

Madagascar

DIVERSE WILDLIFE TOUR

- See Madagascar's unique wildlife including the magnificent Indri, Madagascar fish eagle and the elusive fosa
- Explore an exciting diversity of habitats ranging from montane rainforest to dry deciduous forest
- Personal, small group trip led by local wildlife experts
- Each tour carries a contribution towards the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (DWCT)



Summary

This exciting itinerary has been specifically designed to witness the spectacular diversity of Madagascar's unique fauna and flora. Incorporating a variety of habitats, ranging from Montane rainforest to western deciduous forest, you will accompany park guides through a rainforest in search of the largest lemur, the Indri and watch troops of Coquerel's Sifakas in Ankarafantsika National Park where nocturnal walks are also particularly rewarding. Your journey will continue to Morondava, where you will search for the giant jumping rat and elusive fosa, Madagascar's largest carnivore, before enjoying the spectacular sight of the Avenue of Baobabs.

Overview



Accompanied by an experienced local wildlife guide, your journey will encompass a visit to a montane rainforest where, to the accompaniment of a cacophony of eerie cries, you will search for the Indri, the largest of the lemurs and one of the country's most iconic animals. The rainforest is also home to a host of other species, from colourful chameleons to extraordinary reptiles. You will then continue to Ankarafantsika Park, a vast deciduous oasis of western forest, with its troops of Coquerel's Sifaka and a magnificent array of birdlife. The last few days of the trip are spent in the Morondava region, home to the splendid Granddier's baobabs, where you will search for the giant jumping rat which is only found in this small area of the country. It is also the most likely location to see the elusive fosa, Madagascar's largest carnivore.



Such diversity of habitat comes with a range of accommodation, from the luxury of a rainforest lodge to the simplicity of basic camping in the Kirindy region in order to optimise the wildlife viewing in this region. Most of the regions visited offer little or no alternatives and where ever possible, we use the best accommodation available.



You will gain a great deal from the trip if you travel with an open mind and a flexible attitude given the logistical issues of travelling in such remote areas. However, in so doing, the trip will offer an unparalleled wildlife experience.

This tour aims to give you a fabulous Madagascan wildlife journey, whilst contributing towards Durrell's conservation work in the host country.

Itinerary



Day 1

Following your arrival in the capital of Antananarivo (Tana), you will be met and welcomed by your guide who will transfer you to a nearby hotel where you can relax after your flight and meet up with the rest of the group. Overnight at the simple and comfortable Relais Plateaux on a bed & breakfast basis.



Day 2

This morning, after breakfast, you will be met by your local guide and depart for Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. The drive, through highland villages, takes approximately two and a half hours and after settling in, you can enjoy a nocturnal walk, looking for Mouse lemur and Horned-nosed chameleon. You will be accommodated at the luxurious Vakona Forest Lodge situated on the outskirts of the Mantadia National Park on a full board basis.



Day 3

After an early breakfast you will be taken on a guided walk in Andasibe National Park, the island's most accessible rainforest reserve and the best place to see (and hear!) Indri, the largest of the lemurs. Over and above the 11 species of lemur found in Andasibe, this is also a great place for bird watching, including specials such as the velvet asity, blue coua and nuthatch vanga and there is a good chance of seeing snakes, chameleons and frogs. This evening, enjoy another nocturnal walk before returning to Vakona Forest Lodge on a full board basis.



Day 4

This morning is another early start as you depart for Mantadia National Park which comprises of virtually untouched primary forest and provides the possibility of seeing the diademed sifaka. Other species found here include the Red-bellied lemur, the common Brown lemur, the Madagascar tree boa and the beautiful Parson's chameleon.



Later today you will be transferred back to the capital, where you will overnight before tomorrow's early morning departure to Majunga. Overnight at Relais Plateaux on a full board basis.

Day 5

This morning you will be met and transferred to the airport for your flight to Mahajanga. Following your arrival, you will be transferred to Ampijoroa - a road journey of around 2 hours. The Ampijoroa forestry station is now part of Ankarafantsika Park and is one of the best pieces of accessible western forest remaining. The stunning Coquerel's sifakas are easy to see, often foraging around camp and the birding is here is excellent, including White-breasted mesite, Schlegel's asity and Van Dam's vanga. After dinner, enjoy a nocturnal walk, which is particularly rewarding in this park due to the high density of nocturnal lemurs. Overnight at Gite de Ampijoroa on a full board basis.





Day 6

This morning you will have the chance to explore Ampijoroa and while the walking terrain here is flat, it can get hot. Ampijoroa is also the location of the Durrell tortoise and turtle captive breeding centre for the Ploughshare tortoise, the Flat-tailed tortoise (endemic to Menabe) and the Side-necked turtle or rere found in the lakes and rivers of western Madagascar. This evening, enjoy another nocturnal walk to find the Golden mouse lemur (found nowhere else in the world!), Grey mouse lemur and Fat-tailed dwarf lemur. Overnight at the Gite de Ampijoroa on a full board basis.



Day 7

An early morning start with a visit to Durrell's captive breeding centre, before heading out by boat on Ravelobe Lake, where you will have an opportunity to see the endangered Madagascar Fish eagle. This afternoon, optional activities include a visit to a small raffia workshop and a baobab trail walking trail. Alternatively, enjoy some birding around the park office, where you will have the chance of spotting the greater vasa parrot and Madagascar green pigeon. This evening enjoy another exciting nocturnal walk. Overnight at the Relais des Plateaux on a full board basis.



Day 8

This morning you will fly to Morondava and on arrival you will be transferred to Kirindy Forest where your camp will be set up, providing the ideal base from which to observe wildlife at the optimum time of dawn and dusk. This evening you will have the opportunity to see nocturnal lemurs and chameleons and, if you are lucky, a giant jumping rat! Camp overnight on a full board basis.



Day 9

Another full day to explore this little-visited part of the country where the nocturnal and early morning walks allow you to make the most of the spectacular wildlife opportunities in this part of Madagascar. Camp overnight on a full board basis.



Days 10 - 11

After an early morning excursion, the following two days are set aside to visit the sights of this region - the spectacular Granddier's baobab is best seen at the Avenue of the Baobabs, spectacular at sunset. Spend some rest and relaxation after your camping adventure, at the Baobab Café situated in the port of Morondava. It lies on a long, sandy spit of land called Nosy Kely, which runs southward from the town centre, flanked by the Indian Ocean to the west and a mangrove-lined tidal river to the east. Overnight at Baobab Café on a full board basis.



Day 12

Today you will fly from Morondava back to Antananarivo, where you will be met and transferred to the Relais de Plateaux. Freshen up in a day room and later this evening, you will be transferred to the airport for your exit flight.

Please note the itinerary is flexible and is to be used as a guide only. The itinerary will be dependent on any unexpected flight schedule changes. Given the adventurous nature of the tour and the areas visited, the itinerary can and will change at short notice. A combination of the activities mentioned will be undertaken, but the order in which they take place can and will change on a daily basis!



Accommodation

Given the diversity of regions covered, we use a mix of simple and luxury accommodation:

Vakona Forest Lodge: Situated about 30 minutes by road from the turn-off to Perinet Reserve. Accommodation comprises of brick bungalows each with their own bathrooms, heaters and mini bar. Mosquito nets are provided. There is a large lounge area and the open plan restaurant is built around an open fire. There is a small souvenir shop and swimming pool.



Relais des Plateaux: Situated ten minutes from the airport and one hour from the city, this comfortable, clean hotel is in a quiet residential area. There is a large open restaurant and heated pool. All rooms are en-suite with TV, minibar, room safe, hot / cold air conditioning.



Gite de Ampijoroa: The bungalows are set discreetly in the forest overlooking Lake Ravelobe. Offering double and bunk beds they are clean and comfortable. Each is equipped with a toilet and shower with cold water only. Mosquito nets and fans are provided. There is also a pleasant camp site with shelters for tents and ablution facilities with cold showers, flush toilets and basins. Accommodation is at a premium here and although we try to book the bungalows with private bathrooms, they cannot be guaranteed.

Kirindy Camping: Dome tents (4-man tents) with sewn-in mosquito netting, foam mattresses (16cm in thickness) with sheets, pillows and towels are provided. Communal shower facilities available with a bucket of cold water. Chemical toilet and bucket shower will be provided if needs be.



Baobab Café: Small hotel situated in the port of Morondava, lying on a long, sandy spit of land called Nosy Kely. The attractive bar and dining area is spread across a stilted wooden platform overlooking the mangrove-lined river and leading toward a large pool deck surrounded by shady tables. The restaurant is very good and the standard rooms are comfortably furnished with satellite TV, mini bar, air conditioning and en-suite hot showers.

Dates

2010 (Antananarivo / Antananarivo)

Wednesday 3rd November to Sunday 14th November

Main tour cost

From £2'995 per person in twin share accommodation including domestic flights only

Based on a minimum group of six travelling

Includes

All road transfers, accommodation, domestic flights, meals as stated, local wildlife tour leader and park guides. Park fees and excursions listed. Also includes a contribution to Durrell.

Excludes

All international flights, vaccinations, travel insurance (mandatory), all drinks, laundry, some meals, telephone calls and all personal expenses.

Flights

This itinerary is based on Air France International flights, please note the group flight schedule which you would need to base your flights on:

Arriving Antananarivo at 23.10 on Day 1 (subject to flight schedule changes)

Departing Antananarivo at 01.35 on Day 13 (subject to flight schedule changes)

Extras

Here are some suggestions of ways to enhance your trip even before you arrive; upgrade your flight from economy to premium economy or business class, upgrade your hotel room, prebook valet or airport parking, airport hotels and airport lounges. If you wish to take advantage of the reduced tour operator rates we are able to offer, please don't hesitate to contact us for further information.

Important information

Ground only arrangements

We are happy to quote you either in US dollars or Euros for the tour including return flights to Antananarivo. However, owing to currency fluctuations, we will quote you at the time of your enquiry using the current exchange rate and base this on current flight availability. Please do contact us for a costing.

Vaccinations and Visas

All visitors must be in possession of a valid passport with at least six months left before expiry. It is your own responsibility to obtain a visa for Madagascar. A visa for 30 days is granted on arrival for UK and US citizens, and costs around £45. It is also possible to obtain a 30-day visa from the Madagascan Consulate in the UK. Other nationalities should contact the Madagascan Embassy in your country of residence for visa requirements. Vaccinations for Typhoid, Tetanus, Hepatitis A and Polio are recommended. Malaria is widespread and expert advice should be sought. Please consult a medical practitioner or ring MASTA on 09068 224100 (premium rate call) at least two months before you travel. **IMPORTANT** – if you are travelling from a yellow-fever endemic area to Madagascar, you may be requested to provide proof of your current Yellow Fever vaccination.

Health and Fitness

A good to high level of fitness and good health is required for the walks and in order to better handle the heat and humidity of some of the areas.

Food

Malagasy food comprises of simple but tasty dishes served with lots of rice and an abundance of tropical fruits in season. Hotels tend to serve a host of mouth-watering French dishes. Vegetarians can be catered for.

Weather

This programme has been devised to provide the best possible wildlife viewing. November falls at the beginning of the rainy season, and in addition to the fosa mating spectacle at Morondava, November is one of the best months to see the giant jumping rat here, which is more active after the rain has softened the ground. Reptile viewing is also excellent at this time of year and the jacarandas are in flower and the lemurs also have babies.

Essential items that you will need

We will provide you with a very comprehensive information document when you book, but the following is a guideline for what you need to take: good first aid kit, water bottle, rain poncho, day pack, insect repellent, cheap watch with alarm, good torch with spare batteries, preferably a head torch, binoculars (waterproof if possible), zip lock bags. We recommend that you bring comfortable old trainers/running shoes rather than walking boots as the terrain is wet, and your footwear will need to dry quickly.

Travelling in Madagascar

Travelling in Madagascar is not for everybody and tourism is a relatively young industry. Many conveniences available and expected in well-travelled destinations only exist in a rudimentary form. Exact schedules, tight itineraries and luxurious accommodation cannot be guaranteed. However, if you are flexible and looking for the unexpected, if you want to meet an extraordinary people, then go and discover this fascinating island! You will certainly agree with the characterisation made by world-explorer Dervla Murphy: "Apart from the Tibetans, I have never travelled among a people as endearing as the Malagasy."

Our commitment



In 2007 we celebrated 10 years of spectacular achievement as pioneers in the field of nature travel.

We have raised a significant amount in support of the world's leading wildlife and conservation agencies, researchers and experts, and increased awareness of travel and conservation through newsletters, lectures and consistent media coverage. Furthermore we have voluntarily spearheaded collective action campaigns such as Travel Operators for Tigers in South Asia.



To mitigate the carbon dioxide released into the high atmosphere through your air travel we are giving £10 per client to Rainforest Concern. Rainforests have a central role to play in the slowing of climate change and yet we are removing forests from the planet at a faster rate than they can grow back. It is thus axiomatic to try and preserve the forests that we have rather than replanting.

Rainforest Concern was established in 1993 to protect threatened natural habitats, the biodiversity they contain and the indigenous people who still depend on them for their survival.



Durrell's mission is saving species from extinction. Founded by Gerald Durrell nearly 50 years ago, it has a worldwide reputation and pre-eminent expertise in the conservation of endangered species. Its largest field conservation programme is in Madagascar, where intensive work in seven different areas of the country focuses on numerous species, the habitats they live in and the local surrounding communities.

Steppes Discovery is running a Madagascar study tour that visits the Durrell projects and that funds their work.

Our travel partners, accommodation, service providers and ground agents are all carefully chosen to ensure their commitment to the environment, most being quality, family owned businesses – reflecting the unique character of the places, the abiding hospitality of its people and the remarkable spirit of its wilderness.

Now come along and see for yourself. With us it won't cost the earth!

Want to discuss this trip?

Please call **Mandy Mountjoy** on **01285643333** for more details or to make a booking.



Born and raised in South Africa, Mandy's passion for the African bush and its people began at a private game reserve adjacent to the Kruger National Park. This led to far dustier and wilder experiences further afield in Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia. Considering herself privileged to have witnessed raw Africa at its finest - from nesting leatherback turtles and endangered mountain gorillas to the simple beauty of everyday life in the bush - Mandy is passionate about the conservation of Africa and its wildlife. Having recently returned from Madagascar, she would be happy to assist you with your Madagascar adventure.
