

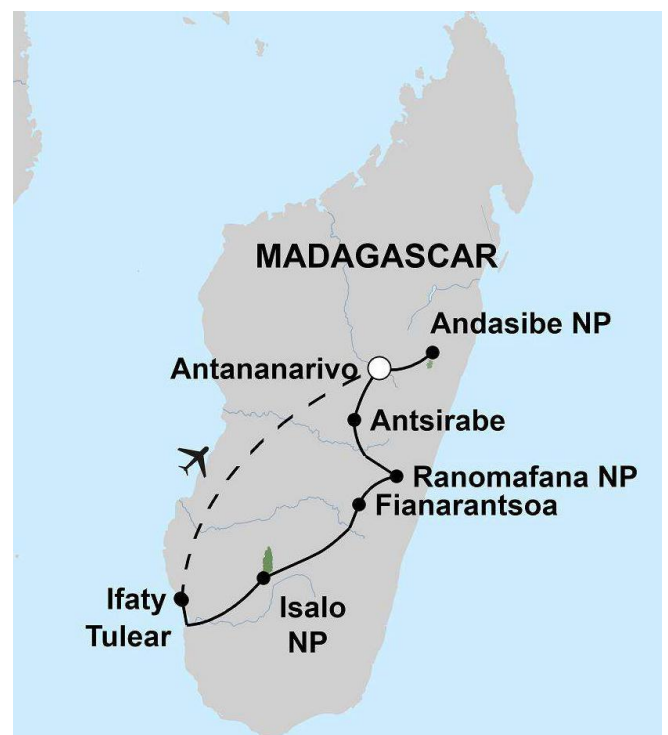
1000 VIEWS OF MADAGASCAR 12 DAY ESCORTED TOUR

Photo by Luc Legay, Flickr

The magical island of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean invites the traveller to let go of the hustle and bustle of the world and embark on a nature and culture adventure never to be forgotten. Go in search of camouflaged chameleons, multiple species of the island's signature lemurs, prized orchids and brilliantly-plumed birds.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Antananarivo – explore the capital
- Natural Reserve of Andasibe - go in search of lemurs
- Antsirabe – Centre of the beer industry
- Ambositra – Centre of the wood carving industry
- Ranomafana National Park – Rain forest covered hills and abundant wild life
- Fianarantsoa – Centre of the wine industry
- Ihosy – Capital of the Bara tribes
- Isalo National Park – Hike amid beautiful vegetation and natural pools
- Ifaty – Diving, snorkelling, seasonal whale watching
- Reniala Park – Baobabs, spiny forest and the largest chameleons in the world



Possible dates for this tour in 2022 – no decision until leisure travel becomes viable again.

MONTH	TOUR START	TOUR END	MONTH	TOUR START	TOUR END
April	05/04/2022	16/04/2022	August	02/08/2022	13/08/2022
	19/04/2022	30/04/2022		23/08/2022	03/09/2022
May	03/05/2022	14/05/2022	September	06/09/2022	17/09/2022
	19/05/2022	30/05/2022		20/09/2022	01/10/2022
	31/05/2022	11/06/2022	October	04/10/2022	15/10/2022
June	21/06/2022	02/07/2022		18/10/2022	29/10/2022
July	05/07/2022	16/07/2022	November	01/11/2022	12/11/2022
	19/07/2022	30/07/2022		22/11/2022	03/12/2022

During this tour we will learn about the women of community project "Soalandy", an interwoven effort of cultural resilience and economic survival by a group of female artisans exemplifying determination and entrepreneurship. Weaving together the world of tourism and conservation provides a silkier future for projects such as "Soalandy", offering a sustainable channel to continue practicing their Malagasy craft and ensuring survival.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrive Anatanarivo

Dinner

On arrival in the capital, you will be welcomed and transferred to our hotel in the city.

Rest of the day is at leisure.

This evening meet your tour leaders and fellow travellers at our Welcome Dinner.



Photos by Olivier Lejade, Flickr

Day 2: Anatanarivo – Andasibe (150km)

Breakfast

After breakfast, around 10h00, we drive towards Andasibe, through the luxuriant vegetation of Eastern Madagascar, bringing us to a humid part of the country with many primary forests and lakes. Along the way we will see Merina viallges spread in the rocky mountains. The Merina people (also known as the Imerina, Antimerina or Hova) are the largest ethnic group in Madagascar. They are the "highlander" Malagasy ethnic group of the African island and one of the country's eighteen official ethnic groups.

Their origins are mixed, predominantly with Indonesians arriving before the 5th century AD, then many centuries later with Arabs, Africans and other ethnic groups. They speak the Merina dialect of the official Malagasy language of Madagascar.

Arriving at Andasibe in the afternoon, we will check in at our hotel.

A real treat this evening as we set off on a night walk to observe night active lemurs and other nocturnal animals.

Overnight in Andasibe.

Day 3: Natural reserve of Andasibe

Breakfast

We start our morning with a visit to the Special Reserve of Andasibe to see the Indri, the largest lemurs of the island. This 810 hectare reserve is unique with its endemic fauna and flora and contains a wide variety of orchids, canopy and endemic animals such as chameleons, tenrecs, and many bird species. In the afternoon we visit a community reserve where we should see a variety of wildlife including lemurs, indri, chameleons, geckos and birds. This reserve provides a sustainable way of saving the remaining rain forests in the area by creating a livelihood for local communities through reforestation projects.

Overnight in Andasibe.



Photos by David Dennis and vil.sandj, Flickr

Day 4: Andasibe – Antsirabe (309km)

Breakfast

Today we head south to Antsirabe, across the highland landscape with its beautiful rice fields reminding us of the Far East. The spectacular eroded hills, called "lavaka", are covered by rice fields, vegetables and fruit trees. We stop in Amabatolampy for a quick visit to this huge agricultural city, also recognized as the "capital of aluminium recycling."

Arrival in Antsirabe is around 18h00. "The place of salt" is an elegant city known as the centre of the beer industry – we can smell the Star Brewery as we enter the town! Founded by Norwegians in 1856, it is the only place which really feels and looks like a European city. It has a temperate climate which means fruit and vegetables from colder climates grow well in Antsirabe.

Day 5: Antsirabe - Ranomafana National Park (250km)

Breakfast, Dinner

After breakfast we drive to Ambositra, the center of Madagascar's wood carving industry. The highlands are characterized by its architecture: the houses sport ornately carved wooden balconies and shutters with bright colours. Further on we pass the "le col de topis", a type of tree resistant to bush fires. The landscape is dominated by rice fields, pine forest, eucalyptus trees and rocky mountains. We turn off from the main road to reach our destination for the day: Ranomafana National Park.



Photo by Leonora Enking, Flickr

Day 6: Ranomafana National Park

Breakfast, Dinner

The approximately 40,000 hectares of Parc National de Ranomafana, with its rain forest covered hills and abundant wildlife, has long been considered one of Madagascar's highlights, being one of the country's most visited national parks. Its entrance lies about 7km from Ranomafana village. Altitudes in the park range from 800m to 1200m above sea level. In addition to its densely forested hills, Ranomafana's terrain is characterized by numerous small streams which plummet down to the beautiful Namorona River. Although much of the region has been logged, the eastern most part of the park retains relatively large areas of primary forest. We will enjoy long walks, spotting some of the lemurs, chameleons and other animals.

Day 7: Ranomafana – Fianarantsoa – Isalo (355km)

Breakfast

Returning to our inbound road, we leave Ranomafana and visit a local wine farm for wine tasting near Fianarantsoa, "the city where one learns good things." **(We will make sure we are not here over a week-end as visits to the wine farm may not be possible.)**

The city is the gateway to the South, the capital of the Betsileo tribes and the centre of the Catholic religion. Most of the best schools in the country are also found here.

We continue southwards to Ambalavao and visit the "Anteimoro Paper Factory" which is a vestige of the Arabian civilization on the island. Later we partake in a community based silk weaving project run by the "Soalandy" association of women.

On we go, passing through the mountain chain of Andringitra, which serves as a transition between the dry south and green highlands with its famous "3 hillocks" and its huge "archbishop's cape."

Along the way we will see from afar a spectacular huge granite dome with twin rock towers called "the gate of the south." The "bishop's hat" is another noticeable, imposing formation and a sacred location for the local people – a place where their ancestors chose a collective suicide rather than to give in to the Merina tribes. We continue to Ihosy, the capital of the Bara tribes, who are shepherds of Zebu. On through the huge "Plateaux de Horombe" with its deep red soil, arriving in Isalo for our overnight.



Photos by Leonora Enking and Bat, Flickr

Day 8: Isalo National Park

Breakfast

Today we will visit and hike in the Isalo National Park, covering an area of 81.5 hectares and comprising of the entire stretch of the Isalo massif. This huge mountain is spectacular with its eroded sandstone elevations. Along the way we will see vegetation such as *Uapaca bojeri*, a tree species endemic to Madagascar, also *Pachypodium rosulatum* or "elephant foot" and *Aloe isaloensis*, a native species of Aloe endemic to Isalo. The eroded mountains also served as a place where the Bara kept their dead before they could bury them in their actual tombs.



Photos by Bat and Ettore Balocchi, Flickr

We start our climb and after 20 minutes reach the massif, where there is a spectacular view of the huge sandstone mountains with their beautiful colours. The strange and battered formations create many different images like "the tortoise, the masks and the crocodiles." We will see small streams and rivers marked by lines of brilliant green, being numerous *Pandanus pulcher* (the screw pine) and the delicate slim-stemmed, feathery leaved palm *Chrysalidocarpus isaloensis*.

We should also see sifakas, brown lemurs and ring tailed lemurs as well as many of the 55 species of birds, lizards and snakes. This will indeed be a day of immersion in Mother Nature. Leave the digital world behind and enjoy the glory of the natural world.

Day 9: Isalo – Ifaty (265km)

Breakfast

After breakfast, we drive to Tuléar, the terminal of National Road No 7. This part of our journey brings us to new scenery among the dry forests of the west and the spiny desert of the south. On the way we admire the different “Mahafaly tombs” and the “Antandroy tombs.” The Mahafaly are an ethnic group known for the large tombs they built to honour dead chiefs and kings. Antandroy tombs are decorated with “aloala”, sculptured wooden posts set upright on top of the tombs, often depicting scenes from the person’s life.



Photos by Leonora Enking, Flickr

After a short visit to Tuléar, we continue for about 27km to Ifaty, the driest part of the country. Situated in the Deep South, the landscape is dominated by the cactus-like spiny forest of different euphorbiaceae and didieraceae. In this dry and sandy soil local people struggle to find drinking water. Mangrove trees line the coast, where Vezo communities earn their living from fishing. We will see many small pirogues with men who go out fishing twice a day, while women and children wait on the shore to collect the fish and take them to Tuléar for selling.

Day 10: Ifaty

Breakfast

Today is a day of leisure, to explore this beautiful area and perhaps do some bird watching along the coast.

You may want to visit the Reniala Forest where you will see two types of baobab trees, spiny bush, reptile like "boa madagascariensis," geckos and the "chameleon parsoni", one of the largest in the world. In season, (July to mid September) you could take a boat trip to see the whales when they come to the cool seas of Madagascar to give birth. Situated in the largest lagoon of the country, Ifaty is protected by a large coral reef, making it an ideal place for diving and snorkelling. You can also walk to the village of Mangily to visit a local school and experience the Vezo fisherman's way of life, especially as the boats return from fishing.



Photos by Rod Waddington and Olivier Lejade, Flickr

Day 11: Ifaty – Antananarivo

Breakfast, Dinner

Early morning departure and transfer to the airport for the flight back to Antananarivo (also known as Tana.) After checking into our hotel, the rest of the afternoon is free to explore on your own and take in some sightseeing. The capital of Madagascar, called "The City of Thousands", is where the first King started to unify the different kingdoms of the island. Tana was built in three stages: The high city, the first area occupied during the regal period where the old Queen's palace is situated; the mid-city where all the chic boutiques of the capital are found; and the low city, the commercial area of town. Walk from the high city to see The Rova, the queen's palace, and the house of the first minister which is now a museum. The mid-city ends at the Rainiharo tombs and the lower town is situated in the main avenue called "L'avenue de l'indépendance", dominated by the railway station. Farewell dinner this evening.

Day 12: Departure

Breakfast

Our tour has come to an end and we will be transferred to the airport for onward flights.

