

MADAGASCAR DISCOVERY (20 DAYS)

This tour has been designed to provide the best overview possible of Madagascar within a 3-week period – especially for first-time visitors! The tour focuses mainly on the nature and culture of this fascinating continent. On this tour you will encounter an exceptional variety of plantlife, mammals (including numerous lemur species) and birdlife as well as fascinating reptiles and insects, found only in Madagascar. You will also be introduced to the Malagasy culture from village life to agriculture, local crafts and alcohol production. From the magnificent rainforests of the Andasibe National Park, to the spectacular rock formations and natural swimming pools of Isalo National Park (known as the Malagasy “Colorado”) and the pristine beaches and islands of Sainte-Marie and Nosy Bay, this tour offers something for everyone.

BASIC ITINERARY

Day	Accommodation
1 Andasibe	Vakona Forest Lodge
2 Akanin’ny Nofy	Bush House
3 Akanin’ny Nofy	Bush House
4 Isle Sainte-Marie	Princess Bora Lodge
5 Isle Sainte-Marie	Princess Bora Lodge
6 Isle Sainte-Marie	Princess Bora Lodge
7 Antsirabe	Hotel des Thermes
8 Sahambavy	Lac Hotel
9 Ranomafana	Steam Lodge
10 Fianarantsoa	Tsara Guest House
11 Tsaranoro Valley	Tsara Camp
12 Tsaranoro Valley	Tsara Camp
13 Isalo	Relais de la Reine
14 Isalo	Relais de la Reine
15 Tananarive	Palissandre Hotel
16 Montagne D’Ambre	Nature Lodge
17 Ankify	Baobab Hotel
18 Nosy Komba	Tsara Komba
19 Nosy Be	Tsara Komba
20 Tananarive	Flight home or Palissandre Hotel (optional)

Accommodation for this tour is upmarket (wherever possible) or we make use of the best lodges available in each area, without compromising on our experience of the natural environment.

Price*: *Please refer to rates page on website.*

* Prices include domestic flights, airport taxes, accommodation, meals, transport, entrance fees, listed activities and guide fees. Prices exclude international flight to and from Tananarive, visas & travel insurance, beverages, laundry fees, any optional activities, gratuities and items of a personal nature (such as gifts and souvenirs).

DAY 1: TANARIVE TO ANDASIBE

Highlights: Andasibe National Park, night walk

After the arrival of your flight at Tanarive, we will make our way to Andasibe National Park (3hrs drive on a good tarred road). En route we plan to stop at Peyreras for lunch where we hope to see a wide variety of butterflies, reptiles, frogs and insects endemic to the region. Once in Andasibe National Park, we will make our way to the Vakona Forest Lodge. Here, we will enjoy a walk at nightfall, where we hope to spot various nocturnal species such as night active lemurs and tenrecs.

Overnight at Vakona Forest Lodge

DAY 2: ANDASIBE TO ANKANIN'NY NOFY

Highlights: Scenic boat cruise, Nephentes Lake

We spend the morning observing the fauna and flora of the Andasibe National Park, where we hope to spot the Indri Indri, the largest of all the lemurs. We then commence our drive to Manambato, situated on the Pangalanes Canal, stopping for lunch en route. We will embark on a 30min scenic boat cruise from Manambato to Ankanin'Ny Nofy. In the afternoon, we will walk to the Nephentes Lake (named after the indigenous carnivorous plants, Nephentes or "Pitcher Plants") and the nearby village.

Overnight at the Bush House

DAY 3: ANKANIN'NY NOFY

Highlights: Palmarium Reserve, Indri-Indris

In the morning, we will visit the Palmarium reserve, where we will see lemurs up close (and hopefully Indri-Indris). Of all places in Madagascar, the Palmarium is where we are most likely to see lemurs the closest. Apart from the lemurs, this little eden park is also home to numerous orchids, palm trees, ravinalas (the emblem of Madagascar), endemic frogs and reptiles. After lunch at our lodge, we will enjoy a walk to the Indian Ocean, with its wild beaches and roaring waves.

Overnight at the Bush House

DAY 4: ANKANIN'NY NOFY TO ISLE SAINTE-MARIE

Highlights: Scenic boat trip, Sainte-Marie Island

After breakfast, we embark on a 2½hr boat trip along the Canal des Pangalanes, one of the highlights of our tour. The cruise provides an excellent opportunity to observe life on the Pangalanes canal - villages on the banks, overcrowded bus-boats, fishermen boats and wooden rafts loaded with goods – a very genuine and lively experience! Once we arrive in Tamatave, we will make our way to the airport to catch our 30min flight to Isle Sainte-Marie.

Overnight at Princess Bora Lodge

DAY 5: ISLE SAINTE-MARIE

Highlights: Historical tour, Pirates Graveyard

Today we will explore the eastern side of Isle Sainte-Marie (this can be done on quad bikes). We will be accompanied by a guide with an in-depth knowledge of the area's flora, fauna and Sainte-Marie's traditions. We will visit Sainte Marie's tiny capital, Ambodifotatra, the Pirates' graveyard and sample Betsa-Betsa, a local alcoholic production. We will then enjoy a hearty lunch at "Paradis d'Ampanihy" with its wide à la carte menu including shrimp, crab, and fish, all cooked the traditional Sainte-Marie way. We will then drive through the vanilla, pepper, cinnamon and clove plantations to spend a relaxing evening at Cipper Bay's Beach. We will return to our lodge in time for sunset.

Overnight at Princess Bora Lodge

DAY 6: ISLE SAINTE-MARIE

Highlights: Snorkelling, sunbathing

Today we will embark on a full day excursion to Pointe Larrée (on Madagascar's mainland) and Coco bay, where we will enjoy snorkelling, sunbathing and a picnic on the beach. A relaxing program!

Overnight at Princess Bora Lodge

DAY 7: ISLE SAINTE-MARIE TO ANTSIRABE

Highlights: Sacred lake, historical town, craft workshops

In the morning we will be transferred to Sainte Marie's airport to catch our 1-hour flight to Tananarive. We will then drive via the mysteriously turquoise Titriva sacred lake to Antsirabe. With its superbly conserved colonial architecture, Antsirabe seems to be snoozing, remembering its past glory when it used to be a "chic" thermal city. Today, it is mainly known for its gemstones, its "pousse-pousse" (rickshaws) and handicraft. We will visit some of the workshops in the town, where people transform natural materials such as zebu horn into cutlery and wheat straw into hats.

Overnight at Hotel des Thermes

DAY 8: ANTSARIBE TO SAHAMBAVY

Highlights: Terraced highlands, woodcarvings and handicraft

After breakfast we will make our way through the terraced highlands towards Sahambavy. En route, we will enjoy lunch and shopping at Ambositra, a small town known for its Zafimaniry woodcarvings and handicraft.

Overnight at Lac Hotel

DAY 9: SAHAMBAVY TO RANOMAFANA

Highlights: Scenic train trip, rainforest night walk

Today, we depart by train on which we will enjoy spectacular scenic views and full immersion in Malagasy life! We will arrive in Tolongoina at approx. 11am, where our driver guide awaits. We will enjoy a picnic lunch en route to the idyllic tropical forest of Ranomafana. We will reach Ranomafana Park just in time for a night walk, where we are likely to spot nocturnal lemurs and frogs and, if we are fortunate, fossas, the only endemic carnivorous species of Madagascar.

Overnight at Setam Lodge

DAY 10: RANOMAFANA TO FIANARANTSOA

Highlights: Rainforest walk, historical town

We will start the day with a morning walk in Ranomafana Park, the best time for animal observation! After lunch back at our lodge we will depart for Fianarantsoa (or Fianar for short). Fianar is the capital of the Betsileo country, and means "the place where you learn Good". We will enjoy a stroll in the historical part of town, where paved roads, traditional houses and a beautiful cathedral give the place a romantic atmosphere.

Overnight at Tsara Guest House

DAY 11: FIANARANTSOA TO TSARANORO VALLEY

Highlights: Wine estate, Zebu market, lemurs, Betsileo tombs

Our first stop for the day is at the wine estate of Lazaina Betsileo. We then continue to the town of Ambalavao. Beautifully set in yellowish mountain scenery, Ambalavao seems to come straight out of a Western movie. The town holds the biggest zebu market in Madagascar (Wednesdays and Thursdays). Here we will visit a handmade Antaimoro craftshop. Our third stop is at the small Anja reserve, an interesting reserve for close encounters with ring-tailed lemurs and its traditional Betsileo tombs. We will enjoy a picnic lunch en route and arrive in the Tsaranoro Valley in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Tsara Camp

DAY 12: TSARANORO VALLEY

Highlights: Nature walks, lemurs, natural pools

Today will be a day at leisure. Tsara Camp organises many guided walks in the beautiful reddish mountains which surround the lodge. Easy walks will take you to a sacred forest inhabited by catta lemurs, a waterfall, a natural swimming pool, and nearby Barabory villages. This is a unique opportunity to discover the

traditional Malagasy life of this isolated population. Here, people rely on the weather, the sun and the rice harvest as a clock. A more energetic walk will take you all the way up Mount Chameleon!

Overnight at Tsara Camp

DAY 13: TSARANORO VALLEY TO ISALO

Highlights: Maki Canyons, lemurs, natural pools

Today we will drive to the National Park of Isalo, known as the Malagasy "Colorado". The park includes much of the Isalo Massif, which rises up from the flat grassy plains. The sandstone has eroded into unusual shapes and the area contains impressive gorges, canyons and streams with associated endemic trees, palms and succulents. Amongst the highlights of the day are the Maki Canyons, where we will most likely spot lemurs, and the natural swimming pools nestled among the rocks.

Overnight at Relais de la Reine

DAY 14: ISALO

Highlights: Natural pools

We will have a full day to explore, swim and picnic at the beautiful natural pools in the area.

Overnight Relais de la Reine

DAY 15: TULEAR TO TANANARIVE

Highlights: Arboretum

After breakfast, we will drive to Tulear, where we will visit the well-known arboretum with its wide variety of endemic plants and wildlife. In particular, the park showcases numerous species characteristic of the "spiny forest" of the dry south. We will then be transferred to the Tulear's Airport to catch our flight back to Tananarive.

Overnight at the Palissandre Hotel

DAY 16: TANA TO MONTAGNE D'AMBRE

Highlights: Historical village, crater lakes, waterfalls, abundant wildlife

We begin with an early morning transfer to the airport to catch our flight to Diego, after which we will drive to the Montagne d'Ambre National Park. En route we pass through Joffreville (a rest village for the French Army, built in 1902). Montagne d'Ambre is a volcanic range offering several botanical trails, crater lakes, great cascades and providing home for abundant wildlife including numerous rare reptiles, lemurs and 70 species of birds. We will enjoy a picnic lunch in the reserve.

Overnight at Nature Lodge

DAY 17: DIEGO TO ANKIFY

Highlights: Tsingy rock formations, caves, underground rivers

Today we will make our way to the exceptional Ankarana Park, where we will see the famous stone formations called "Tsingy". We will also discover the nearby bat-filled grottos (with their stalagmites and stalactites) and underground rivers. During our walk we will see xerophytic plants such as kalanchoes, bottle-trees, euphorbias and are likely to encounter our agile fluffy friends, the lemurs! The Antakarana consider the Ankarana massif as sacred, since, in the past, the Antakarana fled from the Merina and took refuge in the caves and Tsingy, and many of their kings are buried there. After a picnic lunch, we depart for Ankify. On the way we will pass coffee, cocoa, ylang ylang, sugar cane and clove plantations and pass the small towns of Ambilobe and Ambanja. We will then retire to our hotel on the beach.

Overnight at the Baobab Hotel

DAY 18: ANKIFY TO NOSY KOMBA

Highlights: Snorkelling, tropical islands

We will depart at 07H30 from Ankify and travel by boat to Tanikely Island, a protected marine reserve and fantastic snorkelling spot. Here, we can snorkel among colourful corals, tropical fish and we may even spot sea turtles - a real aquarium! After enjoying a seafood lunch on the beach, we will continue our boat trip to Nosy Komba, a small volcanic island, with beautiful beaches and plenty of lemurs. In this small paradise, the tropical island of your dreams, you can soak in the sun or follow one of the walking trails inland.

Overnight at Tsara Komba

DAY 19: NOSY BE

Highlights: Madagascar's premier resort island, Malagasy culture

After breakfast at our hotel, we will be transferred Nosy Be (Island in the North), Madagascar's premier beach resort destination. The beaches here are busy but beautiful and the inhabitants have kept their good humour. If you are looking for "Robinson Crusoe's" beaches, you will prefer the less visited islets around Nosy Be, but the main island is a worth a visit. With its sugar cane fields, rum distillery, single gauge railway, and ylang ylang perfuming the whole island, Nosy Be has a "Caribbean" charm. In the evening we will return to Nosy Komba.

Overnight at Tsara Komba

DAY 20: NOSY KOMBA TO TANA

Highlights: Morning at leisure

We will enjoy a leisurely morning on the island, and in the afternoon we will be transferred to Nosy Be's Airport to catch our flight back to Tana. Thereafter, you may either catch your international flight home, or we will take you back to the Palissandre Hotel, with its sweeping views over the city.

Flight home or overnight at the Palissandre Hotel.