

Wildlife of Madagascar Aye-Aye Adventure

Madagascar

The vast island of Madagascar has some of the highest concentrations of unique plant and animal species found anywhere on Earth. The island's varied topography ranges from soaring highlands to spectacular coastlines, supporting distinct climatic zones that range from steaming tropical rainforest habitats, unique spiny forest and arid desert plains. Up to 90 % of the wildlife of these habitats can be seen nowhere else.

This expedition offers you the chance to explore Madagascar's best nature reserves. Doing so supports conservation efforts, and allows you to come face to face with Madagascar's most emblematic wildlife.

Please note: we run two versions of our Wildlife of Madagascar Expedition, each with a slightly different itinerary. The Wildlife of Madagascar **Aye-Aye** Adventure offers the chance to see the rare Aye-Aye (the most mysterious of the lemur family). Whereas the Wildlife of Madagascar **Spiny Forest** Adventure includes additional sites within the unique spiny forest habitat (one of Madagascar's most diverse, beautiful and interesting ecotypes), and is specifically designed to feature less driving time.

ONE OF OUR BEST EVER TRIPS!

Previous groups have left Madagascar completely spellbound! During past trips, we have encountered up to 18 species of lemur, 12 species of chameleon (including the world's smallest, the *Brookesia* chameleon), 4 species of leaf tailed gecko, tenrecs, many amazing snakes, numerous mantids, hissing cockroaches, several owls and nightjars, crocodiles, day geckos, tortoises and giraffe beetles! The plant life was no less impressive; from carnivorous pitcher plants (*Nepenthes madagascariensis*), four species of ancient baobabs, *Alluaudia* (octopus trees) to *Pachypodium*, *Euphorbia*, and many orchids. We explore rainforest, dry spiny forest, gallery forest and semi-desert, with adventures to the incredible Tsingy rock tower pinnacles carved in red laterite and limestone.

COST: US\$3,500 per person for **15 days/14 nights** (all inclusive from start point to end point)
(equivalent to approximately UK£2,700 or €3,030)

START POINT: Antananarivo International Airport, Madagascar.

END POINT: Antananarivo International Airport, Madagascar.

DATES: Monday 05 August to Monday 19 August 2019.

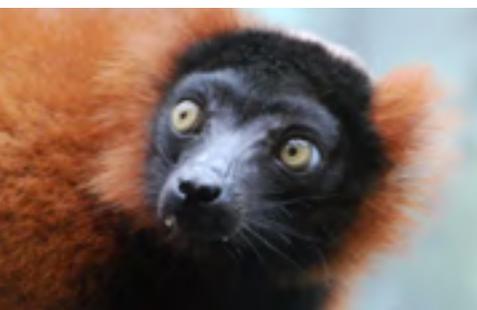
GROUP SIZE: 6-10

BESPOKE TOUR: If you do not wish to join a group tour, we can customise a private trip to suit your dates and interests. Please email us for details and a quote.

Email sales@redfernadventures.com for more information and to make bookings.

Optional pre- or post-expedition extensions: Visit the beautiful avenue of the baobabs; stay at a luxury beach resort at Antsanitia; extra trips to nature reserves; an adventurous three day climb up Mount Marojejy through rainforest to spectacular summit vegetation to see the unique silky sifaka and the endemic sundew *Drosera humbertii*. Simply mention which extension(s) you are interested in when you apply to Join this Adventure!

Getting there: Regular flights are available to Antananarivo from Cape Town, Johannesburg, the Seychelles, Paris (and other destinations in Europe), the Middle East, Singapore and other Asian cities.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Meet in Antananarivo (pick up from airport or your hotel) and drive to Peyreiras Reptile Reserve (approx 3 hours) to see up close captive panther chameleons, island chameleons, stump-tail chameleons, Brookesia chameleons, golden mantela frogs, tomato frogs, Madagascar tree boas, leaf-nose snakes, cat-eyed snakes, tenrecs, numerous species of leaf tail geckos and many other species. The curators of the reserve usually take the animals out of their enclosures to allow close photographs. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 2: Visit the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park and trek along trails to see wild diademed sifakas, woolly sifakas, common brown lemur and the famous indri indri (the biggest lemur of all!). Sightings are usually close up (a few metres above in the trees). Explore the trails for orchids and birdlife. Visit lemur island to see semi-wild/semi-tame common brown sifaka, grey bamboo lemurs and the black and white ruffed lemurs (the rangers feed these species as points along the trail allowing close encounters and excellent photograph opportunities). Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

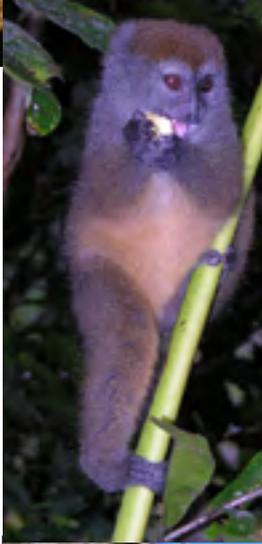
Day 3: This morning we set off east towards the Pangalanes Canals on the east coast. This is a series of lakes that were linked together to form a safe passage up the east coast. After a 45 minute boat trip passing through fishing villages you will arrive at the private reserve of Palmarium. Enjoy a walk through the forest with one of the lodge guides. Here it is possible to see a family of indri, Coquerel's sifakas, black lemurs, crowned lemurs, black and white ruffed lemurs and red lemurs. This reserve provides excellent photograph opportunities as you can get very close to the lemurs. The afternoon is yours at leisure to explore. We can visit a nearby island at 17.30 to go in search of the famous Aye-Aye (the strangest member of the whole lemur family). The tour takes approximately one hour and includes return boat transfers. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 4: After breakfast we will visit a forest reserve to search for lemurs and chameleons. We take the boat trip back to our vehicles where we are met and driven back to Antananarivo. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 5: Drive to the airport for our flight to Fort Dauphin (Tôlanaro). The flight is scheduled to arrive at Fort Dauphin in the early afternoon, after which we check into our accommodation and drive for a short distance to the north to see vast populations of the endemic carnivorous pitcher plant *Nepenthes madagascariensis* in a preserved wetland, as well as (with luck) ring tailed lemurs. We return to Fort Dauphin before sunset, and can take sunset walks along incredible beaches. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 6: An early breakfast is followed by a 2 hour drive inland to the Berenty private reserve. The drive is fascinating, passing through spiny forest, home to baobabs, several species of *Alluaudia* (ocotillo or octopus trees), *Pachypodium*, and *Euphorbia*. Berenty is home to six species of lemur and the largest colony of Madagascar fruit bats in southern Madagascar. The ease with which one can observe sauntering ring-tailed lemurs and 'dancing' Verreaux sifakas has turned this small protected area into one of the Madagascar's most treasured reserves. We can explore several trails and visit an arboretum and spiny forest preserve that is full of life: tortoises, sportive lemurs, Scop's owls, hissing cockroaches, aloes and bats. The spiny forest is truly fascinating. We can also visit an excellent ethnological museum that depicts the life of the local tribe, the Antandroy, and features a re-constructed Antandroy village. We drive back to Fort Dauphin after sunset. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 7: Depending upon the time of the outbound flight, we can visit the Nahampoana Reserve, close to Fort Dauphin. This park-like preserve harbours four species of lemur that are semi-tame; ring-tailed, red-fronted brown and bamboo lemurs jostle alongside sifakas, which are the stars of the park. Their small, white, fuzzy heads with black faces and snouts are gracefully balanced as they move over the ground in their famous "dance" as they run across the ground, between the trees. The well-kept gardens show a good sample of Madagascar's dry plants with their three-cornered palms, spiny *Desiderata* trees and stands of bamboo. Our flight takes us back to Antananarivo. Here we can undertake a city tour in the late afternoon, or visit Lake Tsarasaotra, a 27 hectare site renowned for its birds, including the night heron, endangered pond heron, Meller's duck and Madagascar little grebe. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.





ITINERARY CONTINUED...

Day 8: Fly to Diego Suarez (Antsiranana) then drive to Montagne d'Ambre National Park. The park offers a great biodiversity: a large tropical forest with endemic fauna and flora, luxuriant vegetation and many waterfalls and volcanic lakes. With a guide, we search for *Brookesia minima*, one of the smallest chameleons in the world (less than 25 mm in length), and several species of leaf tail geckos. We also look for the ring-tailed mongoose, the fossa, and as many as 8 different lemurs (Sanford's brown lemur, crowned lemur, lesser bamboo lemur and are five species of nocturnal lemurs)! The forests are home to 75 different bird species (35 of which are endemic to Amber Mountain, such as the Amber Mountain rock-thrush). With luck, we find the stump-tailed chameleon, several interesting snake species, and study some of the 35 frogs and more than 40 butterflies known from the park. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 9: Drive to Ankarana via Tsingy Rouge, a stunning geological formation of towers and pinnacles of red laterite formed by erosion. The landscape is breath-taking. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 10: Full day exploring Ankarana National Park, including a hike through bizarre landscapes of grey 'Tsingy Tsingy' limestone pinnacles, mixed with patches of dense tropical jungle, deciduous forest, deep caves and canyons (the largest underground network in Africa) and rushing rivers. With an annual rainfall of almost 2000 mm, the underlying rocks undergo heavy erosion producing an amazing karst topography, including the famous limestone 'tsingy' spires. The Park is one of the most visited in Madagascar for its large animal populations. Key species include the paradise flycatcher, the sunbird, the vagas, the crowned lemur, the Sanford's brown lemur, the northern sportive lemur, the brown mouse lemur, the fat-tailed dwarf lemur, the fork-marked lemur, the eastern woolly lemur, Perrier's sifaka and the western lesser bamboo lemur. The Reserve also has several microendemic species of reptile and amphibian which we may see as well. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 11: Drive to Antsohihy (6-7 hours) but scenery is beautiful and we will be able to stop at Ambodimanga forest trying to find the very rare blue eyed black lemurs. The colourful panther chameleon can also be seen around Ambanja and Antsohihy. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 12: Morning drive to Ankarafantsika National Park and afternoon walk along the trails. The park covers a vast area that combines deciduous forest, savannah and wetland, Ankarafantsika is one of Madagascar's largest parks, occupying a staggering 1,350 km². The area is a birdlife haven and a large number of visitors come for this reason alone (particularly to see the Madagascan fish eagle). There is a host of over wildlife, including the rare Madagascan big-headed turtle, the rhinoceros chameleon, the dwarf chameleon, and eight species of lemur (including two species of mouse lemurs that are among the world's smallest primates). Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 13: For those wanting a last chance to spot lemurs, we undertake walks along trails in the park. The most common species is the Coquerel's sifaka, but we can also see the endemic golden brown mouse lemur, fat-tailed dwarf lemur, western woolly lemur and grey mouse lemur. The Coquereli circuit is – as the name suggests – the best trail for lemur spotting and can take up to two hours to complete. Bird lovers should consider the Retendrika trail, which is also a two hour circuit. Here you will see varied medicinal plants and a great array of general plant life, from which some of the most popular birds such as the banded kestrel and vanga are known to feed. Another great trail to combine the wildlife and birdlife of the area is the Source of Life trail, which offers insight into the Sakavala communities and passes through areas of grazing birds and lemurs. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 14: A final long drive (6-7 hours) but scenery is beautiful and there are many endemic plants that can be seen along the road. We learn more about local lifestyle and culture as we will pass through small villages. We arrive back in Antananarivo around sunset. Overnight in a local hotel and dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 15: Transfers to the airport for departing flights. Those with additional time to spare can walk around Antananarivo city to take in some of the local sights and sounds, including the local markets and historic buildings.



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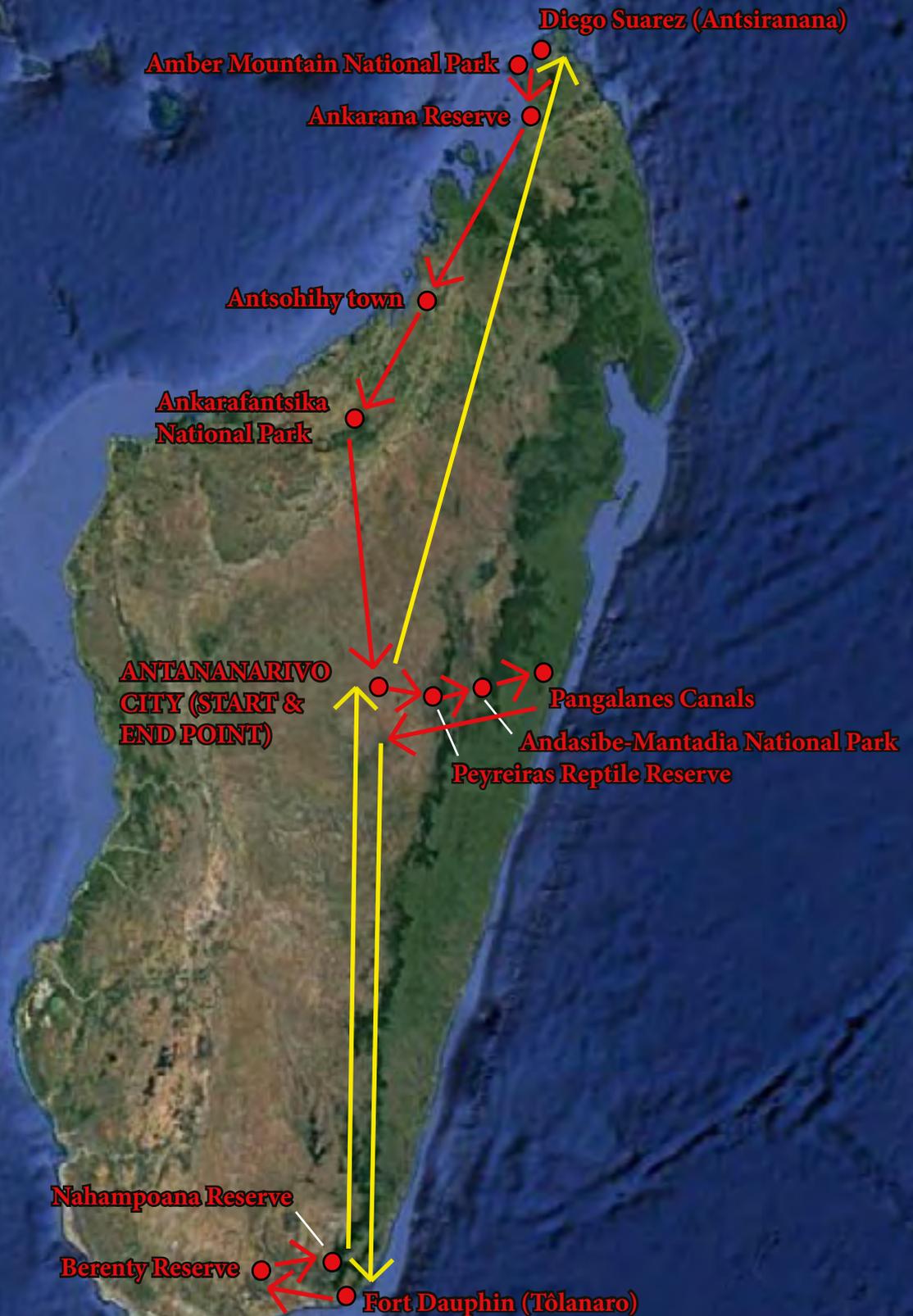
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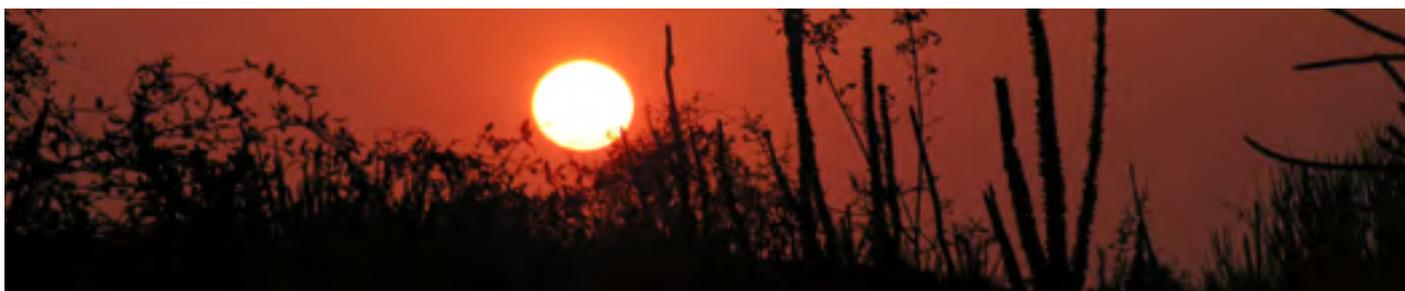
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