



# Madagascar

## Lost Island-Continent

Small Group Safari September-October 2023



### Why Madagascar?

Madagascar was only colonised by human settlers relatively recently - perhaps as late as 500AD - some 300,000 years after the first appearance of Homo sapiens in Africa. Its seclusion resulted in “megadiversity”; it possesses a vast number of different species, many found nowhere else. Add to this mix: Royal Hill of Ambohimanga, a 500-year-old burial site; the rainforests of the Atsinanana, which are home to many rare species of primate and lemur; and the Tsingy de Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve, an impassable labyrinth of limestone canyons, caves, tunnels and spires — and you will chance upon one of the world’s most fascinating destinations.

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## Introduction



Madagascar, the world's fourth largest island, has been relatively—and fortunately—undiscovered for thousands of years. This seclusion has allowed spectacular ecological riches to flourish, to rival The Galapagos. On our thoughtfully-conceived small-group safari, we will use Antananarivo as a hub and travel in three separate directions to access the best that Madagascar has to offer: unique wildlife and plants, and unforgettable landscapes.

### How this safari delivers the best

- ❖ We have timed this tour for September, the optimum season before monsoons arrive which affords an opportunity to swim with migrating whale sharks in the north. As waterholes dry up, wildlife is more active in its search for water and therefore easier to spot.
- ❖ Centrally-located Antananarivo is the hub for accessing the three main travel areas of Madagascar. While some road travel is necessary to take in unforgettable landscapes, returning along the same road means backtracking and gruelling days. Instead we added three internal flights. Get off the bus and see more of Madagascar!
- ❖ Accommodations comprise a large part of your overall experience. We have carefully selected small family-owned boutique hotels and mixed in dabs of pure luxury where necessary.
- ❖ The range of diverse landscapes is what makes Madagascar so compelling. We have devised this itinerary to take in the best of this diversity in the west, south, and north.
- ❖ Optional excursions: swim with the whale sharks, and boat to isolated islands around Nosy Be for diving and snorkelling.
- ❖ Included expert botanist and zoologist guides in reserves.



## Itinerary

### Module ONE – THE WEST: Great Tsingy and Baobab Alley

#### Day 1 Antananarivo

Arrival in Tana, meet and greet at the airport then transfer to your hotel.

Antananarivo means "City of thousands". Its story began 500 years ago, the king Andrianjaka sent over 1000 soldiers to cut the forest and to conquer the land. Then the great King Andrianampoinimerina, attracted by the beauty of the city, decided to build a palace there, which became later his successor's main palace. From here the same king started to unify the different kingdoms of the island. During King Radama's reign Antananarivo became the capital of all Madagascar. . Antananarivo is built on 3 levels : the high city where the queen's palace is situated, the first area occupied during the royal period, then the mid-city, the administrative area where all the better boutiques of the capital are found, then the low city which is the commercial area of the town.

#### Day 2 Antsirabe – Miandrivazo

Enjoy a fresh breakfast at hotel. Then head 3-4 hrs southward to Antsirabe, crossing the highland landscape with its beautiful terraced rice- fields along the hill. Arrival in Antsirabe, enjoy a short city tour before heading westwards to Miandrivazo for 3- 4 hours. The landscape will gradually change, leaving the highland behind and giving way to savannah, empty hills, valley, and big hole called "lavaka" resulted from erosion. The climate is also changing as we are now in the hottest city of the country. Arrival in Miandrivazo by the end of afternoon, we check in and overnight in hotel.

#### Day 3 Morondava - Kirindy (Réserve)

Short city tours of Miandrivazo, then depart for 4 hours' drive to Morondava, followed by 40km to Kirindy.. As we come close to Morondava, the landscape giving way to flat rice fields decorated with baobabs. Arrival in Kirindy before 04.00pm to spot the fossa. Check-in followed by 1 hour guided hike in "Kirindy Park". After dinner, we meet our guide again for a night walk to see nocturnal wildlife.



#### **Day 4 Krindy - Bekopaka**

The Kirindy boasts more than 60 species of birds, so early morning we hike 2 hours to look for birds before breakfast. Then 2 hours' drive to Tsimafana through the baobabs forest and the red soil of the west for a ferry transfer to Belo. Head to Bekopaka for another 4 hours adventure in a dirt track. This drive brings us deeper into Madagascar, the African bush side of the country with its dry and red soil. Here we will experience the real life of Malagasy people in the driest part of the country. Arrival in Bekopaka by end of the afternoon, check-in and overnight in hotel.

#### **Day 5 Bekopaka**

Morning after breakfast, hike to the Tsingy, a limestone mountain classified as a World Heritage Site. This massif is spectacularly eroded into a chaos of karst pinnacle which gives it a unique form. Here nature seems to be in perfect harmony with this wild and sharp limestone mountain. Flora consists of a dry western deciduous forest, plants typical of these dry limestone areas, such as species of aloe and baobab *Andasonia*, the red-flowered flamboyant tree *Delonix regia* which is so widely planted in the tropics, as well as Madagascar's sole native banana *Musa Perrieri*. We can also see typical plants growing in the rocky area such *pachypodium* and orchids. With regard to fauna, spot the stump-tailed chameleon *Brookesia perarmata* known from only a handful specimens, a bird list of 53 species, and 7 species of lemurs including Decken's sifaka *Propithecus verreauxi deckeni*. Overnight in hotel

#### **Day 6 Bekopaka-Morondava**

Breakfast at hotel then cross Manambolo river and take the dirt road to Morondava. Stop in Belo sur Tsiribihina where we cross the Tsiribihina river with a local ferry to reach Tsimafana. From there another 4 hours to reach Morondava. We are now in the region of splendid Grandidiers baobab, *Andasonia grandidieri*. Arrive in «ALLEE DES BAOBABS » and enjoy the sunset in this unique setting with its different colours and shapes.

#### **Day 7 Morondava - Antananarivo (Flight)**

Transfer to the airport for the flight back to Tana. Afternoon at leisure or sightseeing of the city.



## Module TWO – THE SOUTH: Kingdom of Lemurs

### Day 8 Antananarivo – Fort Dauphin – Berenty (flight)

Transfer to the airport to fly to Fort Dauphin in the far south. You will be met at the airport then transferred to Berenty about 80 km away. Experience a big contrast between the humid east of Fort Dauphin and the dry south of Amboasary. This can also be seen in the features of the population — the Antanosy with their Asian origin, and the Antandroy with their Bantu origin. In Fort Dauphin, guided visit of the Berenty reserve at the "Nepenthès" fields or carnivorous plants, then at the triangular palm "Neodypsis Decari", an endemic palm to Fort Dauphin. Berenty is one of the main reserves where we can see almost all the fauna and flora of the south. It is also known as the Kingdom of Lemurs for species such as the ring-tailed lemurs, the dancing lemurs and many others.

### Day 9 Berenty

Get up at dawn — this is the best time for bird watching — to see the sifakas sunbathing and to enjoy the coolness of the forest before breakfast. The reserve is split into five parcels surrounded by extensive sisal plantations, total area of 265 ha is located along the Mandrare River. The gallery forest is dominated by huge tamarind trees and is suffering from a severe invasion by the alien rubber vine. Back to the hotel for lunch. Relax in the afternoon. At around 05.00 PM, meeting with your local guide for a night expedition to explore the reserve and to look for nocturnal animals.

### Day 10 Berenty - Fort Dauphin

In the morning, drive back to Fort Dauphin. Lunch at your hotel. In the afternoon, city tour: Fort Dauphin lies on the south-east coast of Madagascar. It has two distinct climates which gives it two contrasting landscapes : the humid east with its wet and green tropical forest and the south with its dry and desert plants such as the numerous spiny Bush. Night at your hotel.

### Day 11 Fort Dauphin – Antananarivo (flight)

At the appropriate time, transfer to the airport to fly to Tana. Meet your driver, then transfer to your hotel. Evening at leisure to further explore Antananarivo.



## Module THREE – THE NORTH: Nosy Be, the Perfumed Island

Nosy Be is a volcanic island of 321 sq. km in the far north surrounded by emerald seas and numerous little islands. Covered with lush tropical green vegetation and rich in natural beauty, Nosy Be is also called the Perfumed Island or Island of Ylang-ylang because of its ylang ylang, sugar and spice scent. Although this is the most popular tourist destination in Madagascar, its riches in biodiversity, idyllic landscapes, beautiful beaches, and welcoming population make it an ideal place to wind down our safari and use as a base to explore the west coast with its traditional fishing villages.

### Day 12 Antananarivo - Nosy Be (flight)

Arrival in Nosy Be. Transfer to our luxury beachside hotel. With a perfect climate and fertile soil, Nosy Be is the ideal place for sugar, pepper and vanilla plantations which are its main exports, and which scent the air. This day and the next two (**Day 13 and Day 14**) will be at your leisure, to relax and unwind, or to partake in two included excursions, among a plethora of optional (\$) adventures.

### Optional Excursions

#### ❖ **Whale shark safari**

Departure at 8 AM from the hotel. Looking for and watching sharks the whole morning from the boat or in the water. Meal on Sakatia Island (traditional food). Snorkeling with giant turtles around Sakatia Island. Return to hotel in late afternoon.

#### ❖ **Excursion to Nosy Komba and Nosy Tanikely**

Nosy Komba and Nosy Tanikely are isolated, tranquil islands accessible by boat. First stop is Nosy Komba or Island of Lemurs. Then we continue to Nosy Tanikely, a tiny island with a light house, known for its rich submarine park, perfect for diving and snorkelling. See an amazing variety of marine life - coral, starfish, anemones, every colour and shape of fish, turtles, and lobsters. Back to Nosy Be in late afternoon.

### Day 12 Nosy-Be - Antananarivo (flight)

Transfer to the airport to connect with your international flight.



Anticipated tbc

## **COST**

### **Modules One and Two**

Double occupancy per person USD 3950

Add for own room throughout USD 620

### **Module Three: The North: Nosy Be, The Perfumed Island**

Double occupancy USD 2280

Add for own room throughout USD 285

### **Includes**

Accommodation in double room occupancy

All transfers in private vehicles with experienced drivers

Expert English speaking guide

Specialist botanical guides

All entrance fees

All excursions as noted

All breakfasts and lunch or dinner daily

### **Excludes**

International and internal flights

Personal expenses such as laundry, alcoholic beverages, and incidentals

Visa fees

Gratuities

Questions? [shila@eyhotours.com](mailto:shila@eyhotours.com)

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