



MADAGASCAR

AUDLEY

TAILOR-MADE JOURNEYS FOR THE DISCERNING TRAVELLER



Madagascar

165 million years ago Madagascar broke free from Africa and drifted 400 kilometres out into the Mozambique Channel. Geological forces thrust up dramatic mountain ranges along the spine of an island a thousand miles long. Isolated from the rest of the world, there were no large predators: here wildlife evolved on its own distinct path. Of Madagascar's 200,000 species, more than 80% are endemic.

The most famous are the lemurs. This is the place to hear the eerie wail of the indri echo across misty rainforests and see sifakas leap across ochre earth. Walks through the forests will reveal more than lemurs though. Pushing past wild ginger ferns and over buttress roots you will see a kaleidoscope of chameleons, frogs and butterflies. Birds screech in the trees and uncharted insects march through the leaf litter.

Man arrived late: only 2,000 years ago, on small boats from Indonesia. Today, there are many different tribes, each with their own languages, beliefs and customs and each amongst the most spiritual you'll find anywhere. Finally, Madagascar is surrounded by a halo of small islands. The beaches are long and sandy with pirogues moored in the shallows. Kick off your walking boots, lie back and watch the frigate birds soar overhead...

Audley in Madagascar

There are two main ways to get around Madagascar, by flying or by being driven by a guide. As a general rule people tend to fly around the north and drive in the south. In Northern Madagascar distances are huge and roads poor and for this reason it is best to fly. Air Madagascar has a network of flights, all of which originate in Antananarivo and radiate to the major towns and islands. Key destinations include the islands of Nosy Be and Ile Ste Marie, Maroantsetra, the gateway to the Masoala National Park and Diego Suarez, from where you can access Amber Mountain and Ankarana. We will arrange for you to be met at each regional airport by a guide with a 4WD – or even a boat – ready to head off to parks, reserves or private islands.

The main road south from Antananarivo, Route Seven, is a good tar road winding through a number of villages and towns. It's a scenic journey and we recommend exploring with a driver-guide. Driving south and exploring the parks of Ranomafana, Isalo and Berenty takes about ten days. On reaching the south coast most visitors fly back to Antananarivo from a regional airport such as Tulear or Fort Dauphin. Whilst Madagascar is a predominantly French speaking country you will find many people in the tourism industry speak English. We work closely with a number of English speaking guides who have fantastic knowledge of the country. Many have a particular expertise and so if you have an interest in lemurs, reptiles or birds we can find a guide with matching expertise.

Accommodation

Accommodation in Madagascar is not nearly as developed or as high a standard as it is on mainland Africa. There are no luxurious lodges with slick service, no large operators and no chains of hotels. At Audley we love this as it means that there is a wonderful array of accommodation, all totally different in character. In the rainforest there are small tented camps where chickens cluck around the garden and their eggs are collected for breakfast. There are colonial homesteads where you will sleep in converted stable blocks and eat in a wood-panelled dining room. You might find yourself camping in the heart of the rainforest one minute and sleeping in a beautiful rosewood chalet the next – complete with lemurs on the roof! Finally, on the islands there are small guesthouses, boutique hotels and idyllic private islands. While the standards of comfort may vary, your diet will be excellent. Madagascar has a very high standard of cuisine that blends Malagasy, French and Asian influences. Zebu steaks are a speciality, as are prawns, crab, lobster and fresh fish.

Climate

Madagascar runs across several latitudes and its climate varies. Broadly speaking the north is hot and tropical, the west temperate, the east wet and the south has a dry, Austral climate. The most rainfall is from January to March and cyclones can occur in February: these are the only months we advise against travel. In April, May and June there are some heavy downpours, however these are interspersed with sunshine. The country is green and fresh after the rain and lemurs and reptiles are active and readily seen. July and August are cool and dry and ideal for exploring. The whales arrive on Ile Ste Marie in July and remain until the end of August. September, October and November are particularly lovely as the weather is fine and warm, the jacarandas are in flower and many lemurs have young. December is hot but lemurs, reptiles and tenrecs are active so wildlife viewing is good. All that said, there are dramatic regional variations so it's best to speak to our specialists about the best time to visit each part of the country.



Nosy Be girl

Madagascar

Telephone: 01993 838 585



Brown lemur in Andasibe National Park

Andasibe National Park (Perinet)

Andasibe covers an area of montane rainforest at altitudes between 930 metres and 1,040 metres. It is the best park for the indri, the largest lemur, and two of the 62 resident groups have been habituated, making them easy to see. There are eight other species of lemur in Andasibe and the most commonly seen include the grey bamboo lemurs, brown lemurs and woolly lemurs. There are some wonderful chameleons in the reserve including the two-foot long Parson's chameleon and the tiny nose-horned chameleon. Frogs are plentiful and birding highlights include Madagascar blue pigeon, coral-billed nuthatches and the Madagascar long-eared owl. All exploring is done on foot along trails that weave through the forest: expeditions can vary in length from one hour to five. Walks are particularly rewarding in the early morning when indri calls, sounding rather like a weird forest whalesong, echo through the air.



Vakona Forest Lodge

VAKONA FOREST LODGE, ANDASIBE

Vakona Forest Lodge is situated on a hillside that drops down to a lake: the combination of luxuriant vegetation and fresh mountain air is wonderful, the peace disturbed only by the sound of forest frogs. Dotted around the hillside, fourteen basic bungalows each have their own decks. A number of marked trails leave from the lodge and thread into the heart of the primary forest.

The Pangalanes Canal

Running parallel to the Indian Ocean the Pangalanes Canal forms a network of man-made channels connecting fresh water lakes and lagoons. Stretching 600 kilometres from the bustling port of Tamatave to Farafangana along the south east coast, the Pangalanes is the longest canal in the world. Though overgrown with aquatic plants the canal still dominates daily life in this region as it provides the main source of trade and transport. Plans are in place to clear the weed and upgrade the canal once more to the busy commercial waterway that it once was. Cruising by boat on the calm waters of Pangalanes is fascinating. This area is the stronghold of the Betsimisaraka people and their villages can be seen along the banks. On the waterways themselves you see pirogues, local fishermen, rafts carrying timber and over-crowded ferries with names such as 'Great Hopes' and 'Malagasy Fish'.



Indri – the largest lemur species

PALMARIUM HOTEL, PALMARIUM PRIVATE RESERVE

Submerged within the thick vegetation, small lodges scatter the banks of the Pangalanes. One of the best is Palmarium Hotel, two hours by boat from Tamatave, with clean and spacious rooms, all with lake views. Apart from the sights of cargo boats and fishermen travelling by on the water, the surrounding reserve is great for photographers, as ten different species of lemur are resident, including sifakas as well as the occasional indri.



Leaf-tailed gecko



Red-ruffed lemur



Tree boa



Masoala Forest Camp



Camping on Nosy Mangabe

Masoala National Park

Masoala National Park is Madagascar's largest park and one of its least visited. Primary rainforest covers a range of mountains and drops down to the deserted beaches of Antongil Bay where hump-backed whales come to breed and calve. The Masoala rainforest is beautiful with tall pallisander trees, vines, wild ginger plants, ferns and orchids. Walking in the forest you see hundreds of frogs, including the large tomato frog. Chameleons are easily found: the most commonly-seen species include the panther chameleon, hooded chameleon and several species of stump-tailed chameleon. Masoala is the last refuge of the red-ruffed lemur which sun themselves on the tops of trees in the morning. At night you often see eastern woolly lemurs sitting in the tree forks and white-fronted brown lemur, brown mouse lemur and the aye-aye are also resident. On the ground a surprising number of lowland streaked tenrecs rustle through the vegetation in their endless search for insects.



Chameleon in miniature

MASOALA FOREST CAMP, MASOALA NATIONAL PARK

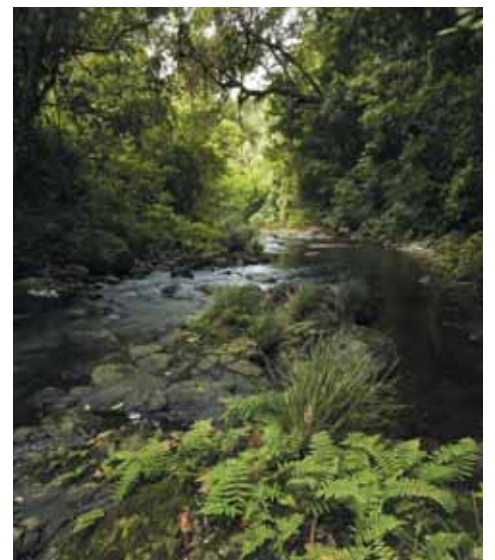
Masoala Forest Camp is built on a golden-sand beach where the rainforest meets the sea. There are five tents on raised platforms, each with a hammock where you can relax on hot afternoons, watching the birds and geckos. The chef, Estrina, is particularly good, conjuring up wonderful meals using fresh, local ingredients. Activities include wildlife walks in the rainforest, snorkelling and kayaking along the coast.

Nosy Mangabe

Nosy Mangabe is a small island located in Antongil Bay two kilometres offshore from Maroantsetra. The island has a rich history of piracy and arriving by boat it looks exactly like a pirates' hang-out. Dense vegetation drops to large boulders and hidden coves - one of which has a rusty shipwreck emerging from the shallows. The island is a rainforest reserve and sanctuary for the endangered aye-aye which was introduced in 1966. This is the best place in Madagascar to see these fascinating creatures and an overnight stay is recommended to give you the chance to search by torchlight. Other lemurs on the island include black and white ruffed lemur, white-fronted brown lemur and the brown mouse lemur. As there is no accommodation on the island the only way to stay overnight is to camp. Paths through the forest can be steep so it's a place for nimble walkers.

CAMPING SAUVAGE, NOSY MANGABE

The camping on Nosy Be is often referred to as 'camping sauvage' and this is an accurate description. You will stay in simple dome tents on a rudimentary campsite that has only the most basic washing facilities. Whilst the camping is wild, the experience is wonderful. At night the forest rings with the calls of frogs and at dawn, an eerie mist hangs over the trees.



River in Masoala National Park

Madagascar

Telephone: 01993 838 585



Crowned lemur

Amber Mountain National Park

Amber Mountain National Park is situated in the far north of Madagascar, 40 kilometres south of Diego Suarez. Whilst Diego can be hot and dry Amber Mountain is always cool and fresh with mist hanging over the trees. There are huge strangler figs, quinine trees and enormous bird-nest ferns. The park is rewarding for walkers with several beautiful trails threading through the forest. Two trails lead to waterfalls, the Cascade d'Antomboka and Cascade Sacrée. On foot you have the chance to discover all the smaller wildlife such as the leaf-mimic chameleons, tree boas, leaf-tailed geckos, butterflies and pill millipedes which curl up into perfect balls. There are seven lemur species in the park, including the crowned lemur and Sanford's brown lemur, and hikers usually see at least one if not two of the diurnal species.

Joffreville (Ambohitra)

There is no accommodation in the Amber Mountain National Park itself, but Joffreville is an excellent base, just 4 kilometres from the park gate. This village is a relaxing place to wander around and catch a flavour of rural Malagasy life. Small stalls sell seasonal fruit amongst crumbling colonial houses, little tin-roofed bars sell rum to locals perched on wooden benches and chickens and ducks scabble all over the place.



Domaine de Fontenay



Cascade Sacrée

🏠 DOMAINE DE FONTENAY, JOFFREVILLE

Domaine de Fontenay is a colonial property, owner-run by Karl-Heinz and his wife Marie-Jose, who is in charge of the superb French cuisine. The eight guest bedrooms are set in converted stable blocks, and three radiata tortoises called Lolita, Tweedledum and Tweedledee live in the surrounding garden that bursts with flowers. Footpaths lead into a private nature reserve, allowing you to walk from your room into rainforest.

🏠 NATURE LODGE, JOFFREVILLE

Nature Lodge is located on a hill two kilometres south of Joffreville, centred around a restaurant that serves local food and a small sociable bar. Accommodation is in 12 simple thatched chalets made from local wood, each with a deck that is perfect for taking in the superb views of Diego Suarez and the Indian Ocean beyond.



Nature Lodge

Rainforests and Island Hideaways

Start by relaxing on the beautiful island of Ile Sainte Marie, combining days on the beach with delicious seafood meals at Boraha Village. After three days fly back to Antananarivo and drive through farming villages and rice paddies to Andasibe National Park. Walk in the rainforest to view chameleons, frogs, indris and other lemurs. Return to Antananarivo for a night then fly to Madagascar's northern tip to explore the beautiful waterfalls of Amber Mountain National Park. End with five nights at Nosy Komba, relaxing in your hammock as pirogues and dhows drift slowly past.

- Day 1** Fly from the UK to Antananarivo via Paris.
-
- Days 2-4** Arrive in Antananarivo. Fly to Ile Sainte Marie. Three nights at Boraha Village.
-
- Days 5-6** Fly to Antananarivo. Drive to Andasibe National Park. Two nights at Vakona Lodge.
-
- Day 7** Drive to Antananarivo. One night at the Royal Pallisandre.
-
- Days 8-10** Fly to Diego Suarez and drive to Amber Mountain National Park. Two nights at Nature Lodge.
-
- Days 11-15** Fly to Nosy Be. Boat trip to Nosy Komba. Five nights at Tsara Komba.
-
- Day 16** Fly to Antananarivo. Fly to London via Paris.
-
- Day 17** Arrive in London.

EXTENSIONS

From Nosy Be fly direct to Anjajavy for five nights. Explore the dry deciduous forests on guided walks or take boat trips to the mysterious islands of Moramba Bay. Every afternoon tea is taken in the 'Oasis', a beautiful garden where Coquerel's sifakas and brown lemurs often leap through the trees overhead.

TAILOR-MADE TRAVEL

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Anjajavy Pool



Anjajavy from the air



Walking in the Anjajavy Nature Reserve



Coquerel's sifaka

Anjajavy Private Nature Reserve

Idyllically remote on Madagascar's northwest coast, Anjajavy is reached only by air. Flying towards the airstrip you pass thick forest that stops abruptly at the sea, shading white-sand coves separated by limestone headlands. A handful of dhows and pirogues bob in the water and in small clearings you see the thatched huts of the Sakalava fishing villages. The Anjajavy Private Nature Reserve covers an area of 450 hectares and is predominantly dry deciduous forest. There are over 1,800 floral species, most endemic and several medicinal. Wildlife is prolific and walks through the forest reveal chameleons, frogs and spore of bush-pigs and the elusive fossa. There are two diurnal lemur species, the common brown lemur and Coquerel's sifaka, both of which are easily seen. Nocturnal species include sportive and mouse lemurs. A stay at Anjajavy is as much about the coast as it is the forest. Boat trips explore the mysterious islands of Moramba Bay where there are sacred baobab trees and Sakalava tombs tucked high in caves and on ledges in the limestone cliffs. Running the length of the reserve is a series of small coves, each one more beautiful than the last. Paths lead from one to the other allowing you to take a picnic and your snorkelling equipment and spend an afternoon on your own private beach.

ANJAJAVY L'HÔTEL, ANJAJAVY PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE

Anjajavy is set in extensive tropical gardens, backed by thick forest and looking out over the turquoise waters of the Mozambique Channel. There are 25 air-conditioned rosewood villas, all of which face the sea and are a step away from the beach. Early in the morning Madagascar lovebirds, red fody and Madagascar wagtails flit about the gardens. In the afternoons groups of brown lemurs and Coquerel's sifakas leap through the trees to the forest. The atmosphere is warm and relaxed at Anjajavy and it is a perfect place to lounge by the pool, explore idyllic beaches and savour the excellent food, especially the freshly-baked pastries. There are also plenty of activities including walks in the forest, village visits, boat trips in the mangroves, sailing, snorkelling, kayaking and more. Stay for five days or more to really explore this remote and idyllic area.



Rosewood chalet at Anjajavy

Madagascar

Telephone: 01993 838 585



Village in the Central Highlands

Ranomafana National Park

Ranomafana National Park is part of the lush chain of rainforest that runs down Madagascar's east coast. The steep hills are covered in thick vegetation, occasionally broken by waterfalls and mountain streams. The park's star attraction is the golden bamboo lemur, often found grazing amongst the bamboo thickets. Eleven other species of lemur include diademed sifakas that leap through the canopy during the day and brown mouse lemurs who race up and down tree trunks by night. Heading deep into the park, you may hear the calls of cuckoo rollers, catch a glimpse of a leaf-tailed gecko or stumble across the graves of the Tanala, 'the people of the forest'. It is well worth spending a few days hiking around this enchanting park.



Sportive lemur at night



Civet

Antsirabe

Antsirabe is a small spa town roughly half way between Antananarivo and Ranomafana. Signs of its colonial past can still be seen today in the town's wide boulevards, imposing cathedral and crumbling white villas, enlivened by countless signs of Madagascar today, including the colourful *pousse-pousses* that race along the town's streets, all brightly coloured, and each with their own name and number plate! Numerous stalls cluster on each street corner selling everything from bananas to spare bicycle parts. The cool, clear air of the high plateau makes Antsirabe an attractive stop on the route to the south, and it is an excellent place to see local craftsmen at work; hundreds of tiny workshops are scattered across town, making sweets, delicate lacework and tiny model bicycles. A visit to the thermal baths is also fun and you'll find a wonderfully hot swimming pool full of a lot of splashing and laughter.

🏠 SETAM LODGE, RANOMAFANA NATIONAL PARK

Setam Lodge comprises a handful of clean and simple bungalows built into the hillside of Ranomafana. The lodge has spectacular views over the park, so each day guests awake to the sight of the early morning mist rising from the rainforest. Setam is the closest lodge to the park gate, making it an excellent base from which to explore.

🏠 HOTEL DES THERMES, ANTIRABE

Hotel des Thermes is a grand old building overlooking Antsirabe. From the outside it resembles a French country house, set amongst a few acres of parkland. Inside it feels more like a 1970's spa hotel: rather startling but not without its own unique charm. The real appeal of this hotel lies in its location, a short walk from the centre of town, with striking views over the thermal baths to the distant hills beyond.



Craftsman in Antsirabe

Eastern Madagascar Explorer

This exciting trip ventures up the remote Pangalanes Canal. Start with two days in Andasibe National Park for your introduction to the Madagascan rainforest. From here drive east to the Pangalanes Canal and board a small boat for a cruise north. Stay at the Palmarium Private Reserve and enjoy close up photography of crowned lemurs. Continue your boat trip up to the top of the Pangalanes Canal and then fly to Ile Sainte Marie for a relaxing five nights on the beach.

- Day 1** Fly from the UK to Antananarivo via Paris.
-
- Days 2-3** Arrive in Antananarivo. Drive to Andasibe National Park. Two nights at Vakona Lodge.
-
- Days 4-5** Drive to the Pangalanes Canal. Boat trip to the Palmarium Private Reserve. Two nights at the Palmarium Hotel.
-
- Day 6** Boat trip up the Pangalanes Canal to Tamatave. One night at the Sharon Hotel.
-
- Days 7-11** Fly from Tamatave to Ile Sainte Marie. Five nights at Princesse Bora Lodge.
-
- Day 12** Fly to Antananarivo. Fly to London via Paris.
-
- Day 13** Arrive in London.

EXTENSIONS

The really adventurous can begin their trip with four nights in the Masoala National Park. Spend a night in the Relais de Masoala before heading out for two nights wild camping on Nosy Mangabe. Spend the days hiking in the rainforest with night walks in search of aye-aye. After a night relaxing back at the Relais de Masoala fly back to Tana and drive to Andasibe for the start of the Eastern Madagascar Explorer.

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Bara tribe sacred burial site



Isalo at sunset



Hoopoes

Isalo National Park

Isalo's golden sandstone cliffs can be seen rising out of the plains from many miles away. The national park is home to some of Madagascar's most stunning scenery, and is a sacred place for the Bara tribe, whose burial sites are marked by mounds of tiny stones placed in crevices in the rock face. Hiking up to the massif, visitors enter a barren wonderland of twisted rock formations and extraordinary plants, shimmering in the heat of the plateau. Squat elephant's foot plants cling to the rocks, a few dry grasses blow in the wind, and succulent aloes thrive. Wildlife concentrates in the numerous shady gorges and cool running streams that carve through the massif. Deciduous woodland grows in each canyon's higher levels, and it is here that Isalo's lemurs are most often found. Brown lemurs feed amongst the branches, Verreaux's sifakas leap from rock to rock, and troops of cheeky ringtails wander along the pathways. Descending deeper into the gorges, only a few shafts of sunlight penetrate to the streams below, and dripping mosses and ferns line the walls. Occasionally the streams become blocked, forming tiny tropical pools amongst the rocks. The clear air, tumbling waterfalls, and cool water almost defy belief, and make a wonderful respite from a hot day's hiking on the plateau.



Relais de la Reine

🏠 RELAIS DE LA REINE, ISALO NATIONAL PARK

Cleverly hidden amongst the rocks of Isalo, Relais de la Reine has the feel of a Mediterranean farmhouse. The thick stone walls provide a shelter from hot summer days and crackling open fires warm chilly winter nights. As with anywhere in Isalo, views are magnificent. Sitting on the terrace for sundowners is a delight, as the setting sun paints darker shades on the golden-pink cliffs above.



Brown lemur in Isalo

Madagascar

Telephone: 01993 838 585



Ring-tailed lemurs in Berenty



Spiny Forest



Chameleon spotted on a night walk

Berenty Reserve

One of Madagascar's best known wildlife reserves, Berenty is set on the banks of the Mandrare River. Strolling through the gallery forest you could be forgiven for thinking you were in the English countryside – though a flicker of movement in the canopy or a rustle amongst the leaves will soon prove you wrong. Troupes of ring-tailed lemurs race along the dappled pathways, happily fearless of their human guests. Verreaux's sifakas leap from tree to tree, occasionally descending to earth to triplejump, arms raised high, across the sand. Red-fronted brown lemurs have been introduced into the forest and can easily be spotted eating fruit and leaves. Bird watching, even without binoculars, is excellent here: look out for flashes of blue on the faces of giant couas, and the long tails of paradise flycatchers. Alongside Berenty's deciduous woodland, a small area of spiny forest is excellent for night walks. As moonlight filters through the twisted fingers of euphorbia and octopus trees a powerful torch (bring your own, good torches and batteries are rare in Madagascar) will pick out the eyes of curious lemurs, flashes of green against the inky night. Mouse lemurs are ever active, flickering fast up and down silhouetted trees, and sportive lemurs can be found by following their eerie call. Stepping out of the forest at the end of a night walk, the sweep of stars across the sky is magnificent: a few minutes stargazing are the perfect prelude to a night at your lodge.



Berenty Lodges

BERENTY LODGES, BERENTY RESERVE

Visiting Berenty focuses more on the wildlife than pampering, so accommodation in the reserve is basic. Guests stay at Berenty Lodges, a simple collection of en suite bungalows or lodge rooms: while far from being the height of luxury you'll have everything that you need, and mischievous ring-tail lemurs in the grounds provide hours of entertainment.



Verreaux's sifaka



Antandroy tombs



Kite



Mouse lemur

Madagascar Classic Camping

In mainland Africa the mobile tented safari has long been accepted as one of the best ways to travel in remote regions, but until recently this hasn't been available in Madagascar. In 2007 the enterprising Ed Tucker-Brown, drawing on his extensive experience in East Africa, started mobile tented safaris in the Ifotaka region of the south. Small and personal, with just six tents, these are the ultimate way to enjoy Madagascar's deep south. You are woken by the sun streaming into your tent, can spend days hiking in the forest with some of Madagascar's top wildlife guides, visit local villages where you'll often be the first western visitor and return, each evening, to Ed's specialities such as seafood kebabs grilled on vanilla pods. With some of Madagascar's top guides, a strong community involvement, and tented comforts that exceed most Malagasy hotels this is, in our view, the ultimate way to explore. From April to October the camp is set at Mandrare River. Staying in the Ifotaka region you will have the opportunity to see first hand the life of the Antandroy, one of Madagascar's fiercest and most traditional tribes. Their tribal ancestors are buried in the Sacred Forests: guarding their graves, the Antandroy have also preserved pristine wildlife areas. Species including ring-tailed, mouse, sportive and sifaka lemurs are all readily seen, as well as many bird species. Many tombs are hidden in

the forest undergrowth, and your guide will explain the traditions and rituals of ancestor worship. It is possible to visit the ombiasy (traditional healer), learn how to use the piletse, a zebu-hide sling shot, and take a zebu-cart to the colourful market at Fenaivo.

MANDRARE RIVER CAMP, IFOTAKA COMMUNITY FOREST

Mandrare River Camp is set in the Ifotaka Community Forest, four hours west of Fort Dauphin. The sun rises directly in front of the tents over the Mandrare River giving breathtaking early morning views. At night, far from civilisation, the stars are the best you'll see anywhere in Africa. The tents are set up under tamarind trees and have en suite bathrooms with hot bucket showers. The camp is at Mandrare River each year from April to October, while plans are afoot to move the camp in November to the remote north-east coast for two months of green season birding.



Mandrare River Camp

Under Canvas and into the Wilderness

Madagascar at its most luxurious, this journey starts in Antananarivo's finest boutique hotel. In the morning, fly to Tulear and drive up to Isalo National Park viewing lemurs, hiking and then cooling off in the mountain streams and natural rock pools. Fly to Fort Dauphin and head into the Ifotaka Sacred Forest to stay in Madagascar's first and only luxury tented camp before travelling to the coast for a glorious finale at Anjajavy Resort.

- Day 1** Fly from the UK to Antananarivo via Paris.
-
- Day 2** Arrive in Antananarivo. One night at the Royal Pallisandre.
-
- Days 3-5** Fly to Tulear and then drive to Isalo National Park. Three nights at Relais de la Reine.
-
- Days 6-8** Fly to Fort Dauphin. Drive to Mandrare River Camp. Three nights at Mandrare River Camp.
-
- Day 9** Fly to Antananarivo. One night at the Royal Pallisandre.
-
- Days 10-14** Fly to Anjajavy Private Reserve. Five nights at Anjajavy.
-
- Day 15** Fly to Antananarivo. Fly to London via Paris.
-
- Day 16** Arrive in London.

EXTENSIONS

From Anjajavy fly to Nosy Be and take a boat to Tsarabanjina Island. This beautiful private island is known for its swimming, snorkelling, diving and deep sea fishing, though it's also an excellent place to relax on the beach with a book. With luxurious bungalows under palm trees, powder white sand and invariably turquoise water it is hard to imagine a more idyllic island hideaway.

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Mantella frog

Madagascar

Telephone: 01993 838 585



Madagascar's Islands

Madagascar is fringed by a number of beautiful islands. Nosy Be is the best known, a relatively developed place with a number of boutique hotels. Though you can find quiet corners of Nosy Be, we prefer the sleepier islands such as Ile Sainte Marie on the east coast, Nosy Komba off northern Madagascar, or the private islands of Tsarabanjina and Nosy Iranja. On these islands it is easy to

find deserted beaches with soft sand and clear water. Ghost crabs scuttle across the sand and – particularly in the north – frigate birds can be seen soaring overhead. Many of the islands have villages on or nearby and you become accustomed to the daily sight of dhows sailing past, filled with thatching palms, grain and cows until they float just inches above the water. In villages breadfruit trees shade bamboo huts and zebu cattle

graze in the fields. The islands are perfect for relaxing after the adventurous experience of Madagascar's rainforests. Flights go regularly from Antananarivo to Ile Sainte Marie while even more fly to Nosy Be, from where boats reach Nosy Komba, Tsarabanjina and Nosy Iranja. Once on the islands, days can be spent snorkelling and diving, pottering around on a bicycle or just lying on the beach.



Pirogue off Ile Ste Marie



La Crique Beach



Girl on Ile Sainte-Marie

Ile Sainte-Marie

Ile Sainte-Marie is a sleepy island off Madagascar's east coast, ringed by deserted beaches with soft sand and palm trees, traditional fishing villages and just a handful of small lodges. The island is renowned for its seafood and is the best place on Madagascar to eat crab. If you are brave you can also sample the island tippie – coconut milk enlivened by a large measure of Pastis. Ile Sainte Marie is about 60 kilometres long and 5 kilometres wide and has a colourful history: through the 17th and 18th centuries it was a popular base for the Indian Ocean's pirates. There is one town, Ambodifotatra, with a couple of cafés, a large church and a busy market. Numerous villages dotted around the island have bamboo huts, fat ducks crossing the road and geese swimming in rainfilled potholes. Mango, clove, cinammon and breadfruit trees line the roads that never get far from beaches where pirogues are moored in the shallows. If you cycle through the villages in the evening you smell the food being cooked, hear music playing from the radios and under a tree in Volihava village there is often a group of men playing boules. Ile Sainte Marie can be visited from April right through until December, but is particularly rewarding from July to September when substantial groups of humpback whales come to breed and calve in the calm waters of the Antongil Bay.

The cloves are harvested in November and the mangos and lychees come into season in December: only the months of January to March are marred by the cyclone season. With all these enticing features just a short flight from Tana it is surprising this island has remained so thoroughly unspoiled.

🏠 BORAHA VILLAGE, ILE SAINTE MARIE

Boraha Village is a small and friendly lodge located on a hilltop on the east coast of the island. The thirteen bungalows have hammocks and ocean views and are well positioned to take advantage of the sea breeze. The lodge is well known for its food and the crab is a speciality. You can eat in the dining room or better still, on the end of the jetty, surrounded by the clear turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean.



Boraha Village



Princesse Bora Lodge

🏠 PRINCESSE BORA LODGE, ILE SAINTE MARIE

Transfers to the Princesse Bora Lodge are done by zebu-cart, slow and relaxed – much like your stay here. The lodge is situated in a grove of palm trees on the south-west side of the island. The beach has white sand shelving into a sheltered lagoon and faces west, ideal for spectacular sunsets. Accommodation is in fifteen villas with decks and hammocks, there is an infinity pool and dining room serving good French and Malagasy cuisine. It is particularly pretty at night when lit by paraffin lanterns.

Madagascar

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Pirogue at sunset

Nosy Be

Nosy Be lies off the northwest of Madagascar and has a near-perfect climate – sunshine with brief showers that are often at night. The soils are fertile and sugar, pepper and ylang-ylang are all grown for export. There is one busy town, Hell-Ville, where the roads are packed with ancient Renault taxis, zebu-carts, bicycles and pedestrians. Tourist shops jostle for space with local stalls that sell everything from chilli peppers to mangrove crabs caked in mud. North of Hell-Ville the road winds around the west coast where a few hotels cluster around sandy beaches. Nosy Be's beaches are not ideal for swimming as they shelve gradually, staying shallow for miles out to sea, but they are peaceful and hassle-free, with pirogues lying abandoned in the sand and dhows floating past offshore.

🚢 MADAVOILE, NOSY BE

Madavoile is a small privately owned yacht company based out of Nosy Be who operate seven vessels, ranging in size from small yachts for two or four guests to catamarans sleeping eight or more in luxury. The yachts come with a skipper and chef and can be chartered for anything from three days to a few weeks: they present a unique opportunity to explore untouched villages and idyllic islands off Madagascar's northwest coast.



Auberge Orangea

🏠 AUBERGE ORANGEA, NOSY BE

Auberge Orangea is tucked away on a quiet beach. There are 21 rooms, some on top of a hill and more set under coconut palms by the beach, where a bar has been built from an old dhow – ideal for watching the sun set over the sea. Pre-dinner snacks are served around the pool and meals are cooked in an open kitchen: cuisine is excellent here with seafood a speciality.



Tsara Komba

Nosy Komba

Nosy Komba is a beautiful island a few kilometres away from Nosy Be, placed on the map for its population of habituated black lemurs. Hills fold dramatically into the water, creating sandy coves and sheltered harbours for fishing villages. The island's main settlement is Ampangorinana, where the villagers have a keen eye for business: the dusty lanes are lined with embroidered tablecloths, woven baskets and wood carvings. Out of the village island life is quiet. There are numerous deserted coves to explore as well as paths that lead through tavy farms and into the hills where you will find birds, chameleons and black lemurs: best of all, you'll have them all to yourself.

🏠 TSARA KOMBA, NOSY KOMBA

Owned and run by Christian & Guy, Tsara Komba extends a warm welcome to every guest. Wooden walkways flanked by tropical flowers lead to six thatched bungalows, made from natural materials and dotted around the hillside. The hotel's restaurant and bar has a good selection of wine as well as Tsara Komba's famous coconut rum punch. Days here can be spent walking in the island interior or snorkelling around one of the many deserted coves.



Coral reef



Nosy Iranja



Tsarabanjina Island

The Nosy Mitsio Archipelago

The Nosy Mitsio Archipelago lies 70 kilometres north of Nosy Be and is only accessible by boat. Skimming over the water you often glimpse bottle nosed dolphins and green turtles but the arrival is even more breathtaking, as you slow amongst tiny tropical islands, lush with tropical vegetation and necklaced with powder-white beaches. Few parts of Madagascar suffer from any light pollution and this is no exception: at night the stars glitter brightly over the water. The archipelago is made up of about a dozen islands. La Grande Mitsio is the largest island with the small farming villages of Antakarana and Akalava. Tsarabanjina is beautiful with volcanic rocks, palms and badamier trees and four gently shelving beaches. Nosy Ankarea is surrounded by coral reefs while Les Quatres Freres is made up of four imposing silver basalt rocks, covered by hundreds of nesting seabirds including brown boobies, northern gannets, frigate birds and white-tailed tropic birds.



Shells on the beach

🏠 TSARABANJINA ISLAND, NOSY MITSIO ARCHIPELAGO

As soon as you step off the boat from Nosy Be onto Tsarabanjina Island you will be handed mask, snorkel and flippers. Then you walk barefoot to your villa, hop into your hammock and relax – your stay has begun. Tsarabanjina Island is small at just 22 hectares, with 18 guest bungalows, all en suite, linked by sandy paths that weave in and out of the coconut palms. There are four idyllic beaches, all with powder-white sand sloping gently into turquoise waters. Days can be spent snorkelling, diving, kayaking and enjoying the excellent French cuisine the chef serves up in the beachside restaurant.



Bungalow at Tsarabanjina Island



A suite at Nosy Iranja

Nosy Iranja

One hour by boat southwest of Nosy Be, at low tide Nosy Iranja is a single island but splits into two as rising waters cover the connecting white sandbank. The northern and larger island is Iranja Komba, with a small fishing village where abandoned dhows are washed up on the sand and modest bamboo huts are tucked under badamier trees. The southern island, known often as Nosy Iranja Kely, has one small hotel. Both islands have gently shelving powder-white beaches. The islands are an important breeding site for hawksbill turtles and scientists are currently working on a turtle monitoring project. Guests can learn about their work and, with luck, watch turtles hatching at night.

🏠 NOSY IRANJA HOTEL, NOSY IRANJA KELY

Nosy Iranja Hotel has recently undergone extensive refurbishment and is now one of Madagascar's most luxurious boutique hotels. It is situated on Nosy Iranja Kely and has 29 suites built of wood and natural materials dotted around the coastline, each with their own sea view. Guests are invited to participate in turtle research, and other activities include diving, snorkelling and sailing.

Madagascar

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