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# Tour Notes

Comoros Discovery

Tour Duration - 11 Days



## Tour Rating

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

## Tour Pace

Relaxed

## Tour Highlights

- ✓ Visit all three of the Comoros Islands; Grande Comore, Anjouan and Mohéli
- ✓ Climb Mount Karthala volcano
- ✓ Spot the Livingstone Fruit Bat - the largest bat in the world
- ✓ Search for whales and dolphins in Le parc Marin de Mohéli

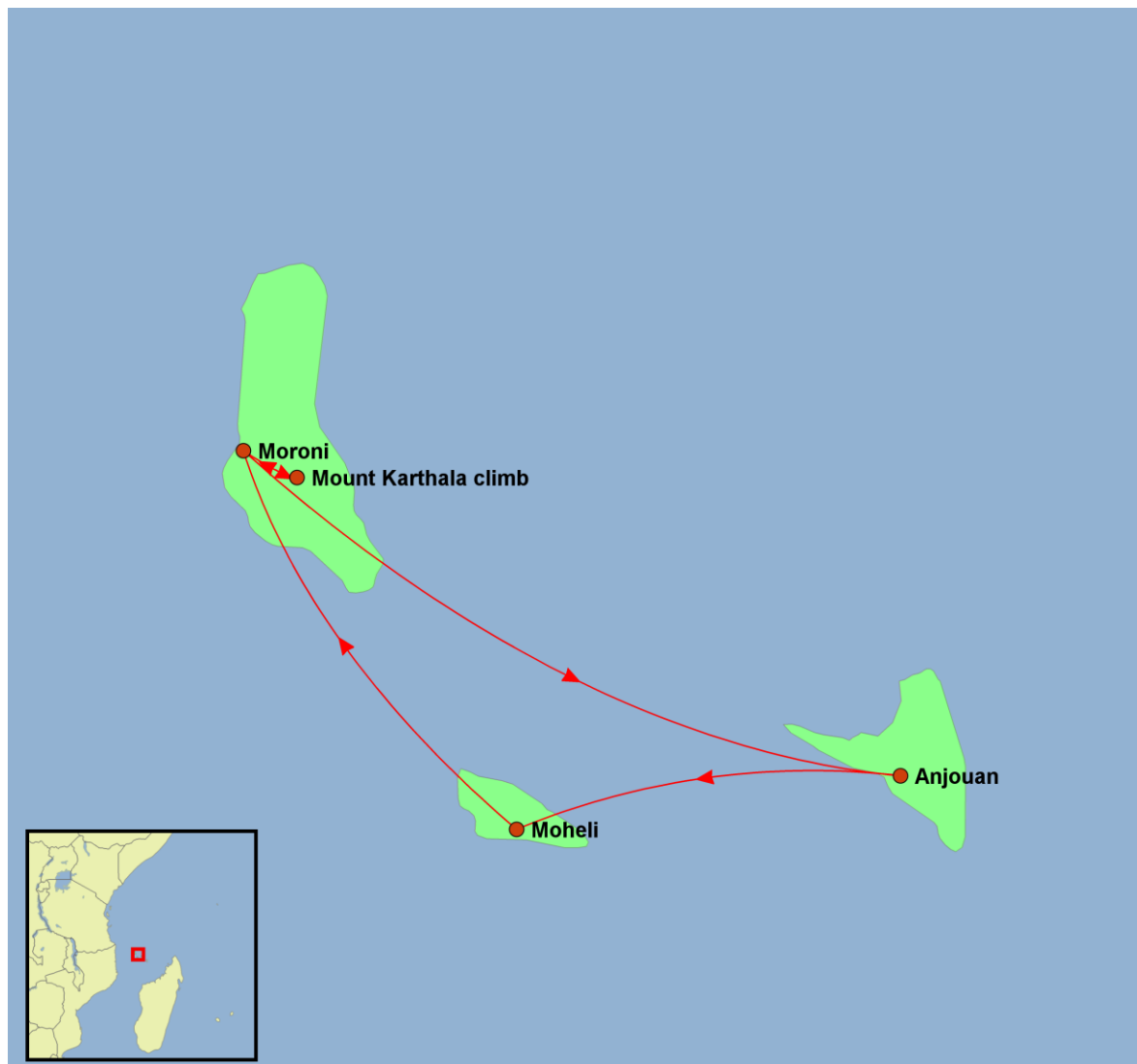






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## Tour Map



## Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Comfortable hotels with en-suite bathroom and toilets – hotel in Anjouan is basic, but best available
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Maximum of 12
- Start Point:** Moroni (Grande Comore)
- End Point:** Moroni (Grande Comore)
- Transport:** Car, minibus/van – dependant on group size
- Country Visited:** Comoros Islands - Grande Comore, Anjouan and Mohéli,



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## Comoros Discovery

*Be the centre of attention in the Comoros, a delightful set of tropical islands which define the very essence of off the beaten track – with very few other tourists. Flying between the three islands of Grande Comore, Anjouan and Moheli you visit local villages, explore the capital, relax on gorgeous beaches and for the energetic, why not to organise locally a day hike in Moheli or Anjouan, or climb the volcano of Mt Karthala?*

## 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, the itinerary can substantially vary depending on local safety initiatives, road conditions, road traffic, delays and cancellation of domestic flights 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. You can expect to have the same guide throughout the tour.

# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrival in Moroni (Grande Comore)

Arrive in Moroni, capital of the Comoros Islands and transfer to your accommodation. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure for you to relax or start exploring the area on your own. No guided arrangements nor meals are included today. Overnight Retaj Moroni Hotel, or similar.

**Note:** *The Retaj Moroni Hotel does not serve alcohol.*

## Moroni

The sleepy capital Moroni is a delightful little town perched on the edge of the Indian Ocean and often surrounded by fishing boats in its harbour. The old quarter of the town is a maze of narrow streets that are fantastic to explore, and many buildings still have the traditional carved doors, reminiscent of those that can be found on Zanzibar. Moroni's main feature is its ancient Friday Mosque, while its market is a great place to wander around to observe scenes of daily life. Once an important trading town on the Indian Ocean, Moroni has slipped quietly into a forgotten existence where tourists are rare and visitors are treated as a curious novelty. The views out to sea as the sunsets, over tiny ships heading out for an evening's fishing, are unforgettable.

## Day 2: Moroni - Full Day exploration of the northern part of Grande Comore

After breakfast embark on a full-day tour of Grande Comore with private car, driver and English-speaking guide. We drive across the island from the foothills of the Mount Karthala, an impressive active volcano, to the high plateau of Diboini to view other extinct craters. We then proceed to the agricultural cooperative in Mbeni where you can see another ylang ylang distillery and a vanilla pods warehouse.





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In this pedagogic cooperative, it is also possible to encounter lemurs and tortoises as well as the odd and legendary cœlacanthe fish. Later, we drive to the famous rock formation shaped as a Dragon and we stop by the enchanting Salt Lake, which water colour may vary from white to blue turquoise. On our way back to Moroni we stop at the beautiful white sand beaches of Galawa and Chomoni where you can enjoy a swim in the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean if you wish to. Overnight at Retaj Hotel, or similar. (BL)

### Grande Comore

Officially known as Ngazidja, Grande Comore is the largest of the Comoros Islands but has no rivers or waterways at all – all water is gathered via wells or as rainwater. Prior to the arrival of the French, it was divided up into several sultanates. Grande Comore is dominated by Mt Karthala, which at 2361m is the largest active volcano in the world. The island has around 315,000 inhabitants, most of whom are of Arab or African descent.

### Day 3: Moroni - Anjouan (Domestic flight) – Mutsamudu City tour

Transfer to the airport for the short flight to Anjouan, widely accepted as the most beautiful of the islands which make up the Union of the Comoros. On arrival, you will be taken for a city tour around the charming capital Mutsamudu with its historical citadel and the Medina. Overnight at Al Amal Hotel, or similar. (B)

**Note:** *Accommodation in Mutsamudu, is limited. Al Amal Hotel is known as the best available hotel in Anjouan, although rooms are very basic and service can be slow at times. Wi-Fi connection is available from the restaurant but we cannot guarantee that it will be working.*

### Anjouan

Anjouan seems to sit uncomfortably within the Comoros nation. In 1997 it declared itself an independent nation, and then asked to be re-integrated into France, but following French refusal re-joined the Comoros in 2002. Not entirely happy with this though, it announced once more its independence in 2007, prompting military action from the Comoros, although it now has a semi-autonomous status. Anjouan is a pretty little island which is the world's principal exporter of ylang-ylang oil, an ingredient found in most perfumes. The island is heavily forested with beautiful beaches and small villages dotted here and there, and like Grande Comore its centre culminates in the peak the 1600m Mt Ntingui.

### Day 4: Full day guided tour around Anjouan

After breakfast, we depart for a full day tour of Anjouan. We first drive through the col de Patsy which offers spectacular views of the island and we continue to the ylang ylang distillery of Bambao. After a short stop we proceed to the Tatinga falls where you can observe the former building once used by the French manufacturers to distillate the flowers used to prepare the world-renowned perfume Chanel No 5. Continue to the interesting town of Domoni to discover the historical mausoleum of former president Abdallah and stop for a picnic lunch along the ocean. In the afternoon we drive through the farmer lands of Nyumakele before returning to the hotel. Overnight at Al Amal Hotel, or similar. (BL)

### Day 5: Anjouan - Mohéli (Domestic flight)

Morning transfer to the airport for the flight to Mohéli. On arrival you will be met by a local guide and transferred to the Laka Lodge, a small and intimate resort with its own beach. There are a number of other optional excursions available including trips to some of the smaller islands nearby, and evening visits to watch turtles lay their eggs in the sand. Overnight at Laka Lodge, or similar. (BLD)

### Mohéli

Mohéli is the smallest of the four islands of the Comoros archipelago, and is the wildest and least populated island of the Union, but also the most scenic and well-preserved, the true 'Pearl of the Comoros'.





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Nature lovers will like it here – its flora is rich and includes different species of orchids and endemic palms, while animal life includes turtles, the Livingstone fruit bat (the largest bat in the world), whales, dolphins and dugongs. Beaches are pretty and plentiful, especially on the south coast, and you will have long stretches just for yourself. All in all a true island paradise.

### **Days 6 and 7: Mohéli at leisure**

Two full days at leisure to enjoy this beautiful island. We have not pre-arranged any sightseeing or activities as Mohéli is very easy to explore independently or optional excursions can be arranged directly with the lodge. Relax and enjoy the different pace of life and meet the friendly local people. If you are feeling a little more energetic, you can arrange a guided hike across the island on tracks of virgin rainforest. Alternatively, you can cycle around the island, on virtually empty roads. Then of course there are the beaches. Two of the most beautiful are Sambadjou and Nioumachoua. You can also snorkel to discover the rich marine life or even go whale and dolphin watching. Finally, at certain times of the year you may be lucky enough to see giant turtles lay their eggs at night on Itsamia beaches. Overnights at Laka Lodge, or similar. (BLD)

### **Day 8: Mohéli – Moroni (Domestic flight) – Moroni City tour**

After a leisurely breakfast, transfer to the local airport for your flight back to Moroni. On arrival, take a short city tour and visit the Medina with its famous narrow streets and colorful material shops. Then, transfer to the hotel. Tonight, you will be staying in a nice hotel located just further north of the capital and there will be leisure time to relax and unwind on the white-sand beach. Overnight at Golden Tulip Resort & Spa, or similar. (B)

### **Day 9: Day at leisure in Moroni or Mt Karthala climb**

Today you have the option of leaving Moroni for a climb to the summit of Mt Karthala (2,361m). Although it is possible to do the climb in just one long day, we recommend that you camp at the summit in the crater itself and return the next day. For those not wishing to make the climb, you will have today and the next day to relax or perhaps enquire locally about the options to dive. Overnight at Golden Tulip Resort & Spa, or similar / camping. (B – Hotel / BLD – camping)

### **Mt Karthala**

Mt Karthala is the largest active volcano in the world and erupts on a fairly regular basis – the last time being in 2005. The climb can be challenging and should only be attempted if you are reasonably fit. It will take about seven hours depending on your personal fitness. Although the slopes are normally blanketed in thick mist for much of the day, the summit and crater are frequently clear, rewarding you with the most spectacular of early morning sunrises. It should be noted that we only recommend attempting the climb during the dry season (between April and November). We will arrange for all camping equipment and supplies to be provided as well as a porter.

### **Day 10: Moroni – Full day guided tour around the south of Grande Comore**

This morning, we depart for a full day guided tour around the south of the island, stopping first to the beautiful white sand beaches of Galawa and Chomoni where you can enjoy a swim in the turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean if you wish to. Continue on to Bandamadji with its nice costal view and short stop at Ouroveni village to see the impressive baobab twins. Later we stop at the superb Chindini beach where we also get a panoramic view of the island and continue to Singani, were one can still see the remaining of the last volcanic eruption dated from 1977. On the way back to Moroni we also visit the ruins of the former Sultan Palace built in the XVIIIth Century, stop by the peaceful lake Marabou where many birds nest and take a stop at the impressive suicide cliffs in Iconi for a reminder of the past slavery time – the spot is gorgeous but one can still feel the dramatic atmosphere as hundreds of women choose to commit suicide rather than being captured by slavers. Overnight at Golden Tulip Moroni Resort & Spa, or similar. (B)



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### Day 11: Moroni - Departure from the Comoros

Time at leisure to either relax or explore further until your transfer to the airport and your onward flight. (B)

## Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

#### Inclusions:

Arrival and departure airport transfers in Moroni

Domestic flights in between the islands, as per itinerary

All accommodation

Transport throughout the tour with services of English-speaking driver/guides (different in each island), as per mentioned in the itinerary

Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)

Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

#### Excluded:

International flights

Any airport taxes

Travel Insurance

Visa – Available on arrival in Moroni – currently 30 euros per person

Drinks

Items of personal nature

Covid-19 testing, if required

Tips (discretionary)

## Important Information

#### Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

Before booking your tour please familiarise yourself with the country specific information provided by the UK's Foreign, Development and Commonwealth Office (FCDO) - <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>. This includes important information such as latest immigration requirements, and details of any travel advisories.

Despite the country's turbulent politics, we believe that the Comoros is one of the safest destinations in Africa. We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British FCDO. In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At the time of writing there are no travel warnings that apply to this tour. Non-UK nationals should check with their own government, as the information and advice may differ to that provided by British authorities.

#### 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 morning arrivals.







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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, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included.

### **Accommodation Rating**

On this tour you can expect to stay in clean and comfortable accommodation. You can expect rooms to be en-suite, with private bathroom. The accommodation in Moheli and Anjouan are more basic compared to Grande Comore. In general, you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

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.

### **Food & Drink**

While on our tour in the Comoros you are likely to take most of your meals at the hotels. Comorian food blends African, Arab and European styles and uses a fair amount of spices. Coconut based dishes are quite common, and as you would expect, seafood is good and plentiful.

### **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**

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.

Lunch £8.00

Dinner £10.00

### **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.

Bottle of Beer £2.00

Water £1.50

### **Tipping – Guide and Drivers**

Tipping is common practise in Africa. If your local guide has been helpful then you could think about tipping. A reasonable amount to tip a guide would be between \$5-7 per day.



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### Foreign Exchange

**ATM Availability:** You can find ATMs in Grande Comore and Anjouan

**Local Currency:** Comoros Franc (KMF)

**Credit and Debit Card Acceptance:** Not widely accepted, except at some high-end hotels and generally VISA cards only are accepted.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Euros. You should also avoid taking large denomination notes such as €50 or €100 bills as these may be difficult to exchange.

**Where to Exchange:** Exchange facilities will be available at most of the hotels included in this itinerary. Opportunities for changing money outside of the hotels will be limited – only Moroni and Mayotte have banks capable of changing foreign currency. Your driver/guide will advise you.

### Joining your Tour Abroad

#### 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 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 and Altitude

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 (including cover for Covid-19 conditions) and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

If you decide to climb the Mount Karthala, please ensure that your travel insurance is valid for walking at altitude and if you have any doubts, please contact your insurance provider. Some travel insurance policies may exclude walking and trekking above a certain altitude.

#### Visa Information

Most nationals will require a visa to visit the Comoros. As there are very few Comorian Embassies or Consulates, a visa will in most cases be issued on arrival, for a cost of €30, which is valid for a stay of up to 45 days. Passports must have at least three six month's validity remaining from the date of arrival.

All other nationalities, please consult your nearest Embassy for up-to-date advice on necessary visa requirements. Please be aware that visa information is subject to change, therefore please refer to your nearest embassy for up-to-date advice. Please note that the price of your tour does not include visa costs.

#### 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 your country.





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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 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 immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. Anti-malaria medication is also required and the use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended.

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.

## Preparing for your tour

### Climate

The climate is marine tropical, with two seasons: hot and humid from November to April, and cool and dry the rest of the year. In fact, for a significant part of the year Comoros enjoys a near-perfect, balmy 25°C, with the scent of ylang-ylang, cloves, cinnamon and vanilla wafting gently in on the trade winds.

### General Travel in the Comoros

The Comoros 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, the itinerary is meant as a guideline only and can substantially vary depending on local safety initiatives, road conditions, road traffic, domestic flights and other unforeseen events. Service at hotels and restaurants is really not comparable to western standards. On this tour you should be able to see some wildlife especially when in Moheli, however this should not be a main priority. 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.

### Access to the Internet

Kindly note that access to the Internet via Wi-Fi should be available in every location of your tour and is usually only available at the restaurant or main lobby of the accommodation. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that Wi-Fi connection will be working when you stay at the properties, and the connection will be very unreliable in Moheli and Anjouan.



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### **Clothing**

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy.

### **Equipment**

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. Sun cream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have, especially in Moheli. A small drybag to store your phone and other small electric devices can also be of use, especially in Moheli where there is much humidity in the air. Please bring a torch/head-torch as electricity outage can occur from time to time and also to assist with walking around hotel/lodges at night. If you wish to do the Mount Karthala climb, the torch/head-torch will be essential. If you use walking poles you may wish to bring them for walks, and especially for the hike to the Mount Karthala.

### **Footwear**

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots with closed toes and ankle support are recommended (and required, if doing the hike to the Mount Karthala), as well as a pair of sandals for general travelling.

### **Luggage on tour**

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

### **Internal Flights**

We are arranging your domestic flights in between all three islands. Domestic flights 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. Therefore, changes to the itinerary may be necessary and you will be advised locally.

### **Electric Supply & Plugs**

Generally electrical supply is 220-240V AC (50 Hz) and use European two circular pin style plugs.

### **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 11 December 2023.