

Lemur-Land

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Madagascar split off from the African continent 80 million years ago to form the world's fourth largest island. It is a living laboratory for evolution – revealing quirky creatures and botanical marvels in its diverse landscape of spiny desert, tropical moist forest, tropical dry forest and mountainous terrain. The vast majority of its flora and fauna are endemic—meaning they exist nowhere else in the world—including more than 100 species of lemurs. Frogs, birds, chameleons, and the number one endangered tortoise in the world, Angokoka (commonly known as ploughshare) — all make their home in a country with a unique blend of Asian and African cultures.

Marco Polo first reported the island's existence, and throughout the centuries embattled African slaves, intrepid Indian and Portuguese traders, European pirates, and French colonists have arrived at its shores and gone on to create 18 official “tribes.” During our travels, spot the creative spirit of the Malagasy people expressed in their thoughtful and colorful monuments in honor of their ancestors. Bring a spirit of adventure while you traverse this beautiful island paradise of arid and tropical contrasts and you will be amply rewarded with Malagasy hospitality and incomparable memories.

Tour Highlights

- Antananarivo, capital of Madagascar
- Royal Hill of Ambohimanga *
- Lemurs' Park
- Rainforests of the Atsinanana *
- Berenty Reserve on the Mandrare River
- Andohahela National Park
- Nahampoana Reserve
- Sandstone Canyon Massif in Isalo Nat. Park
- Independence Day in Tana
- Parc National d'Andasibe-Mantadia

* *UNESCO World Heritage Sites*

Wednesday, June 13, 2018

Departure, bound for Madagascar

Depart from your home city bound for Antananarivo, Madagascar (airport code TNR). Connecting through a European capital plan for your flight to arrive in Antananarivo anytime on Friday, June 15. (*Meals Aloft*)

Thursday, June 14, 2018

Travel Day

The first leg of your journey ends as your international flight lands in Europe sometime in today. After waiting out your connection time, board a late evening flight bound for Antananarivo, Madagascar. Depending upon your departure time, you will arrive sometime tomorrow. (*Meals Aloft*)

Friday, June 15, 2018

Arrive in Antananarivo

Tour services commence today. Arrive Antananarivo, called “Tana” for short, the capital of Madagascar. You are met at the airport and escorted to your luxury hotel. A short drive from the airport through lush green rice fields will bring you to this city with its brightly colored houses stacked up the hillsides and its deliciously exotic flavor. Antananarivo is situated in the central part of the island, on the slopes of a rocky ridge that rises to about 4,700 feet. The city is the chief economic, cultural, and administrative center of the country. It is the trade center for a rice-growing region, and industries here manufacture processed food, tobacco products, textiles, and leather goods. We have a free afternoon to rest from the long journey. Settle in and explore the hotel and environs. Dinner is included at the hotel. We’ll gather for a drink and introductions beforehand. (*Welcome Drink / Dinner Included*)

Saturday, June 16, 2018

Ambohimanga / Lemur Park / Welcome Dinner

Our morning drive takes us to discover the Royal Hill of Ambohimanga, one of the 12 sacred hills surrounding Antananarivo, where we visit the ruins of the palace of King Andrianampoinimerina. Situated just 15 miles from the capital, Ambohimanga is the birthplace of the Malagasy state, the Mecca of the Merina Kingdom, and the starting point for the unification of Imerina. It was already surrounded by dense forests, but the people erected a massive wall and seven outer gates in the 18th century to further protect the town. On our way back to Tana, visit the Lemurs’ Park. The lemur, symbol of the endemic fauna of Madagascar Island, can be seen easily in this park as there are 9 species of lemurs roaming about. The observation of this endangered animal is more and more difficult in the wild due to deforestation. In addition to lemurs, the botanical garden contains 6,000 Madagascar plants and many reptile species. Your welcome dinner will be at a local restaurant. Overnight in Tana. (*All Meals*)

Sunday – Tuesday, June 17 – 19, 2018

Fort Dauphin / Berenty Reserve

This morning we fly to picturesque Fort Dauphin in the most exotic and famous part of Madagascar. From Fort Dauphin, board our minibus and drive west to Berenty, home of the Antandroy people. This region of “spiny desert” has weird cactus-like trees. Here, the Mahafaly tribe erects their intriguing and often entertaining “aloalo” (funerary pole sculpture) above the graves. The landscape is dramatic, with rugged green hills for the first half of the journey giving way to a flatlands and a skyline interspersed with baobab and spiny trees, including the “octopus tree” and more spiny plants.

Bordering the Mandrare River, the Berenty Reserve includes more than 600 acres of gallery and riverine forest. For three days, we explore this superb private wildlife reserve, famous for its population of ring-tailed lemurs and sifakas (the most picturesque primate with creamy white fur and darker face).

It is not unusual for the photogenic ring-tailed lemurs to take bananas from your hand. They are used to humans and are quite tame. You’ll wake at dawn to enjoy the lemurs’ antics and hear the early chorus of birdlife. We may also see hundreds of fruit bats clinging just under the forest canopy. There are 56 species of birds, as well as thousands of butterflies and different species of chameleons. Overnight at Berenty Private Reserve. (*All Meals*)

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

Andohahela Park

Drive back to Fort Dauphin in time for lunch. In the afternoon visit Andohahela National Park, with its special forest ecosystem combining a semi-arid dry forest and a lush forest. The park covers 295 square miles of the Anosy Mountain range. Fifteen species of lemurs have been recorded here, including ring-tailed lemurs, mouse lemurs, and one of Madagascar's most emblematic species, Verreaux's sifaka. More than 130 species of birds, 67 species of reptiles, turtles, and snakes, and 50 species of amphibians live together in the area. At Tsimelahy, the intermediate forest, discover natural swimming pools, reptiles and birds, and visit a local village. At Mangatsiaka, see the dry forest, home to lemurs and reptiles and several species of birds, as well as the beautiful forest of Didieraceae. Overnight in Fort Dauphin. (All Meals)

Thursday, June 21, 2018

Nahampoana Reserve

On your second day in Fort Dauphin visit Nahampoana Private Reserve, situated a mere 4.3 miles from town. Walk inside the reserve to discover its rich and diversified fauna and flora. See many species of lemurs, reptiles, and birds as well as the vegetation of the east and south coasts of Madagascar. Natural swimming pools, waterfalls, and caves can also be seen during the walk, and you can also explore the reserve by canoe on the small river that surrounds it. Other animals in the park include chameleons, tortoises, crocodiles. Overnight in Fort Dauphin. (All Meals)

Friday – Sunday, June 22 – 24, 2018

Tulear / Ranohira / Isalo Park

Take a morning flight to Tulear, where we board vehicles for the drive to Isalo National Park. There is a dramatic change in scenery during the drive, becoming more desert-like, allowing the sky to fill with all the radiant colors of the setting sun. One of the most frequented parks in Madagascar, Isalo National Park is a spectacular site established in 1962 and covering 315 square miles. The rocks here (known as "ruiniformes") date back to the Jurassic Period and have been sculpted by wind and water into weird and wonderful shapes: eyes, beaks, and faces.

Awaken to the view of the sandstone canyon massif, markedly different from any place you've visited so far on the trip and impressive in its grandeur and unusual eroded shapes. Succulents and fire-resistant trees, such as the tapia, on which the endemic silkworms feed, are native here.

In the early morning, the black kite will soar regally overhead as if it owns the desert sky. The endemic Benson's rock thrush is found only in this area and will be heard singing in the morning from the prominent rock perches. Spend your days here exploring the park looking for ringtails, sifakas, and brown lemurs. At the Isalo Interpretation Centre, learn about the local indigenous tribes whose mysterious burial sites are found here. Lodgings at the boundary of Isalo National Park. (All Meals)

Monday, June 25, 2018

Tulear / Tana

We make the return drive to Tulear, an oasis of sandy beaches and the third largest coral reef system in the world. Time permitting, visit the Arboretum d'Antsokay, a private reserve encompassing an area of 120 acres. Enjoy lunch before flying back to Antananarivo, where the rest of your day is at leisure. Tomorrow Madagascar celebrates its independence from France with great pomp and joy. To celebrate, every year on the evening of June 25th there are colorful festivals in the streets, with firecrackers and music. One of the spectacles of the day is a presentation of "Hira Gasy", a musical presentation of Malagasy folklore with singers wearing their best traditional attire and

performing songs and dances combined with traditional folk tales from Madagascar. (*All Meals*)

Tuesday – Thursday, June 26 – 28, 2018

Marozevo / Andasibe National Park

We drive this morning to Andasibe, with a stop in Marozevo for a short visit of the private reserve, “Pereyras.” This park is owned by a prominent naturalist to help preserve many endemic species of animals. Continue our drive to the Parc National d’Andasibe-Mantadia, featuring 31,654 acres of lushness and encompassing two distinct areas: the smaller Périnet Reserve, and the much larger Parc National de Mantadia.

In Perinet we can see the largest species of the lemur family, the indri. Three feet tall, with black and white markings, the indri has an ear-shattering, eerie, wailing sound, somewhere between the song of a whale and a police siren. There are 9 different species of lemurs in Perinet, where you may be able to see the brown lemur, the mouse lemur, and the dwarf lemur. The largest of the chameleons lives here and the bird-watching is superb.

Due to its considerably larger size, Mantadia’s wildlife is even more diverse. Indri, diademed sifakas, and black-and-white ruffed lemurs can be found here, although seeing these animals will require some effort as you follow them on steep and narrow trails. Our Farewell Dinner will be in the evening of our last night here. Three nights at Andasibe.

(*All Meals*)

Friday, June 29, 2018

Andasibe / Tana / Departure

This morning, after a leisurely breakfast, head off to Antananarivo where we have dayrooms reserved to use in preparation for our long journey home. After dinner (depending on your flight), transfer to the airport for your overnight flight to Europe and onwards to the USA. (*All Meals*)

Saturday, June 30, 2018

Return Home

You will return home sometime today, bringing with you the memories (and photos) of all your wonderful experiences in Madagascar. (*Meals Afloat*)

Optional Extension to Île Sainte-Marie

Friday, June 29, 2018

Andasibe National Park /Antananarivo

This morning, after a leisurely breakfast, head off to Antananarivo where you bid farewell to your fellow tour members who are returning to the USA. The rest of the day is at leisure to enjoy the amenities of your hotel, tour or shop around the city. Overnight in Tana. (*All Meals*)

Saturday – Monday, June 30 – July 2, 2018

Île Sainte-Marie

Transfer to the airport for departure on your flight to picturesque Île Sainte-Marie. Locally known as Nosy Boraha, Île Sainte-Marie is a slender island about 35 miles-long, offering numerous deserted beaches, coconut palm trees and turquoise blue waters. In the 17th and 18th centuries, pirates called the island their home. This ideal location wasn’t far from maritime routes for ships returning from the East Indies. In addition, the island had abundant fruit and was situated in quiet waters. Legendary pirates including Olivier Levasserur and William Kidd lived on an island located in the bay of Sainte Marie’s main town of Ambosifotatra. Île Sainte-Marie is home to the world’s only pirate cemetery.

With its rugged interior, the island makes a very good place for hiking, cycling and motorcycling. The remote

beaches are great spots for lazing in the sun and sunbathing.

You can enjoy a host of water sports like kayaking, rafting, snorkeling, and scuba diving. Of course, beach-bumming is a must for visitors to the island; this is the perfect time to grab a book and soak up the sun. Île Sainte-Marie is home to some of the most spectacular whale watching; you may see humpback whales that are known to migrate from the Antarctic to this serene breeding place.

Many optional activities are offered by the lodge. These are not included in the tour price. [Click here to review excursion offerings](#). Divide the price shown by 3 for the approximate dollar cost. Three nights at the luxury Princesse Bora Lodge. (*All Meals*)

Tuesday, July 3, 2018

Return to Tana / Departure

Today, fly back to Antananarivo. An opportunity to do some last-minute shopping before relaxing at your dayroom at our hotel. Return to the airport late this evening for your flight back home, connecting through Europe. (*Breakfast / Lunch*)

Wednesday, July 4, 2018

Return Home

Your connecting flight should arrive back in your home city sometime today. (*Meals Aloft*)

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