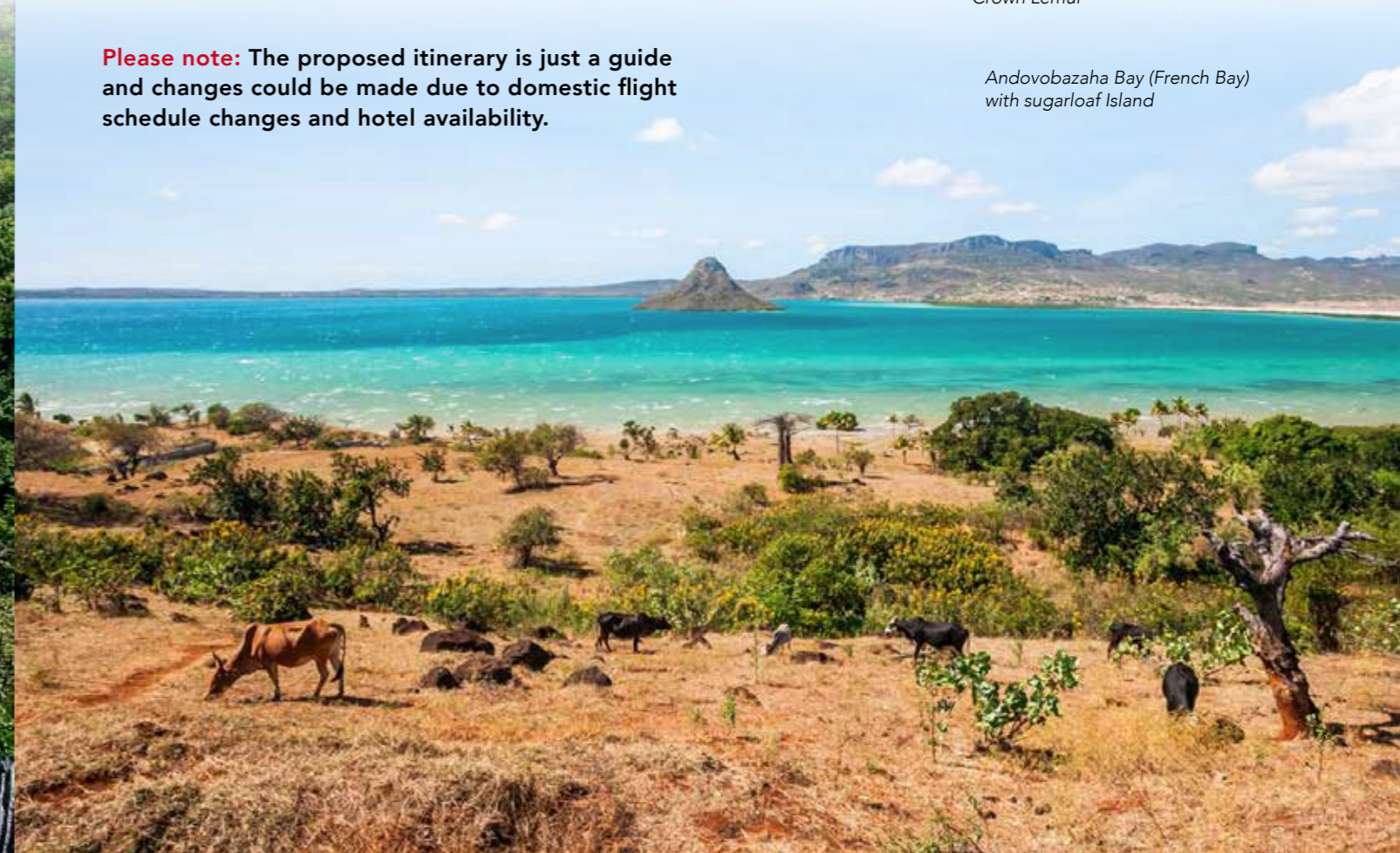
Red Tsingy



Crown Lemur

**Please note: The proposed itinerary is just a guide and changes could be made due to domestic flight schedule changes and hotel availability.**

Andovobazaha Bay (French Bay) with sugarloaf Island



## HOTELS WE USE

We have researched and selected only the best top end hotels in each region we visit. We make sure you're always looked after by friendly staff, that you enjoy good food and have clean and comfortable rooms with en-suites. Here are some examples of the wonderful Malagasy accommodation you'll experience.



Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo



Dunes D'Ifaty, Ifaty



Jardin Du Roy, Isalo NP



Thermal Hotel, Ranomafana



Palissandre Cote Ouest, Morondava



Akiba Lodge, Marofandilla



Ankarana Lodge, Ankarana



Nature Lodge, Amber Mountain



Le Soleil Des Tsingy, Bekopaka



Manjarano Lodge, Andasibe



Palmarium Beach Resort, Akanin'ny Nofy

## SAINTE MARIE ISLAND EXTENSION

**B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner**

### Day 1

Transfer to Ivato airport and fly to Sainte Marie Island approx. 1 hour. Where a representative from Princesse Bora Resort will meet you.

Sainte Marie Island is also known under the Malagasy name of "Nosy Boraha". Sainte Marie had a colourful history of pirate activity during the 17th and 18th centuries. The quiet bays and lagoons provided safe haven for pirate ships close to the maritime routes of the East India Company. Several pirate shipwrecks lie in the shallow water of the Baie des Forbans. The quiet lagoons offer unique diving and snorkeling.

Year round rain from the Indian Ocean provides a lush green environment where orchids and lemurs thrive. From July to September it has become a whale watching hot spot as the Antarctic humpbacks come to breed. **B, D**

### Days 2-3

Days at your leisure on this tropical Island paradise

There are many options for diving, snorkeling, walking in the forest or on the beaches, wildlife and flora viewing, chatting with the locals, wandering in the villages or just relaxing. The island has largely avoided unsightly tourist development so remains a quiet haven to relax. **B, D**

### Day 4

Transfer to the airport and fly back to Tana. You will be met and transferred to your hotel. **B, D**

### Day 5

Departure from Tana (Antananarivo), transfer to Ivato airport for the flight back home! **B**



Princess Bora hotel



## WALKING IN MADAGASCAR

This is only a guide to some of the walks we may do on our trip and to help you prepare. On all walks it is very important to always carry a bottle of water and protect yourself from the sun.

The walks have been graded as follows:

GRADE 1 EASY		GRADE 2 MODERATE		GRADE 3 MODERATE – DIFFICULT	
No bushwalking experience required. The track is a hardened or compacted surface and many have a gentle hill section or occasional steps.		Suitable for most ages and fitness levels. Some bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may have short steep hill sections, a rough surface and steps.		Bushwalking experience recommended. Tracks may be long, rough, slippery and steep.	
WALK	GRADE	DISTANCE	DETAILS		
Honko Mangrove site		2-3 km	Boardwalk and muddy flat ground approx 2 hrs		
Arboretum		1km	Easy walking on flat ground approx 1hr		
Isalo NP option 1 Blue and Black pools		5km	Starts easy on flat ground then becomes more difficult including stream crossings & carved rock steps approx 2-3hrs		
Isalo NP option 2 Lookout point		3-4km	Up hill climb to a lookout approx 1-2 hrs		
Isalo NP option 3 Circuit walk		10-12km	Steep uphill climb on steps to top of Gorge then along top to several lookout points approx 2-3 hrs		
Anja NP		500m	Relatively easy flat walk to lemurs approx 1hr		
Ranomafana NP option 1		3km	Steep up and down hills and steps, off track scabbling can also be slippery & muddy approx 4 hrs		
Ranomafana NP option 2		2km	Undulating on a well made trail with steps to a lookout approx 2-3 hrs		
Kirindy Forest night walk		2km	Easy walking through dry deciduous forest on flat paths approx 1 hour		
Kirindy Forest day walk		3-4 km	Easy walking through dry deciduous forest on flat paths approx 2 hrs		
Little Tsingy		3km	Includes iron ladders, wooden walkways, scrambling over and under low overhanging rocks approx 2-3 hrs		
Grand Tsingy option 1		3km	A forest walk to the base of the Tsingy & a lookout point approx 2-3 hrs		
Grand Tsingy option 2		5km	A forest walk to the base of the Tsingy, then attach harness for clipping into safety line, rock climb/scrambling, ladders, caves, approx 4 hrs		
Amber Mountain NP		30 km of trails	Many of the trails are quite flat and easy. Some trails are tougher, with more up-and-down stretches and a steep descent to waterfalls & viewpoints. The peak of Amber mountain is at 1475m		
Ankarana NP Tsingy & Lake		10-20 km of trails	The best Tsingy are seen on a 6-hour circuit walk over some rugged terrain, boardwalks, ladders. Hanging bridges have been constructed to allow safe passage. An easier alternative is a walk around the Petit Tsingy		
Ankarana NP Caves		1-2 km	Huge passageways, easily walkable inside the caves, there is a rocky scramble out into the sunken forest approx 1 hrs		
Peyrieras Reptile Reserve		500m	Optional 10-15 min steep climb to sifaka & lemurs		
Andasibe NP		3-5km	Easy flat trail then uphill steps & some off-track walking in search of Indri Indri approx 2 hrs		
Akanin'Ny Nofy Palmarium		3-5km	Short stair climb to resort then easy flat walking approx 2 hrs		

## MADAGASCAR AT A GLANCE

### GEOGRAPHY

**Full name:** Republic of Madagascar  
**Motto:** Tanindrazana, Fahafahana, Fandrosoana (Fatherland, Liberty, Progress)  
**Area:** 587,041km<sup>2</sup> and the world's 4th largest island  
**Capital City:** Antananarivo (Tana)  
**Main International airport:** Ivato Airport, Antananarivo (TNR)  
**Transport:** 5,613km paved roads; 854km railways; 432km navigable waterways

### PRACTICALITIES

**Time Zone:** 3 Hours ahead of GMT (no daylight saving time)  
 Sunrise is at 6:30 am in winter and at 5:30 am in summer and in winter the sunsets at 17:30 pm and in summer at 18:30 pm.  
**Electricity:** 220 volts, European-style round-pin sockets  
**Currency:** Ariary (Ar; MGA)  
**International dialling code:** +261 (followed by 20 when calling landlines)  
**Driving side:** Right  
**Visa:** Required by all tourists

### HUMAN STATISTICS

**Population:** 32.7 million (2025)  
**Life expectancy:** 67 years (2019)  
**Poverty:** 81% live on less than US\$1.25/day; 93% on less than US\$2.00/day  
**Literacy:** 65% of over 15 years can read and write  
**Official languages:** Malagasy & French  
**Religions:** Indigenous belief 52%, Christian 41%, Muslim 7%

### POLITICS & ECONOMY

**Leader:** President Andry Rajoelina (since January 2019)  
**Main agriculture:** Rice, coffee, vanilla, sugar cane, cloves, cocoa, cassava (tapioca), beans, bananas, peanuts, live stock products  
**Main exports:** Vanilla, prawns, coffee, sugar, clothing, chromite  
**Main import partners:** China 18%, France 12%, South Africa 5% India 5%  
**Flag:** Horizontal bands of red and green alongside a vertical white band (the red represents sovereignty, the green stands for hope, and the white for purity)  
**Independence:** 26 June 1960 (from France)





Village along the Pangalanes Canal

## THE COUNTRY

### GEOGRAPHY

A chain of mountains runs like a spine down the east-centre of the island descending sharply to the Indian Ocean, leaving only a narrow coastal plain. These eastern mountain slopes bear the remains of the dense rainforest that once covered all of the eastern section of the island. The western plain is wider and the climate drier, supporting forests of deciduous trees and acres of savannah grassland. Madagascar's highest mountain is Maromokotro (2876m), part of the Tsaratanana Massif, in the north of the island. In the south is the Madagascar spiny forests (also known as the Madagascar spiny thickets). Spiny plants distantly related to the cacti.

### CLIMATE

Madagascar has a tropical climate: November to March (summer/wet season) is hot with variable rainfall; April to October (winter/dry season) mainly dry and mild.

Typically, southwest trade winds drop moisture on the eastern mountain slopes and blow hot and dry in the west. North and northwest 'monsoon' air currents bring heavy rain in summer, decreasing southward so that the rainfall in Taolagnaro is half that of Toamasina. There are also considerable variations of temperature dictated by altitude and latitude. On the summer solstice of 22 December the sun is directly over the Tropic of Capricorn, and the weather is very warm. June is the coolest month.

Average midday temperatures in the dry season are 25°C in the highlands and 30°C on the coast. These statistics are misleading however, since in June the night temperatures can drop to near freezing in the highlands and it is cool in the south. The winter daytime temperatures are very pleasant and the hot temperatures of summer are usually tempered by cool sea breezes.

Madagascar frequently suffers from cyclones, especially during February and March, primarily down the east coast.

### A BRIEF HISTORY

Madagascar, as part of East Gondwana, split from Africa approximately 160 million years ago; the island of Madagascar was created when it separated from India 80 to 100 million years ago. Archaeologists estimate human settlement of Madagascar to be between 200 and 500 A.D., when seafarers from southeast Asia (probably from Borneo or the southern Celebes) arrived in outrigger sailing canoes. Bantu settlers probably crossed the Mozambique Channel to Madagascar at about the same time or shortly afterwards.

Until about 2,000 years ago Madagascar was uninhabited. Then Indonesian people arrived. About 800 AD the Arabs started sailing to Madagascar. The first European to reach Madagascar was a Portuguese called Diogo Dias in 1500. At first Europeans showed little interest in the island although pirates used it as a base in the 17th century.

In the early 19th century an ethnic group called the Merina ruled most of the island. The king, Radama I,

established relations with the British and allowed Christian missionaries access to the people. In 1890 Britain gave up all claims to the island allowing the French to formally annex Madagascar in 1896.

When France surrendered to Germany in 1940 a puppet government was formed in Vichy. At first Madagascar was controlled from Vichy but in 1942 it surrendered to the British. After World War II Madagascar was handed back to France. In 1947 the people of Madagascar again rose in rebellion against French rule but were crushed. Madagascar gained full independence in 1958 as the Malagasy Republic. Philibert Tsiranana was the first president.

Tsiranana was forced to resign in 1972 and was replaced by Gabriel Ramantsoa who introduced socialism, which proved disastrous for Madagascar. Ramantsoa was replaced by Didier Ratsiraka in 1975 who ruled until 1991. Ratsiraka continued socialist policies until 1993 when multi-party elections were held and in 1997 Ratsiraka was elected president again. Marc Ravalomanana followed him in 2002 and was re-elected in 2007. In January 2009 protests broke out against his rule and in March 2009 the army installed Andry Rajoelina as president. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in 2013 and Hery Rajaonarimampianina became president in 2014.

Meanwhile from the mid-1990s Madagascar abandoned socialism and the economy began to recover. Today Madagascar is still a very poor country with a population of 23 million.

## THE REGIONS OF MADAGASCAR

The varied topography of the island dictates the natural division into six distinct parts. Very different ethnic groups populate these regions and diverse climatic conditions prevail in each of the areas.

### THE HIGHLANDS

Madagascar Central Highlands constitute the main core of the island and here is where the capital, Antananarivo, together with other important cities are located. The landscape is dominated by terraced rice fields that attest the Asian origin of the Merina people, the main ethnic group that share this territory with the Betsileo. Along Route Nationale 7 from Antananarivo to Fianarantsoa we also find some of the most visited tourist attractions of the island. Due to the altitude, relative temperatures are pleasant during the summer, though they can drop sharply in the winter months.





Red Tsingy, north Madagascar

**THE NORTHERN REGION**

The northern part of Madagascar is sparsely populated, with the exception of little-known Nosy Be archipelago and Diego Suarez. Despite its relative inaccessibility, this region holds a rich mix of ethnic groups and features natural wonders of extraordinary beauty, like the karst pinnacles of the Ankarana national park or the untouched and little-explored rainforests of the Marojejy national park. The dry season is particularly long here, except for the northeast forest regions where persistent year-round rainfall is expected.

**THE EASTERN REGION**

The lowlands of the east coast are home to one of the major ethnic groups of the island, the friendly and hospitable Betsimisaraka whose traditions and customs have been preserved. The pristine postcard beaches of Sainte Marie Island are a major tourist attraction of the area. The awesome variety of flora and fauna of the largely unexplored rain forests of the Masoala Peninsula make the visit to this national park a must for any serious nature lover. Best months to visit this

White sands of the east coast



Exotic spiny plants of the south

region are from October until December, before the cyclone season and after the rainy winter.

**THE SOUTHERN REGIONS**

The remote, harsh, desolate landscapes of the south have made this inhospitable, arid area into one of Madagascar's most appealing regions. The dry desert of southwest Madagascar provides shelter to the Antandroy people – whose name (meaning 'people of the thorns') testifies to the exotic spiny plants that grow here. The Mahafaly ethnic group occupy the area from the Onilahy River in the north to the Menarandra River in the south and are known for their unique funerary art. The endless beaches with immaculate sand dunes line the western south coast and are home to the nomadic Vezo fishermen. The climate is hot and dry with almost no rain, except around Fort Dauphin.

**THE WESTERN REGION**

The west coast of Madagascar is sublime: white and beige-sailed dugouts sparkle on a limpid ocean surface, tiny hamlets with welcoming villagers emerge

Canyons of the southern Isalo NP



Tsirbihina River, west Madagascar

occasionally on the beaches lined with oval sand dunes. The rivers form fertile valleys, sometimes almost flat, sometimes sharp and abrupt, but always beautiful. The northern part is mainly a fertile savannah while travelling southwards we find a drier, rather bushy territory with astonishing landscapes. Spectacular tsingy formations are found in this region and bizarre looking baobabs with immense trunks can be seen scattered around the landscape. Climate is dry and pleasant during the winter months.

**ECOLOGY**

Much of Madagascar's varied fauna and flora are endangered by human activity; a third of the island's native vegetation has disappeared since the 1970s – only 18% remains intact.

The eastern, or windward side of the island is home to tropical rainforests, while the western and southern sides, which lie in the rain shadow of the central highlands, are home to tropical dry forests, thorn forests, and deserts and xeric (drought tolerant) shrub lands. Madagascar's dry deciduous rain forests have been preserved generally better than the eastern rainforests or the high central plateau, presumably due to historically low population density and scarce water supplies.

Extensive deforestation has taken place in parts of the country. Slash-and-burn activity (locally called tavy) has occurred in the eastern and western dry forests as well as the on the central high plateau, reducing certain forest habitat and applying pressure to some endangered species.

**MADAGASCAR'S CONSERVATION MEASURES**

Madagascar is home to nine-tenths of all the world's lemur species, including the dwarf Microcebus, no bigger than a mouse; the very friendly Macaco; the Catta, with a distinctive grey body and long black-and-white striped tail; the Sifaka, which can leap 30 feet or more from branch to branch; the Indri, tallest of all lemurs; and the rarest of all lemurs, the Aye-aye.

Madagascar is considered a must-see by all serious birdwatchers. Visitors to the island are often amazed by the wide variety of rare and breathtakingly beautiful birds, including the marvellous Vangas, the beautiful Crested Coua and the remarkably colourful Roller bird. There are over 70 species of singing birds and parrots, an abundance of gorgeous waterfowl, including herons and flamingos; and graceful birds of prey, such as the lightning-fast eagle and graceful falcon.

Sheltering more than 10,000 varieties of plants (with more discovered daily), Madagascar is truly blanketed with one of the richest collections of flora in the world. There are 1,000 different species of orchids, including the stunning black orchid and the most rare of all orchids, the white-flowered Darwin's orchid (*Angraecum Sesquipedale*). You'll also find the provident plant, a water-storing bottle tree, 6 species of baobabs, the carnivorous pitcher plant, and more.

Because of its extraordinary biodiversity, Madagascar is the number one priority in the international community for conservation of endangered species and preservation. The responsible eco-traveller will contribute greatly to the international conservation effort, and will be very much welcomed by the friendly Malagasy.

Mangrove conservation project workers



Right: Pitcher plant (left) and purple periwinkle (right)

**WILDLIFE SPECIES CHECK LIST**

With a land area slightly greater than that of France, Madagascar is the world's fourth-largest island. It is celebrated amongst conservationists and wildlife enthusiasts for its exceptional number of endemic species (of all the world's islands, only New Guinea is home to more unique species).



Aye aye

**INSECTS**

Upon seeing a long-necked orchid from Madagascar, Charles Darwin predicted the existence of a giant hawkmoth with an especially long tongue that had co-evolved to pollinate the flower. The later discovery of this insect remains a classic example of evolutionary adaptation. The island can also boast insects among its most iconic wildlife images, including the bizarre giraffe-necked weevil (*Trachelophorus giraffa*) and the spectacular giant comet or moon moth (*Argema mittrei*), a brilliant yellow insect with two long 'tails' (actually part of the wing). The remainder of Madagascar's diverse insect fauna is for the most part very poorly-known, but the island is regarded as a high conservation priority for this group.



Giraffe-necked weevil

- Giant pill millipede *Diplopoda*
- Giraffe-necked Weevil *Trachelophorus giraffa*
- Flatid Leaf Insect *Phromnia rosea*
- Mocker Swallowtail *Papilio dardanus meriones*
- Madagascar Giant Swallowtail *Pharmacophagus antenor*
- Angled Grass-Yellow butterfly *Eurema desjardinsii*
- African Monarch *Danaus chrysippus*
- Brilliant Blue *Junonia rhadama*
- Comet moth *Argema mittrei*
- Dung Beetle *Scarabidae*
- Golden orb-web spider *Nephila spp.*
- Dragonfly *Neodythemis hildebrandti*

**AMPHIBIANS**

Madagascar is home to more amphibian species, all frogs, than any other African country; remarkably, 100% of these species, and most genera, are endemic. Over 200 species have been formally described from the country, placing it 12th in the world in terms of amphibian diversity, however recent genetic evidence suggests that the total is closer to 450. Of these, the most famous are the dozen species of mantella, brightly-coloured, poisonous day-active frogs popular in the pet trade. The large, bright red tomato frogs (*Dyscophus antongilii*) are likewise among Madagascar's well-known, charismatic but threatened wildlife. Some of the island's frog species are among the planet's most endangered, many of them tied to forest habitat which is dwindling rapidly.



Tomato frog

- Mascarene Ridged Frog *Ptychadena madagascariensis*
- Betsileo Reed Frog *Heterixalus betsileo*
- Tomato Frog *Dyscophus antongilii*
- Golden Mantella *Mantella aurantiaca*
- Pandanus Frog *Guibemantis pulcher*
- Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog *Boophis madagascariensis*
- White-lipped Bright-eyed Frog *Boophis albilabris*
- Madagascar Fringed Frog *Spinomantis aglavei*
- Grandidier's Madagascar Frog *Mantidactylus grandidieri*

**REPTILES**

Madagascar's reptiles include some of the island's best-known residents. The island is home to over half the world's chameleons, including both the largest and the smallest, as well as many of the most striking. Most of the world's day geckos (genus *Phelsuma*), known for their bright contrasting colours as the "living jewels of Madagascar" also occur only on the island. Conversely, the bizarre leaf-tailed geckos (genus *Uroplatus*) are among the best-camouflaged, most cryptic animals in the world. Madagascar is home to the world's most endangered tortoise, the plowshare or agonoka and its relative the radiated tortoise (*Geochelone radiata*). Madagascar's iguanas and one lineage of turtles appear to be relics of the period when the island was attached to South America as part of the southern continent Gondwana. For a long time Madagascar's three species of "boa" were thought to share this origin, but are now known to be close relatives of the African rock python. One attraction for many visitors to the island may be that none of Madagascar's snakes are dangerously venomous. However, the Malagasy people themselves are extremely superstitious of snakes and tragically kill them in large numbers.



Radiated tortoise



Day gekko

- African Helmeted Turtle *Pelomedusa subrufa*
- Radiated Tortoise *Astrochelys radiata*
- Spider Tortoise *Pyxis arachnoides*
- Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus*
- Montagne d'Ambre Leaf Chameleon *Chameleon Brookesia tuberculata*
- Brown Leaf Chameleon *Brookesia superciliaris*
- Oustalet's Chameleon *Furcifer oustaleti*

- Parson's Chameleon *Calumma parsonii*
- Panther Chameleon *Furcifer pardalis*
- Jewelled Chameleon *Furcifer lateralis*
- Perinet Chameleon *Calumma gastrotaenia*
- Big Nose Chameleon *Calumma nasutum*
- Short-horned Chameleon *Calumma brevicorne*
- Warty Chameleon *Furcifer verrucosus*
- Three-eyed Lizard *Chalaradon madagascariensis*
- Merrem's Madagascar Swift *Oplurus cyclurus*
- Madagascar Plated Lizard *Zonosaurus madagascariensis*
- Western Plated Lizard *Zonosaurus laticaudatus*
- Madagascar Keeled Plated Lizard *Tracheloptychus madagascariensis*
- Elegant Skink *Trachylepis elegans*
- Fire-tailed Skink *Madascincus igneocaudatus*
- Giant Day Gecko *Phelsuma grandis*
- Lined Day Gecko *Phelsuma lineata*
- Gold-dust Day Gecko *Phelsuma laticauda*
- Thicketail Day Gecko *Phelsuma mutabilis*
- Spiny Forest Dwarf Gecko *Lygodactylus tuberosus*
- Common House Gecko *Hemidactylus frenatus*
- Madagascar Ground Gecko *Paroedura picta*
- Mocquard's Ground Gecko *Paroedura bastardi*
- Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko *Uroplatus sikorae*
- Giant Leaf-tailed Gecko *Uroplatus giganteus*
- Madagascar Tree Boa *Sanzinia madagascariensis*
- Giant Hognose Snake *Leioheterodon madagascariensis*
- Blonde Hognose Snake *Leioheterodon modestus*
- Leaf-nosed Snake *Langaha madagascariensis*

**MAMMALS**

The exact origins of Madagascar's unique native mammals is a mystery; it was only in 2010 that convincing evidence came to light that the ancestors of Madagascar's mammals had 'rafted' to the island from the African mainland when the direction of ocean currents was reversed. Today, these animals include Madagascar's most famous inhabitants, as many as 100 species of lemur, prosimian primates found only on the island and the neighbouring Comoros. Best-known of



Crowned lemur

the lemurs are the three-foot tall indri, whose call is a loud, mournful wail; the sifakas (*Propithecus sp.*) which appear to 'dance' as they move along the ground on their hindlimbs; the ringtailed lemur (*Lemur catta*) with its vaguely racoon-like mask and tail and the extraordinary nocturnal aye-aye. Madagascar is also home to another group of mammals nearly unique to Madagascar. The insectivorous tenrecs, most of which resemble shrews or hedgehogs and to three endemic civets, the best-known being the fosa (also spelt fossa). Excluding bats, all Madagascar's native mammals are endemic, although a number of introduced species are present.



Verreaux's sifaka

**LEMURS**

- Rufous Mouse Lemur *Microcebus rufus*
- Golden-brown Mouse Lemur *Microcebus ravelobensis*
- Berthe's Mouse Lemur *Microcebus berthae*
- Grey Mouse Lemur *Microcebus murinus*
- Coquerel's Giant Mouse Lemur *Mirza coquereli*
- Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur *Cheirogaleus medius*
- Pale Fork-marked Lemur *Phaner pallescens*
- Ankarana Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur ankaranensis*
- Red-tailed Sportive Lemur *Lepilemur ruficaudatus*
- Greater Bamboo Lemur *Prolemur simus*
- Grey Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur griseus*
- Golden Bamboo Lemur *Hapalemur aureus*

- Ring-tailed Lemur *Lemur catta*
- Sanford's Brown Lemur *Eulemur sandfordi*
- White-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemur albifrons*
- Brown Lemur *Eulemur fulvus*
- Red-fronted Brown Lemur *Eulemurfulvus rufifrons*
- Red-bellied Lemur *Eulemur rubriventer*
- Black Lemur *Eulemur macaco*
- Crowned Lemur *Eulemur coronatus*
- Mongoose Lemur *Eulemur mongoz*
- Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur *Varecia variegata*
- Red Ruffed Lemur *Varecia rubra*
- Eastern Woolly Lemur *Avahi laniger*

**SIFAKAS**

- Decken's Sifaka *Propithecus deckeni*
- Coquerel's Sifaka *Propithecus coquereli*
- Verreaux's Sifaka *Propithecus verreauxi*
- Silky Sifaka *Propithecus candidus*
- Milne-Edward's Sifaka *Propithecus edwardsi*
- Diademed Sifaka *Propithecus diadema*
- Perrier's Sifaka *Propithecus perrieri*
- Tattersall's Sifaka *Propithecus tattersalli*
- Crowned Sifaka *Propithecus coronatus*Indri
- Indri *Indri indri*
- Aye-aye *Daubentonia madagascariensis*

**CARNIVORES**

- Ring-tailed Vontsira *Galidia elegans*
- Northern Bokiboky *Mungotictis decemlineata*
- Spotted Fanaloka *Fossa fossana*
- Fosa *Cryptoprocta ferox*

**TENRECS**

- Greater Hedgehog Tenrec *Setifer setosus*
- Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec *Echinops telfairi*
- Lowland Streaked Tenrec *Hemicentetes semispinosus*
- Common Tenrec *Tenrec ecaudatus*

**RODENTS**

- Giant Jumping Rat *Hypogeomys antimena*
- Eastern Red Forest Rat *Nesomys rufus*
- Lowland Red Forest Rat *Nesomys audeberti*

**BATS**

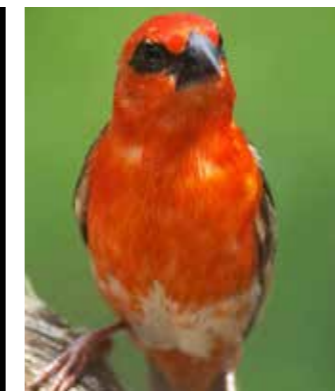
- Madagascar Flying Fox *Pteropus rufus*
- Commerson's Leaf-nosed Bat *Hipposideros commersoni*

**BIRDS**

Given the proximity to mainland Africa and birds' ability to fly, the fact that nearly 60% of Madagascar's birds are found nowhere else is an impressive figure. In a familiar story, birds are represented in Madagascar by an endemic family (the *Vangidae*) found only on the island (*Coua*, a group of cuckoos with a striking ring of exposed blue skin around the eye). Although couas and vangas may be Madagascar's best-known endemic birds, the island is home to numerous other unique species. Birds may also be the most seriously threatened animal group on the island; over a sixth of the bird species found in the region are endangered and within the Madagascar-Seychelles hotspot as a whole, 32 of 45 recorded extinctions in historic times have involved birds.



Grey-headed love bird



Red fody

\*= endemic to Madagascar

- White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*
- \*Madagascar Partridge *Margaroperdix madagarensis*
- \*Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea firasa*
- Humblot's Heron *Ardea humbloti*
- \*Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea madagascariensis*
- Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*
- Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*



Purple heron



Madagascar Malachite kingfisher

- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta dimorpha*
- Great Egret *Ardea alba*
- Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*
- \*Madagascar Buzzard *Buteo brachypterus*
- \*Madagascar Harrier-hawk *Polyboroides radiatus*
- \*Madagascar Baza *Aviceda madagascariensis*
- Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans aegypticus*
- \*Frances' Sparrowhawk *Accipiter francesiae*
- Madagascar Kestrel *Falco newtoni newtoni*
- Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*
- Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis aliena*
- Lesser Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis nigra*
- \*Greater Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis vasa*
- \*Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis canis*
- Madagascar Coucal *Centropus toulou*
- Madagascar Cuckoo *Cuculus rochii*
- \*Crested Coua *Coua cristata*
- \*Giant Coua *Coua gigas*
- \*Blue Coua *Coua caerulea*
- White-browed Owl *Ninox supercilialis*
- \*Madagascar Scops Owl *Otus rutilus*
- Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo vintsiodes*
- Olive Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*
- Madagascar Hoopoe *Upupa marginata*
- \*Pitta-like Ground-roller *Atelornis pittoides*
- \*Madagascar Wagtail *Motacilla flaviventris*
- Pied Crow *Corvus albus*
- Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone mutata mutata*
- \*Madagascar Mannakin *Lonchura nana*
- \*Sickle-billed Vanga *Falcula palliata*
- Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina cinerea*
- Crested Drongo *Dricrurus forficatus*
- \*Red Fody *Foudia madagascariensis*

## BAOBABS OF MADAGASCAR

Belonging to the family Malvaceae, the baobabs are amongst the most spectacular trees in the world. Baobabs are believed to have originated in Madagascar, as six of the world's nine species are only found here. Two species are found in Africa (*Adansonia digitata* and *Adansonia kilima*) and one is native to northwestern Australia (*Adansonia gibbosa*).

Illustrations by Louise Jasper and edited by the Arboretum Antsokay



### *Adansonia madagascariensis* Bozy

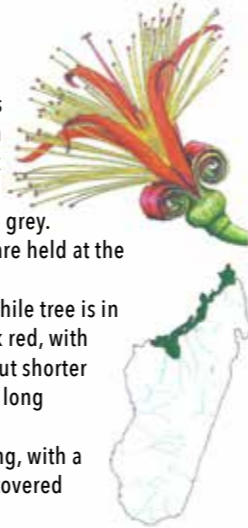
**Description:** Small to large trees from 20-50 metres in height with bottle-shaped or cylindrical trunk reaching up to 5 metres in diameter. The bark is smooth and grey.

In mature trees, the branches are held at the top of the tree.

Flowering season is Feb-Apr, while tree is in leaf. Flowers solitary, pink to dark red, with petals longer than the stamens but shorter than the style. They emerge from long cylindrical, greenish buds.

Fruit spherical to slightly oblong, with a hard woody pericarp (shell) and covered in short brown hairs.

**Uses:** The fruits are the least palatable of all the baobabs and are therefore rarely eaten.



### *Adansonia rubrostipa* Fozy

**Description:** Small to large trees up to 20 metres in height (usually much shorter), with a cylindrical or bottle-shaped trunk and reddish bark.

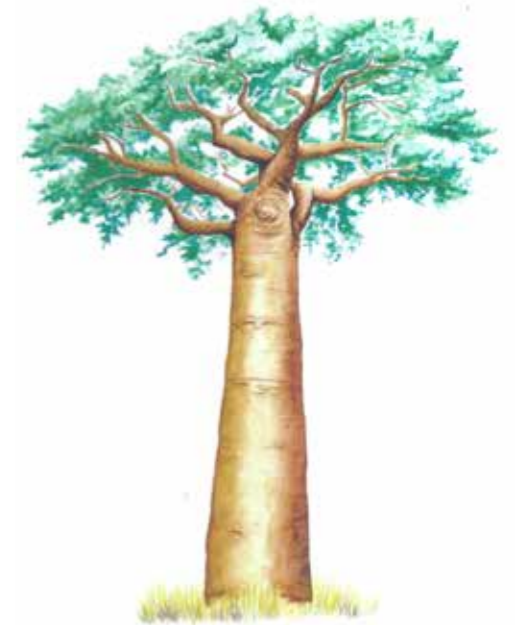
Easily recognisable by its dentate (toothed) leaflets and copper-coloured bottle-shaped trunk.

The outer layers of bark peel away in thin sheets, beneath which lies a thin photosynthetic layer.

Flowers yellow to orange-yellow, with petals far shorter than the stamens, appearing from Feb-Apr.

The round, red-brown, furry fruits have a thick pericarp, enclosing many small, kidney-shaped seeds.

**Uses:** The dry fruit pulp is edible, and the fibrous bark is used to make rope.



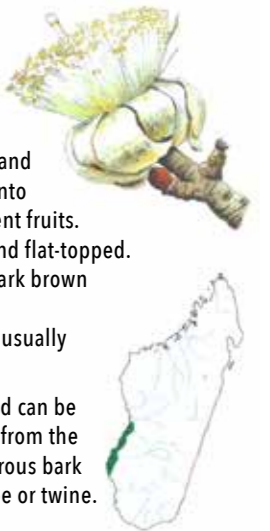
### *Adansonia grandidieri* Renala

**Description:** Large, often massive trees 5-25 metres in height, with cylindrical trunk reaching up to 3 metres in diameter. Bark is reddish-grey. Like all baobabs it is deciduous and has palmate, compound leaves (leaf divided into several leaflets) solitary flowers and indehiscent fruits.

Branches usually horizontal, crown broad and flat-topped. Solitary, erect white flowers emerge from dark brown flower buds before the tree comes into leaf.

The fragile, furry brown fruits are large and usually oblong or roundish in shape.

**Uses:** The dry fruit pulp is rich in vitamin C and can be eaten or made into juice. Oil can be extracted from the seeds, though of little value. Sheets of the fibrous bark are used as roofing material, or made into rope or twine.



### *Adansonia suarezensis* Bozy

**Description:** Large trees reaching up to 25 metres when mature. The massive tapering or cylindrical trunk can reach 2m in diameter. Bark is grey-brown with a yellowish green layer beneath the surface.

The crown is flat-topped, with mainly horizontal, regularly distributed branches.

The erect white flowers emerge during the dry season while the tree is leafless from May-Jul.

Fruits are long (up to 40cm) and irregularly shaped, oblong to cylindrical with a thin fragile pericarp (shell).

**Uses:** The bark was once used locally as a substitute for quinine.



### *Adansonia perrieri* Bozy

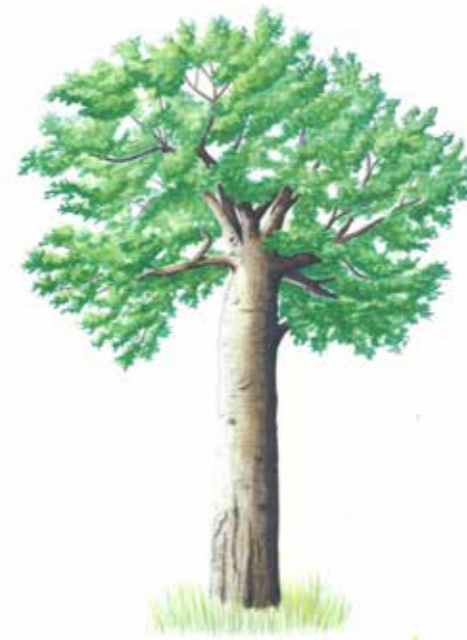
**Description:** Medium to tall trees up to 30 metres tall, with certain trees reaching 3 metres in diameter. The trunk is cylindrical, occasionally bottle-shaped with smooth grey bark.

The leaves emerge during the wet season, from Nov-Apr.

Emerging just before the leaves, the erect flowers are pale yellow, the petals turning yellow-orange with age.

The fruits are ovoid to oblong, large (up to 30cm long) and covered with velvety brown hairs.

*Adansonia perrieri* is very rare and faces many threats. It is classed as an Endangered species.



### *Adansonia za*

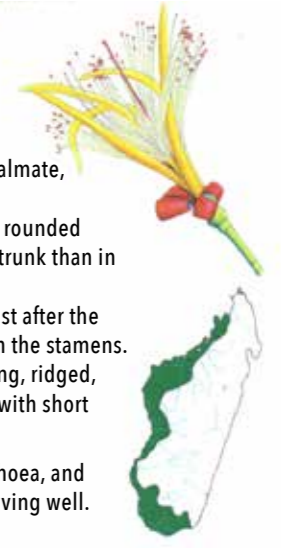
**Description:** Medium to tall trees up to 30 metres in height (rarely stunted), with a tapering or cylindrical trunk reaching 3 metres in diameter. Bark grey and mainly smooth. Leaves palmate, with entire (not toothed) margins.

A variable species characterised by grey bark, a rounded crown with branches extending further down the trunk than in other baobabs.

Flowering season Nov-Feb, emerging with or just after the leaves. Flowers are yellow, with petals longer than the stamens.

Fruits are variable in shape, from ovoid to oblong, ridged, occasionally pointed, the tough pericarp covered with short blackish-grey hairs.

**Uses:** The leaves and fruits are used to treat diarrhoea, and the large trunk is sometimes transformed into a living well.



**CULTURE**

The Malagasy are a very hospitable and welcoming people, although their relaxed attitude may sometimes be frustrating. Madagascan life definitely has a French flavor – French is spoken and croissants are served for breakfast.

Friends and acquaintances kiss each other 2, 3 or 4 times on each cheek every time they see each other.

Visitors are advised not to wear any military-style clothing and not to photograph military or police establishments.

**RELIGION & CUSTOMS**

Almost all Malagasy combine the Christian faith (either Catholic or Protestant) with their traditional religion. Two groups, the Antalaotra in the northwest and the Antaimoro ('Arab-Malagasy') of the southeast, have adopted Muslim practices. In traditional religion, the Highest Being or Creator is Zanihari, or Andriamanitra, who is neither male nor female.

There are a vast number of secondary gods or nature spirits, which inhabit certain trees, rocks or rivers. These spirits can influence the lives of people, who visit sacred sites to pray to spirits reportedly



residing there. Spirits can also possess humans, sending them into trances (an important and regular phenomenon in some tribes), and also animals, particularly crocodiles and certain lemurs.

The Malagasy follow a vast, complex system of beliefs pertaining to all aspects of everyday life. These vary from village to village and even family to family. The many taboos are believed to be enforced by supernatural powers and are called *Fady*.

There are three category of *Fady*: those related to actions – for example believing it is *fady* to sing while you are eating and if you do you will develop elongated teeth; those related to objects – for example, the Merina will not have funerals on Tuesdays as this may bring about another death in the family. Foreigners are exempt from having to adhere to *fady*, although it is sensible and considerate to find out as much as possible about this in regions you are visiting so as to avoid offending people. The most classical example of *fady* to which tourists might be confronted is the ban on the access to burial sites.

In the region around the tsingy of Bemaraha it is *fady* to point at something with the forefinger. You must do it using your five fingers – the park ranger will probably explain this to you.

**CLOTHING**

The lamba is the most conspicuous piece of traditional Malagasy clothing. It consists of two pieces of identical fabric used as wraparound sheets, often printed with designs depicting everyday scenes. Some cheaper lambas also have slogans on them that should be checked before the cloth is paid for – some can be suggestive! In the highlands, particularly among the Betsileo people, lambas are worn on the shoulder. If it trails off to the person's right, it symbolises mourning. Lamba mena (red lambas) are reserved for special occasions and are also used as burial shrouds.

The other noticeable element in Malagasy dress is the straw hat. These vary regionally, from broad-rimmed hats to brimless, tight-fitting, cone-shaped hats, which can be seen in the south and central-west. Western influence is increasingly apparent and fashion (especially urban areas like Tana) tends to follow trends set by popular international fashion magazines. There is therefore a huge demand for trainers, jeans and leather jackets.



**CUISINE**

Rice is the staple of the Malagasy diet. The resourceful natives have developed literally dozens of delicious preparatory techniques for this plentiful grain. But the Malagasy diet is a varied one, and heaping mounds of rice are usually topped with zebu, an excellent local beef, as well as pork, chicken, crab, fish, corn, peanuts, and potatoes. Fresh fruits and vegetables abound. Spicy curries are popular, as are the numerous exquisite French dishes served at the island's finest restaurants and hotels.

When in Madagascar, you'll be urged to try the national snack – Koba, a plate of rice, banana, and peanut. Unless you're a fan of that combination of flavours, skip the Koba and order one of the island's famous seafood salads. You'll be handed a heaping plateful of luscious ginger-and-lime-flavoured crab and lobster meat, resting on a bed of fresh greens. Akoho sy voanio, a chicken dish prepared with rice and fresh coconut, is also quite delicious, as is the Foza sy hena-kisoa, a stir-fried crab, pork, and rice dish.



**OUR EXPEDITION TEAM**



**SUE WERNER**

Sue graduated as a veterinary nurse before embarking on a more adventurous life as a professional outdoor guide. Over the past 30 years she has worked as an expedition leader and guide, specialising in Antarctica and the High Arctic. Her enthusiasm has taken her to many remote corners of the world, including Madagascar, the Amazon, Africa and the Himalaya. Spending three months working for the South Georgia Heritage Trust was a highlight of Sue's career.

In January, 2015, Sue purchased Adventure Associates and continues to plan even more exciting journeys.



**MINAH RANARIVELOHARIVONY**

Minah is a highly skilled and resourceful tour guide with over twelve years of experience in Madagascar. With a strong focus on goals and meticulous attention to detail, she is committed to delivering exceptional customer service. Minah holds a Graduate Diploma in the Tourism industry, having studied for two years at INTH (Institut National de Tourisme et Hôtellerie) and completed a year of practical training at Mad Trekking in Fianarantsoa. Her extensive expertise and dedication make her an invaluable asset in the field of tourism.



**ANGLIN RAZAFIMANTSOA**

Anglin hails from Joffre Ville, Madagascar, adjacent to Amber Mountain National Park, which fostered his passion for nature. He completed his National Tourism guiding course in 1994. His research collaboration with the University of Michigan resulted in a publication focusing on Madagascar's reptiles and amphibians. In 2003, Anglin partnered with a German firm to produce two significant works: 'A Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar' and 'Lemurs of Madagascar.' Proficient in two Malagasy dialects, he is also fluent in English and French.



**GENERAL TRAVEL INFORMATION**

**MONEY & CURRENCY**

The official currency of Madagascar since 1st January, 2005, is the Malagasy Ariary (MGA), which has been reintroduced to replace the Malagasy franc. The word *Ariary* literally means *silver dollar*.

There are banknotes of 20,000 MGA, 10,000 MGA, 5,000 MGA, 2,000 MGA, 1,000 MGA, 500 MGA, 200 MGA and 100 MGA. The largest note of 20,000 MGA is worth about AUD8. There are even coins from 1 up to 50 Ariary. The 50Ar coin is very beautiful with its carved baobabs.

We recommend taking Euros or US Dollars in cash or travellers' cheques for your travelling expenses. When exchanging travellers' cheques a small commission may be deducted.

Credit cards, Visa/Mastercard, are accepted in most hotels, restaurants and large shops but the exchange rate is generally more favourable for cash. American Express is rarely accepted anywhere.

Antananarivo airport has ATM's for cash withdrawals and money exchange. Almost all banks in Tana and the major towns now have ATM's. Obviously, the amount you need will depend upon the level of personal expenditure, but as a guide we recommend allowing between €30 to €60 per day to cover all items such as souvenirs, drinks and personal items etc.



New banknotes started circulation in July 2017 with a new 20,000 Ar note.

**SAFETY & VALUABLES**

Make photocopies of all your important documents (passport, visa, airline ticket, credit cards, emergency contacts, travel insurance policy with emergency hotline numbers etc..) Leave one set of copies with a friend or relative at home and keep another in your main luggage, in case your hand luggage with the originals goes missing.

Please leave any non-essential valuables at home (jewellery, expensive watch etc.) Money belts worn underneath clothing are useful. Don't take all your money with you when out sightseeing. We advise utmost caution at popular tourist spots and especially the airports – don't leave luggage unattended. Adventure Associates is not to be held responsible for the loss or theft of any valuables. We recommend you bring with you only what you consider necessary.



**TIPS/GRATUITIES**

In Madagascar, tipping of guides, drivers, porters etc. is normal and customary.

In order to avoid confusion and for the ease of all involved Adventure Associates has included the gratuities/tips in the group price for all local guides and drivers throughout the group tour.

However, have a small amount of Ariary (2000-5000Ar) handy for tipping the porters who carry your luggage to your room..

**SHOPPING & SOUVENIRS**

You can buy almost anything in the handicrafts markets in Madagascar. Most popular are woodcarvings, a great variety of raffia work, crocheted and embroidered table cloths and clothes, leather goods, carved zebu horn, Antaimoro paper (with embedded dried flowers) and marquetry. Good quality cotton T-shirts bearing Malagasy designs and slogans are produced by the Baobab, Maki, Carambole and Fosa labels. There is a Baobab T-shirt shop very close to our hotel in Tana.

In the south you can buy attractive heavy silver bracelets that are traditionally worn by men. You can find shops selling lambas almost anywhere. Delightful little toy cars and other vehicles constructed from scrap tin cans are among the most colourful wares in the craft markets.

Madagascar is a rewarding place for gem hunters, with citrine, tourmaline and beryl inexpensive and easy to find. The centre for gems is traditionally Antsirabe but they are for sale in many towns throughout the south.

**PLEASE DO NOT BUY PRODUCTS MADE FROM ENDANGERED SPECIES**

Bargaining and haggling is expected in markets and with street sellers, but not generally in shops where prices are set.

**ELECTRIC CURRENT**

The mains voltage in Madagascar is 220V. Outlets are European-style plugs with two round pins.

Note: Increasingly upper-end eco-hotels in remote locations are using solar power; such lodgings usually do not have power sockets in the rooms (but batteries can always be charged at reception).

**MEALS**

Meals during the tour are included as indicated in the itinerary as (B.L.D). Meal times may vary according to the day's activities and flight schedules.

**WATER**

Water varies in purity from place to place. It is safer to drink bottled or mineral water. Be wary of ice blocks, unpeeled fruit and salads unless served in better class hotels and restaurants. Iodine water purification tablets or a Steripen can also help.

**BEER & WINE**

The most famous drink, *Three Horse Beer*, known universally as THB, is wonderful on a hot day. It is not well known by the rest of the world that Madagascar produces wine. It is not considered world class, but some can be reasonable. Malagasy wine and beer is available at most places and quite affordable. Have fun sampling the local produce!

**GIFTS TO THE LOCALS**

Please do not give money, presents, or sweets to children. If you wish to make a contribution we suggest bringing along: educational material (pens, markers, note-books, colour pencils, rubbers and chalks), soccer balls and children's clothes. In consultation with our local guide, we will organise where it's best to distribute these items.

**TIME CONVERSION**

Madagascar: GMT +3 (Standard time) or 5 hours behind Perth, 6 hours 30 min behind Adelaide and 7 hours behind Sydney/Melbourne/Brisbane.

Mauritius and Réunion: GMT +4 or 4 hours behind Perth, 5 hours 30 min behind Adelaide and 6 hours behind Sydney/Melbourne/Brisbane.

South Africa: GMT +2 or 6 hours behind Perth, 7 hours 30 min behind Adelaide and 8 hours behind Sydney/Melbourne/Brisbane.

**TRAVELLER'S TIP:**

Start your adventure with an open mind and resolve to take any itinerary changes in your stride – relax and enjoy your opportunity to visit this fascinating island and its people. Areas we visit are extremely interesting, however, some parts remain remote and tourism infrastructure is often largely undeveloped. Please understand that delays and variations to the itinerary, transport, hotels and food standards, may occur.

**PACKING HINTS & CLOTHING SUGGESTIONS**

We recommend you keep your baggage to a comfortable minimum. Pack simply and lightly. Clothing that you can layer will prepare you for all kinds of weather. In packing your carry-on bag for the flight, we suggest you pack essential toiletries, medicines, and a change of clothing in the event you reach your destination without some or your checked luggage.

In tropical conditions, shorts and lightweight shirts are most comfortable, but loose, long-sleeved shirts and long pants in a natural, lightweight fabric (eg cotton, linen), offer protection against the sun and insects. For women, a loose cotton dress (or cotton skirt/top) is comfortable and cool.

Dress is casual for the entire programme; please leave formal evening wear at home!

**CHECK LIST**

The three ideal characteristics for clothing in Madagascar are dark colours, many pockets, and the ability to withstand rain and mud splatters (i.e., quick drying and breathable). In general, one should dress conservatively. It does get cold, so bring some warm clothes. Do not bring a lot of clothes, just three or four outfits; you can buy just about anything in local markets.

The following clothing list is designed to assist you in preparing for your tour:

- 2 pair of shorts/skirt, loose & comfort
- 3 T-shirts or short sleeve shirts
- 2 long-sleeved quick dry shirts
- 2 pairs of comfortable travel pants
- 1 light sweater or light fleece jacket
- A raincoat or poncho
- Socks, underwear, etc.
- Sunhat with brim or a cap
- Bathing suit / sarong
- Bandannas or handkerchiefs
- Walking shoes with good soles
- Closed in sandals
- A pair of thongs are handy if we have

to walk in water or mud



**For your safety kit you should pack ample supply of basic health and first aid needs including:**

- Any prescription drugs, medication and vitamins that you take on a regular basis. A letter should accompany these from your doctor certifying that such medications are vital to your health. Dosage should be indicated. Pack these essentials in your carry-on luggage.
- Common remedies such as antacids, laxatives, decongestants, indigestion tablets, aspirin, throat lozenges, and other medications that you may use for common ailments
- Dettol or similar antiseptic
- "Wet ones" or similar
- Aspirin or paracetamol
- Band-aids, antiseptic, and tropical antibiotic
- Air/motion sickness preventatives
- Insect repellent and insect-bite relief products like mosquito patches and OUCH are natural and work
- Sunscreen and sunburn relief products, chap stick and protective lotions for lips and face you would normally use
- Personal toiletries or hygiene products.



**The following items may come in handy during your adventure:**

- Binoculars (essential for bird and lemur watching!)
- Travel umbrella
- Small flashlight or head torch
- Travel alarm clock
- Travellers clothes line
- Backpack suitable for carrying your photographic equipment and safety kit during the excursions – with shoulder straps so your hands are kept free for carrying your camera and other gear.
- Walking poles (collapsible)
- Spare set of prescription eye glasses or contact lenses for emergencies
- Sunglasses with a strap (and an extra pair in case you lose yours)
- Plastic bags of various sizes, including "zip lock" type for electronic equipment etc.
- Camera, camera bag, video camera
- Plenty of memory cards and batteries of your Madagascar adventure!
- Notebook and pencil
- Personal water bottle
- Reading and writing materials
- Nail clippers, scissors, small sewing kit and safety pins – NB. Please remember that these "sharps" must be packed in your checked luggage on all flights for airport security reasons.
- An electrical adaptor for any appliances you wish to take and a power board can be handy for multiple charging.



**IMPORTANT TIPS: PLEASE KEEP YOUR PASSPORT AND MONEY SAFELY WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES AND IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO TAKE A PHOTO OF YOUR CHECK-IN LUGGAGE AT THE START OF YOUR TRIP.**

**PHOTOGRAPHIC TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS**

We expect that everyone will bring some kind of camera be it a mobile phone or a professional SLR camera with all the bells and whistles. Remember to take extra memory cards and some spare camera batteries with you as it can be expensive or inconvenient to purchase these whilst travelling in Madagascar.

Be careful with photographs or video recordings. Ask your local guide first if it is appropriate to take photographs or to make video recordings in Malagasy communities, at burial sites etc. Avoid close up shots, and never remunerate people with money for a photograph.

Below are a few simple tips and suggestions that may help you get sorted before you go. Whatever camera you bring it is possible to get good images.

- Get to know your camera, make sure it is working correctly and that you understand all its main functions.
- Read and bring the instructions manual. Download an electronic version onto your laptop.

- Remember to pack the battery charger.
- Have some way of keeping your camera equipment dry and safe from dust. Lightweight nylon dry bags work well and are available in many sizes.
- Tripod and Monopod. A quality tripod is invaluable for the serious photographer. However they can be big, heavy and cumbersome to carry during our walks. A monopod is lighter and can be used as a walking stick for support.
- If you bring an SLR camera, a good zoom lens for wildlife photography will be handy. 200mm – 300mm is a good focal length. (Remember that on an SLR camera with a 1.5 crop-factor sensor a 200mm lens is equivalent to a 300mm lens on full frame sensor).
- We recommend that you carry all photography equipment, cords, chargers and storage devices in your carry-on luggage in case your main luggage is left behind somewhere.



Common tenrec



Red ruffed lemur



Fosa



Oustalet's chameleon

## USEFUL PHRASES IN MALAGASY &amp; FRENCH

ENGLISH	MALAGASY	FRENCH
Welcome	Tonga soa	Bienvenue
Hello (General greeting)	Salama	Bonjour
How are you?	Manao ahoana ianao?	Comment çava?
I'm fine thank you	Salama aho fa misaotra	Je vais bien, merci
What is your name?	Iza ny anaranao?	Quel est votre nom?
My name is .....	Ny anarako dia ...	Je m'appelle...
I'm from ...	Izaho dia avy any...	Je suis de/d' (Australie)
Pleased to meet you	Faly mahafantatra anao	Enchanté / Ravi
Yes	Eny	Oui
No	Tsia	Non
Good morning	Salama / Morning = maraina	Bonjour
Good afternoon	Salama / Afternoon = hariva	Bonjour
Good evening	Salama / Evening = alina	Bonsoir
Good night	Tsara mandry o Tsara mandry dia manaova nofy tsara	Bonne nuit
See you later	Mandra-pihaona	A bientôt / A plus tard
Goodbye	Veloma	Au revoir
Good luck	Mirary soa e!	Bonne chance
Cheers! (Toasts used when drinking)	Mirary fahasalamana e!	A votre santé / Santé / à la vôtre / Tchîn-tchîn!
Have a nice day	Mirary anao tontolo andro mahafinaritra	Passez une bonne journée!
Have a good journey	Soava dia!	Bon voyage
I understand	Mazava, azoko	Je comprends
I don't understand	Tsy azoko	Je ne comprends pas
I don't know	Tsy haiko Tsy fantatro	Je ne sais pas
Please speak more slowly	Afaka miteny miadana kokoa ve ianao?	Parlez plus lentement
Please say that again	Afaka averinao ve azafady?	Répétez s'il vous plait
Please write it down	Afaka soratanao ve izany?	Pouvez-vous écrire cela
Do you speak English?	Mahay miteny anglisy ve ianao?	Parlez-vous anglais?
Do you speak Malagasy?	Mahay miteny malagasy ve ianao?	Parlez-vous Malgache?
Yes, a little (reply to 'Do you speak ...?')	Eny kelikely Kely fotsiny (ihany)	Oui, un peu Je parle (I speak...)
I feel sick	Toa marary aho	Je me sens mal / Je suis malade
Where is the doctor?	Aiza ny dokotera?	Où est le docteur?

## USEFUL PHRASES IN MALAGASY &amp; FRENCH

ENGLISH	MALAGASY	FRENCH
Take me to the doctor please	Ento ho any amin'ny dokotera aho azafady	Amenez-moi chez le docteur, s'il vous plaît
How do you say ... in Malagasy?	Ahoana no fiteny hoe ... amin'ny teny gasy?	Comment dit-on...en Malgache?
Excuse me	Azafady	Excusez-moi
Sorry	miala tsiny	Pardon
Please	Mba miangavy re	S'il vous plaît
Thank you	Misaotra anao	Merci
Reply to thank you	Tsy misy fisaorana	De rien (you're welcome)
Where's the toilet?	Aiza ny toiletty?	Où sont les toilettes / les WC?
How much is this?	Ohatrinona ity?	C'est combien?
OK. All right	OK. Tsara izany	D'accord / OK
I miss you	Manimanina anao aho	Tu me manques
I love you	Tiako ianao	Je t'aime
Go away!	Mandehana!	Va-t-en! Allez-vous en!
Help!	Mila fanampiana!	A l'aide /au secours
Fire!	Misy may ô!	Au feu
Stop!	Mijanona	Arrête! Arrêtez!
Call the police!	Miantsoa paolisy!	Appelez la police!
At what time do we leave?	Amin'ny firy no hiala ?	A quelle heure part-on?
At what time is breakfast?	Amin'ny firy ny sakafo maraina ?	A quelle heure est le petit-déjeuner?
Breakfast	Sakafo maraina	Le petit-déjeuner
Lunch / Dinner	Sakafo atoandro / Sakaro ariva	Le déjeuner / Le dîner
Have a nice meal	Mazotoa homana!	Bon appétit
I'm finished eating	Avy nihinana aho	J'ai fini de manger
I'm hungry	Noana Aho	J'ai faim
I'm thirsty	Mangetaheta aho	J'ai soif
Is it drinkable water?	Moa ve rano azo sotroina ?	Est-ce que l'eau est potable?
Where is... ?	Aiza... ?	Où est... ?
It is a bit / too expensive	Izany dia mora / lafo loatra	C'est un peu/ trop cher
I would like...	Izaho dia te...	Je voudrais...
NUMBERS: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten	Nomery : iray , roa , telo , efatra , dimy , enina , fito , valo , sivy , folo	NOMBRES: un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, dix
Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty... One hundred	Roa-polo , telo-polo , efa-polo , dimam-polo ... Zato	Vingt, trente, quarante, cinquante... cent

**SUGGESTED READING LIST**

*Madagascar: The Bradt Travel Guide (Bradt Travel Guide).*  
Author: Hilary Bradt.

*Lonely Planet Madagascar & Comoros (Lonely Planet Madagascar).* Author: Gemma Pitcher, Patricia C. Wright.

*The Eighth Continent: Life, Death, and Discovery in the Lost World of Madagascar.* Author: Peter Tyson

*Forest and Labor in Madagascar – from Colonial Concession to Global Biosphere* (2012) Genese Marie Sodikoff, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

*The Natural History of Madagascar* (2003).  
Steven M. Goodman & Jonathan P. Benstead (Eds.),  
The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

*Extinct Madagascar: picturing the island's past* (2014).  
Steven M. Goodman and William L. Jungers, with plates by  
Velizar Simeonovski. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

*Madagascar: a Natural History* (1991) Ken Preston-Mafham,  
Facts on File Ltd, Oxford.

*Lost Worlds; Adventures in the Tropical Rainforest* (2008).  
Bruce M Beehler. Yale University Press. Octavo.

*Madagascar* (2007). Alain Pons & Christine Baillet.  
Photographic Safari Companion Series. Evans Mitchell  
Books, UK. A4, pb, 72pp. ISBN 1901268276; 9781901268270.

*For the Love of Lemurs – My Life in the Wilds of Madagascar* (2014). Patricia Chapple Wright. Lantern Books, New York. Octavo.

*Wildlife of Madagascar* (2016 Wild Guide)  
By Ken Behrens & Keith Barnes.

*The Aye-aye And I: A Rescue Mission In Madagascar.*  
Author: Gerald Durrell.

*Lords & Lemurs: Mad Scientist, Kings with Spears, and the Survival of Diversity in Madagascar.* Author: Alison Jolly.

*Lemurs of Madagascar* (2010 3rd Edition).  
Russell Mittermeier et al, Conservation International,  
Washington DC. Octavo.

*Mammals of Madagascar: a complete guide* (2007).  
Nick Garbutt. A & C Black, London. Octavo.

*Birds of Madagascar: A Photographic Guide.*  
Author: Pete Morris, Frank Hawkins.

*Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands – Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Rodrigues, Seychelles and the Comoros* (2013 3rd edition). Ian Sinclair and Olivier Legrand. Struick Publications, Cape Town. Octavo.

*A Photographic Guide to the Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands: Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Reunion and the Comoros* (2006). Ian Sinclair et al. Struick Publications, Cape Town. Octavo.

*A Fieldguide to the Chameleons of Madagascar.* Gilles and Aurelia Moynot (in French/English/Malagasy) Octavo.

*Atlas of the Vegetation of Madagascar* (2007). Justin Moat and Paul Smith, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Folio.

*Field Guide to the Orchids of Madagascar* (2009).  
Phillip Cribb and Johan Hermans, Royal Botanic Gardens,  
Kew. Octavo, hb, 465pp.

*Orchids of Madagascar* (2007 2nd Edition). Johan Hermans et al, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Quarto, hb, 398pp.

**A selection of these books can be bought online from the following online book stores:**

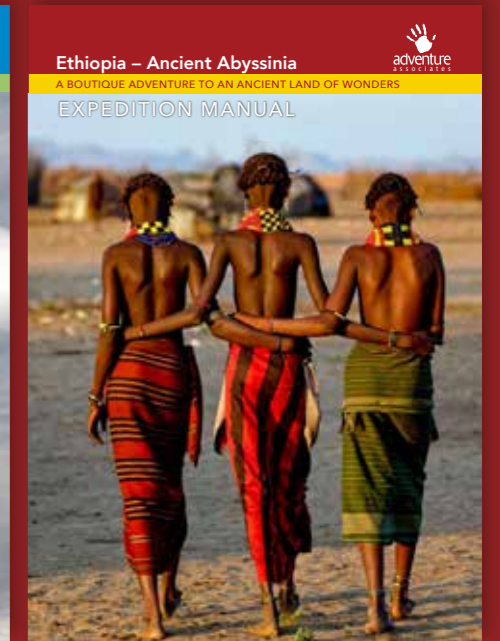
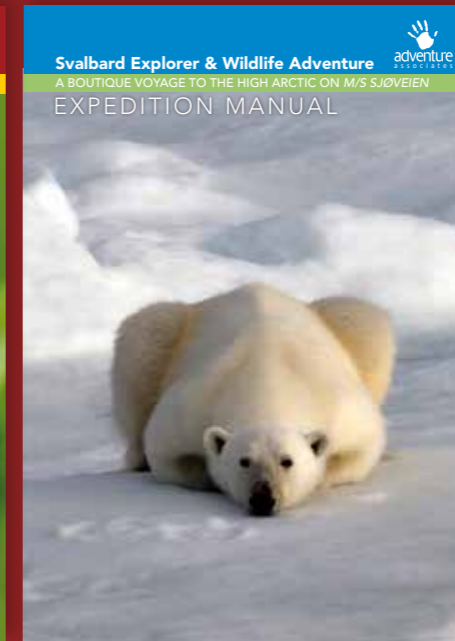
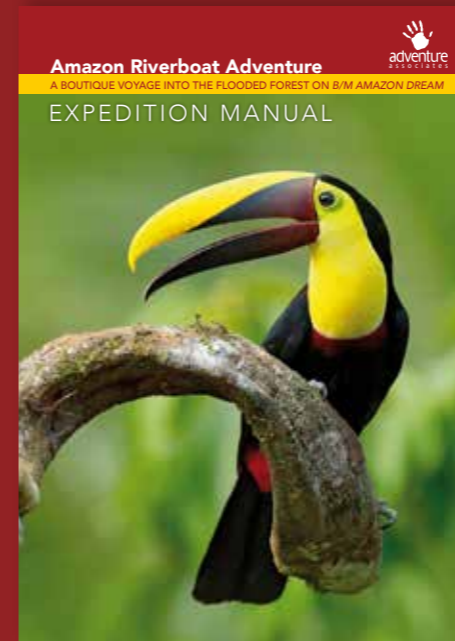
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