



The Living Eden: Madagascar's Unique Flora and Fauna

9 SEP – 1 OCT 2019

Code: 21954

Tour Leaders **Stephen Ryan**

Physical Ratings 

Explore Madagascar, one of the world's botanical and zoological hotspots, including the Indri d'Analamazaotra Reserve, Avenue of the Baobabs, Tsingy de Bemaraha and the Masoala Peninsula.

Overview

Tour Highlights

- With [Stephen Ryan](#) explore Madagascar's rich and unique wildlife habitats, venturing into exquisite national parks and reserves ranging from semi-tropical rainforests, succulent and spiny thicket, rocky landscapes of the central west and the spectacular mineral forest (karst spires) of the Tsingy de Bemaraha.
- Learn about Madagascar's fascinating blend of Austronesian and East African cultures.
- View the spectacular Avenue of the Baobabs, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Get up close with Madagascar's unique lemur and hear the call of the Indri across the Andasibe rainforest.
- Enjoy invigorating walks in Andasibe-Mantadia, Ranomafana and Isalo National Parks, while searching for lemurs, chameleons and strange insects in the forest.
- Spend a day visiting the spiny thicket or 'spiny desert' of southern Madagascar; a globally distinctive ecoregion where ninety-five percent of the plant species are endemic to the region.
- Make an excursion to Masoala National Park and the island reserve of Nosy Mangabe, home to the White-Fronted Brown Lemurs and Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs, Leaf-Tailed Geckos and several species of chameleon.

Testimonial

Sightseeing in Madagascar is not for the frail or faint-hearted but it is immensely exciting and rewarding. The lemurs, geckos, chameleons and frogs are astonishing; it's like an African Galapagos. The forests are hard to get to and challenging to explore but intensely rewarding for the wildlife treasures they reveal, flora and fauna. ASA has selected the best accommodation available in this country, which has yet to recognise the value of tourism, and has appealing infrastructure. Madagascar is right off the comfortable tourist trail, which makes it a very exciting, unusual and rewarding destination. If you are fit, healthy and love wildlife – just go while it's still there to see. Anna, VIC.

23-day Flora & Fauna tour of Madagascar

Overnight Antananarivo (1 night) • Andasibe NP (3 nights) • Antsirabe (1 night) • Ranomafana NP (3 nights) • Isalo NP (2 nights) • Ifaty (2 nights) • Kirindy Forest Reserve (1 night) • Tsingy de Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve (3 nights) • Morondava (1 night) • Antananarivo (1 night) • Maroantsetra (1 night) • Masoala NP (2 nights) • Antananarivo (1 night).

Overview

Visit one of the world's botanical and zoological hotspots with Stephen Ryan, who will be making his sixth trip since the 1990s. Stephen is a renowned horticulturalist, writer and lecturer with a life-long love affair with the plants and animals of this unique land. Madagascar, the world's fifth-largest island, has a higher percentage of endemic species than any comparable land mass; it has plant species, genera and even families that grow nowhere else on earth. Many natives have, however, made their way into gardens the world over. Among them is the magnificent Poinciana; we will see many more species of the outstanding genus of flowering plants, *Delonix*. Madagascar also has many unique native terrestrial mammal species, including such endearing creatures as lemurs. The exact number of species isn't known, as new ones are regularly discovered or reclassified. However, 86 have been described, from the tiny Madam Berthe's Mouse Lemur – the world's smallest primate at about 30 grams – to the Indri, one of the largest living lemurs, that can weigh in at 9.5 kilograms. Chameleons can be as small as your little fingernail

or as big as a kitten. Many do change colour, although not as dramatically as the cartoons would suggest. The Leaf-Tailed Gecko is possibly the world's most perfectly camouflaged lizard – until it moves, you won't believe it's there. This is the land of the world's largest moth, the Comet Moth, that can measure 20cm from antennae to tail; and who wouldn't love a Tomato Toad or a Giraffe-Necked Weevil with a neck five times longer than its body? We see amazing scenery from the dry canyons and *buttes* of Isalo National Park, where John Wayne would have felt at home, to the pristine rainforests of Maroantsetra with its orchids and giant bamboos eaten by Madagascar's equivalent to the Panda, the Bamboo Lemur. We also view the spectacular Avenue of the Baobabs (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the mineral forest (karst spires) of the Tsingy de Bemaraha, and examples of spiny forest at the Arboretum d'Antsokay in Toliara. This land's unique plants and animals are not its only charms. As the last major habitable land mass to be settled by humans, the history, culture and customs unique to the Malagasy people will fascinate all who experience it.

Leaders



Stephen Ryan

Horticulturalist, nurseryman, collector, prolific writer and award-winning broadcaster. Stephen brings his profound knowledge to ASA garden tours in France, Morocco & New Zealand. He is also leading ASA's flora and fauna tour to Madagascar in 2019.

Stephen Ryan, horticulturalist, author and broadcaster, started working in his father's nursery at the age of ten and at the same time joined the Mt. Macedon Horticultural Society. By the age of 19 he was the president and still is to this day. After completing a Gardening and Turf Management apprenticeship, and achieving an *Award of Merit* as the top Victorian apprentice he subsequently was awarded two scholarships, one in the United Kingdom and the other in New Zealand. On Stephen's return to Australia he ran his family nursery until he started his own nationally recognised nursery Dicksonia Rare Plants a few years later in 1980 and has been a passionate plant collector ever since.

Having started with writing articles for magazines and newspapers, Stephen's media presence has developed to the stage where he does a regular radio slot with Melbourne's 3CR station. In 2002 Stephen was awarded a *Radio Laurel* by the Horticultural Media Association for his segments on ABC Radio 774 3LO. Stephen has often appeared on a variety of television programs, however he is best known for his role for three years as host on ABC Television's *Gardening Australia*.

Stephen lectures and holds seminars both in Australia as well as overseas which have included a lecture that was translated into Spanish as he spoke to an audience in Argentina. As a plant hunter and traveller he has travelled to many places in the world such as Namibia, India, Oregon, England, Ireland, South Africa, Peru, New Guinea and France as well as the aforementioned Argentina. He has also led tours into Madagascar and North West France.

He has published three books on rare plants that have received rave reviews and his manual contains over 2000 plant entries of rare plants available in temperate Australia. He also contributed to the two large tomes produced in Australia *Botanica* and more recently *Flora*. Stephen's garden and nursery hold three national plant collections, *Cornus*, *Sambucus* and *Acanthus*, for the Garden Plants Conservation Association of Australia. In 2001 the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria recognised Stephen with a John Pascoe Fawcner Gold Medal for "Distinguished Service to Horticulture".

Since departing *Gardening Australia*, Stephen is now writing for a New Zealand magazine *Weekend Gardener*, and has started writing another book, which will be on the development of his own garden, 'Tugurium'.

Stephen first joined ASA as a lecturer in 2009.



Itinerary

The following itinerary lists a range of sites which we plan to visit. The daily activities described in this itinerary may change or be rotated and/or modified in order to accommodate alterations in flight schedules, road and weather conditions. Participants will receive a final itinerary together with their tour documents prior to departure. The tour includes breakfast daily, lunches (usually boxed lunches) and evening meals as indicated in the itinerary where: B=breakfast, L=lunch, and D=evening meal. The duration of walks described below are approximate only.

Discovering Lemurs

Lemurs belong to the suborder Strepsirhini, which also includes bushbabies, pottos and lorises. These groups are the most basal living primates. Ancestral prosimians, possibly resembling today's Mouse Lemurs, are thought to have colonised Madagascar from mainland Africa 50-60 million years ago. In the absence of competition from other non-primate mammals, these species diversified to fill a wide range of unusual ecological niches. There are five distinct families of lemurs: Lemuridae, Indriidae, Megaladapidae, Cheirogaleidae and Daubentoniidae. The Lemuridae comprises 10 species, divided into two subfamilies: the Lemurinae ('true' lemurs) and the Hapalemurinae (Bamboo or Gentle Lemurs). All species of lemurs are endemic primates of Madagascar. They are the smallest primate in the world, from Ms Berthe Lemur which weighs 30 grams to the Indri, which can weigh up to 9.5 kg. Recently extinct species were much larger. In 2010, five families, 15 genera and 101 species and subspecies of lemurs were officially recognised. Between 2000 and 2008 39 new species were identified. During this tour we shall study several beautiful species including the Indri Indri, Sifaka and some interesting nocturnal species.

Guiding in Madagascar and visits to the National Parks

Entry to national parks and reserves in Madagascar requires that you be accompanied by a local guide. During visits to the national parks there will be at least two local guides as well as our English-speaking national guide from Wild Madagascar. This will enable us, if necessary, to sub-divide into small groups according to preference and ability levels. If you feel you cannot keep up with the rest of the group or feel tired, you may return to the entrance of the national park, shorten your visit or take a short-cut to meet the rest of the group at a different place.

Antananarivo - 1 night

Day 1: Monday 9 September, Arrive Antananarivo

- Airport transfer for participants travelling on the ASA 'designated' flight (from Mauritius MK288 1410-1505)
- Orientation tour of Antananarivo
- Welcome Dinner

We arrive in Antananarivo, Madagascar's capital city, affectionately known as 'Tana'. We proceed immediately from the airport for a short orientation tour of the city including stops at the former Prime Minister's and Queen's Palaces.

The city of Tana was built in three stages; the high city was the first area occupied during the royal period, and it is here that the old Manjakamiadana Rova (Queen's Palace) is located. This royal palace complex (rova in Malagasy) served as a residence for the kings and queens of the Merina Kingdom during the 17th and 18th centuries and the rulers of the Kingdom of Madagascar in the 19th century. Its religious counterpart is the nearby fortified village of Ambohimanga, which served as the spiritual seat of the kingdom. Originally made of wood, in 1869 the palace was rebuilt in stone by order of Queen Ranaivalona II. In 1995 a fire almost completely destroyed the palace sparing only the stone walls. From its high position the palace offers great panoramic views of the city and the Twelve Sacred Hills.

The Andafiavaratra Palace, also known as the Prime Minister's Palace, is located north of the Queen's Palace. The original wooden palace was built under the supervision of Queen Ranaivalona I. In 1872, it was rebuilt according to the plans of British architect William Pool. The 3-storey palace centres on a large reception hall lit up by a glass dome. Each of the four corner towers includes a bell tower. From 1864 to 1895 the palace was the residence of Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony, who married three queens and exercised ultimate power from here. After Madagascar became independent, the palace was used as army barracks, a court, school of fine arts, presidential palace and finally again as the prime minister's office. In 1976 the palace burnt down. Following extensive restoration it now houses a museum displaying precious items which were saved from the fire of the Rova in 1995 including the red jacket of Radama I, the royal coral jewels, various royal portraits and the diadem of the last queen. **Note: this palace is currently closed for restoration and may not be open by September 2019.**

We next drive down to mid-city Tana, or the administrative district, ending at the Rainiharo tombs. While poorly maintained, the tomb designed by Jean Laborde in 1835 for the deceased prime minister is nevertheless a significant example of French colonial architecture and the first structure in Madagascar to use carved stone. A three-year stay in Bombay, shortly before Laborde's fateful shipwreck on Madagascar, gave a decided Hindu air to his design for this mausoleum.

Finally we visit the low city which is the commercial area of the town with its magnificent Avenue de l'Independence and its imposing colonial buildings including the old railway station. In the late afternoon we transfer to our hotel located in the heart of the government district. This evening we gather for a welcome meal at a local restaurant. (Overnight Antananarivo) LD

Andasibe National Park - 3 nights

Day 2: Tuesday 10 September, Antananarivo – Marozevo – Andasibe

- Peyrieras Reptile Reserve (Mandraka Nature Farm), Marozevo
- Physical Endurance: Our visit to the reserve may include an optional ten-minute hike to the top of

a nearby hill, where a family of Coquerel's Sifaka (*Propithecus coquereli*) and a group of Common Brown Lemurs (*Eulemur fulvus*) reside. The hillside is quite steep. Duration: 2hrs

- Early evening walk in the VOI Community managed forest of the Reserve of Indri d' Analamazaotra
- **Physical Endurance:** The night walk starts at around 1800 from the entrance to the VOI preserve. The trail, winding in the understorey of the forest, is reasonably flat. Duration: 1.5hrs

This morning we depart Antananarivo for Andasibe, a region of primary forests and lakes. En route we stop at the Peyrieras Reptile Reserve, founded by the French entomologist and naturalist André Peyri ras, for a close-up look at some of Madagascar's numerous reptiles and amphibians, including several species of chameleons, snakes, geckos and frogs.

In the late afternoon we arrive at our atmospheric lodge set on the edge of the rainforest. In the early evening we make our first visit to the special Reserve of Indri d'Analamazaotra with a stroll through the VOI community managed forest. Here we search for a number of nocturnal species including various tree frogs, chameleons, the Eastern Woolly Lemur (*Avahi laniger*), Furry-Eared Dwarf Lemur (*Cheirogalus crossleyi*) and Goodman's Mouse Lemur (*Microcebus Lehilahitsara*). (Overnight Andasibe) BLD

Day 3: Wednesday 11 September, Andasibe

- Journey by 4WD
- Birdwatching and nature tour of Mantadia National Park: The Tsakoka and Belakato Trails
- **Physical Endurance:** Hiking trails in Mantadia can be steep and are often sandy/muddy. As our plan is to combine birdwatching and wildlife, lemurs in particular, we cannot limit walks to the lower elevation. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. Duration: 4-5hrs.
- Time at leisure

The Andasibe-Mantadia National Park is a pristine primary growth rainforest reserve, separated into two sections, each home to plants and animals found only in that part. The two protected areas are referred to as the 'special Reserve of Indri d'Analamazaotra' (or Andasibe National Park) and Mantadia National Park. Mantadia National Park, located 21 kilometres north of the Andasibe National Park, was created primarily to protect the Indri and also constitutes a habitat for the Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur (*Varecia variegat*). A quiet, beautiful area with numerous waterfalls, it is undeveloped and less visited than its popular neighbour to the south.

We spend today exploring this section of the park, looking for lemurs, reptiles and rare endemic birds. The terrain at Mantadia is ranked from rough to very rough and searching for wildlife will be physically demanding. We will dedicate four to five hours to following a combination of the Tsakoka and Belakato trails. We intend to be back at our lodge around mid-afternoon. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure. (Overnight Andasibe) BLD

Day 4: Thursday 12 September, Andasibe

- Birdwatching and nature tour of the special Reserve of Indri d'Analamazaotra
- **Physical Endurance:** Hiking trails in the reserve are steep in spots and can be sandy/muddy. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. Duration: 3-4hrs.
- Lemur Island

This morning we explore the special Reserve of Indri d'Analamazaotra, world famous for its population of Indri, whose unforgettable wail can be heard emanating from the misty forest throughout the day, most commonly in the early morning. There are about 60 resident family groups of two to five Indris each. In

2005 the Goodman's Mouse Lemur was discovered here and identified as a distinct species. There are numerous other species to see as well, such as the Bamboo Lemur and the Brown Lemur, the Emerald-Green Parson's Chameleon and a number of rainforest dependent birds.

In the middle of the afternoon, we visit Lemur Island, a tiny reserve owned by Vakona Lodge, home to three species of lemur including the Bamboo Lemur, the Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur and the Brown Lemur. Here we may obtain a close-up view of these endemic creatures. (Overnight Andasibe) BLD

Antsirabe - 1 night

Day 5: Friday 13 September, Andasibe – Ambatolampy – Antsirabe

- Aluminium Pot Workshops, Ambatolampy

We spend most of the day travelling from Andasibe to Antsirabe. Our journey will take approximately seven to eight hours. South of Tana we make a brief visit to the charming and very typical plateau town of Ambatolampy, famous for its aluminium pots. A visit to a local foundry will enable us to view the workers who, out of the blazing hot metal, create small artworks, cutlery and cooking pots. Their skilful technique is interesting to watch. The metal is smelted by one worker in a crucible until it is molten. In the meantime, another member of the team creates the inverted shape of the inside of the pot on the floor of the workshop using a very fine-grained mixture of sand, laterite and powdered charcoal. Once this shape has been completed, a wooden mould is lowered carefully over the foundry sand, and more sand is packed around it. Finally, the molten metal is poured into the cavity between the two to create the pot. The pot is then left to cool – which is a surprisingly quick process – before the mould is removed and the foundry sand is gently swept away to expose the new pot. It is then sanded and burnished to remove the rough edges and reveal the characteristic silvery white colour of the metal. (Overnight Antsirabe) BLD

Ranomafana National Park - 3 nights

Day 6: Saturday 14 September, Antsirabe – Ambositra – Ambatovaky – Ranomafana

- Rickshaw ride: visit to the semi-precious stone workshops and handicraft sector of Antsirabe
- Wood carving of Ambositra
- Blacksmith village of Ambatovaky

Early this morning we begin with a short tour of Antsirabe, the third largest city in Madagascar. Located on a high plateau, at an altitude of approximately 1500m, it has a relatively cool climate. Its name, meaning 'where there is salt', honours the large number of hot springs whose curative qualities were appreciated by the local population when French colonists decided to locate a thermal bath here in the 19th century. It is also renowned for having hundreds of registered rickshaws (or *pousse-pousses* in French) and specialises in the cutting of semi-precious stones. In the town's thriving handicrafts sector we may view a variety of products including jewellery made from zebu horn, toys crafted from old tin cans, wood carvings, polished minerals, embroidered tablecloths and clothing.

Mid-morning we depart Antsirabe and continue 90km south to the Betsileo town of Ambositra, whose close proximity to the forest has made it the centre of Madagascar's wood carving industry. Its name means 'the place of the eunuchs', supposedly because the Merina tribe castrated all defeated warriors of the local tribe, the Zafimaniry. The cultural influence of this tribe can be found in the traditional motifs on the local houses with their intricately carved balconies, panels and shutters. We'll encounter many specialised workshops in printmaking, wood carving and marquetry. Saturday is market day; raffia products are particularly plentiful.

The village of Ambatovaky, situated 24km from the entrance to Ranomafana National Park, consists of a small population of farmers and artisans. Here shall visit a local blacksmith before continuing to Ranomafana National Park in the mountainous highlands. (Overnight Setam Lodge, Ranomafana) BLD

Day 7 & 8: Sunday 15 September & Monday 16 September, Ranomafana National Park

- Mornings: Birdwatching and nature walk along the Varibolamena Trails
- **Physical Endurance:** One of the most difficult trails, it is taxing due to the rough terrain and humidity. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. Duration: 4 hrs.
- Afternoon: Birdwatching and nature walk along the Vohiparara Trails
- **Physical Endurance:** The Vohiparara Trail is flatter than the Varibolamena Tail. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. Duration: dependent on bird species spotted; approx 2hrs.

Particularly rich in wildlife, this hitherto unprotected fragment of mid-altitude rainforest and higher-altitude mountain cloud forest first came to the world's attention with the discovery of the Golden Bamboo Lemur in 1986; formal protection followed in 1991. Today this exquisite upland cloud forest is one of Madagascar's top wildlife hotspots. The twelve lemur species that live here include all three Bamboo Lemurs: Grey Bamboo Lemur (*Hapalemur griseus*), Greater Bamboo Lemur (*Prolemur simus*) and the Golden Bamboo Lemur (*Hapalemur aureus*). The Bamboo or Gentle lemurs have grey-brown fur. Their muzzles are short and their ears are round and hairy. Lengths vary from 26 to 46 cm, with tails just as long or longer, and they weigh up to 2.5 kg. Bamboo Lemurs prefer damp forests where bamboo grows and as their name suggests they feed almost exclusively on bamboo. Completely dependent on this low-energy food source, the lemur must lead a very sedentary lifestyle and spend much of its time eating. As with many specialised species, this lemur is unable to adapt to its rapidly changing habitat. Widespread clearing of its rainforest habitat has caused populations to become isolated in the few remaining patches of forest capable of supporting the species. Other residents of the park include the striking Milne-Edward's Sifaka and the robust Black and White-Ruffed Lemur. There are also scores of reptiles and beautiful chameleons.

We shall spend two days in Ranomafana National Park exploring the network of paths through the forests and dense stands of giant bamboo. Expect to see various lemurs, such as Red-Fronted Brown Lemur (*Eulemur rufus*), Red-Bellied Lemur (*Eulemur rubriventer*) and the shy Grey Bamboo Lemur. For the tree lover we will see some of the species of *Dombeya* with their heads of pink or white flowers. Ranomafana is also superb for birdwatchers as many of the rainforest dwelling endemics occur in the park. There are Brown Mesite, Blue Coua and the Velvet Asity. Ranomafana is a herpetologist's paradise, with a variety of chameleons, geckoes, skinks and frogs. The floral diversity is bewildering, with numerous species of palm, bamboo and orchid thriving here.

The Ranomafana National Park trail is considered to be one of the most difficult walks included on this tour due to the roughness of terrain and the permanent humidity. Difficulty will undoubtedly arise while tracking wildlife, in particular Golden Bamboo Lemurs and Milne's Edward Sifaka, the former being very often met only off track – which can be a strenuous endeavour. The terrain where birds are usually encountered is more even. (Overnight Setam Lodge, Ranomafana) BLD

Isalo National Park - 2 nights

Day 9: Tuesday 17 September, Ranomafana – Anja – Isalo National Park

- Ring-Tailed Lemurs of Anja Community Reserve
- **Physical Endurance:** Relatively easy trail with only slight uphill slopes. The narrow trails follow open

vegetation through dry-deciduous forest. Duration: 2hrs

Leaving the rainforest early after breakfast, we drive across the desolate central southern interior to the community-run Anja Reserve. Known for its superb scenery, the reserve covers eight hectares and is home to about 300 Ring-Tail Lemurs (*Lemur catta*), instantly recognisable by their banded tail, and some intriguing plants adapted to the dry southern climate. The region is sacred to the Betsileo; their ancestors are buried here and it has always been *fady* (meaning taboo in the traditional culture of Madagascar) to hunt the lemurs. The caves here have provided a useful sanctuary in times of trouble and were inhabited up to a century or so ago. We spend a couple of hours in the Anja Reserve following a relatively easy trail through dry-deciduous forest to spot groups of Ring-Tailed Lemurs and various species of reptiles.

In the afternoon we continue our drive to Isalo's remarkable landscapes, with eroded 'ruiniforme' sandstone outcrops, giving hints of silver and green reflections of sunlight, and interspersed with endless palm savanna of the endemic Bismarkia Palms (*Bismarkia nobilis*). (Overnight Hôtel Le Jardin du Roy, Ranohira, Isalo National Park) BLD

Day 10: Wednesday 18 September, Isalo National Park

- Morning nature trail, Isalo National Park
- **Physical Endurance:** The path to the natural pool climbs steeply and there is little shade along the way. The hiking time for the uphill climb is approximately 1-1.5 hours at a leisurely pace with stops. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. Duration: 2-3hrs.
- Afternoon at leisure OR optional trail to the Piscine Noire et Bleu, Isalo National Park.
- **Physical Endurance:** This 4km walk begins with easy walking, but becomes more difficult towards the end of the canyon due to stream crossings on flattened boulders, cliff ascents on carved steps, followed by a descent to the pools along narrow steps and stepping stones. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. Duration: 3hrs.

We explore Isalo National Park's fascinating plant community, including some very localised species of palm, aloe and the squat 'elephant's foot' pachypodiums, which flourish on the rock faces. With luck, we'll see some Ring-Tail Lemurs or Verreaux's Sifakas in dense vegetation lining the canyon streams. Isalo offers several options for hikes into rocky canyons and verdant oases, with opportunities to take a refreshing dip in naturally formed pools at the base of hidden waterfalls. We shall look for Ring-Tail Lemurs, Verreaux Sifakas and Red-Fronted Brown Lemurs that have adapted to life in this dry desert climate.

Our early morning trail provides views of xerophytic and sclerophyllous vegetation as well as stunning sandstone runiforme scenery.

This afternoon is at leisure for you to enjoy the lodge's facilities. Alternatively, you may wish to join an optional walk to the 'Piscine Noire et Bleu' (Black and Blue Pools), both fed by narrow waterfalls, located at the end of the Namazaha Canyon. This canyon features riparian (riverbank) vegetation and shelters a variety of birds including the Benson Rock Thrush (*Monticola bensoni*). We begin the trail in a dry deciduous pocket forest that is home to birds, reptiles and insects. At the centre of this forest we may see Ring-Tailed Lemurs, the Red-Fronted Brown Lemurs and a Verreaux Sifaka. (Overnight Hôtel Le Jardin du Roy, Ranohira, Isalo National Park) BLD

Ifaty - 2 nights

Day 11: Thursday 19 September, Isalo – Zombitse National Park – Toliara – Ifaty

- Zombitse National Park
- **Physical Endurance:** An easy walk along the Mandresy Trail; terrain includes loose sand. Duration: 2hrs
- Arboretum d'Antsokay, Toliara

We make a very early start to drive to Zombitse National Park. The forest is a very special transition zone between the southern flora and the western deciduous forest. Similar in appearance to the latter, it contains the baobab species of the former. Here we may find our first *Angraecum* orchids and see *Rhopalocarpus*, a large tree and a member of a family unique to Madagascar. The large white Verreaux's Sifakas bound from tree to tree and often allow close views.

After lunch we visit the splendid Arboretum d'Antsokay, located 12km south-east of Toliara. Created in the early 80s on the initiative of a Swiss amateur botanist, Hermann Petignat, the arboretum is devoted to the conservation of plants from the south-western part of Madagascar. In close collaboration with many institutions including the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and WWF, it presents a typical spiny thicket (also known as spiny forest) in a botanical garden preserving more than 900 species, of which 90% are endemic to the region and 80% have medicinal virtues.

In the late afternoon we drive to Ifaty, a small fishing village with idyllic palm-fringed white beaches on the southwestern coast of Madagascar. (Overnight Ifaty) BLD

Day 12: Friday 20 September, Ifaty

- Reniala Reserve: Spiny Thicket
- **Physical Endurance:** An easy walk; terrain includes loose sand.

Today we make an excursion to the Reniala Reserve, whose name 'mother of the forest' is the nickname of the baobabs endemic to this area. The reserve, which opened in 2001, functions as a botanical garden, ornithological park and baobab forest, and includes some of the last pieces of primary forests of the South. The spiny thicket or 'spiny desert' of southern Madagascar, also referred to as deciduous thicket, is a globally distinctive ecoregion with 95 percent of the plant species endemic to the region. Members of the endemic Didiereaceae family dominate the thicket, which have similar xeric adaptations to New World cacti, such as small leaves and spines, but are woody rather than succulent. The reserve also features the famous baobabs (*Adansonia rubrostipa*), *Pachypodium* and countless *Euphorbia*.

For bird lovers, you may see the Madagascar harrier-hawk (*Polyboroides radiatus*) or find the sickle-billed vanga (*Falco pinnatus*), the white-headed vanga (*Artamella viridis*) and Madagascar buttonquail (*Turnix nigricollis*) in their natural habitat. Reniala is also home to many endemic reptiles. A big population of the rare radiated tortoise and the smaller spider tortoise (*Astrochelys radiata* and *Pyxis arachnoides*) lives on the sandy ground and shares its territory with many Madagascar iguanas (*Chalarodon madagascariensis*). The forests are rapidly disappearing and becoming fragmented by charcoal production, agricultural expansion (for maize and cattle grazing), and wildfires associated with generation of new cattle pastureland. (Overnight Ifaty) BLD

Kirindy Forest Reserve - 1 night

Day 13: Saturday 21 September, Ifaty – Toliara – Morondava – Kirindy

- Fly Toliara to Morondava via Antananarivo
- Journey by 4WD to Kirindy

- Nocturnal guided visit of Kirindy Forest Reserve
- **Physical Endurance:** Trails are broad and mostly flat, making walking easy. Duration: 2hrs

Today we fly from Toliara to Morondava, and then travel by 4WD to the Kirindy Forest Reserve. This 10,000-hectare reserve is a rare remnant of Madagascar's threatened dry tropical deciduous forest. The reserve contains such oddities as the endangered Giant Jumping Rat collected by Gerald Durrell and now resident at the Durrell Wildlife Foundation, the Fossa (*Cryptoprocta ferox*) – Madagascar's largest predator and a member of the mongoose family, and seven species of nocturnal lemur including the Fork-Marked Lemur, Coquerel's Dwarf Lemur and the smallest of all primates, the Pygmy Mouse Lemur. Also present is the hissing cockroach. Kirindy boasts the highest density of primates of virtually any forest in the world. Diurnal lemurs include the acrobatic Verreaux's Sifaka and Red-Fronted Brown Lemur.

Kirindy is part of the Manabe forests, also noted for their diverse botany which includes three of the island's seven endemic baobabs, including the Giant Baobab and the smallest, the Bottle Baobab. Birdwatching is excellent, and we should see the Madagascar Jacana, Coquerels and Crested Couas and Sicklebill Vangas to name but a few. You may also see iguanids and the Flat-Tailed Tortoise – known as Kapidolo (ghost turtle), currently one of the most threatened of all the world's tortoises.

This evening we take a walk through the reserve to spot some of these nocturnal species including the Giant Jumping Rat (*Hypogeomys antimena*). (Overnight Relais du Kirindy, Kirindy Forest Reserve) BLD

Tsingy de Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve - 3 nights

Day 14: Sunday 22 September, Kirindy – Belo Tsiribihina – Tsingy de Bemaraha

- Return visit to Kirindy Forest Reserve
- Journey by 4WD to Bekopaka via the Tsiribihina River and Belo Tsiribihina

Following an early return visit to the Kirindy Forest Reserve we drive northwards to the shores of the Tsiribihina River, where a barge will transport us across the river to the town of Belo Tsiribihina. The river crossing takes about 45 minutes.

Following lunch in Belo Tsiribihina we make the four to five-hour drive to Bekopaka. Our journey takes us across savanna, a grassland home to the Madagascar Harrier-Hawk (*Polyboroides radiatus*). One of the commonest raptors of Madagascar, this is a very large bird of prey. Aside from its size, it is unmistakable with its black and white stripes (called *barring*) on its underside, grey back, long bare yellow legs and bare pink or yellow skin patch around the eye.

A second barge will take our party across the river Manambolo to the village of Bekopaka; we shall spend the next three nights based at the Soleil des Tsingy. Located in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Tsingy de Bemaraha, the lodge is perched on the highest point in this region, offering spectacular views of the surrounding scenery. (Overnight Soleil des Tsingy, Bekopaka) BLD

Day 15: Monday 23 September, Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park

- The Gorge of the Manambolo River by *pirogue*
- **Physical Endurance:** The excursion by *pirogue* on the Manambolo River is not suitable for anyone with bad knees. Further details are provided below. Duration: 2hrs
- The Petite (Small) Tsingy
- **Physical Endurance:** The walk includes a short ascent following a series of iron ladders and wooden

walkways. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. Duration: 2-3hrs.

The spectacular mineral forest of Tsingy de Bemaraha stands on the west coast of Madagascar. The area, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1990, comprises 1575 square kilometres of canyons, gorges, undisturbed forests, lakes and mangrove swamps. The northern section is designated an Integral Reserve, and therefore off-limits to visitors, but we shall visit the southern section, declared a national park in 1998. This vast forest of rugged and eroded karst pinnacles supports about 90 species of birds, 8 species of reptiles and 11 species of lemurs. Scientists estimate that 86.7% of the flora and fauna are endemic to Madagascar, and 47% are endemic to this region.

This morning we make an excursion by *piroque* (wooden dug-out canoe) to the spectacular Manambolo Gorge, where the river has carved a deep channel through the limestone plateau. As we canoe past dry forest and sheer, vertical cliffs, craggy caves and overhangs, we shall view unusual vegetation, endemic water birds, and hear the shrill cries of black parrots resounding against the rock walls. Madagascar Fish Eagles can sometimes be seen perching in large trees edging the river. The park is generally divided into two parts – the Petit (Small) and the Grand (Big) Tsingy – a distinction based upon on area and also on the height of the pinnacles.

This afternoon we visit the Petit Tsingy. An easy walk through a dry deciduous forest (where you'll get to see plenty of lemurs) takes us to the base of the karst formations. Here a short ascent – following a series of iron ladders and wooden walkways (designed by a French mountaineer) – takes us to the viewpoint that opens up to a vista of the surrounding Tsingy forest. (Overnight Soleil des Tsingy, Bekopaka) BLD

Day 16: Tuesday 24 September, Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park

- The Grand Tsingy: Adjacent Forest Walk (Option 1)
- **Physical Endurance:** Option 1: A leisurely forest walk. Duration: 2hrs
- Climbing The Grand Tsingy (Option 2: strenuous)
- **Physical Endurance:** Option 2: Climbing the Grand Tsingy is long and strenuous and can be very hot during the middle of the day. It includes many steps, cables, walkways, caves, and a fair bit of rock scrambling. You need to be okay with heights. A climbing harness is provided for those undertaking the cables and rock scrambling section. Duration: 4hrs.
- Afternoon at leisure

We depart very early this morning for a one-hour drive to the Grand Tsingy; a packed breakfast will be provided. We may see lemurs and dozens of birds, orchids, aloes, pachypodium and baobabs. The endemic and medicinal plants make the flora of this park unique. On arrival we take a leisurely walk exploring the adjacent forest for birds: Decken's Sifaka (*Propithecus deckeni*), Randrianasolo's Sportive Lemur (*Lepilemur randrianasoli*). At the entrance of the Tsingy we may also search for the Western Ring-Tailed Mongoose (*Galidia elegans occidentalis*). Note: the Grand Tsingy, the outskirts of which are characterised by xerophyte vegetation, may be viewed from below, from quite short distance without needing to climb.

Alternatively you may wish to take an adventurous (and indeed strenuous) walk traversing the pinnacles either along a harnessed track or following the iron ladder way. A harness clipped to a steel cable is used for safety on the vertiginous and exposed scrambling sections amongst the rock. (Note: no technical climbing experience is necessary).

After visiting the park we shall return to our hotel for lunch and an afternoon at leisure to relax. (Overnight Soleil des Tsingy, Bekopaka) BLD

Morondava - 1 night

Day 17: Wednesday 25 September, Tsingy de Bemaraha – Morondava

- Return journey to Morondava by 4WD
- Avenue des Baobabs

We return to Morondava by road, viewing the sunset in the Avenue des Baobabs. This cluster of towering Grandidier's Baobabs (*Adansonia grandidieri*) is one of Madagascar's most famous views. In 2007 the avenue (together with about 300 baobabs of three species in the surrounding one kilometre) became an officially protected natural monument. *Adansonia grandidieri* is the most majestic and famous of the baobab species and may reach 30m in height. The best-known specimens form the Boabab Avenue. These trees would once have been surrounded by dense forest, but today their isolated silhouettes can be seen for miles across the flat, featureless rice fields. There is now an active program to plant saplings amongst the existing trees. The project suffered a setback late in 2012 when a fire engulfed 11ha of the 320ha reserve, destroying 99 of the 2220 newly planted trees, but no mature baobabs were affected. We overnight in Morondava, a relaxed coastal town located on the Mozambique Channel. (Overnight Morondava) BLD

Antananarivo - 1 night

Day 18: Thursday 26 September, Morondava – Antananarivo

- Flight Morondava – Antananarivo
- Royal Hill of Ambohimanga

Following some time at leisure we take a flight back to Antananarivo. We spend the remainder of the day exploring this city, including the UNESCO heritage listed Royal Hill of Ambohimanga, one of the most important spiritual and historic sites for the Malagasy people. Occupied since the 15th century, it was a fortified political capital, royal palace and royal burial ground. In the nineteenth century, the French colonial authorities made several attempts to undermine the significance and national symbolism of Ambohimanga, all of which proved unsuccessful. (Overnight Antananarivo) BLD

Maroantsetra - 1 night

Day 19: Friday 27 September, Antananarivo – Maroantsetra

- Flight from Antananarivo to Maroantsetra
- Orientation tour of Maroantsetra
- The Tomato Frog, *Dyscophus antongilii*

This morning we fly to Maroantsetra. Located at the far end of the Bay of Antongil, near the mouth of the Antainambalana River, this charming town, described as 'Madagascar at its most authentic', enjoys both river and ocean views.

This afternoon we make a short tour of the town which often smells of vanilla and cloves; looking around we may see tables of drying vanilla beans on colourful blankets or cloves drying on mats and plastic bags.

Vanilla is a major export from Madagascar's east coast. The only fruit-producing orchid, it is one of the most labour-intensive crops in the world, taking as long as five years from planting the vine to producing aged extract. Production involves the entire family, who pollinate the vanilla by hand when it flowers after two years, and then collect, cure and dry the pods. World vanilla prices experienced a massive spike after a

2000 cyclone devastated much of the East Asia crop. The sudden drop in supply pushed vanilla prices to nearly \$500 per kilogram. However, by 2010 prices had dropped to as low as \$25 per kg. Today, vanilla prices are surging again due to drought, fungal attacks and low prices driving many producers out of the market. Vanilla now sells for \$80-\$120 per kilogram. Despite the establishment of a financial cooperative which allows farmers to access credit during the lean season that lasts for most of the year (vanilla is sold only between June and October), very few people are still interested in caring for their plantations. Many have moved away from vanilla to other cultivations. Seeing drying vanilla pods is therefore very much dependent on the year and whether vanilla plantations are still tended.

There is an abundant market featuring food such as large jumping shrimp, rice, greens, coconuts and a variety of cooked dishes, housewares, clothing and jewellery. Among the local crafts are lovely handmade raffia hats and bags which are primarily used by the local women. Women with stately postures may be seen balancing raffia totes and baskets piled high with fruit, vegetables and other goods on their heads.

While in Maroantsetra we also visit an area dedicated to the breeding habitat of the Tomato Frog, *Dyscophus antongilii*, a conspicuous red-orange frog belonging to the Microhylidae family. Currently listed as 'Near Threatened' by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, it is present in eastern and north eastern Madagascar, with two main nuclei, one around and within the town of Maroantsetra, and the other in the surroundings of Antara, close to the town of Toamasina. (Overnight Maroantsetra) BLD

Masoala National Park - 2 nights

Day 20: Saturday 28 September, Maroantsetra – Nosy Mangabe – Masoala National Park

- Réserve de Nosy Mangabe
- **Physical Endurance:** Hiking trails can be steep and are often sandy/muddy. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. Duration: 2hrs

Early this morning we travel by boat to the Masoala Peninsula. En route we make an excursion to the island nature reserve of Nosy Mangabe, a small island (520ha), located in Antongil Bay two kilometres offshore from Maroantsetra, and covered in humid dark-green thick forest.

The boat takes around 40 minutes before we wade ashore. The island is home to White-Fronted Brown Lemurs and Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs, Leaf-Tailed Geckos (*Uroplatus fimbriatus*), several species of chameleons, frogs and snakes, including the Madagascar Tree Boa (*Sanzinia madagasciense*), some of which can usually be spotted easily on the forest trails during a day visit. There is also the nocturnal Aye-Aye Lemur, which in the past could be seen if one stayed overnight on the island. However, the Aye-Aye on Nosy Mangabe are now more elusive and night walks are no longer permitted on the island.

In the early afternoon we continue by boat to the Masoala Peninsula. Here we spend three nights based at the Masoala Dounia Forest Lodge offering accommodation in rustic, but quite adequate, thatched huts. (Overnight Masoala Dounia Forest Lodge) BLD

Day 21: Sunday 29 September, Masoala National Park

- The Western Coastal Trail, Lohatrozona
- **Physical Endurance:** Hiking trails can be steep and are often sandy/muddy. Group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels.

The Masoala Peninsula is truly exceptional: two percent of all of planet earth's animal and plant species are

to be found here. Some species like Aye-Aye, Red-Ruffed Lemur, Madagascar Red Owl and the extremely rare Serpent Eagle are endemic to the peninsula.

Encompassing 2300 square kilometres of rainforest and 100 square kilometres of marine parks, Masoala is Madagascar's largest protected area. The park was established in 1997 to preserve this unique ecosystem comprising coastal rainforest, flooded forests, marsh and mangroves from the serious threat of encroachment by local communities that depend on the area for agricultural land and firewood, and from international logging companies harvesting timber. The park forests, which abound with chameleons, geckos, frogs as well as several species of butterflies, tumble down to the edge of a pristine, unspoiled shore peppered with unexplored golden beaches.

The three marine parks protect over 10,000 ha of coral reefs, marine plants and mangroves around the peninsula. Presently, more than 3001 fish species have been inventoried in the marine parks. Antongil Bay is also used as a shelter by humpback whales that gather here during the summer breeding season, when Antongil's waters literally froth with cetaceans.

The region also supports one of the most diverse groups of palm species in the world. The park is home to a total of 102 species of birds, more than 60% of which are endemic. During our stay we shall be looking for, among others, the rare and localised Helmet and Bernier's Vangas, Madagascar Long-Eared Owl, Red-Breasted Coua and both Short-Legged and Scaly Ground-Rollers. There are also several rare species of lemur (Red-Ruffed, White-Fronted Brown, Fork-Marked) and chameleon. Among the carnivores, Masoala is the only locality where the Mongoose Salanoia Concolor or Brown-Tailed Mongooses have been observed since 1970. This species is the least known of the Malagasy carnivores. (Overnight Masoala Dounia Forest Lodge) BLD

Antananarivo - 1 night

Day 22: Monday 30 September, Masoala – Maroantsetra – Antananarivo

- Morning Charter Flight from Maroantsetra to Antananarivo
- Farewell Dinner at La Varangue

We travel this morning by boat to Maroantsetra where we connect with our flight back to Antananarivo. The afternoon is at leisure. This evening we enjoy a farewell meal at La Varangue, one of the city's top gourmet restaurants thanks to its chief Lalaina Ravelomana, who is a kitchen *maestro* and chocolate specialist. (Overnight Antananarivo) BLD

Day 23: Tuesday 1 October, Antananarivo TOUR ENDS

- Airport transfer for participants travelling on the ASA 'designated' flight (MK289 1655-1940)

Following some time at leisure in the morning we transfer to the Antananarivo airport in order to check-in for our late afternoon flight for Australia (via Mauritius) B

Accommodation

23 days in Madagascar

Hotel reservations are currently under preparation. The following should be used as a guide only. Wi-Fi is not available in a number of the locations we will be visiting.

- Antananarivo (1 night): 4-star Hôtel & Spa Palissandre – a charming hotel, located in downtown Antananarivo, with panoramic views over the city. The hotel offers 50 rooms equipped with en suite bathroom. Facilities: outdoor swimming pool, spa, fitness centre, restaurant & free Wi-Fi. hotel-restaurant-palissandre.com
- Andasibe (3 nights): 3-star Mantadia Lodge – situated 2.1km from the Mitsinjo Reserve and 2.4km from the Analamazoatra Reserve. The lodge, which opened in 2018, offers rooms scattered in a garden overlooking the forest. All rooms have a private terrace and are equipped with en suite bathroom, safe and satellite TV. Facilities: swimming pool & restaurant. mantadialodge.com
- Antsirabe (1 night): Hotel Le Royal Palace – a modern hotel with 40 guest rooms equipped with en suite bathroom. Facilities: outdoor swimming pool, restaurant & free Wi-Fi. leroyalpalace.mg
- Ranomafana (3 nights): 3-star Hotel Thermal – located in the town of Ranomafana, the hotel offers 21 air-conditioned rooms equipped with en suite bathroom, minibar and TV. Facilities: large restaurant and bar. www.thermal-ranomafana.mg
- Isalo (2 nights): 4-star Hôtel Le Jardin du Roy – a luxury lodge located on the southern boundary of Isalo National Park. Built from granite to blend in with the landscape, the lodge offers 40 air-conditioned rooms with en suite bathroom housed in eight thatched bungalows. Facilities: outdoor swimming pool, free Wi-Fi & restaurant. www.lejardinduroy.com (French only)
- Ifaty (2 nights): 3-star Les Dunes d'Ifaty – located 27kms north of Toliara, overlooking the Mozambique Channel, near the fishing village of Mangily. The hotel, set in a tropical park, provides sea view villas with en suite bathroom. Facilities: outdoor swimming pool, Wi-Fi, bar & restaurant. www.lesdunesdifaty.co
- Kirindy Forest Reserve (1 night): Relais du Kirindy – opened in April 2017, this new hotel, located in the forest reserve, offers accommodation in 20 bungalows. Facilities: outdoor swimming pool, bar & restaurant. www.relaisdukirindy.com (currently under development), see www.facebook.com/kirindyforest/
- Tsingy de Bemaraha (3 nights): 4-star Soleil des Tsingy – the lodge, located in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage site, offers spectacular views of the surrounding scenery. Accommodation is provided in 17 bungalows equipped with en suite bathroom and fans (no air-conditioning). Facilities: restaurant, bar and infinity swimming pool overlooking the forested valley below. Wi-Fi is not available. www.soleildestsingy.com
- Morondava (1 night): 4-star Hôtel Palissandre Côte Ouest – located at Nosy Kely on the beach of Morondava, 30 minutes drive from the Avenue of Baobabs. The hotel offers 30 spacious air-conditioned bungalows, all with a private terrace and sea view, and equipped with en suite bathroom, minibar, satellite TV and safe. Facilities: bar, restaurant and swimming pool and free Wi-Fi. www.hotel-restaurant-palissandrecoteouest.com
- Antananarivo (1 night): 4-star Hôtel & Spa Palissandre – a charming hotel, located in downtown Antananarivo, with panoramic views over the city. The hotel offers 50 rooms equipped with en suite bathroom. Facilities: outdoor swimming pool, spa, fitness centre, restaurant & free Wi-Fi. hotel-restaurant-palissandre.com
- Maroantsetra (1 night): 3-star Hotel Manga Beach – Facing the River Anjahanambo, this new boutique hotel offers air-conditioned rooms with private terrace. Each room is equipped with orthopedic bed, en-suite (with shower and toilet), satellite TV and safe. Facilities: restaurant and free Wi-Fi. mangabeach-madagascar.com

- **Masoala (2 nights): 3-star Dounia Forest Lodge** – Accessible only by foot or by sea, the lodge provides complete exclusivity in a remote corner of Masoala National Park. This small, intimate lodge has great access to some of the rare and endemic species of Madagascar. The lodge offer 12 bungalows set on a gentle sea-facing slope at Lohatrozona on the west side of Masoala National Park. Each bungalow has a veranda from where guests can enjoy panoramic views of the rainforest and of Antongil Bay. Built out of traditional materials, the bungalows are charming and comfortable with en-suite bathrooms, an open shower, hot water, and lounge space. The lodge has its own generator: power is on from 1300 - 1500 hrs and from 1800 - 2200 hrs. www.facebook.com/douniaforestlodge/ See also [YouTube Dounia Forest Lodge](#)
- **Antananarivo (1 night): 4-star Hôtel & Spa Palissandre** – a charming hotel, located in downtown Antananarivo, with panoramic views over the city. The hotel offers 50 rooms equipped with en suite bathroom. Facilities: outdoor swimming pool, spa, fitness centre, restaurant & free Wi-Fi. hotel-restaurant-palissandre.com

Note: Hotels are subject to change. In this instance a hotel of similar standard will be provided.

Single Room Accommodation

Single rooms will be apportioned to those who book first. **We cannot offer you a single room throughout the tour.** This definitely applies to the Dounia Forest Lodge where accommodation is extremely limited. Approximately one month prior to departure, rooming lists will be confirmed. If you have booked a single supplement but must forego a single room in some places the single supplement for those hotels will be refunded to you.

Tour Price & Inclusions

AUD \$11,780.00 Land Content Only – Early-Bird Special: Book before 31 December 2018

AUD \$11,980.00 Land Content Only

AUD \$1500.00 Single Supplement**

** This is the maximum payable by guests reserving a single room. This amount would be reduced if twin-share is required in the Dounia Forest Lodge.

For competitive Economy, Business or First Class airfares and/or group airfares please contact ASA for further information.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) includes:

- Accommodation in twin-share rooms with private facilities including 3- and 4-star hotels, eco-lodges and bungalow-style accommodation.
- Meals, indicated in the itinerary, where: B=breakfast, L=lunch & D=evening meal
- Drinks at welcome and farewell meals. Other meals include water only.
- Transportation by air-conditioned coach and 4WD vehicles
- Airport-hotel transfers if travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Porterage of one piece of luggage per person at airports and hotels (where available)
- Lecture and site-visit program
- Entrance fees to national parks and other sites as outlined in the itinerary
- Excursions by boat (Nosy Mangabe, Masoala Peninsula) and canoe (Manambolo River, Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park)
- 4 internal flights: Toliara to Morondava; Morondava to Antananarivo; Antananarivo to Maroantsetra; Maroantsetra to Antananarivo
- Bottled water during all excursions
- Tour Reference Book
- Tips for the coach driver, driver's assistant, Malagasy national guide, local national park guides and restaurants for included meals.

Tour Price (Land Content Only) does not include

- Airfare: Australia - Antananarivo, Antananarivo - Australia
- Personal spending money
- Airport-hotel transfers if not travelling on the ASA 'designated' flights
- Luggage in excess of 20kg (44 lbs)
- Travel insurance
- Visa for Madagascar.



Physical Endurance & Practical Information

Physical Ratings 

The number of flags is a guide to the degree of difficulty of ASA tours relative to each other (not to those of other tour companies). It is neither absolute nor literal. One flag is given to the least taxing tours, seven to the most. Flags are allocated, above all, according to the amount of walking and standing each tour involves. Nevertheless, all ASA tours require that participants have a good degree of fitness enabling 2-3 hours walking or 1-1.5 hours standing still on any given site visit or excursion. Many sites are accessed by climbing slopes or steps and have uneven terrain.

This 23-day tour is definitely for the more adventurous of our ASA travellers and involves:

- Walks which can be steep and strenuous, on uneven, muddy/sandy terrain; distances covered depend on wildlife sought and group's ability.
- Vehicle transfers up to eight hours; the route to Tsingy de Bemeraha is by 4WD along an extremely dusty, potholed track.
- Regular early morning starts at 7.00 or 7.30am; a number of nocturnal walks.

Other considerations:

- 12 accommodation changes
- 4 internal flights: Toliara to Morondava; Morondava to Antananarivo; Antananarivo to Maroantsetra; Maroantsetra - Antananarivo
- Excursions by boat (Nosy Mangabe, Masoala Peninsula) and canoe (Manambolo River)
- Transportation by 21-seater Toyota Coaster (or Nissan Civilian or Hyundai); 4WDs used for the Morondava – Bekopaka track and Mantadia National Park
- Meals include a number of boxed lunches
- You must be able to carry your own hand luggage
- Hotel portage includes 1 piece of luggage per person.

During visits to the national parks the group may be divided into smaller groups based on ability levels. It is important to remember that ASA programs are group tours, and slow walkers affect everyone in the group. However, during visits to the national parks there will be at least two guides to escort us. We shall also be accompanied by our English-speaking tour guide from Wild Madagascar. This effectively means we have 3 guides escorting us during our visits to the national parks which will enable us, if necessary, to sub-divide into small groups according to preference and ability levels. Whoever cannot catch up with the rest of the group or feels tired, may either return to the entrance of the national park, shorten their visit or take a short-cut to meet the rest of the group at a different place. If you have any doubts about your ability to manage on this program, please ask your ASA travel consultant whether this is a suitable tour for you. Please note: it is a condition of travel that all participants agree to accept ASA's directions in relation to their suitability to participate in activities undertaken on the tour, and that ASA retains the sole discretion to direct a tour participant to refrain from a particular activity on part of the tour. For further information please refer to the Terms and Conditions section.

Transportation

The majority of this tour will be conducted in an air-conditioned 21-seater coach. Depending on the group size, the group may be sub-divided between two coaches. Models used in Madagascar include the Toyota Coaster, Nissan Civilian or Hyundai. Larger coaches (eg 30-seaters) are not available in Madagascar.

4WD vehicles will be used to travel along the Morondava-Bekopaka track and in Mantadia National Park. These vehicles are mainly station wagons (Toyota Land Cruiser or Nissan Patrol). While capable of seating 7-9 people, for the sake of comfort, we shall travel with a maximum of 4 people per vehicle. The track to Bekopaka from Belo Tsiribihina is pot-holed and dusty which limits the average speed to a maximum of 20km per hour.

Practical Information and What to Bring

We have elected to run this tour in October - November as the weather is usually fine but not too hot. October is one of the best times to see baby lemurs, when they are happily clinging to their mother and starting to explore their surroundings. This is also the time when chameleons are starting to come out of their winter hibernation. The western side of the island is always quite dry (eg. spiny forest areas) while the eastern side of the island is wetter (rainforest areas). Average midday temperatures in the dry season are approximately 25°C in the highlands and 30°C on the coast. The central mountainous spine area can get cold at night throughout the year.

- Malaria is a problem in many parts of Madagascar, especially the wetter rainforest areas. Be prepared and take a good anti-malarial prophylactic (we recommend you avoid using LARIUM, which may cause side effects)
- Mosquito repellent is essential
- Good walking boots are a must
- Head torch
- Trekking day-pack
- Light runners can be useful for evenings and travel days
- A small pair of binoculars or field glasses is a must for enthusiastic birdwatchers
- A good personal first aid kit
- Walking poles
- Sunhat & sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- A small collapsible umbrella for extra shade

- Light clothing for daytime activities
- Pullovers are recommended for the evenings in the central high plateau and in the mountains
- A windbreaker or raincoat is recommended for any trip to Madagascar regardless of the destination and the season.

Prior to departure, tour members will receive detailed practical notes which include information on visa requirements, health, photography, weather, clothing and what to pack, custom regulations, bank hours, currency regulations, electrical appliances and food. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade website has advice for travellers see: www.smartraveller.gov.au and www.dfat.gov.au/geo/madagascar/

Visa Requirements Madagascar

All foreign visitors to the Republic of Madagascar require entry visas. For short visits (90 days or less), every visitor, regardless of nationality, can obtain a visa upon arrival at the airport in Antananarivo, provided the visitor's passport is valid for at least 6 months beyond the last day of the intended stay in Madagascar, and provided the visitor carries an airline-issued ticket or passenger receipt confirming the visitor's intention to leave Madagascar within 90 days.

Luggage

This tour requires that you take a minimum of luggage and that your suitcase is suitable for rough conditions. Please consider:

- Excursions are undertaken using 21-seater coaches or 4WD vehicles where your luggage may be carried in racks on top of the vehicle.
- Strict luggage allowance applies to the domestic flights included in this tour.

Mobile Phones

International mobile roaming is available throughout Madagascar, but is expensive.

Booking Conditions

ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION FORM

Please complete the ASA RESERVATION APPLICATION and send it to Australians Studying Abroad together with your non-refundable deposit of AUD \$500.00 per person payable to Australians Studying Abroad.

Passport Details

All participants must provide no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the program a photocopy of the front page of their current passport.

Single Supplement

Single rooms will be apportioned to those who book first. We cannot offer you a single room throughout the tour. This definitely applies to the Dounia Forest Lodge where accommodation is extremely limited. Approximately one month prior to departure, rooming lists will be confirmed. If you have booked a single supplement but must forego a single room in some places the single supplement for those hotels will be refunded to you.



Reservation Application

TOUR NAME _____

TOUR DATES _____

Please complete **one application, per person in block letters and sign**. Parental signature is required for participants under 18 years of age. Please mail this form with the appropriate deposit to: **P.O. Box 8285, ARMADALE, VICTORIA, 3143**. On receipt of this Reservation Application and deposit, ASA will process your booking and if approved, send you a tour confirmation.

Applicant Details (as in passport)

TITLE Mr Mrs Ms Miss Dr Other _____

FIRST NAME _____ Preferred FIRST NAME _____

MIDDLE NAME _____ SURNAME _____

POSTAL ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ COUNTRY _____ POSTCODE _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

Date of birth / / _____ GENDER Male Female

Passport Number _____ Expiry date / / _____ Nationality _____

Colour copy of my current valid passport enclosed I'm renewing my passport ASA has a colour copy of my current passport

Travel Plans

I wish ASA to book my airfare, please contact me to discuss my options. Business Class Economy Class

I plan to leave Australia before the tour commences. Planned departure date / / _____

I will be arranging my airfare independently and taking the Land Content Only option.

Frequent Flyer _____ Name of Airline _____ Airline Seat preference _____
Membership # _____ (please note request only)

Tour Accommodation (rooming preferences)

I/we would like: a twin-bedded room a double-bedded room a room for sole occupancy

I am travelling: on my own with a friend/family member Travel Companion _____

Meals

I do not have any specific dietary requests

Please **X** the box if you **CAN NOT** eat any of the following:

fish poultry red meat dairy products

eggs pork nuts

Allergies: Refer to the Medical Information

Other _____

Correspondence

Your preferred method of correspondence Postal Mail Email Address _____

Emergency Contact Details

Note: this person **MUST** be available by telephone and be present in Australia for the duration of your tour with ASA

Name _____ Relationship to Traveller _____

Address _____

TEL. (AH) () _____ TEL. (BH) () _____ Mobile Tel: _____

EMAIL address _____

The purpose of seeking this information is to assist ASA to determine, where necessary, whether ASA is able to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your specific needs and whether your health and safety (or that of your fellow travellers) is likely to be compromised given your choice of tour. It will also assist you and ASA if you fall ill or have an accident whilst travelling.

- ASA reserves the right to decline your Reservation Application if this Medical Information section is not completed properly and may reject or cancel your reservation, or terminate your participation on any tour, if ASA subsequently learns that you have failed to make full and proper disclosure.
- ASA is committed to protecting the privacy of your personal information. ASA's privacy policy is available for viewing at www.asatours.com.au
- If ASA has any concerns about the information you have provided, it will contact you to request clarification before considering your Application.
- ASA requires you to consider carefully your limitations in light of ASA's Physical Endurance Star Rating System in ASA's Brochure and Itinerary when choosing your tour.
- If you are not likely to satisfy ASA's Participation Criteria (see below), ASA, in its sole discretion, may reject your Reservation Application.
- It is a condition of your tour that you agree to accept the directions of ASA's Tour Leaders in relation to your suitability to participate in activities planned on tour.
- ASA reserves the right to cancel your participation on a tour if your behaviour is in ASA's opinion causing undue distress or damage to any person or their property.
- If your participation is discontinued during a tour, ASA will assist by arranging your onward travel (if required) at your own cost, but you will not be refunded for forfeited parts of the tour.
- ASA tour groups are not accompanied by a medical practitioner. ASA recommends that you see your doctor for advice about your specific needs while overseas. You may also wish to contact a travel and vaccination clinic for advice. www.traveldoctor.com.au tel: 1300 658 444; www.travelvax.com.au tel: 1300 360 164.
- Travel insurers require you to declare all existing medical conditions.
- Please carry a complete list of medications with you during the ASA tour. Include **generic names** of each medication (consult your local pharmacy for information).

Please mark **X** in the YES or NO box to every question below and provide details where necessary:

Participation Criteria

To participate in an ASA tour, you must be reasonably fit, in good health and able to participate in all activities without assistance from Tour Leaders or other tour members. If you require assistance, a fit and able travel companion must undertake to accompany and assist you with all tasks for the duration of the whole tour. The responsibility of the Tour Leader is to ensure that the larger group enjoys a relaxing and informative journey, and he or she cannot be relied upon to provide ongoing individual assistance to any one guest.

- | | YES | NO |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Can you walk and stand unassisted for at least 2-3 hours a day in hot, humid conditions? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Can you walk unassisted on and over uneven surfaces? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Can you climb at least 3 flights of stairs and/or walk up and down steep slopes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. Can you walk at a steady pace and no less than 1km every 15 - 20 minutes unassisted? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Can you organise, manage and carry your own luggage? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Can you follow and remember tour instructions and meet punctually at designated times and places? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Can you administer your own medication? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Do you have impaired vision or hearing which may impact your capacity to participate on this tour? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Mobility and Fitness

As many of ASA's international sites do not provide access to wheelchairs or similar mobility aids, we regret that ASA tours are not suitable for people who require the use of a walking frame, wheeled walker, wheelchair or motorised scooter.

1. Do you suffer from any medical conditions that may compromise your mobility and/or fitness to participate on this program? YES NO

 If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

Allergies and/or Food Intolerances

ASA will make reasonable endeavours to organise meals to suit you, provided that you give ASA adequate notice of your specific dietary requirements or allergies. You may be required to research dietary alternatives, as not all destinations may be able to offer suitable food substitutes.

1. Do you have any food allergies or intolerances? YES NO

 If yes, please specify

2. Have you ever had an anaphylactic reaction to anything?
 If yes, please specify

Do you carry an epipen?

3. Do you have any other allergies or reactions to anything, including medical drugs?
 If yes, please specify

Existing Medical Conditions

You alone are responsible for managing any existing medical conditions, your medication and any medical equipment that you may need when on your tour. Please plan for contingencies and take extra medication, dietary supplements and/or fully charged batteries for medical equipment if your health and safety depends on these. You should take into consideration that power sources at some destinations may be unavailable, inadequate, inconvenient or unreliable.

1. Have you any significant medical conditions that may impact your capacity to complete this tour? YES NO

 If yes, please specify

If yes, how will you manage this on tour?

2. Do you require some form of powered medical aid, such as a CPAP machine?

These machines may not be operable on certain international flights, modes of transport, in remote or other areas with inadequate or unreliable power sources without a fully charged independent long life battery or batteries.

Diabetics: You may be travelling and sightseeing for many hours at a time. Insulin dependent diabetics must carry extra supplies of insulin (as this medication cannot be obtained in some destinations), regulators, applicators, storage and refrigeration equipment, as well as any necessary supplements. Accommodation may not provide refrigerators in rooms.

3. Are you diabetic?

Are you insulin dependent?

4. Do you suffer from travel sickness?
 Remember to use an appropriate medication while on tour.



Declaration, Liability and Booking Conditions

Declaration

I declare that: I have read and understood the ASA Tour Itinerary, Reservation Application and Booking Conditions. I am aware of ASA's terms as relating to refunds, cancellations, responsibility and liability. I understand that ASA relies upon this declaration when considering this Application. I accept that there are inherent dangers and risks that may occur during any tour. I have made full and complete disclosure and have not knowingly withheld any medical information about myself from ASA. I have completed this Reservation Application honestly and accurately. I warrant that I am able to participate independently in all activities described by ASA in the itinerary without assistance from any person.

I will advise ASA in writing if any aspect of my fitness and or health conditions change materially at any time before my departure date. I understand and accept that the itinerary, accommodation and lecturers scheduled for this tour may change.

I agree and consent that ASA may give my personal information in this Reservation Application to tour service providers and relevant authorities as required by law, but for the purpose of making bookings with and engaging services provided for the tour. I understand that if I do not consent to the use of my personal information for this purpose, ASA will decline my Reservation Application.

In consideration of ASA's acceptance of my Reservation Application, I irrevocably release and indemnify ASA from all claims that I, or any other party, may have against ASA its employees, invitees, agents and contractors, however arising in respect of any loss, damage, injury, death or expense incurred in the course of travelling to, on and from any tour.

I understand and acknowledge that this Release and Indemnity applies with respect to:

1. Every general risk to which I or my personal belongings may be exposed in the course of travelling to, on or from any ASA tour
2. Every special risk, in particular medical risks, to which I may be exposed in the course of travelling to, on or from any ASA tour arising from, including, but not limited to:
 - a. intermittent power cycles and/or the temporary or permanent loss of power (beware CPAP or any other medical machine users);
 - b. dietary, food or other allergies (ASA cannot guarantee that traces of items to which you are allergic are not present in food or drink you are served, medication you are administered or other substances with which you may come into contact);
 - c. any event or situation that may compromise the administration of necessary medication or my health, safety and wellbeing generally.
3. All claims arising as a result of my or ASA's cancellation or termination of my continued participation on a tour for whatever reason (refund conditions in ASA's Booking Conditions excepted).

Limitation of Liability

ASA is not a carrier, event or tourist attraction host, accommodation or dining service provider. All bookings made and tickets or coupons issued by ASA for transport, event, accommodation, dining and the like are issued as an agent for various service providers and are subject to the terms and conditions and limitations of liability imposed by each service provider. ASA is not responsible for their products or services. If a service provider does not deliver the product or service for which you have contracted, your remedy lies with the service provider, not ASA.

ASA will not be liable for any claim (eg. sickness, injury, death, damage or loss) arising from any change, delay, detention, breakdown, cancellation, failure, accident, act, omission or negligence of any such service provider however caused (contingencies). You must take out adequate travel insurance against such contingencies.

ASA's liability in respect of any tour will be limited to the refund of amounts received from you less all non-refundable costs and charges and the costs of any substituted event or alternate services provided. The terms and conditions of the relevant service provider from time to time comprise the sole agreement between you and that service provider.

ASA reserves the sole discretion to cancel any tour or to modify itineraries in any way it considers appropriate. Tour costs may be revised, subject to unexpected price increases or exchange rate fluctuations.

Booking Conditions

DEPOSITS

A deposit of \$500.00 AUD per person is required to reserve a place on an ASA tour.

CANCELLATION FEES

If you decide to cancel your booking the following charges apply:

More than 75 days before departure: \$500*
75-46 days prior 25% of total amount due
45-31 days prior 50% of total amount due
30-15 days prior 75% of total amount due
14-0 days prior 100% of total amount due

This amount may be **credited to another ASA tour departing within 12 months of the original tour you booked. We regret, in this case early-bird discounts will not apply.*

We take the day on which you cancel as being that on which we receive written confirmation of cancellation.

UNUSED PORTIONS OF THE TOUR

We regret that refunds will not be given for any unused portions of the tour, such as meals, entry fees, accommodation, flights or transfers.

WILL THE TOUR PRICE OR ITINERARY CHANGE?

If the number of participants on a tour is significantly less than budgeted, or if there is a significant change in exchange rates ASA reserves the right to amend the advertised price. We shall, however, do all in our power to maintain the published price. If an ASA tour is forced to cancel you will get a full refund of all tour monies paid. Occasionally circumstances beyond the control of ASA make it necessary to change airline, hotel or to make amendments to daily itineraries. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

ASA requires all participants to obtain comprehensive travel insurance. A copy of your travel insurance certificate and the **reverse charge** emergency contact phone number must be received by ASA no later than 75 days prior to the commencement of the tour.

FINAL PAYMENT

The balance of the tour price will be due 75 days prior to the tour commencement date.

PLEASE READ THE ABOVE CAREFULLY, PRINT AND SIGN BELOW

I accept the conditions on this booking form I have read the information about the physical requirements of the tour in the detailed itinerary and confirm that I am able to meet these requirements

Applicant's Signature

Print Full Name

Dated

Tour / Course Name

Name of Traveller 1 _____

Name of Traveller 2 _____

I have enclosed a payment to the value of \$ _____ (including CC or bank fee if applicable) for this tour

The above amount is payable for:

- Intention to Travel Tour Deposit
 Balance of Payment Upgrade from Intention to Travel to a Deposit
 Travel Insurance Other (eg. Airfares, Accommodation) _____

International Payments

Welcome to our international travellers! If you are making a payment and do not have an Australian bank account/credit card, we can only accept payment as follows:

- via credit card with the applicable fee - the credit card company/bank will set the exchange rate
- via bank transfer; please give your surname and tour code (eg. Smith 21705) as a reference and ask your bank to allow for all charges.

Bank cheques or personal cheques will not be accepted.

By Cheque (accept Australian cheques only)

Please make cheques payable to *Australians Studying Abroad*

Direct Deposit or Internet Banking

You will need to:

1. Provide your bank with ASA's bank details (see below) and the amount you wish to transfer OR make a direct deposit through any ANZ branch
2. Include any fees levied by the banks
3. Provide a reference number (Mobile or last name recommended).
4. Complete section below, including confirmation no. (given when transaction completed).

Australians Studying Abroad bank details

Bank ANZ
Branch 420 St Kilda Road, Melbourne Vic
Swift Code ANZBAU3M
BSB 013-423
Account No 3472-32759

Bank confirmation No. _____

Reference used: Mobile or last name recommended

Date Money Transferred _____

Credit Card Payment

Credit card fees apply: Mastercard & Visa 2%
 American Express 2%

Please debit my: Mastercard Visa American Express

I authorise ASA to debit my credit card for the amount due plus the applicable fee as above

Credit Card Number _____

Expiry Date _____

Security Code (CVC) _____

Bank the Card is linked to (eg. NAB or ANZ) _____

Cardholders Name _____

Cardholders Billing Address _____

Postcode _____

State _____

Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Cardholders Signature _____

AUSTRALIANS STUDYING ABROAD

Office 6, Level 1, 1087-1095 High St (PO Box 8285) Armadale VIC Australia 3143

Phone +61 3 9822 6899 Freecall 1800 645 755 (outside metro Melbourne area only) Email info@asatours.com.au

www.asatours.com.au

License No. 31248 ABN 27 006 589 242