

Madagascar - An Island Set Apart

A playground for outdoor lovers - hiking, rainforests, baobabs, deserts and lemurs...

Trip Length: 14 days / 13 nights

April 2020

Maximum 8 adventurers



**6 = €2300, 8 = €2100, 10 = €2000 / person / twin share
(single supplement cost available on request)**

(2019 prices. Expect a little extra for 2020)

Included meals marked each day. B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Epic landscapes - it's just a 300 kilometre journey from the desert to the rainforest, and with 5000 kilometres of coastline you are never far from the sea. Added to that five per cent of all Madagascar's plants and animals are found nowhere else on this earth. Lemurs are the animal that we have all heard about, but there are others; colourful and camouflaged chameleons, striking frogs, unusual insects, and of course the famed baobab trees. Australia's baobab trees are a direct descendant of Madagascar's baobabs. Seeds followed the ocean currents to our Western Australia and Northern Territory's shores to take root and provide that much needed water storage for our early explorers.

Madagascar is the fourth largest island on our planet. Its people come from every corner of the Indian Ocean and the melting pot encompasses an intricate set of rituals and beliefs. Although its roads may not be too smooth, the journey will be unforgettable.

It's a mosaic of nature - let's enjoy it!

Day 1. Arrive in Antananarivo (D)

We'll be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel. We can use the rest of the afternoon to just take it easy, or have a look around the city. We'll have a group briefing that evening at our hotel where we will meet our guide for the trip.

Antananarivo, just shortened to 'Tana' is Madagascar's capital, and is located in the centre of the island. It's the largest city on the island and the nucleus of the Merina people, who make up the majority of its inhabitants along with those from China, India, Europe and other nations. Merina people were one of the three major kingdoms to settle Madagascar by the 18th century.

Day 2: Anjozorobe-Angavo forest (B, D)

Drive time: 2.5 - 3 hours.

We'll leave Tana after breakfast and drive to Saha Forest Lodge, north-east of the capital, in Madagascar's highlands. The rainforest corridor is one of the last remaining forests in the central highlands. After checking in to our lodgings we'll have a short guided afternoon walk. We'll be on the lookout for lemurs and birds. Another walk that evening will have us looking for nocturnal wildlife.

The origin of the word Anjozorobe most likely comes from 'zozoro', a reed found in the area that is thought to have provided hiding places for 'menalamba' people who fought under the French to liberate Madagascar.



Madagascar's Panther Chameleon



Day 3: Anjozorobe-Angavo forest (B, L, D)

Walk time 6 hours. 14 km, grade moderate

From the forest lodge we'll set out in search of the Indri Indri (also known as the babakoto), the tallest living lemur of Madagascar. It has a black and white coat and it climbs and clings in an upright position. Its head and body length measure around 64 to 72 cm, and it weighs between six and 9.5 kg. We'll also search for the endangered Diademed Sifaka, a lemur endemic to this type of rainforest. Also one of the largest living, and one of the most colourful and attractive lemurs, it wears a long, silky coat. Adults can measure about 105 cm from top to tail. There are nine lemur species living in Anjozorobe-Angavo forest.

We continue hiking, embracing the local community who live in the protected area and surrounds. Lunch today is a picnic. We return to our lodge for the night.

Day 4 Anjozorobe to Antsirabe (B, D)

Drive time: 6 hours

We leave Anjozorobe and head south again to Tana and on to Antsirabe, Madagascar's second largest city. Along the way, we will visit the aluminum smelters at Ambatolampy, 'city of rocks'. Many of the foundries are passed from generation to generation. It is hard, hot work melting down the aluminium that comes from recycled items bought in by the locals. The craftsmen work barefoot and without protective clothing and make most of the aluminium tableware found throughout Madagascar. When we reach Antsirabe we'll have a chance to visit the toy and horn craftsmen. Miniature toys, made from recycled products are a big attraction and show the skill and creativity of the workers. Zebu horn is used to fashion jewelry and these artisans are expert in their creations.

Day 5 Antsirabe, Ambositra, Ambodirano (B, D)

Drive time: 4.5 hours total

Walk time 1 hour. 1.3 km, grade moderate

In the morning, we will drive out of town westwards to Tritriva Crater Lake where we'll do a hike. The lake fills an extinct crater in a region also noted for its hot springs. On the way back to Antsirabe we'll stop at Talata Village to visit a silk weaving factory. Back in Antsirabe, we will have a short city sightseeing tour before heading south to Ambositra, two hours away, then to Ivato for the night.



Tritriva Crater Lake

Day 6 Ambodirano, Sakaivo, Ambodirano (B, L, D)

Drive time: 1 hour

Walk time 8 hours. 25 km, Grade moderate to strenuous

Today's walk takes us to the Zafimaniry village of Sakaivo, one of more than 100 villages and hamlets situated on the tops of the hills and mountains in the eastern part of the Betsileo region. The Zafimaniry community is the only remaining repository of a unique woodcraft culture. These people settled in the remote wooded region during the eighteenth century, seeking refuge from the deforestation ravaging Madagascar at the time. The repository was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008.

After a picnic lunch, we'll hike back to the village of Antoetra and drive back to our hotel. There may be option to shorten this walk.

Day 7 Ambositra, Ranomafana (B, D)

Drive time 5-6 hours

Walk time 2 hours. 3 - 4 km, Grade easy

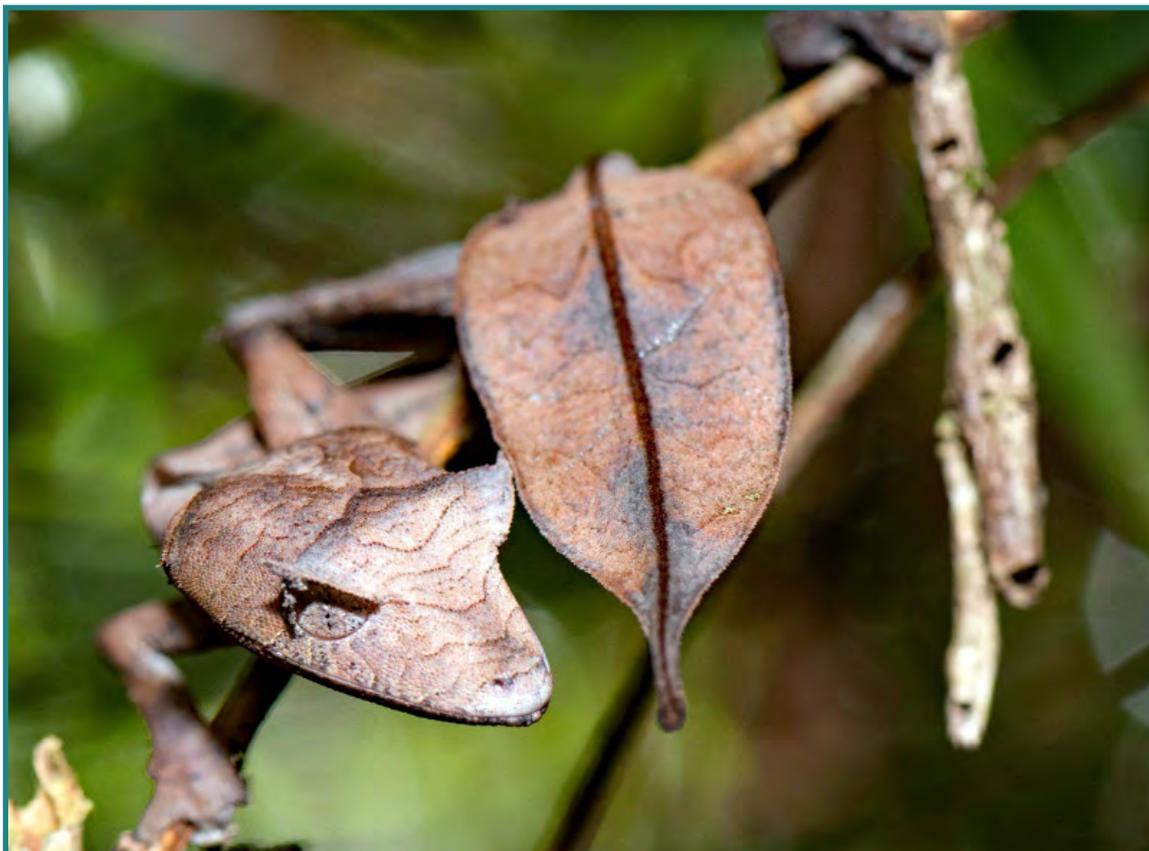
We drive to the village of Ranomafana (meaning 'hot water' in Malagasy). Our afternoon hike in one of Madagascar's most spectacular national parks will have us walking slowly and watching for lemurs and birds along the Sahamalaotra Trail. Twelve lemur species inhabit the park. In 1986 the critically endangered golden bamboo lemur was discovered here, prompting the government to create the national park. We might even spot some seven species of tenrecs. It is thought tenrecs arrived on the island, washed in from the African continent, millions of years ago. Since, they have evolved and adapted their body shape to fit the environment. Originally thought to be related to hedgehogs, scientists now believe they are cousins of elephants, aardvarks and manatees.

Day 8 Ranomafana, Ambalavao (B, L, D)

Drive time 3 hours

Walk time 6-7 hours. 12 km, Grade moderate to strenuous

Today's hike leads us through the Ranomafana National Park to again become acquainted with lemurs in the least visited part of the national park's primary forest. After a picnic lunch, we will drive south to Ambalavao, passing the town of Fianarantsoa ('Fianar' for short) surrounded by hills. The city of Ambalavao is situated in the most southern part of the Central Highlands.



Satanic leaf-tailed gecko - Ranomafana National Park

Day 9 Ambalavao (B, L, D)

Walk time 6-7 hours. 12 km, Grade moderate

We will have a couple of hours to visit the community managed Anja Reserve, a unique environmental and cultural preservation site in the south of Madagascar, famous for different groups of Ring-tailed Lemurs. As a nature reserve and a growing Malagasy town, Anja is an example of how humans and nature can co-exist. We'll then walk through the Iharintsena and Ambalavao areas, having a picnic lunch along the way.

Day 10 Ambalavao, Ranohira (B, D)

Drive time 5 hours.

Walk time 3 hours. 4 km Grade moderate

It's a drive to Ranohira and Isalo National Park today. We're about 700 km south-west of Tana. The national park protects a huge sandstone massif eroded by wind and rain into bizarre ridges ('runiformes'), impressive gorges, canyons and tiny stalagmite pinnacles. It is also home to endemic rupicolous (living among, inhabiting or growing on rocks) vegetation. The massif rises from the surrounding grassy plains and attracts hikers the world over.

After lunch we will have a three hour orientation tour and hike in the massif.



Isalo National Park

Day 11 Ranohira (B, L, D)

Walk time 5-7 hours. 7km, Grade moderate

Another walk today through the unique runiform landscape of the national park. We'll have another picnic lunch along the way.

Day 12 Ranohira, Tulear, Ifaty (B, D)

Drive time 4 hours.

Walk time 2 hours. 2.3 km, Grade easy

On the way to Tulear, we'll stop at Zombitse-Vohibasia National Park, one of Madagascar's least-known yet most accessible parks. The dry, dense, deciduous forest of the park is all that remains in the denuded, semi-desert landscape that does protect an amazing number of bird and lemur species. Propithecus Sifaka are the lemurs we're looking for today. This threatened species' name comes from their characteristic 'shi-fak' alarm call.

After a leisurely lunch in Tulear, we'll head north to the baobab forest where we get discover the southern vegetation of succulents, octopus trees and baobabs before reaching our hotel.

Day 13 Ifaty, Antananarivo (B, D)

Ifaty is a beachside village, close to Tulear and we'll transfer from there to Tulear Airport for the flight back to Antananarivo.

Day 14 (B)

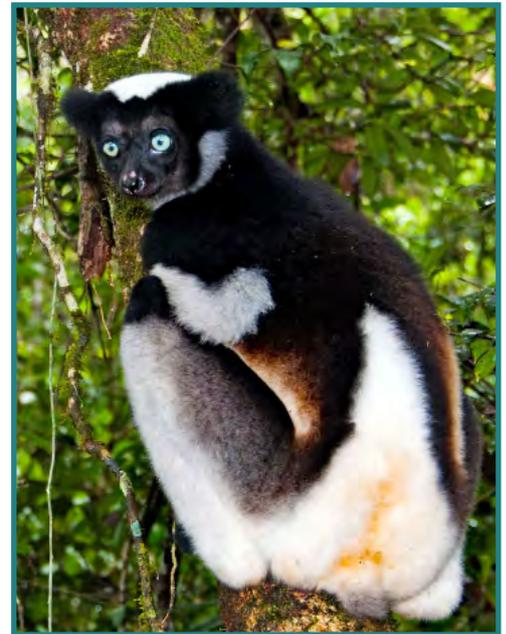
The trip ends after breakfast when we'll transfer to the airport for our flight out.

What's Included in Madagascar

- Airport transfers in Antananarivo and Tulea
- Permanent escort by English speaking tour guide
- An Australian **Take A Walk Adventures** leader for the complete trip
- Porter assistance at airports and hotels
- All ground transport
- All national park entry fees
- All permits and trekking fees
- Daytime and night-time guided visits
- All accommodation in three star hotels or lodges on a twin share basis
- Meals per day as per the itinerary (**B, L, D**)

What's Not Included in Madagascar

- Flights from your departure country to Antananarivo and from Antananarivo to your destination.
- Domestic flight from Tulea to Antananarivo on Day 13
- Entry visa
- Any accommodation prior to or after the trip dates
- Requested single supplement cost (available on request)
- Compulsory travel and accident insurance
- Extra meals not noted
- Trail snacks
- Personal bottled water, alcohol and other drinks eg soft drinks, extra tea and coffee
- All personal trekking equipment
- Cost of any optional activities not mentioned in the itinerary
- Cash for extra personal expenses
- Tips for drivers, guides, hotel staff and other services



Could you ever tire of these beautiful creatures? Indri Indri

Other General Information

- ATMs are usually easy to find in the bigger centres and our guides will point us in the right direction. You may struggle to use Debit Cards in local ATMs. It will be easier to exchange cash for local currency at the airport once you arrive. Euros and American dollars are also accepted.
- Please note, this is a recce trip and minor changes may be made along the way due to factors such as weather conditions, road or park closures, or permits being unavailable. This is left to the discretion of our on-the-ground guides and **Take A Walk** leader. John and Lyn will lead this trip.



Red-capped Coua

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'Tonga soa' 'Welcome' in Malagasy, the Malayo-Polynesian language spoken commonly in Madagascar.