

Madagascar Special Itinerary



Madagascar is the fourth biggest island in the world and is referred to as the 'Galapagos of the African Continent' due to its isolation. This is the furthest gateway to Asia where a mixture of 18 cultures, variety of landscapes, and a natural environment with still many secrets to unveil are the highlights that only few countries can boast of.

Madagascar began its slow separation from Africa during the age of dinosaurs, at that time only very distant primate ancestors existed on earth. Over time the lineage that includes apes, monkeys and humans evolved on the African mainland, while lemur-like ancestors evolved in Madagascar. These lemurs lived in a gentle world, with no competition from monkeys and with none of the predators of Africa.

Madagascar does not offer the wildlife safaris of mainland Africa, but the contrasts, the cultures, the many endemic (80%) animals and plants that you will experience is part of the mysteries of this unique destination.

Your Financial Protection

All monies paid by you for the air holiday package shown [or flights if appropriate] are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 3145.

For more information see our booking terms and conditions.

Day by day Itinerary

Day 1 : Depart UK

Depart London Heathrow with Kenya Airlines for Nairobi (2000/0630). The best connection is departing London on Monday, Wednesday or Friday.

Day 2: Antananarivo

On arrival in Nairobi you will connect with the Kenya Airlines flight to Antananarivo (0820/1140). Arriving at Tana Airport you will be met and transferred to the IC Hotel. Overnight at IC Hotel (BB).

IC Hotel

The IC Hotel is located close to the airport with views that overlook the village of Ivato and the rice fields. This quiet hotel has a large pool which is located in the pleasant and colourful gardens. All the rooms have a small veranda, private bathroom, TV, telephone, internet, mini-bar and hairdryer. Continental breakfast is served in the small dining room.



Day 3 : Tana – Andasibe

After breakfast you will receive a briefing about your tour with our local representative then depart on a city tour of Tana, the capital of Madagascar.



The city was built in three stages; the high city was the first area to be occupied during the royal period. You will see the Rova, the Queen's palace and the House of the first minister which is now a museum, all were built during colonisation. You will continue to the mid-city or the administration area, ending at the Rainiharo tombs where all the chic boutiques of the capital are found. Finally you will visit the low city which is the commercial area of the town with its magnificent Avenue de l'indépendance and its imposing colonial buildings including the old railways station.

In the afternoon you will begin driving to Andasibe through the green landscape of the East. This area is the humid part of the country with many primary forests and lakes. You will arrive at your hotel late afternoon.

Two nights at Vakona Lodge or Andasibe Hotel (BB).

Day 4 : Andasibe National Park

An early start to depart for the National Park of Andasibe, this reserve is unique with endemic fauna and flora. You will meet your guide who will endeavour to show you the delights inside the park such as the Indri Indri, the biggest lemur on the island as well as chameleons, tenrecs, and many birds.

After you will walk to the orchidea park to admire the beautiful and varied flowers.

In the afternoon there will be a visit to a typical Betsimisaraka (The Many Inseparable) village, which is the second largest tribe on the island. These people cultivate rice and other crops so this visit will allow you to see how they live.

Finally you will visit the private park of 'Lemur Island' where you can see three species of lemurs; Sifaka, Brown Lemurs and Variecia Variegata.



Day 5 : Andasibe - Antsirabe

After breakfast you will drive back to Tana past Merina villages. On the way you have the opportunity to stop in Mandraka to visit the private reserve of Domaine Pyereras where you can see many different chameleons, snakes, and frogs.

From Tana you continue to drive south across the highland landscape with its beautiful rice terraces and its spectacular eroded hills called lavaka. You will arrive in Antsirabe in the afternoon. Antsirabe or 'the place of salt' is an elegant city and best known as the centre of beer! Founded by Norwegians in 1856, it is the only place which really feels and looks like a European city. With its cool climate and thermal spring, it is one of the most attractive places in Madagascar.

Antsirabe is also known for gems and semi-precious stones, on the city tour you will visit a lapidary of semi-precious gems, a workshop making pousse pousse (rickshaws) and a craftsman who makes miniature cars. Overnight in Colour Café or Les Chambres du Voyage (BB).



Day 6 : Antsirabe - Ranomafana



After breakfast, continue south to Ambositra which is the centre of Madagascar's wood carving industry. You are still in the highlands with its green landscapes dominated by rice fields and forests of pine and eucalyptus. Almost all the houses in this region are made with ornately carved wooden balconies and shutters. Ambositra also has several small handicraft workshops which you can visit and observe the craftsmen at work.

Driving on to Ranomafana you will see the 'le col de tapia' which is a tree that resists bush fires. The landscape becomes much greener with tropical forest on the both sides of the road, sometimes interrupted by small villages selling bananas or charcoal. Arrive in Ranomafana late in the afternoon.

Overnight at Setam Lodge or Centrest (BB).

Day 7 : Ranomafana National Park

This morning you will meet your special local guide and take an expedition into the forest. The National Park of Ranomafana was created in 1991 and consists of a series of steep hills from which numerous small streams run into the River Namorona.

This area is an important site for lemurs in Madagascar and it is the only confirmed site for the two rarest species - the greater bamboo lemur and the golden bamboo lemur, although other species can also be found. More than 100 birds, reptiles, lizards, butterflies and other insects have been recorded in this park.

The area is covered with thick forest and in the higher regions the trees are adorned with mosses and lichens. You can also see giant bamboo, various orchids, steep mountains, dramatic waterfalls and natural springs which make this endangered forest unusual. The name Ranomafana means 'hot water'. In the afternoon continue to Ambalavao.

Overnight at La Varangue du Betsileo (BB).



Day 8 : Ambalavao – Isalo

After breakfast you will visit Anja Park which is a delightful private park run by the people of the village and where you should be able to see Ring Tailed Lemurs.

You continue to Ihosy which is the capital of the Bara tribe who are shepherds of Zebu. En-route you will pass through the mountain chain of Andringitra, which serves as a transition between the green highlands and the dry south. The landscape becomes more and more grandiose with huge granite blocks marking the spacious plains. From a distance you will see a huge imposing rocky hill called the Bishop's Hat.

This is a sacred place for the local people as it is a burial site and it was also the place where ancestors preferred a collective suicide rather than surrender to the Merina's domination. You will pass twin rock towers called the gate of the south and this marks the end of the highlands and the beginning of the south.

You arrive in Ihosy, the land of Bara who are more dark-skinned with African features. They are cattle-raisers and several activities during their life are associated with Zebu. You continue through the huge plateaux de Horombe with its red soil, this is a huge and empty grassy plain. You may see droves of zebus being taken to market, accompanied by a Bara man and his rifle. Arrive in Isalo late afternoon.

Two nights at Satrana Lodge (BB).



Day 9 : Isalo

This morning you will visit Isalo National Park which covers a massive area comprising the entire stretch of the Isalo massif. This huge mountain is very spectacular with its eroded sandstone peaks.

You will start by hiking to the natural swimming pool; along the route you will see unusual vegetation like elephant's foot as well as native as well as endemic species of aloe. You continue walking through the eroded mountains which is also the area where the Bara place their dead before they bring them to their final resting tombs.



Along the way there may be Sifakas, Brown Lemurs and Ringtails, also several species of birds, lizards and snakes. When you reach the swimming pool you can take a dip in the crystal clear water which is a great reward after your walk.

Return to the hotel and in the afternoon you will visit the window of Isalo for the sunset.

Day 10 : Isalo – Tulear

After breakfast you drive on to Tuléar which is at the end of the National road N° 7, this area offers completely new scenery. En-route you will see the different tribal tombs, the Mahafaly tombs and few Antandroy tombs.

Overnight at Le Paille en Queue (BB).

Day 11 – Tulear – Tana

Morning at leisure before transferring to the airport for your flight to Tana (1440/1545).

OR

Day 10 : Isalo - Ifaty

From Tulear you will continue to Ifaty which is only about 27 kms away but due to the bad condition of the road, it will take about an hour to reach. This will bring you to the driest part of the country where the landscape is dominated by spiny forests and different euphorbias.

You will cross the dry and sandy soil where drinking water is scarce. Many mangrove trees line the coast and the Vezo villages are found in between, these people earn their living by fishing. You can often see the men fishing in small pirogues along the coastline and the women and children take the fish to Tuléar to sell.

Four nights at La Paradisier or La Mira (HB).

Day 11 – 13 : Ifaty

Three days at leisure at the beach.

Ifaty is an ideal place for diving and snorkeling, situated in the largest lagoon in the country it is protected by a large coral reef. In the afternoon you can walk to the village of Mangily where you can visit a local school and see the Vezo Fishermen, especially when they return from a day's fishing.

Many other excursions are available; visit the Reserve Reniala which is a communal reserve where you can see two kinds of baobabs, spiny bush, reptiles, geckos and the largest chameleon – parsoni. There is also a tortoise park and the area is a popular place for birdwatchers.

Perhaps take a boat to see the whales, from July to mid September whales come to the cool seas of Madagascar to give birth. It's a spectacular experience especially as sometimes the whales come very close to the boat.



Day 14: Ifaty – Tana

Transfer to Tulear Airport for the Air Madagascar flight to Tana 1440/1545.

Day 11 or 14: Tana

On arrival at Tana Airport you will transfer to the IC Hotel for one night.

Day 12 or 15 : Homeward

Transfer to the airport for your International flight to Nairobi (1240/1600). On arrival in Nairobi you will connect with the flight to London Heathrow (2345/0645), arriving the following morning.

The best connection is departing Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. To make the wait in Nairobi more comfortable, we can arrange a lounge pass.

Tour Highlights

Andasibe Special Reserve: A huge rainforest where you have a good chance of seeing the largest lemur - Indri. Also nine endemic species of lemur, 28 species of reptiles and 109 species of birds as well as hundreds of orchids.

Highlands: The towns of Antsirabe and Fianarantsoa are characterised by their green landscapes with terraced rice fields and colourful rickshaws.

Ranomafana National park: A rainforest where you can see golden bamboo lemurs, 29 species of mammals, 12 species of lemurs, 5 species of mongoose, reptiles and about 98 species of birds.

Ambalavao: Vineyards and wine production, Anteimoro hand-made paper factory and cattle market.

Isalo National Park: Eroded Sandstone Mountains containing many canyons and a natural swimming pool. Fauna includes three species of lemurs, 55 species of birds, geckos, chameleons. Flora includes succulent plants like pachypodium, tapia, aloes and pandanus.

Ilakaka: The village of sapphires, a real frontier town! Spectacular Mahafaly tombs.

Ifaty: A long beach protected by a coral reef, whales from June to September, baobabs and spiny forest.

The cost of the 10 day itinerary is from £2095 per person, based on twin share and is subject to availability at the time of booking. The four night beach extension is from £260 per person, twin share.

Includes:

Return flights London Heathrow – Tana with Kenya Airlines in economy class inc. Taxes
Domestic flight Tulear - Tana inc. Taxes
Transports by private car (Toyota Land Cruiser) with fuel and driver
Accommodation as described
Meals as described
National Park entry fees in Andasibe, Ranomafana and Isalo
Local guides in Andasibe, Ranomafana and Isalo
Guided tours of Antsirabe, Ambositra,
City tour of Tulear
Visit the gem town of Ilakaka,
Return airport transfers

Excludes:

Optional excursions
Meals other than those mentioned
Drinks
Porterage
Travel Insurance – ask us for a quote
Items of a personal nature

