

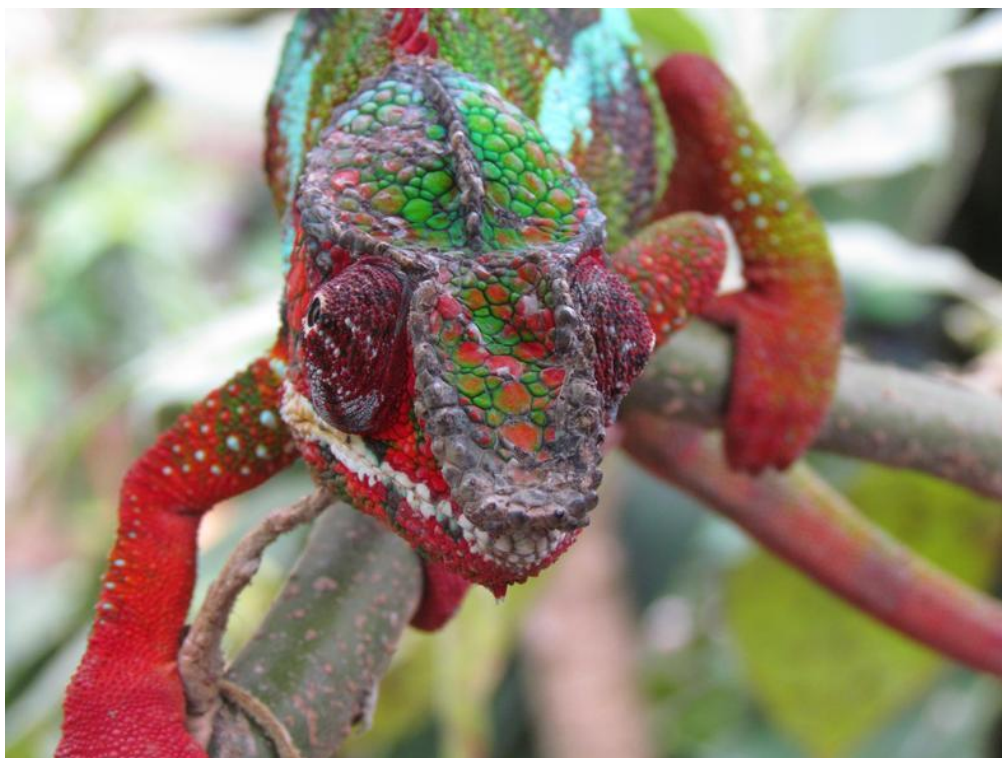


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# Tour Notes

Endangered Madagascar – Northern Explorer

Tour Duration – 18 Days



## Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●●○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●○ | History ●●●○ | Wildlife ●●●●●

## Tour Pace

Busy

## Tour Highlights

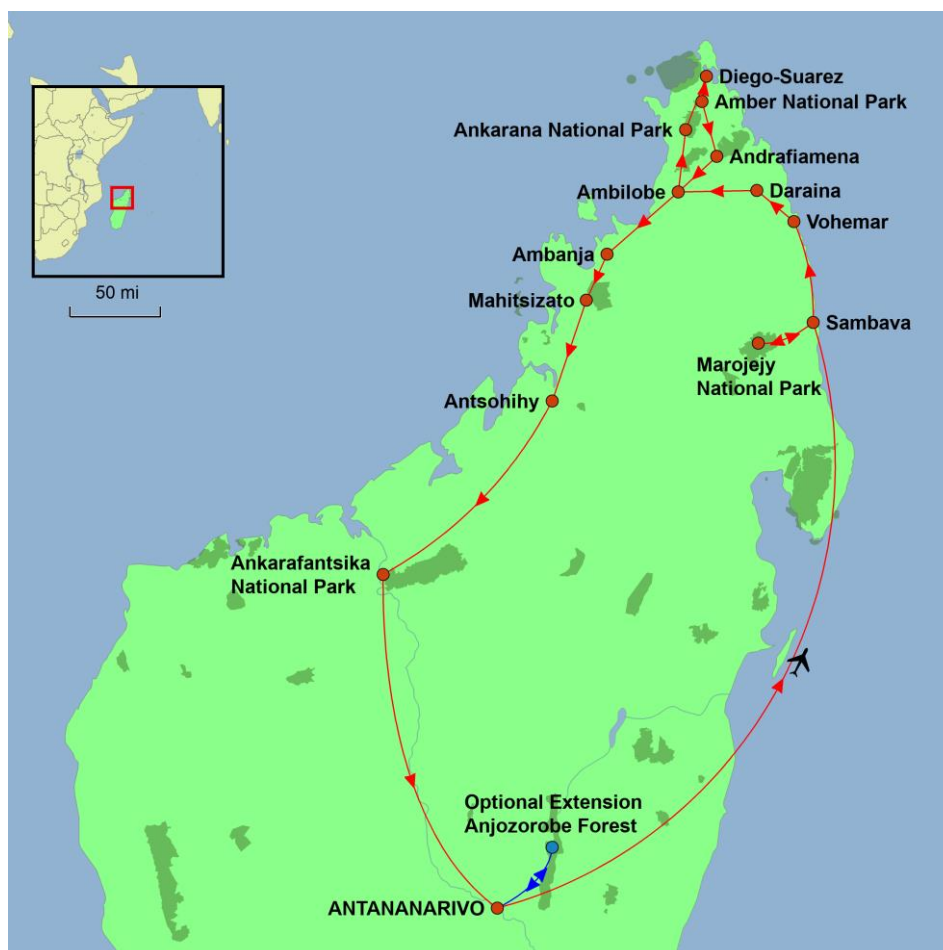
- ✓ Trek and explore Marojejy National Park, one of the most pristine parks in the country
- ✓ Track 3 of the most critically endangered primates on the planet
- ✓ Travel to the far north of Madagascar at Diego Suarez
- ✓ Explore the wonderful tropical rainforest of Amber Mountain National Park
- ✓ Experience the extraordinary spiny limestone landscape of Tsingy de l'Ankarana
- ✓ Take a tour of a huge working plantation of cocoa and vanilla in Ambanja





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## Tour Map



### Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable hotel/lodge accommodation and 4 nights camping or basic huts in Marojejy (very basic) and Andrafiamaena (basic)
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Maximum group size 12
- Start Point:** Antananarivo – you can arrive any time on day 1
- End Point:** Antananarivo – you can depart any time on day 18
- Transport:** 4WD or minibuses, Domestic flight Tana to Sambava
- Country Visited:** Madagascar
- Optional Extensions:** Pre or post tour Anjozorobe Forest and lots of other options including beach extensions



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### Endangered Madagascar - Northern Explorer

*The island of Madagascar occupies a unique place, both culturally and geographically, within Africa. Separated from the mainland millions of years ago, its fauna has developed very differently from the rest of the continent's wildlife, and it is home to countless species found nowhere else on earth. Its people are an intriguing mix of Malay and African ancestry, with complex patterns of beliefs and an unusual history. On this trip we take in the very best of the North of this enigmatic and alluring land. Our journey takes us first to Sambava, Madagascar's vanilla capital on the North East coast before we head to what is undoubtedly one of the jewels of an off the beaten track tour of Madagascar; Marojejy National Park which is only accessible on foot. Marojejy is part of the World Heritage Site of Atsinanana, which UNESCO has placed on its endangered list and contains lowland, mid altitude and high-altitude rainforest, as well as the island's most intact remaining mountaintop moorlands. Visitors need to have a reasonable level of fitness due to the steep slopes in some places. The floral and faunal diversity in the park is bewildering, with the star attraction on the lemur front being the critically endangered pure white Silky Sifaka. We then head inland across the country along a poorly maintained road to Daraina Reserve run by an NGO, where we will hope to encounter the critically endangered Golden Crowned Lemur before continuing to the far North to Ankarana with its fantastic landscape of razor-sharp pinnacles (Tsingy), home to wildlife such as sportive lemurs. In this area we also pay a visit to the lush forests of Amber Mountain National Park. Our journey south back to the capital see us search for the Turquoise Eyed True Lemur and finally to Ankarafantsika National Park and Lake Ravelobe with its wildlife-rich deciduous woodland mixed with teak trees. This is an adventure not to be missed.*

### Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used. Although we try to be as accurate as possible, distances and timings indicated in the itinerary are meant as guidelines only and can substantially vary from one departure to another one depending on local safety initiatives, road conditions, road traffic and other unforeseen events.

### Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour.

On pre and post tour extensions, you will not have an accompanying guide. You will have the services of a local park/reserve guide.

## Itinerary

### Optional pre-tour extension – Anjozorobe Forest Corridor 4 days 3 nights

#### [Pre-tour] Day 1: Arrive in Antananarivo

Arrive in Antananarivo. On arrival transfer to the hotel. Overnight Gassy Country House Hotel or similar. No meals are included today.

**Note:** For those arriving before 3pm into Antananarivo it is possible to travel straight to Anjozorobe at an extra cost. Please contact us for a quote or for arranging any other activities in Tana.



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### **[Pre-tour] Day 2: Antananarivo – Anjozorobe (Overall driving time: 4 hours)**

Depart after breakfast and our first stop is the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga (UNESCO), a significant symbol to the culture and people of Madagascar. We then journey to Anjozorobe Forest Corridor where you can relax or take walks in the surrounds of the beautiful forest. Overnight Akiba Lodge (BLD)

#### **Ambohimanga (UNESCO)**

The Royal Hill of Ambohimanga consists of a royal city and burial site, and an ensemble of sacred places. It is associated with strong feelings of national identity, and has maintained its spiritual and sacred character both in ritual practice and the popular imagination for the past 500 years. It remains a place of worship to which pilgrims come from Madagascar and elsewhere.

#### **Anjozorobe Forest Corridor**

Anjozorobe is home to one of the last large and unfragmented remnants of the central highland's natural ecosystems. Two types of forest are present: high altitude humid forest (over 1500 m) and mountain humid forest (800 - 1500 m). The corridor is still of sufficient size and integrity to guard safe populations of plant and animal life. Anjozorobe is the richest known forest highland sites for biodiversity of flora and fauna. Anjozorobe is somewhat of a hidden gem and despite its beautiful forest and biodiversity receives relatively few visitors compared to more famous parks in Madagascar.

### **[Pre-tour] Day 3: Anjozorobe**

A full day to relax in the surrounds of the beautiful forest of Anjozorobe. There will also be the opportunity to take walks in the forest with a local guide to get your first taste of some of the magnificent flora and fauna of Madagascar. The forest has an abundance of plant and animal life. It may be possible for you to spot the beautiful Indri Lemur as well as other flora and fauna. Overnight Akiba Lodge (BLD)

### **[Pre-tour] Day 4: Anjozorobe – Antananarivo (Overall driving time: 3-4 hours)**

After an optional early morning walk in the forest the rest of the morning is at leisure before returning to Antananarivo in the afternoon. This is Day 1 (arrival day) of the main tour. (BL)

## **Main Group Tour**

### **Day 1: Arrival in Antananarivo**

Arrive in Antananarivo and transfer to the hotel conveniently situated in the vicinity of the airport. Depending on your time of arrival, you may have time to explore the city. Overnight Gassy Country House Hotel or similar. No meals are included today.

#### **Antananarivo**

Antananarivo, commonly known as Tana, is the capital and largest city in Madagascar. The name Antananarivo means 'the City of the Thousands', a reference to the thousand warriors of King Andrianjaka, who established Tana as the capital city of the Merina tribe and accorded it a sacred status. The city was largely chosen for its privileged location – being on high ground (1,370m) and surrounded by marsh made it easy to defend and thus a natural choice for the capital. Tana has unusual French and Asian inspired architecture with winding cobblestone streets and staircases that create a medieval impression. The large open-air Zoma market has been disbanded, which means there is now plenty of room to walk around Araben ny Fahaleovantena (Avenue de l'Independence), the capital's main street. Other attractions include the colourful daily flower market on the edge of Lake Anosy and the botanical and zoological gardens, where you can see the egg and 3m-tall skeleton of the extinct aepyornis, or elephant bird. Sadly, the Rova (Queen's Palace) burned to the ground in 1996. Though virtually nothing remains at the site, there are nice views of the city from the hill where the palace once stood. Antananarivo does not have too much in the way of



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conventional sightseeing, but if you enjoy walking around, watching local scenes and experiencing the laid-back atmosphere that is prevalent here, the city is a very pleasant place – interesting markets, colonial buildings and many craft shops make it a great place to explore.

### **Day 2: Antananarivo – Sambava (Domestic flight)**

We take a morning flight to Sambava (subject to change), the only flight we shall take on this overland adventure. The landscapes around Sambava are dominated by vanilla fields and coconut plantations. On arrival, if time allows us, we can visit a workshop where you will get a demonstration of how to prepare vanilla from the field to the vanilla pod. Overnight at Las Palmas Hotel or similar (BD)

### **Sambava**

Sambava is nestled in a small bay and is sheltered by luxuriant vegetation such as bamboo, banana and palm trees. It is one of the most prosperous cities in the north and known as the capital of the vanilla triangle.

### **Day 3: Sambava – Marojejy National Park (Approximate driving time 1.5 hours approx. / Approximate walking time today 3.5 – 4 hours - gentle uphill for most)**

Today we depart around 07:30am, accompanied by our special Marojejy park guide we travel by 4WD to Manantenina arriving around 9am. From here after a short break we continue along a dirt track to Mandena, which is as far as the car can go. We then continue on foot for 1 hour to the entrance point of Marojejy National Park. This is around a leisurely 3km walk and an elevation change of 80 metres. From the park's entrance it is a further 2½ hour walk to reach Camp Mantella. The difference in elevation on this section is around 270 metres but the trails are quite good (can be slippery under foot after rain) and we shall stop frequently to look at the flora and fauna in the beautiful forest. We should arrive in good time at the camp to be able to enjoy the forest surroundings. For those wishing to do some more exploring on foot we can walk to picturesque Humbert waterfall which is approximately 1 hour each way. Overnight wild camping or staying in basic huts with no shower/bath facilities and outdoor toilet (BLD)

### **Marojejy National Park**

Marojejy National Park is one of the most strikingly beautiful and wild areas of Madagascar. It is unique in the world, a place of dense jungle rainforest, sheer cliffs, and plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. Marojejy National Park comprises 60,050 hectares (148,387 acres) of land, and protects the entire Marojejy Massif. The forests, ranging from low altitude rain forest through to high altitude montane scrub, harbour an impressive list of plants and animals: at least 275 species of ferns, 35 species of palms, 149 species of amphibians and reptiles including 60 frogs such as the green climbing mantilla, leaf-tailed geckos, brookesia chameleons and lots of leeches. The park is also home to eleven species of lemurs, including the critically endangered Silky Sifaka (*Propithecus candidus*) which only occurs here. Other lemurs found here include Indri, red-bellied lemur, Eastern woolly lemur, aye-aye, bamboo lemur or Weasel sportive lemur. Birds are also very well represented with 118 species having been observed so far including the helmet vanga, Madagascar serpent-eagle, velvet asity, and the cryptic warbler.

***Please note that Marojejy National Park is a true wilderness area in Madagascar. Facilities are very basic at the camps and consist either of shared huts or camping. Outside bathroom facilities are shared. You should be well prepared for basic conditions in Marojejy National Park. Even in the dry season rain is common and trails can be slippery. From Days 3 – 6 you will be walking every day (optional Day 5). The walking times between the camps are outlined in the day to day itinerary. Walks from the camps vary depending on the wishes of the group and the state of the trails which will be determined by the local park guide. Should you wish then you can stay at camp on Day 5 if you do not wish to walk any further from Marojejia Camp.***

***Fresh food is cooked for clients at the camps and in our personal experience is plentiful, hearty and delicious.***



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***You will be able to leave your main luggage in Sambava or at the Marojejy park headquarters so please pack lightly for the Marojejy experience. Ensure you have waterproof clothing, insect repellent, antiseptic wipes and any other medication you may routinely need. Ensure you have some dry clothes for time spent at camp. It is a good idea to have a waterproof cover for your small pack or have valuables kept in a plastic bag. Ensure you bring adequate numbers of batteries for your equipment as you cannot charge equipment whilst in the park.***

***Please bring a light sleeping bag and a sleeping inner sheet. A travel towel is advisable. You will need a head torch or torch for the camps at night.***

***There are no shower/washing facilities at the Marojejy camps but there is an outdoor hut at each camp with western style toilet.***

***Please note that night walks on the trails in Marojejy are no longer permitted. We will however be able to look for wildlife around camp on the nights spent in the park.***

#### **Day 4: Marojejy National Park (Approximate walking time – 2 hours to camp (some steep uphill sections))**

Today we continue our trek and reach Camp Marojejia (Camp 2), a trek of approximately 2 hours mostly uphill with an elevation gain of around 350 meters. The walk is quite tough in parts but we have plenty of time and will be able to make lots of stops to enjoy the forest and to look for wildlife. Marojejia camp is located at the transition between lowland and montane rainforest. It is located on a mountainside thus it offers breath-taking views, overlooking large areas of the park. On arrival at the camp we can get some rest and those that want to, can do some further exploring of the park with the special park guide. Hopefully we will be lucky and spot the critically endangered “Silky Sifaka” a beautiful pure white lemur only found in this area and one of the top 25 rarest primates on the planet. Overnight wild camping or staying in basic huts with no shower/bath and outdoor toilet (BLD)

#### **Day 5: Marojejy National Park (Walking time depends on the trail conditions and the location of the wildlife)**

Today we explore the National Park on trails starting from the Marojejia camp searching for flora and fauna. The walk today should be around 4 hours but depends on our success observing the flora and fauna, much of which is unique to this magnificent park. Overnight wild camping or staying in basic huts with no shower/bath and outdoor toilet (BLD)

***Those that wish to stay at camp and enjoy the amazing views and tranquillity of Marojejia camp can do so, rather than hiking in the forest.***

#### **Day 6: Marojejy – Vohemar (Approximate driving time 3 hours and approximate walking time 3-4 hours – gentle descent)**

We depart camp today around 07:00 am and descend to Camp Mantella and then back to Mandena where our vehicles await. The descent should take around 4 hours. We then drive around 1 hour back to Sambava where we will stop for lunch. From Sambava we head on northwards to Vohemar through the green and peaceful landscape of the east. As you travel don't be surprised to inhale the unmistakable scent of vanilla. The journey should take around 2 hours from Sambava to Vohemar. On arrival in Vohemar we check in to our accommodation before visiting a vanilla plantation and learn about the processes involved in cultivating one of Madagascar's most famous export products. Overnight Baie d'Iharana or similar (BD)

***Note – We may visit a vanilla plantation in Sambava instead of Vohemar as described on Day 2***



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### **Vohemar**

Vohemar is situated in an attractive bay and has one of the few natural harbours on the East coast. It is also one of the main vanilla producing areas of the country.

### **Day 7: Vohemar – Daraina – Ankarana (Approximate driving time 8 hours)**

We have an early breakfast before continuing to Daraina Reserve. We take a walk in the forest aiming to spot the critically endangered Tattersall's Sifaka or Golden Crowned Sifaka which is only found in this area.

There are also other species of lemur to look out for as well as many birds. After the visit, we continue to Ankarana. In Ambilobe if time allows, we will take a look around the lively and picturesque market. Overnight Relais de l'Ankarana or similar (BD)

### **Daraina Reserve**

The park is a mosaic of rolling hills covered with patches of deciduous and semi-evergreen forest, which is one of the richest and most ecologically sensitive areas in the north. The principal reason for its importance is the critically endangered golden-crowned sifaka, one of the world's rarest primates, that is found here and nowhere else. Other lemurs are also seen with regularity including crowned lemurs, and Sanford's brown lemurs and even, occasionally, the aye-aye. Recently a new lemur species has been discovered the "Fork-marked lemur". They belong to the genus or group of species, called Phaner and if confirmed as a new species, this would be only the fifth member of that group. Natural ecosystems in Daraina have been transformed and fragmented by human activities. Currently, the area presents a complex and rich mosaic of small, medium, and large forest fragments. Despite the fact that the forests found throughout the region are highly fragmented, the floral and faunal communities found in the area are rich and diverse. The reserve is managed by NGO Fanamby and the Tattersali Camp accommodation is run by people from the local community where proceeds from tourism contribute to enhancing the lives of local villagers.

### **Day 8: Ankarana National Park**

This morning we visit the Tsingy D 'Ankarana, where the limestone highlands have been sculpted by natural erosion. It gives the impression of walking on a spiny landscape and is an extraordinary spectacle. Abundant wildlife lives in the forested canyons and during your walk we should have chances to see brown lemurs, geckos and non-poisonous snakes. The nature of the environment here makes the walking a little challenging but there are different grades of difficulty so there will be different options in terms of the walks on offer and your guide will discuss these options with you. Overnight Relais De l'Ankarana or similar (BD)

### **Ankarana Reserve**

Ankarana Special Reserve is located about 108km south of Antsiranana (Diego Suarez) and covers 18,220ha. Ankarana is known for its limestone karst pinnacles called tsingy along with its extensive cave system and network of underground rivers, some of which contain crocodiles. Dry deciduous forest is found in much of the reserve. Visitors may encounter the crowned lemur, Sanford's brown lemur, Perrier's black lemur, the northern sportive lemur and dwarf lemurs. A variety of chameleons and leaf-tailed Uroplatus geckos can also be found in the reserve.

### **Day 9: Ankarana – Tsingy Rouge - Diego Suarez (Approximate driving time 5 hours)**

After breakfast we continue to the northern most tip of Madagascar and the town of Diego Suarez. En route we will visit the curious rock formations of the Red Tsingy, formed by erosion of the Irodo River. Arrival in Diego, we have a short city tour including a visit to the World War 2 cemetery and memorial dedicated to the allied soldiers that fell during the battle of Madagascar and operation Iron Clad in 1942. Overnight Grand Hotel or similar (BD)

### **Day 10: Diego Suarez**

After breakfast we will visit the French Mountain and 3 bays. We take a hike in Montagne Des Francais National Park which affords magnificent views out over the 3 Bays of Baie des Dunes, Baie des Pigeons and





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Sakalava Bay. During the hike it is also possible to see lemurs and endemic trees including species of the baobab tree. We continue with the visit of 3 bays. Located 15kilometers from Diego, on the road to Ramena, and 5 km of sandy track, it refers to three bays near Diego Suarez: the Sakalava bay, the Pigeons Bay and the Dunes bay, known for their beauty and wilderness with their long beaches of white sand and its turquoise blue sea. We start at the "Bay of Sakalava". We see an imposing 300 years old Baobab tree above the road before we reach a very beautifully white sandy beach where, with a bit of luck we will be able to encounter some lemurs. Then we head on to the "Bay of the Pigeons" and after crossing some dunes, we will arrive at the "Bay of the Dunes", a deserted white sandy beach. Depending on the seasons, a ballet of tortoises might be seen on the sea. Afterwards, we head on to Cap Miné where we can find the vestiges of war guns and fortifications, evidence of presence of the French Army and its former role as guardian of the pass: the main gateway to Diego Bay, with the lighthouse. The tour will end at Orangea camp before we join Ramena village, for a magnificent sunset. Overnight Grand Hotel or similar. (BD)

**Note – The hike up Montagne de Francais is steep in parts and conditions can be very hot. Please take plenty of water and wear a hat and other appropriate sun protection. For those that do not wish to walk then you can relax at the hotel.**

**Day 11: Diego Suarez – Amber Mountain National Park – Andrafiarana - (Overall approximate driving time is 5 hours)**

We depart early from Diego and head on for a 1-hour drive to Joffre Ville a crumbling but atmospheric former retreat for the French elite. Only a few km's from Joffre Ville we reach Amber Mountain National Park where we will spend a few hours searching for flora and fauna in Amber Mountain National Park. There are lots of different trails in the park and you will be able to do a longer or shorter walk depending on how you feel today. There are some beautiful waterfalls in the park. Later we take a picturesque journey to Andrafiarana Reserve, at the foot of the Andranomanera Protected Reserve. The final section of our journey today will be on a poorly maintained track for around 1 hour to our overnight stay, but once we are there the location itself makes today's tough journey well worthwhile. Overnight Akiba Lodge Anjahakely or similar (BD)

**Note – The bungalows at Akiba Lodge Anjahakely are very comfortable with tremendous views but do not have charging facilities. Charging can be done at the bar/restaurant area.**

**Amber Mountain National Park**

Created in 1958 this national park is located 7km's from Joffre Ville and 32kms from Diego Suarez. It is a tropical rainforest with an area of 18,200 hectares and the altitude in the park ranges from 850m – 1,485m. The park has its own microclimate which makes the flora and fauna unique. Seven species of lemur have been recorded in the park including the crowned lemur and Sanford's brown lemur which are usually easily spotted. With a high annual rainfall rate, the park is covered with upland moist tropical forest, with numerous giant tree species, smaller ferns and several orchid species.

**Day 12: Andrafiarana**

After breakfast with a local guide we will hike inside Andranomanera Protected Reserve home to unique and endemic species, in particular the black lemur (Perrier Sifaka) which is only found in this area. The reserve is 30,000 Ha in size and on one side the reserve is quite wet and on the other it is relatively dry and in the middle is a transition zone where the last refuge of the black lemur is found. Overnight Akiba Lodge Anjahakely or similar. (BD)

**Day 13: Andriafarana – Ambanja (Overall approximate driving time is 6 hours)**

This morning we travel to Ambanja passing alongside the Tsaratanana Mountains which is home to the highest peak in the country. Arrival in Ambanja, we take an interesting visit to the Millot plantation for an explanation of the crops such as cacao, coffee and vanilla that are prevalent in this fertile region of Madagascar, then we visit the local market. Overnight Hibiscus Hotel or similar. (BD)





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#### **Day 14: Ambanja – Mahitsizato - Antsohihy (Overall approximate driving time is 8-9 hours)**

In the morning, after breakfast. Continue to the village of Mahitsizato. This is the area run by a community project where we hope to see the blue-eyed true lemur scientifically known as *Eulemur flavifrons*. This is an extremely endangered species of lemur and is the only primate besides humans known to have blue eyes. The forest here is fragmented so the lemurs here are quite shy but our local guide will do their best to spot them. We will have a picnic lunch in this area and then this afternoon travel for a few hours on to Antsohihy where we can explore the town. Overnight Belle Vue or similar (BD)

#### **Mahitsizato Walk**

This is a dry area of forest but there are no well-marked trails here. To see the blue-eyed lemurs we need to walk quite steeply uphill at times and sideways along a slope. As the conditions here are usually dry the walking is not particularly hazardous but care should be taken underfoot and good footwear worn. Also as we may have to push our way through dry forest long sleeves and trousers should be worn.

#### **Day 15: Antsohihy – Ankarafantsika (Overall approximate driving time 8 hours)**

This morning we journey to Ambodromamy, at a crossroads between North RN6 and West RN4. It is a little village brought to life by local vendors and their products, especially local fruits that are exhibited on the roadside. Then from there we take the national road number 4 towards Majunga to reach Ampijoroa. This is a Sakalava region, home to the largest tribes of the eighteen ethnicities of Madagascar. The tombs of this tribe tend to be different from other tribes. We arrive by late afternoon and this evening we will take a walk looking for nocturnal creatures (subject to national park approval). Overnight Gite d'Ampijoroa or similar (BD)

#### **Ankarafantsika National Park**

A paradise for birds, Ankarafantsika is one of the largest remaining dry deciduous forests, and forms a mosaic with extensive wetlands and provides the final refuge for numerous critically endangered and endemic species including lemurs, reptiles and birds. The forestry station campsite has numerous sought-after "campsite residents. At night a pair of Tortoroka Scops Owls normally start calling in the campsite and Madagascar Nightjars can be seen foraging on the edge of the camp or along the trails on a night walk!

#### **Day 16: Ankarafantsika**

For early risers there will be an opportunity to take a dawn walk for bird watching and exploring the trails around magical Lake Ravelobe. After breakfast we spend the day exploring the natural treasures of Ankarafantsika. The terrain here is quite flat so today's walk will not be too challenging. Overnight Gite d'Ampijoroa or similar. (BD)

#### **Lake Ravelobe**

One of the key features of the Lake Ravelobe is one pair of the critically endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle. With an estimated 50-100 breeding pairs remaining in the wild, this bird is on the edge of extinction. While it is exhilarating to see such a rare bird, it is equally sad to know it is disappearing so fast. The crocodiles in Lake Ravelobe are protected by fady (superstitions and taboos taken from ancient folklore) and have been known to attack unsuspecting villagers.

#### **Day 17: Ankarafantsika – Antananarivo (Overall approximate driving time is 9 hours)**

Today we journey back to the capital, passing by grasslands and savannah and we may come across farmers with their zebu herds. On arrival in Tana check in to the hotel before enjoying an early farewell dinner where we can reflect on an amazing journey through the North of this incredible country. Overnight Gassy Country House or similar. (BD)



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### Day 18: Departure from Madagascar

Time at leisure until your transfer to the airport and your onward flight. Please note optional excursions are possible for those with late flights. Day use available at Gassy Country House until late afternoon for clients travelling on the night Air France or Kenya Airways overnight flight. (B)

**Kindly note it is possible to extend the tour to other parts of Madagascar – for example if you wish you can take a flight to the laid-back island of Ile St Marie for a beach break – please contact us for details.**

## Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

### Inclusions:

Arrival and departure airport transfers  
Domestic flight (1) from Tana to Sambava  
All transports throughout the tour with a driver  
All accommodation as per the itinerary, or similar  
Services of English-speaking guides and local park/reserve guides  
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)  
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

### Excluded:

International flights  
Travel Insurance  
Visa (available on arrival at the airport – currently 35 EUR per person or the equivalent in USD - \$38 to \$40)  
Drinks  
Local tipping kitty collected on arrival between 50-75 EUR (or the equivalent in GBP or USD)  
Tips for main tour guide, driver and pre-post tour arrangements (discretionary)  
Items of a personal nature

## Important Information

### Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to Madagascar to areas that we travel to. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

### Accommodation and Meals

#### Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early





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morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

### **Accommodation Rating**

The hotels and lodges used on this tour are classified as a combination of mid-range, clean and simple. With a few exceptions you can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom (not in Marojejy National Park). In general you will find your hotel/lodge has a restaurant and/or bar.

On the Northern Explorer small group tour there are a number of days of basic conditions comprising of basic huts or camping so you should be prepared for this. Equipment for camping is provided but you should bring a sleeping bag and a sleeping sheet. At Marojejy and Daraina in addition to staying in tents there are also some basic huts but these work on a first come first serve basis so we cannot guarantee staying in the huts although we do our best to ensure clients can stay in the huts.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

In Marojejy National Park and Daraina Reserve (4 night in totals) you may have to share accommodation (huts only) if the park and reserve are busy. If you wish to have your own sleeping arrangement then you will need to sleep in a tent – please let us know in advance.

### **Food & Drink**

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

### **Dietary Requirements**

If you have any special dietary requirements you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

### **Budgeting for your Tour**

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### **Food**

In general, the costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more. The costs below are indicative to eating at the hotel restaurants and range depending on number of courses.

- A lunch is £5-10
- A two-course dinner is £5-13



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### Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general, you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

- A bottle of water is £0.50 - £0.75
- A bottle of local beer (THB) is £1 - £2
- A fresh fruit juice is £1 - £1.50

### Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Although not compulsory, tipping is customary in Madagascar. Accordingly, a tipping kitty is organised on arrival which covers day to day tips incurred whilst on tour. This includes tips at restaurants and hotels. It also includes tips for drivers and local guides in the national parks. Please budget 50 to 75 Euros (or the equivalent in GBP or USD) depending on the size of the group. This will be collected in Euros, Pounds or Dollars cash by your guide at the start of the tour who will then be responsible for tipping throughout your trip.

The kitty does not cover tips for your Tour Guide. At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Guide in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

For those doing pre or post-tour extensions and arrangements, please refer to the following amounts given as a general indication in local currency (MGA):

- Staff at the hotel: 10,000 to 15,000 MGA in total, per stay– usually there is a tipping box at the reception
- At a local restaurant: 5,000 to 10,000 MGA in total, per service
- Local guides in the parks and reserve: 10,000 to 20,000 MGA per visit
- Porters: 3,000 MGA per person, per service
- Additionally, if you are happy with your driver/guide, a reasonable amount to leave would be 15,000 to 25,000 MGA per day in total.

### Foreign Exchange

**ATM Availability:** Madagascar's larger cities are equipped with ATMs but they can be unreliable. We recommend you get your Ariary in Tana or at the airport.

**Credit and Debit Card Acceptance:** Cards are not widely accepted as Madagascar is generally a cash economy, but those places that do accept them generally only take Visa cards.

**Local Currency:** Ariary (MGA)

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Euros, US Dollars, Pound Sterling

**Where to Exchange:** Tana Airport or Gassy Country House. Your guide will advise you. Please note that the exchange counters at the airport will be available to change money for all arriving flights.

### Joining your Tour

#### Flight Information

Our advertised prices do not include the cost of international flights. Please contact us if you would like a quotation to book a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

#### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a free airport transfer, both on arrival and departure. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we



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have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

### **Travel Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

### **Visa Information**

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to Madagascar. For further details please visit the applicable website shown below;

British Nationals - [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - [www.smartraveller.gov.au/](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/)

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

When you arrive at Tana, do not join the queue for immigration, instead pass through the barrier and head to the visa counter located at the right-hand side of the arrivals hall where you can obtain your visa. You then continue to the police desk and then to baggage reclaim area.

### **Passports**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK. We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively, UK citizens can visit [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice)

### **Vaccinations & Protection**

As with travel to most parts of Africa, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic around 6-8 weeks before departure for up-to-date information, advice and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have



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immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid. We also recommend that you seek advice about malaria prophylactics.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

### **Yellow Fever**

Yellow Fever vaccination is required for travellers arriving from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission. If you can't produce a certificate, you will have to visit the Institut Pasteur in Antananarivo for vaccination.

## *Preparing for your tour*

### **Climate**

Madagascar, being a large country, has many different climatic variations but it is generally felt that the best time to visit is between May and November, which are the winter months. Outside of these months rain can be heavy and there are frequently cyclones. The temperature on the island is usually pleasant, ranging from the low twenties to the low thirties (Celsius) depending on time of year and altitude.

Please note that during the winter months of May – November it can be cool/cold at night with temperatures dropping into single figures Celsius. In general it is hotter in the west and south-west of the country whilst Antananarivo and the Central Highlands tend to be cooler. On our Northern Explorer tour clients should be well prepared for rain in Marojejy National Park even during the drier time of May – November as the Eastern rainforests are more susceptible to rainfall.

### **General Travel in Madagascar**

Madagascar is not like safari destinations in Southern or Eastern Africa. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. Whilst tourists have been visiting the country for many years in small numbers the infrastructure is still not as well developed as tourist destinations in the western world or even some destinations in Africa. Things sometimes do not run according to plan. Travelling can be slow and tough going. Although we try to be as accurate as possible, distances and timings indicated in the itinerary are meant as guidelines only and can substantially vary from one departure to another one depending on local safety initiatives, road conditions, road traffic and other unforeseen events. Service at hotels and restaurants is not comparable to western standards. Please kindly travel with an open mind and if you experience any problems contact our local team on the telephone number on your tour voucher who will do their best to assist.

### **Clothing**

Madagascar is quite warm and so light clothes are generally a good idea. You should ensure that you bring warmer clothes for any cool evenings. When walking in the forest it is advisable to wear long trousers and sleeves to avoid cuts and scratches that could become infected. Marojejy in particular has leeches (harmless generally but can be uncomfortable and cause bleeding) so tucking your socks into your shoes is advisable. Madagascar has reasonably relaxed attitudes towards dress and shorts are acceptable throughout much of the country but we would not advise wearing short sleeves and shorts when walking in the parks and reserves. You should also bring a hat to protect yourself from the strong sun. A waterproof and windproof jacket is advisable at any time of year.



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### **Access to the Internet**

Kindly note that access to the Internet via Wi-Fi is available to almost all location on the main tour. Wi-Fi is usually only available at the restaurant or main lobby of the accommodation and some places it may be very slow. In every instance, we cannot guarantee that Wi-Fi connection will be working when you stay at the properties.

### **Equipment**

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Please ensure you have a torch/flashlight which is necessary for possible electricity outages which can occur in Madagascar at any time and also for the nights spent camping. If you are a keen birder we recommend you bring a pair of binoculars as the birdlife is excellent. Also for spotting lemurs higher up in the trees. A travel towel will be needed for nights spent camping on the tour.

**To limit unnecessary plastic waste, we do ask you to bring your own water bottle or flask that you can fill in with drinkable water for the whole length of stay.**

### **Footwear**

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots with good grips and ankle support are recommended, as well as a pair of sandals. There may be times when you will leave the main footpaths in the National Parks to see the wildlife which is when good grip is especially necessary. Although we predominantly travel during the dry season, climatic zones in Madagascar are such that rain cannot be ruled out and so paths in national parks can be slippery. If you usually walk with walking poles then you can consider bringing them with you on the tour.

### **Road Conditions and daily driving times**

Road conditions on parts of the Northern Explorer tour can be poor, especially after rainfall. In particular the road from Vohemar to Daraina is particularly challenging. Our drivers are highly skilled but please be patient if the vehicle gets stuck or experiences a puncture. Where conditions dictate we will be using the appropriate vehicles but you should be prepared for challenging road conditions. Note that the approximate driving times in the itinerary are given in good faith but should only be used as a guide as road conditions are poor and also constantly change. Due to the road conditions, it is not uncommon to experience a mechanical problem such as a puncture. Delays can also occur as sometimes if the authorities insist on tourist vehicles travelling in convoy. The driving times given are the anticipated total amount of time per day spent in the vehicle and this does not include stops for sightseeing and/or comfort breaks.

### **Internal flights in Madagascar**

Madagascar is a huge country and as the road infrastructure is poor in many areas using flights is sometimes unavoidable. We only have 1 flight on this tour at the beginning but we must stress that flights within Madagascar are subject sometimes to severe delay and cancellation. Our local team will do their very best to reschedule arrangements but your understanding in advance is appreciated.

### **Luggage on tour**

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

For the internal flights one piece of checked luggage up to 20kg and one piece of hand luggage up to 5kg are allowed per person.



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### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

Electrical supply is 220V/50 Hz and plugs have two round pins like most European countries.

### **Tour Itinerary Versions**

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These tour notes were updated on 28 November 2023.

