

Unique ecosystems in the land of the lemur: Madagascar

3 September 2025 – 16 days for £8,399 (Approx. \$10,200 USD)

All Inclusive except International Airfare (Approx. \$2500 USD from USA)

Deadline : July 31, 2025. Max 12 people. Only 10 spaces left as of 1/13/25



HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit National Parks and reserves including Andasibe-Mantadia, Kirindy, Amber Mountain and Ankarana in 4-wheel-drive jeeps with individual English-speaking drivers.
- Listen to the call of the indri – the largest lemur – echoing through primary forest.
- Experience the breathtaking beauty of Baobab Alley at sunset, where the iconic, towering baobab trees are bathed in golden and amber hues, creating a truly mesmerising scene against the vast, open skies.
- Discover the evolution of Madagascar's array of species found nowhere else on Earth, including lemurs and fossas.
- Walk through a variety of different ecosystems discovering the incredible diversity of habitats on the island and the unique wildlife it nurtures.
- Maximum group size of 12 guests.



To book email newscientist@intrepidtravel.com or phone **020 3089 917**.

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Dive into Madagascar's vibrant and unique ecosystems, a true living laboratory of evolution. Discover the island's rich flora and fauna, shaped by isolation into species found nowhere else on Earth.

Gain a deeper understanding of how, having broken away from mainland Africa some 150 million years ago, Madagascar is now unlike anywhere else on the planet. Explore its ancient, fossilised forests and towering baobabs that reveal stories of millennia past, marvel at surreal geological formations shaped by time and erosion, and venture through the varied landscapes, from lush rainforests and spiny deserts to semi-arid plains and open savannahs teeming with life. Learn about crucial conservation efforts that protect these irreplaceable ecosystems and their incredible biodiversity.

You will be accompanied by Dr Erik Patel, a primatologist who has been visiting Madagascar on research projects every year since 2000. He will deliver a series of engaging lectures and walking seminars throughout the tour, giving a detailed insight into the fascinating ecosystems and species you will encounter including:

- History, evolution and biodiversity in the world's largest oceanic island
- Conservation challenges, strategies, and the community
- Amber Mountain National Park and Ankarana Special Reserve

In addition to Erik, you will be joined by local English-speaking guides on walks and night-time exploration making this a unique experience in a stunning country with landscapes like nowhere else.

With a **maximum group size of only 12**, this expedition will give you a close up and intimate experience with the fascinating wildlife of Madagascar.

This tour is suitable for anyone with a passion for nature and offers a rare opportunity to witness Madagascar's ecological wonders, learning how its isolation has fostered some of the most extraordinary biodiversity on Earth.

In partnership with Intrepid Travel.

DAY 1: ARRIVE IN ANTANANARIVO

Welcome to Madagascar! Upon arrival, you'll transfer to the charming Relais des Plateaux hotel in Antananarivo, the bustling capital.

Antananarivo, or "Tana" as it's affectionately known, means "City of the Thousand", a nod to the 1000 Merina tribe warriors who once protected it. The city is a vibrant maze of busy streets and alleyways, colourful markets, ancient stone steps, and historical sites, split into upper and lower towns.

In the evening, meet your fellow adventurers, tour leader and Erik Patel, your tour leader, for a briefing about your tour. This will be followed by a welcome dinner.

DAY 2: FLIGHT TO MORONDAVA AND THE ZAZAMALALA FOUNDATION

Start your day with an early breakfast before taking a short 1-hour flight to Morondava, a coastal city in the Menabe Region of western Madagascar, renowned for its stunning Avenue of the Baobabs and its proximity to unique nature reserves including the Kirindy Forest

Upon arrival, visit the Zazamalala Foundation and discover their vital work in preserving Madagascar's precious dry forests. An expert guide from the foundation will lead you on a short walk through original deciduous forest and will provide valuable insights into the foundation's work. With only 3% of these forests remaining, the foundation educates, employs, and empowers the local community to reforest and protect this endangered habitat. Zazamalala is also home to a wide variety of wildlife, including 11 species of lemur (such as the ring-tailed lemur, collared lemur, Verreaux's sifaka, and the red and white-fronted lemur), 14 species of snake and 5 species of chameleon, so be sure to keep your eyes peeled!

Afterward, head to your hotel for the next three nights, Relais du Kirindy, and enjoy a leisurely afternoon in Morondava.

DAY 3: KIRINDY FOREST AND NOCTURNAL WALK

Today, you'll immerse yourself in the wonders of the Kirindy Forest, a unique dry deciduous forest that has risen from the shadows of selective logging to become a thriving private conservancy and research centre. This hidden gem is one of the premier spots to witness Madagascar's endemic species, including the elusive and fascinating fossa.



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Your journey continues with an enchanting nocturnal walk through the Camp Amoureux forest, managed by the dedicated Fanamby Association, a non-profit organisation who manage marine and terrestrial ecosystems and champion empowerment of local communities. This experience is often hailed as one of the most rewarding wildlife encounters in Madagascar, yet it remains a well-kept secret among travellers. Nestled along the western coast, this dry forest reserve offers a rare opportunity to spot the fossa, a carnivorous, cat-like mammal unique to the island.

The forest is teeming with life, from the giant jumping rat (don't worry, it's more intriguing than it sounds) to the narrow-striped mongoose and the tiny pygmy mouse lemur. Bird enthusiasts will be thrilled by the presence of over 70 bird species. And let's not forget the lemurs; these charming creatures provide ample opportunities for close-up photography, especially during the night walks when the nocturnal species come to life.



Prepare to be captivated by the rich biodiversity and the serene beauty of Kirindy Forest. This is more than just a visit; it's a journey into the heart of Madagascar's natural heritage.

DAY 4: AVENUE OF BAOBABS

Today, you'll embark on a journey to the iconic Avenue of Baobabs, where majestic Granddier's baobab trees line the rustic road between Morondava and Belon'i Tsiribihina. These towering giants are a symbol of Madagascar, with six of the eight baobab species found nowhere else on Earth. Alongside lemurs, fossas, and other unique wildlife, these trees paint a vivid picture of the island's extraordinary biodiversity.

After lunch, you'll dive into the heart of conservation efforts with the Fanamby Association. Discover their incredible work in improving natural resource governance, preserving and restoring ecosystems, and empowering local communities. Despite Madagascar's rich natural resources and unique biodiversity, it remains one of the world's most impoverished countries, with over 80% of its population living in poverty. Your visit will shed light on the vital initiatives aimed at alleviating this hardship.

In the afternoon, you'll have the chance to make a tangible impact by planting young baobab trees, contributing to the conservation of this precious ecosystem in collaboration with the Fanamby Association.

They have been responsible for over 3000 hectares of forest gain since their inception in 1997, so you will be contributing a small part to the important work they do.

As the day winds down, prepare for a breathtaking experience. Witness the sun setting over the Avenue of Baobabs, a spectacle of vibrant blues, oranges, and pinks that will leave you in awe. This magical moment is the perfect end to a day filled with discovery and personal contribution to the preservation of this precious habitat.

You'll then return to Morondava for a restful night.

DAY 5: RETURN TO ANTANANARIVO

After breakfast, you'll transfer back to Morondava airport for your short flight back to Antananarivo. Though short in duration, the views from the plane are much part of the experience as your time on the ground. Check into the comfortable 4-star Relais des Plateaux and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure.

DAY 6: ANDASIBE-MANTADIA NATIONAL PARK AND NOCTURNAL WALK WITH THE MITSINJO ASSOCIATION

Your adventure continues with a scenic 4-hour drive through Madagascar's breathtaking mountain highlands and charming Merina villages, with rice paddies painting the landscape. Andasibe is one of the island's most beloved national parks, offering unparalleled opportunities to encounter Madagascar's extraordinary wildlife, including the remarkable indri.

Upon arrival, check into your comfortable accommodation at Relais de Mantadia, where you'll stay for the next two nights. The park's popularity ensures top-notch lodging and expert guides to enhance your experience.

After a delicious lunch, head to the Analamazaotra Forest Station, right next to Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. This is the very place where, in 1960, David Attenborough captured the first audio and video footage of the indri, Madagascar's largest lemur. The haunting calls of these incredible creatures often reveal their presence in the forest canopy. Keep your eyes peeled for other lemur species, as well as vibrant chameleons and a variety of birds.

As night falls, prepare for a magical nocturnal walk in the nearby reserve managed by the Mitsinjo Association, a local NGO dedicated to reforestation and conservation. This evening adventure offers a unique glimpse into the nocturnal world of Madagascar's wildlife. During the walk, you may encounter a variety of fascinating wildlife including nocturnal lemurs, such as the woolly lemur, dwarf lemur, and Goodman's mouse lemur. Chameleons, including the impressive Parson's chameleon, one of the largest in the world and a variety of

colourful frog species that are active at night. It's a unique experience to see these creatures in their natural habitat under the cover of night.

DAY 7: ANDASIBE-MANTADIA NATIONAL PARK AND VAKONA LEMUR ISLAND

From here, travel to the heart of a towering primary forest, a rare and precious sight in Madagascar. Spanning altitudes from 800 to 1260 meters, this park is a haven for biodiversity, offering well-marked trails with stunning views across the lush forest canopy.

Keep your eyes and ears open for the park's famous residents – several species of lemurs, including the indri. Their haunting calls resonate eerily through the tall trees, creating an unforgettable atmosphere. While the high canopy might make lemur spotting a bit challenging, there's plenty to discover closer to the ground. Look out for fascinating creatures like centipedes, frogs, and the nesting paradise flycatchers.



Birdwatchers will be in paradise here, with opportunities to spot endemic species such as the striking scaly ground roller, the pitta-like ground roller, and the vibrant red-breasted coua. The park's remoteness adds to its charm, allowing you to explore this pristine wilderness at your own pace.

Later on, take the chance to visit Vakona Island where you can have close encounters with rescued lemurs. This unique experience offers you a personal, deeper connection to Madagascar's incredible wildlife.

DAY 8: VOIMMA RESERVE THEN RETURN TO ANTANANARIVO

Start your day with an enchanting walk through the VOIMMA Community Reserve, managed by a passionate villager's association. The name V.O.I.M.M.A. stands for "Vondron'olona miaro mitia ala," which translates to "Local people love the forest". It was established in 2012 by the villagers of Andasibe and features a variety of endemic wildlife, including the famous Indri lemurs, diademed sifakas, and various chameleons and frogs.

Afterwards, enjoy a scenic drive back to Antananarivo, where you'll return to the welcoming Relais des Plateaux Hotel. The rest of the day is yours to unwind and explore at your own pace, whether you choose to relax in comfort or discover more of the vibrant city.

DAY 9: FLIGHT TO DIEGO SUAREZ, THE THREE BAYS AND NOCTURNAL WALK

Begin your day with a short, scenic flight of around 2-hours to the captivating Diego Suarez. From here travel to Joffreville, the gateway to the breathtaking Amber Mountain National Park, with a stop enroute at the charming city of Antsiranana, renowned for its stunning harbour and spectacular setting. Wander through streets lined with historic colonial buildings and bustling markets, soaking in the vibrant local culture. Venture out of town to explore the picturesque Les Trois Baies, a series of stunning bays and pristine beaches.

Continue to Joffreville and check into the enchanting Nature Lodge for the next two nights, featuring charming stone and thatch cottages that offer a cozy retreat. As night falls, embark on an exciting nocturnal adventure at the Domaine de Fontenay Nature Reserve. This private reserve, adjacent to Amber Mountain National Park, offers well-established paths through the forest. With a flashlight in hand, discover the astonishing array of nocturnal wildlife. Marvel at the intricate golden orb spider webs, listen to the chirping tree frogs, spot shimmering flatworms, and identify countless chameleons resting on branches. Keep an eye out for the elusive nocturnal lemur species, including northern sportive lemurs, Geoffroy's dwarf lemurs, and brown mouse lemurs.

DAY 10: AMBER MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Today you will embark on an adventure through a network of trails that weave through the forest of Amber Mountain National Park.

Established by the French in 1958, Amber Mountain National Park is a protected area boasting a stunning volcanic massif and lush surrounding forests, making it one of the most thrilling parks to explore. Named after the amber resin found in its trees, this montane rainforest is a haven for extraordinary plant and animal life. Marvel at the dramatic scenery created by huge ferns and strangler figs, and encounter a variety of endemic species, including the captivating Sanford's lemurs and crowned lemurs.

Climb ridges, pass sacred waterfalls, and descend to serene crater lakes. This forest, far lusher and wetter than Andasibe and the lowland coastal forests, offers a unique and tranquil experience with fewer visitors.

The dense vegetation and towering trees conceal a rich array of wildlife. From lemurs and vibrant birdlife in the canopy to centipedes and leeches on the forest floor, there's always something fascinating to discover. Keep an eye out for the striking panther chameleon and the tiny inch-long dwarf chameleon, the second-



smallest chameleon species. The park is a birdwatcher's dream, with species like crested ibises, paradise flycatchers, and rock thrushes flitting through the lush greenery.

DAY 11: ANKARANA SPECIAL RESERVE VIA TSINGY ROUGE

After leaving the lodge, embark on a picturesque 3-hour drive to Ankarana. Along the way, marvel at the Tsingy Rouge, intensely red-hued pinnacles, formed by millions of years of erosion and one of Madagascar's most striking natural wonders. Their colour comes from a dense concentration of iron oxide which the northern Malagasy people regularly use for dye and face paint. The setting is truly spectacular, with views overlooking several small but beautiful canyons.

In the late afternoon, arrive at the enchanting Iharana Bush Camp, your home for the next three nights. The camp's setting is breathtaking, overlooking a vast lake with views of the limestone Ankarana massif, perfect for witnessing spectacular sunsets and enjoying great birdwatching. The handful of rooms, crafted from wood, stone, and thatch, blend a natural feel with a surprisingly stylish look, making it the ideal base for exploring this remote and less accessible side of the reserve.

As darkness falls, set out on a guided night walk through the forest surrounding the camp. Discover the nocturnal wonders of the area, adding an exciting and adventurous touch to your stay.

DAY 12: IHARANA BUSH CAMP

Enjoy a full day discovering the natural wonderland of the Iharana Reserve. Iharana Reserve, located near the Ankarana National Reserve in Madagascar, offers a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural immersion. The reserve provides an excellent opportunity to experience Madagascar's diverse flora and fauna while engaging with the local community. Visit the Mandresy Cave, where you'll encounter fruit bats and amazing stalagmites, join a guided walking tour through the mesmerising tsingy limestone formations, or canoe on the serene lake, offering ample opportunities for birdwatching and soaking up the incredible scenery.

DAY 13: ANKARANA NATIONAL PARK

Step into the enchanting world of Ankarana, a remote and untouched park that feels like a fantasy grotto. Marvel at the stark tsingy pinnacles and dry forests, where bats and crocodiles lurk in subterranean caves and forest-filled canyons. The imposing grey cliffs are dotted with vibrant splashes of green, thanks to the unique flora that thrives here, providing both habitat and food for the 10 species of lemur that call this place home.



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Embark on a challenging yet rewarding hike through this extraordinary landscape. The eastern part of the park is slightly more accessible, with several walking circuits starting from the eastern gate. Here, you'll begin your journey above the tsingy, offering breathtaking views of this spectacular terrain. A local guide will accompany you, sharing fascinating insights into the formation of the tsingy.



After a day of exploration, return to the Iharana Bush Camp for a restful final night.

DAY 14: ANKIFY

Today, bid farewell to the Ankarana Reserve as you embark on a scenic drive through the heart of rural Madagascar, heading towards the charming port village of Ankify. This picturesque journey takes around three hours, offering glimpses of the island's vibrant landscapes and local life.



Upon arrival in Ankify, the rest of the day is yours to enjoy at leisure. This quaint village boasts a beautiful sandy beach, perfect for a relaxing afternoon. For those seeking adventure, explore the surrounding settlements, hike up the neighbouring small mountains, or venture into the lush mangroves.

DAY 15: BOAT TO NOSY BE HARBOUR AND FLIGHT TO ANTANANARIVO

At the port, you'll be greeted and whisked away to Nosy Be by speed boat. Nosy Be is one of Madagascar's most beloved destinations, renowned for its pristine beaches, breathtaking coastline, and vibrant marine life. Often called the "perfumed isle," the air here is filled with the intoxicating scents of ylang-ylang and vanilla from the surrounding plantations. This tropical paradise, with its lush forests cascading down to powdery white sands, offers a serene and inviting atmosphere that attracts visitors from around the globe.

If you wish to extend your stay in this idyllic haven, please refer to the note below for details on how to do so.

In the afternoon, you'll transfer to the airport for your return flight to Antananarivo, where you'll check back into the Relais des Plateaux for your final night, reflecting on the incredible journey you've experienced.

DAY 16: DEPART ANTANANARIVO

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast. Then there will be a group transfer to the airport for your return flight home.

Please note that travelling in Madagascar can be quite an adventure due to the varying road conditions across the country. While major roads in cities like Antananarivo are generally in better shape, many rural roads are often narrow, winding, and may not be in the best condition.



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MEET THE EXPERT



Dr. Erik Patel is a primatologist who has been working in northeastern Madagascar in Marojejy National Park and Anjanaharibe-Sud Special Reserve every year since 2000. His doctoral research at Cornell University focused on vocalisations and scent marking of critically endangered silky sifaka lemurs, and has expanded to population surveys, diet, and ranging studies. He is currently the Research and Conservation Director for Lemur Conservation Foundation which initiates a variety of conservation, education, health, and research programs in Madagascar. From 2012 to 2015 Dr. Patel served as the project director of Duke Lemur Centee's SAVA Conservation Project. His fieldwork has garnered considerable media attention, including several televised feature films by the BBC, Dan Rather Reports, Animal Planet, and Earth Touch.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 15 nights' accommodation with breakfast.
- 15 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 12 dinners.
- All park fees.
- All transfers by road and boat.
- Internal flights.
- All excursions including 4-wheel-drive jeeps with English-speaking drivers.
- Knowledgeable tour leader and local guides.
- Group arrival/departure transfers.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Travel insurance.
- International flights.
- Private airport transfers.
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers and porter.
- Single supplement - £740

HOW TO GET THERE

This tour begins and ends in Antananarivo. Please speak to our tour operating partner Intrepid Travel, which can offer flight advice and book flights for those travelling from the UK.

PACE AND PHYSICALITY

September is a wonderful time to visit Madagascar as it marks the beginning of spring on the island. The weather is generally pleasant, with warm temperatures averaging around 23°C (73°F) and minimal rainfall.

Being relatively fit will allow you to get maximum enjoyment out of this trip. Many of the walks are easy, but the temperature does warm up during the day. The west coast in particular is hotter than the rest of the country, so you need to be comfortable walking in slightly warmer temperatures. We avoid the hottest part of the day. Sturdy footwear is strongly recommended.

All rooms outside the city have mosquito nets but you should also bring mosquito repellents and coils to keep them at bay.

In general, the quality of accommodation in Madagascar is not on a par with usual Western standards, but that is part of the joy of visiting this unique island. Outside of major cities, the amenities will be basic (e.g no air conditioning, no Wi-Fi).

The quality of the roads in Madagascar is poor. Due to government inaction and yearly monsoons, conditions can be difficult, and a level of patience is required. On this tour we use a 4x4 with high suspension to mitigate these circumstances, but journeys are likely to be bumpy.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

All our tours, cruises, expeditions and weekenders are perfect for solo travellers. If you want your own room, you will need to pay a solo supplement of £740. However, if you are happy to share a room with a fellow guest of the same sex, we will do all we can to match you with another guest so you do not have to pay the solo room supplement.



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ACCOMMODATION

Relais des Plateaux Hotel, Antananarivo

A four-star hotel ideal for rest and recuperation between visiting the national parks and reserves. Just 5 minutes from the airport and 15 minutes from downtown. They know how to treat weary travellers with their lush grounds, outdoor pool, renowned restaurant and relaxing spa.



Le Relais du Kirindy, Kirindy

Traditional bungalow style rooms in a very remote location. The amenities are limited but the staff are extremely helpful and it also has a pool.



Palissandre Cote Ouest Resort, Morondava

Spacious thatched cottages on the beach with a sea view and Caribbean atmosphere. You can also relax poolside and enjoy local specialities at the restaurant surrounded by palm trees.



Relais de Mantadia, Andasibe

The perfect blend of comfort & nature, Relais de Mantadia is immersed in a eucalyptus forest and is only 5 minutes from the Analamazaotra Forest Station.

Nature Lodge, Diego Suarez

A small ecolodge of 12 stone and thatch cottages with panoramic views of the Amber Mountain National Park and set within a lush forest, home to many lemurs. From its smart clubhouse, you will be able to enjoy watching the sun set with a drink in hand.



Iharana Bush Camp, Ankarana

18 individual cabanas of traditional Malagasy housing overlooking a huge lake, with a view up towards the limestone Ankarana massif.



Baobab Ankify, Ankify

With 16 bungalows, Baobab Ankify is located directly on a beautiful stretch of beach, with views over to Nosy Komba island. It offers a peaceful, tranquil atmosphere.

Please note that the quality of accommodation in Madagascar is not on a par with usual Western standards, but that is part of the joy of visiting this unique island. Outside of major cities, the amenities will be basic (e.g no air conditioning, no Wi-Fi).

HOW TO BOOK

To secure your place or make a query, contact our tour operating partner Intrepid Travel on newscientist@intrepidtravel.com. Alternatively, you can phone them on 020 3308 9917 from within the UK. If phoning from outside the UK the number becomes +44 203 3089 917. They are accepting calls 9am to 5:30pm GMT Monday to Friday.

For any other general queries, please feel free to reach out to us at tours@newscientist.com.



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