

# AFRICAN ADVENTURE SAFARIS

# ITINERARY



## MADAGASCAR

### FACTS

- From – To:** Antananarivo – Antananarivo or Nosy Be
- Price:** 2.490 EUR
- Group size:** 6-10
- Acc. Type:** 17 nights accommodated, 1 night camping

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Outstanding **wildlife** viewing on day & night walks
- Analamazaotra Special Reserve to see the **Indri Lemur**
- Pristine **rainforest** in Ranomafana National Park
- **Trekking in rugged canyons** in Isalo National Park
- The **Spiny Desert**, Baobabs and beaches in Ifaty
- Montagne d'Ambre National Park's wealth of **chameleons**
- Hike amongst the **Tsingy limestone spires** of Ankárana
- **Island-hopping** and snorkelling around Nosy Be

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### Overview

Off the African mainland, in the Indian Ocean, lies the island paradise of Madagascar. Thick green jungle and turquoise waters lapping onto white sandy beaches. Otherworldly, bizarre landscapes inhabited by weird and wonderful wildlife that is found nowhere else on earth. A rich culture steeped in traditions, ceremonies and taboos coupled with the warmth and hospitality of the local population. This, the world's fourth largest island, is a must-see for all those with the spirit of adventure!

This tour encompasses a great variety of ecosystems, from tropical rainforests to the vast high plateaux of the interior, the spiny desert on the west coast to the dreamy island archipelago in the far north. We will have the chance to explore eight National Parks and Reserves, including one marine reserve, mainly on foot and by snorkelling, respectively.

Starting off in Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, we will first head east to see the Indri lemur and hear its amazing call. Next on our itinerary is the famous *Route du Sud*, which will take us into the montane rainforest of Ranomafana and the dry sandstone canyon landscape of Isalo with lots of trekking opportunities. In the Central Highlands, we will also have the chance to buy souvenirs from the acclaimed wood-carvers and weavers of Ambositra, and we will visit a small community reserve for a close-up with cute Ring-tailed Lemurs. Reaching the south-west coast, we can either relax under the palm trees, take mask and snorkel into a small marine reserve, or explore the baobab-studded spiny desert. From here, we will fly to the northern tip of the island, to the town of Diego Suarez. This is the gateway to two completely different Reserves: Montagne d'Ambre, situated on an extinct volcano covered in rainforest, and the limestone pinnacle wonderland of Ankárana, an ancient sea bed that has risen and been eroded by the rains of millennia. The last days of our tour will be spent relaxing and island-hopping in the Nosy Be archipelago.

### Notes

The tour price includes all accommodation, camping equipment, a professional guide and wildlife expert, local guides, transport, entry fees, excursions, all inland flights and meals as indicated. Not included are drinks, gratuities and extra activities.

For a stay up to 30 days, a visa is currently issued upon arrival at no cost. Please verify whether this is still true before your departure.

We recommend to bring a mask and snorkel as there is good snorkelling around Ifaty and especially Nosy Be. The equipment for hire is not always great and sometimes hard to come by.

It is possible to fly back to your home country from Nosy Be without touching base in Antananarivo (e. g. via Reunion). Please check with your airline and let us know whether you will come back to Antananarivo with us. Please email us your flight details and indicate whether you wish us to book pre- or post tour accommodation for you.

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## Itinerary

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner included.

### Day 1: Antananarivo

Arriving in the capital of Antananarivo today, we will get better acquainted and enjoy the lively, colourful vibe of the 'city of thousand hills'. Staying in the bohemian quarter of Isoraka, we will go out for an evening meal in one of its excellent restaurants that offer a fusion cuisine of French dishes spiced up with Malagasy ingredients (dinner own expense).

### Day 2: Analamazaotra Special Reserve

After a leisurely breakfast, we will travel east to the Analamazaotra Special Reserve. Arriving there at midday, we will have lunch on a terrace overlooking a rainforest lake before heading off for a first walk in the Reserve. After dinner, we will head out again on a night walk in search of some of the more elusive nocturnal species. (B,L,D).

### Day 3: Analamazaotra Special Reserve

An early start today, the morning will be dedicated to tracking the largest of Madagascar's lemur species, the impressive Indri. Its haunting call echoing through the forest in the misty morning, this is one of Madagascar's most endearing animals. Another forest dweller is the bizarre and colourful giraffe-necked weevil, a beetle, that is only found on a single plant species. After a hearty lunch, we will return to Antananarivo for another culinary delight. (Dinner own expense) (B,L).

### Day 4: Antananarivo – Antsirabe – Ambositra

Leaving early in the morning, today we will travel the famous *Route du Sud*, passing picturesque villages and rice terraces of the Central Highlands along the way. We will stop for lunch in Antsirabe, a town with wide tree-lined boulevards and the highest density of colourful rickshaws, here called Pousse-pousse - literally Push! Push! - in the country. We will also spend some time exploring the local craft market in Ambositra, renowned for its skilled woodcarvers whose traditional craft has been proclaimed a UNESCO cultural heritage, before checking into our guest house in this lively little town. (B,L)

### Day 5: Ambositra - Ranomafana National Park

Today, we will will travel into the lush montane rainforest of Ranomafana. In the afternoon, there will be time to relax, or you could take a walk into the village of Ranomafana, which means 'hot water'. There are hot springs here with some basic facilities, and for a small fee you can soak those tired bones in the thermal baths. After dinner, we will conduct a night walk in search of some of the nocturnal lemur and chameleon species of the area. (B,L,D)

### Day 6: Ranomafana National Park

After breakfast, we will spend much of the day exploring this incredible rainforest on foot. We will look out for the endemic Golden Bamboo Lemur and some of the many other lemur species as well as reptiles. (B,L,D)

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## **Day 7: Ranomafana – Anja Community Reserve – Isalo National Park**

Shortly after leaving Ranomafana in the morning, we will pass through the local capital of Fianarantsoa, an old centre of education and Christianity. As we drive on, we leave the ubiquitous rice terraces behind, and the landscape changes to savannah grassland interspersed with impressive granite domes. We might see cattle herders along the road herding their cattle from the famous zebu market of Ambalavao to the capital, a walk that takes them about a month. Travelling along the Central Highlands of Madagascar's interior and taking in the local life along the way, we will stop at the community-run conservation project of Anja, situated amongst towering granite outcrops. Here, we will have the chance to get quite close to habituated Ring-tailed Lemurs and watch these clowns performing acrobatic stunts in the trees. Continuing to Isalo, we will arrive at our bungalows vis-a-vis the plateau in the early evening and prepare for the following days' trekking. (B,L,D)

## **Day 8: Isalo National Park**

One of the largest National Parks in Madagascar, Isalo is a magical place with breath-taking scenery and wide horizons. This is also a sacred burial site for the local Barra, who still observe many interesting taboos and keep a close connection to their ancestors. The impressive tombs thus are a centrepiece of Barra culture. We will spend the whole day trekking through this sandstone wonderland of Isalo, refreshing ourselves in a natural swimming pool oasis along the way. After traversing a plateau, we will descend into a canyon, where we will keep an eye out for lemurs. Reaching our campsite by the crystal clear river, we can either rest, swim. After a hearty dinner, we can sit around a fire, before we fall asleep to the sounds of the wild. (B,L,D)

## **Day 9: Isalo National Park**

Trekking deeper into the canyon today, we will explore its waterfalls and pools, which abound in the canyon, and spend some time searching for the lemurs and other wildlife found within this breathtaking gorge. This evening we will return to the lodge for a well earned sun-downer! (B,L,D)

## **Day 10: Isalo - Tuléar - Ifaty/Mangily beach**

After a leisurely start, we will continue on our route south to the coastal town of Tuléar, where we will have lunch. We will share the 30 km of dirt road that follow the coast north and connect us to Ifaty with ox-carts and trucks amazingly loaded to the max with people, livestock and goods. Our bungalows are situated right on the beach in a shady coconut palm grove, and we will dine on fresh seafood with the Indian Ocean lapping at our feet. (Dinner own expense) (B,L)

## **Day 11: Ifaty/Mangily beach**

This days will be spent at leisure, on the beach, in a hammock, or on a traditional pirogue exploring the nearby reef and marine reserve (optional). Early in the morning, we will visit the Reniala Nature Reserve in the spiny desert, renowned for its bizarre octopus plants, endemic birds and bottle-shaped baobab trees. (B)

## **Day 12: Ifaty – Antananarivo**

Today, after a leisurely morning on the beach, we will fly back to Tana in the afternoon, ready to catch the plane up north early the next morning. (B,D)

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### **Day 13: Antananarivo – Diego Suarez & Montagne d'Ambre National Park\***

This morning, we arrive in Diego, the tropical northern capital and a melting pot for cultures, where some Swahili can be heard in the streets. Depending on our arrival time, we either travel the short distance to Amber Mountain National Park today or tomorrow. Madagascar's oldest reserve covers an extinct volcano. We will explore the park and its waterfalls, visiting some of the many sacred sites and searching for its incredibly diverse wildlife. One of the world's smallest chameleons is found here and is about the size of your fingernail. In the afternoon, we travel back to Diego. (B,L,D)

### **Day 14: Ankárana Special Reserve**

An early start today, we travel to Ankárana Special Reserve, renowned for its bizarre limestone pinnacles locally known as Tsingy. We will visit one of the many bat caves of the park with an underground river running through it and hike amongst the Tsingy and enjoy the local wildlife along the way. (B,L,D)

### **Day 15, 16 and 17: Nosy Be Island**

Today, we will board a boat to Nosy Be and travel to the more remote northern beaches. The days will be spent at leisure in this tropical island paradise, where it is possible to snorkel the nearby reef, browse through local handicraft stalls, or just soak up the sun. We will also visit the marine reserve off the Island of Nosy Tanikely, which offers world-class snorkelling, have lunch on the island's white sandy beach under coconut palms and spend time snorkeling on the reef before returning to Nosy Be in the afternoon. (Three breakfasts and one lunch included)

### **Day 18: Antananarivo**

After a leisurely morning we will fly back to Antananarivo and enjoy a farewell evening meal with our new found friends. (dinner own expense)\*\* (B,L)

### **Day 19: Flight home**

After breakfast, we fly back to our respective countries. (B)

\* Depending on Air Madagascar's flight schedule, we will either arrive in Diego in time to travel to Montagne d'Ambre today, or, in case we will only arrive there in the afternoon, visit the park the next morning

\*\* It is also possible to fly straight out of Nosy Be back to your home country, depending on carrier and destination.