

# MADAGASCAR

*by 4x4*

**31 Days**

**09 Oct-08 Nov, 2024**

**07 Oct-06 Nov, 2025**

**Accommodation Based**



**Self Drive Adventures**  
GUIDED TAGALONG TOURS WORLD WIDE

[www.selfdriveadventures.com](http://www.selfdriveadventures.com)



# The Route

## Madagascar...

160 million years ago Madagascar split from the African continent to form the fourth largest island in the world. At that time mammals did not even exist (they appeared around 100 million years later), which is why Madagascar is without the typical fauna found on the African continent.

Other than bats, that were able to fly from the continent, there is not a single Madagascan mammal species that you can find in any other place of the world.

Madagascar is one of the most bio-diverse countries on earth, home to thousands of species of plant and animal life of which about 80 percent cannot be found anywhere else on the planet. Even 65 percent of all bird species are endemic to Madagascar.

The local ethnic group that forms almost all of the 22 million population are the Malagasy. They are divided into two subgroups: the "highlanders" of the central plateau and the "coastal dwellers" elsewhere in the country. The history of has many influences from Arab merchants, Portuguese, French, Dutch and English.



**Please Note:**

Proposed route is approx. 3,300km.

Guide decides on final route as per current conditions on day of travel.



# The Itinerary

**PLEASE NOTE:** Total travel times indicated in this itinerary include stops for lunch, activities on the way, photos. They are not drive times.

## 1 Antananarivo "Tana"

Arrival in Tana and transfer to your hotel. Evening briefing with local guide and welcome dinner.  
Radisson Blu, Dinner included



## 2 Tana - Ambohimanga Day Trip

After breakfast we take a day trip to the UNESCO world heritage site of Royal Hill of Ambohimanga around 24 km from Tana. This is a walled royal city and burial site and an ensemble of sacred places. In the afternoon we'll do the paperwork for our cars to give us as much time on the road tomorrow.  
Radisson Blu, Breakfast included



## 3 Tana to Antsirabe

Collect our 4x4's and depart for Antsirabe, the beautiful city of the Highlands of Madagascar. Antsirabe is the result of mixed cultures that built the city over two centuries. It is famed for its "pousse pousse" (rickshaws) and the wide tree-lined avenues invite you to discover its workshops where people work on transforming natural materials like zebu horn (for cutlery) or wheat straw (for hats). It is also famous for gemstones. We'll visit some craft centres on the way back through Antsirabe so that we don't have to carry our purchases all around Madagascar. 175 km of asphalt road / total travel time 7 hours  
Couleur Cafe, Breakfast included



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## Autsirabe to Morondava

A "get there day" to heading south west. We have an early start and picnic lunch on the way. It is an interesting drive and the scenery changes quite dramatically near the town on Miandrivazo, known as the hottest place in Madagascar....it is also the only major town on the way to Morondava with very limited accommodation, hence the long day to make it through the heat and to the coast. Morondava is a laid-back seaside town with sandy streets and gently decaying clapboard houses.

490 km of asphalt road / total travel time 12 hours

Hotel Trecicogne, Breakfast included



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## Morondava to Kirindy

There's time to explore near the hotel where in the early morning fishing dhows heading out to sea, boats are repaired and fish and vegetables for sale. It's only around an hour drive and we arrive at one of Madagascar's most iconic sights – the Avenue of the Baobabs. Here we walk the avenue and marvel at these stunning trees. Our next stop is Kirindy Mitea, a privately managed forest. We hope to see the "Fossa" a cat-like, carnivorous mammal endemic to Madagascar as well as the famous giant jumping rat as well as seven species of lemur and a number of endemic reptiles.

60 km of tar and rough track / total travel time 3-4 hours

Gite de Kirindy, Breakfast included



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## Kirindy to Bekopaka

The adventure really begins with our 4x4 expedition to reach Bekopaka, crossing the Tsiribihina river and then the Manambolo river by ferry. The track is slow and the ferry crossings take time to load and unload but it is a lot of fun! Bekopaka is the base from which we will explore the Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park, classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

150 km of rough track / total travel time 6-7 hours

Olympe du Bemahara, Breakfast included



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## Tsingy de Bemaraha

It's a short drive back to the ferry from where we take a canoe (pirogue) ride along the Manambolo river through the gorges to discover its caves and Vazimba tombs. Next is a walk through the "little Tsingy". Tsingys are a very peculiar rock formation, only existing in Madagascar. These are limestone pinnacles, formed by the slow sedimentation of coral and shell, worked by wind and water movements, since Madagascar separated from Africa 160 million years ago. These strange "cathedral like" peaks can tower several hundred metres high. These "stone forests" contain caves, underground rivers and canyons, where bats, lemurs, birds and a specific flora have adapted. We'll return to the hotel in time for lunch and the pool is the perfect place to relax in the afternoon breeze.

2 km of rough track / total travel time 10 minutes

Olympe du Bemahara, Breakfast included



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## Tsingy de Bemaraha

Today we visit the "Big Tsingy". It's about an hour drive to the start of the walk. There are two options for the visit – the more strenuous one requiring you to be in a climbing harness to attached to a series of safety cables to climb up some steep parts of the Tsingy. Which ever option you take, it is an amazing morning. Birds in this area include: Paradise fly catcher, Namaqualand dove, Sunbird, greater Vassa parrot, rock thrush, Alloette, giant Coua, and Robin. Other animals you may see include: Sportiv lemur, sifaka, banded mongoose, red forest rat and red fronted brown lemur. We will take a picnic lunch from the hotel to have during the walk.

40 km of rough track / total travel time 2 hours

Olympe du Bemahara, Breakfast included



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## Bekopaka to Morondava

There is only one way back from the Tsingy – it's a long day, but you know what to expect as you have driven it before. There will be the two ferry crossings and slow tracks but we get to stop at the sacred Baobab of the area and also see Baobab Alley to observe the baobabs in the lovely afternoon light. We'll leave there before sunset as right after sunset there are a lot of tourist cars trying to get back to Morondava. We will get back in time for dinner.

200 km of rough track / total travel time 11 hours

Hotel Trecicogne, Breakfast included



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## Morondava to Belo sur Mer

Our departure time today may depend on the tides. There could be one or two small river crossings and there are a series of barriers put up by local groups where an informal "toll" for the cars is negotiated by our local guides. We'll be mainly on sandy tracks, and will see more baobabs and many local villages. Our destination of Belo sur Mer is a pleasant Vezo fishing village. We'll be greeted by a wonderful kilometre long beach of bright white sands and an amazing transparent sea of emerald waters. You will enjoy the laidback atmosphere and the vibrant red sunsets.

100 km of sandy track / total travel time 6 hours

Belo Beach, Breakfast included



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## Belo sur Mer - Rest Day

Day at leisure at Belo sur Mer. There is an optional morning pirogue trip with snorkelling but also just relaxing by your bungalow watching the fishing dhows come and go is to be recommended. In the afternoon we'll take a walk along the white beach to the village to see pirogues and large wooden boats being built.

Belo Beach, Breakfast included



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## Belo sur Mer to Manja

Departure after breakfast to Manja (again the tide may affect our departure time). We will cross desert areas, passing by traditional Sakalava tombs decorated with the famous "aloalo", a symbolic representation of the deceased person's life. The bush is full of bot jujube, and spiny plant species (mainly euphorbiaceae and didieraceae). Manja used to be the capital of a former Sakalava kingdom, but nowadays, it is only a stop for travellers between Morondava and Iléar. The hotel tonight is VERY basic as is the food they serve, but it is the ONLY accommodation available.

115 km of rough track / total travel time 5 hours

Kanto Hotel, Breakfast included



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## Manja to Morombe

This day will be spent deep in the bush. The track is more difficult than the previous days. We have another fun ferry crossing and see another species of Baobabs as well as pass through other spiny forests. The landscape is wild and makes you feel far away from everything. Morombe is a beachside town where you can see many grand old French Colonial houses that are now slowly crumbling. The beach is an interesting place for a walk and swim and the sunsets glorious as pirogues and dhows sail by.

160 km of rough track / total travel time 8-9 hours

Baobab Hotel, Breakfast included



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## Morombe to Andavadoaka

A short drive today and we will easily arrive for lunch at the stunning beach destination of Andavadoaka. It is a small fishing village lying on the edge of a shallow lagoon protected from the open ocean by a series of fringing and submerged barrier reefs that support substantial coral growth, providing a vital resource base for local traditional and artisanal fisheries.

50 km of rough track / total travel time 3 hours

Laguna Blu, Breakfast included



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## Andavadoaka - Rest Day

The best thing to do today is relax in this stunning location. A walk along the beach to the local village, enjoy lunch in the lovely hotel dining room looking over the turquoise sea, read a book in your bungalow overlooking the sea or swim and snorkel in the lagoon.

Laguna Blu, Breakfast included



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## Andavadoaka to Ifaty

An early breakfast then into some soft, heavy sand. Once this is navigated we hit white dune landscapes, turquoise blue sea, baobabs and dry forests. You will enjoy the ease of the last 10km into town on a new tar road. Ifaty is a quiet fishing village, busier with tourism than what we've been used to for the past week as we are nearing larger towns of the south.

150 km of sandy track and tar / total travel time 9 hours

Bamboo Club or Hotel de la Plage, Breakfast included



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## Ifaty - Rest Day

Day at leisure in Ifaty. This coast has the second largest coral reef after Australia's Great Barrier Reef. It is no surprise that one of the activities that can be organised through your hotel is a snorkelling trip on the reef. In the afternoon you can also visit the private reserve Reniala with its baobab forest, endemic birds and other animals and plants. Alternatively, just soak up the beach atmosphere with a slow walk along the beach or dip in the ocean or hotel pool.

Bamboo Club or Hotel de la Plage, Breakfast included



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## Ifaty to Ranohira

Back to civilisation... drawing money, shopping for snacks and refuelling in Toliara/Tulear and then onto the Antsohay Arboretum 12km out of town. This was created around 1980 by a Swiss amateur botanist Hermann Petignat. It offers a condensed version of the vegetation in South West Madagascar. Over 900 of the plants here are endemic to this area and many have medicinal properties and plenty of spikes. There are also two types of tortoises here (larger radiata & the small spider tortoise). This region of Madagascar is extremely dry and we'll see people pushing 20L water bottles on push carts from the closest water source back to the village. We'll also pass a white rum making area, see many Agave plants, pass through sapphire mining country and end up in a completely different environment at the end of the day in the Isalo National Park.

265 km tar road / total travel time 8 hours

Santra Lodge, Breakfast included



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## Isalo National Park - Day Tour

Today we discover the National Park of Isalo. A unique combination of sandstone rocks cut by deep canyons, bush plains and rare endemic plants make this park particularly rewarding. On our morning guided walk, a short drive from the hotel, we'll have the opportunity to not only see stunning landscapes but also see the Pachypodium (a bulbous rock-clinging plant) and the Aloe Isaloensis, both endemic species. We may also see lemurs: sifakas, brown lemurs and ring-tail lemurs. In the afternoon we recommend enjoying a swim in the hotel pool with its lovely view out over rocky landscapes.

Santra Lodge, Breakfast included



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## Ranohira to Tsaranoro valley

There's time for a walk near the hotel in the morning before we start our drive to the Tsaranoro Valley. This is definitely Zebu country - large herds of this cattle are likely along the side of the road. The Tsaranoro Mountain (800m) is on one side and the giant mountain chains of Andringitra National Park on the other side.

225km of asphalt road + rough track/total travel time 7hrs

Camp Catta, Breakfast included



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## Tsaranoro Valley

Full day walk inside Tsaranoro valley. Camp Catta organises many guided walks in the beautiful reddish mountains. Our easy walks will take you in a sacred forest inhabited by catta lemurs, to a waterfall, a natural swimming pool, and nearby Barabory villages. A unique opportunity to discover the Malagasy traditional life of this isolated population: people live only with the weather, the sun and the rice harvest as a clock. More difficult walks will bring you all the way up to Mount Chameleon.

Camp Catta, Breakfast included



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## Tsaranoro Valley to Ranomafana

Drive to Ranomafana visiting on the way "Anja reserve" in Ambalavao. This community run park, is known for the close encounters with the ring-tailed lemurs, chameleons and its Betsileo traditional tombs. We are back into hilly country today with rice terraces and even vineyards. We are back to altitudes of around 1,200m so the weather is a cooler again. Late afternoon arrival in the Rainforests of Ranomafana National Park.

180 km of rough + tar road / total travel time 6-7 hours  
 Chez Gaspard, Breakfast included



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## Ranomafana - Day Tour

Early start today to discover the natural reserve of Ranomafana National Park which is full of variety. During the morning walk in the rain forest could be in rain - surprise, surprise! Animals and insects that are commonly seen here are: Lemurs (Golden Bamboo, Greater Bamboo, Red fronted brown), Leaf Gecko and Giraffe Weevil. In the afternoon, visit of the village with its hot spring, then a night walk to spot nocturnal lemurs, chameleons and frogs.

Chez Gaspard, Breakfast included



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## Ranomafana to Antsirabe

Today's road winds through the terraced highlands. We see many eucalyptus trees which were introduced along with pines by the French colonialists to reforest Madagascar. Some areas are now large charcoal production areas so there is bag after bag of charcoal on the side of the road. Then every 15-20km what is for sale on the roadside changes. Pine kindle used to start the charcoal production fires, geranium oil, honey, wooden bowls, turkeys and ducks. Arrival in Antsirabe in the late afternoon.

260 km of tar road / total travel time 8-9 hours  
Couleur Cafe, Breakfast included





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## *Antsirabe to Tana*

A morning visit of the workshops of Antsirabe: gemstones and handicrafts, workshops where people work on transforming natural materials like zebu horn (for cutlery) or small bikes and vehicles made from recycled items. We then retrace our journey back to Tana but this time having the chance to stop in the town of Ambatolampy and take a fascinating journey back in time to aluminium casting of pots. The mould is made in a sand and volcanic ash compound, the aluminium heated on coals which is pouring into the mould and only minutes later you have a pot. There is no safety gear in this workshop - not even thongs! When we arrive back in Tana, we'll drop off our 4x4s before spending the night here.

175 km of tar road / total travel time 5 hours

Radisson Blu, Breakfast included



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## *Tana to Andasibe National Park*

After breakfast our journey to Andasibe National Park starts. This is a very winding road with many trucks as it is the main road to the large port of Tamatave. It also has a lot of pot holes but today you don't need to worry about that as the local driver of our small bus will allow you to enjoy the view.

140 km of tar road / total travel time 4 hours

Feon'ny Ala or Anadsibe Lemurs Lodge, Breakfast included



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## *Andasibe - Rest Day*

Morning dedicated to visit the Andasibe National Park. This park is known for its rare orchids that bloom in the forest, its indri indri or babakoto lemur that can be observed all year round, it's beautiful waterfalls and the famous cultural rituals of the inhabitants of the surrounding area. In the afternoon, visit of Vakona private reserve with its "lemur island" where the habituated lemurs will most likely want to visit your shoulder or use you as a tree as they jump around. It is lovely to be this close and be able to feel their soft hands and fur. In the evening we have another night walk looking for more nocturnal lemurs, chameleons and frogs.

Feon'ny Ala or Anadsibe Lemurs Lodge, Breakfast included



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## *Andasibe to Akanin'ny Nofy*

What a different view the east coast is to the west. Here it is tropical - traveller's palms, bananas, bamboo, paw paws, jack fruit, custard apples and so on. The road winds to Manambato, on the Pangalanes channel, where we leave our small bus and then take a 1 hour scenic boat cruise until Akanin'ny Nofy. The Pangalanes is a chain of sweet water lakes and lagoons parallel to the coast of the Indian Ocean, separated by a narrow stretch of land.

140 km of tar road/total travel time 3 hours by road then 1 hour by boat

Palarium Hotel, Breakfast included



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## Akanin'ny Nofy

Morning visit of the private reserve "Palmarium", home to a dozen species of lemurs playing in full freedom in the reserve. Afternoon at leisure where several activities can be organised, such as: a boat expedition to visit a typical Betsimisaraka village with its school and nursery, visit the Indian ocean shore, walk along the channel to see carnivorous plants. Optional evening tour to see the Aye Aye which you might describe the world's weirdest primate. Palarium Hotel, Breakfast included



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## Akanin'ny Nofy to Manambato to Tana

Take a boat ride along the Canal des Pangalanes back to Manambato. From there we will retrace our journey back to Tana in our small bus with local driver. Farewell dinner.

285 km / total travel time 1 hour on boat & 6-7 hrs drive  
[Radisson Blu](#), Breakfast & dinner included



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## Depart

Transfer to Tana airport and depart.  
 Breakfast included



Itinerary is subject to change. The final route may change due to weather, road conditions, decisions by authorities or the local guide.

## Pre & Post Tour Accommodation...

If you'd like arrive a day or two early to acclimatise and get over a long flight or stay longer, we can arrange additional nights in the same hotel. Prices to be advised closer to the date.





## Dates...

31 Days

09 Oct - 08 Nov, 2024

07 Oct-06 Nov, 2025

Accommodation Based

## Prices, Dates....

### Prices...

Below is a schedule of prices based on vehicle number and group size. Upon booking we will ask you to let us know at which level you are willing to join the group. e.g. I there are 2 cars booked, and when you book you are the third car, you may select that you are only prepared to join the group when there is a minimum of four cars. As soon as we reach the minimum number of cars based on this selection from everyone who has booked, we will advise you that the trip is confirmed, and you can start booking flights and making other arrangements.

**3 cars / 6 people minimum (prices per person):** 2 people per 4x4 (twin/double): EUR10,790\*

**4 cars / 8 people minimum (prices per person):** 2 people per 4x4 (twin/double): EUR9,995\*

**5 cars / 10 people minimum (prices per person):** 2 people per 4x4 (twin/double): EUR9,385\*

**6 cars / 12 people minimum (prices per person):** 2 people per 4x4 (twin/double): EUR8,995\*

**7 cars / 14 people minimum (prices per person):** 2 people per 4x4 (twin/double): EUR8,500\*

**Single supplement if single accommodation requested:** EUR1,190

We can provide pricing if you have more than 2 people per 4x4.

\*The prices above are for 2024 only. 2025 prices to be confirmed in November 2024. There is a maximum of 7 vehicles (plus support vehicles). Prices are subject to exchange rate fluctuations – please see booking form for all terms and conditions. Prices subject to change in case of a significant depreciation of the Malagasy Ariary currency compared to the euro of -5%, and in case of fuel increase of more than 10%, between the date of deposit and the full payment for the tour.

### Inclusions...

Accommodation on bed and breakfast basis, dinner included on first and last night, 4x4 rental (day 3-25), fuel, two 4WD assistance/escort vehicles with drivers (day 3-25), English speaking local guide, bus and driver from Tana to Manambato and return (day 26-30), entrance and guidance fees at all parks and reserves to visit, as per the itinerary, boat transfer Manambato/Akanin'ny Nofy/Manambato, all transfers airport/hotel/airport in Tana and Self Drive Adventures escort.

### Exclusions...

International airfares, optional activities, meals other than listed (budget EUR12-15 per lunch/dinner or around EUR900 total per person, vehicle guarantee of EUR640 cash approx. AUD1,190 per 4x4 (to be returned at the end of the hire if the vehicles have not been damaged), travel insurance, visas and vaccinations and local tips (budget approx. EUR150 per person). Car excess and car rental terms and conditions will be supplied separately.

[www.selfdriveadventures.com](http://www.selfdriveadventures.com)





## Other Information

### Mindset...

The mindset required on this adventure is one of patience and flexibility and don't expect a luxury holiday. You need to understand that travelling in a developing country does not always go smoothly, no matter how well planned. There is definitely a culture of "Mora, Mora" – "Slowly, Slowly" in Madagascar so things may not happen as quickly as you'd like – it's all part of the adventure and your Self Drive Adventure's escort and local support team will do their utmost to smooth out any hiccups during the journey.

### Vehicles...

Ford Everest Diesel manual, air-conditioned maximum age of 3 years or similar. As these cars are not camping equipped, there is no fridge. The car is quite spacious inside and can comfortably take 4 passengers. You will be required to pay a cash deposit of EUR640 upon collection of the vehicle. A full set of terms and conditions will be supplied. Self Drive Adventures reserves the right to change the vehicle to a similar but not identical car.

### Driving Ability & Conditions...

The skills required are a driver's license and a good dollop of common sense. 4x4 experience is required, although the tracks we take are not technically challenging, just slow, rough and sandy.

There are some long days on this adventure. We are travelling to remote areas where our accommodation options are limited. This means on some days you have a long distance between hotels. Please see the itinerary for the day to day estimates of travel time. We've put in many two-night stays so that you have the opportunity to be out of the 4x4 either to relax or take part in other activities.

You drive on the right-hand side of the road (left hand drive). In and around cities the traffic will be hectic, but once out on the country roads the traffic will be limited. We will drive on tar roads, dirt roads, very rough and sandy 4x4 tracks. Tar roads are notoriously potholed and narrow. There could be some water crossings.



## Convoy Size...

The maximum number of 4x4s in our convoy is seven. This excludes local guide and support vehicles. Most vehicles tend to have just two guests, however, up to four can be accommodated. The convoy does travel together for the vast majority of the journey, so you need to be willing to be flexible to fit in with the determined start time each day, stops for breaks etc. We try to allow breaks for photos, toilet stops, sightseeing, lunch, morning and afternoon tea but road conditions and travel time for the day may affect how long or how many of these we may have.

## Guide & Support Team...

On this adventure you will be joined by a Self Drive Adventures English speaking escort as well as a local guide who speaks English, French and Malagasy and some other support staff. The decision of the Self Drive Adventure's escort is final on all matters likely to affect the safety or well-being of any person participating in the trip.

## Accommodation...

This is not a 5-star holiday. It is an adventure. We'll be staying in a blend of accommodation. The hotel in Tana is of a very high standard and from there we will stay in 3-star "budget" hotels, a couple of very basic hotels where that is the best available, bush huts, bungalows and resorts. As basic as some places are, they are clean and atmospheric. **There is one night during the adventure where the accommodation is very far below expectations. It is the only accommodation that is available and must be endured so that this route (that is not to be missed) is taken.**

## Food...

See the itinerary inclusions for meals that are included. In general, the food is quite good, very good in some places. Breakfast is the most limited meal being a standard baguette/bread with jam, coffee and tea. Sometimes this is accompanied by fruit and yoghurt and you can usually order a basic omelette (but there may be a small extra charge for this). Where meals are not included we will buy food along the way in small cafes/restaurants or take picnic lunches from the hotel. There are also supermarkets along the route where you can top up on snacks to carry in the 4x4.

## Amenities & Toilet Breaks...

Your accommodation has private bathroom facilities. We will stop for toilet breaks in restaurants if possible, but there will be quite a few "bush toilet" stops where there is cover of trees or bushes for privacy.

## Activity Level...

There are quite a few hikes included within the national parks. Some of these will last up to half a day. While these are walked quite slowly some of them may be on steep terrain (especially within the rain forests). We recommend bringing hiking poles.



## Weather...

Around Antananarivo expect around 23—26 degrees C, there is a possibility of rain, around Morondava 20-35 degrees C, small chance of rain and water temperature 26 degrees C, around Ifaty 19-35 degrees C, small chance of rain and water temperature 25 degrees C, around Ranohira 15-25 degrees C, chance of rain and water temperature 25 degrees C, around Sainte Marie Island 19-30 degrees C, some chance of rain and water temperature 25 degrees C.

## Flights...

Before booking flights and other arrangements it is your responsibility to confirm with us that we have the minimum number of cars required for this adventure to depart.

## Risks & Health...

Madagascar is a developing country and as such can experience problems which may include but are not limited to, political upheaval, lack of supplies (including fuel and spare parts), poor medical services, poor road conditions, poor police services, as well as drought, floods and unusual weather conditions. We cannot be held responsible if the internal infrastructure of the country being visited causes adverse effects.

By participating you acknowledge that the nature of the trip is adventurous, and participation involves a degree of personal risk. Health facilities in Madagascar are basic even in larger cities and towns. We will be very remote and at least a day's drive from the closest town on many occasions. Malaria, Rabies, Bubonic and Pneumonic Plague and other health risks exist in Madagascar. You should discuss the risks with your doctor before agreeing to join this trip.

# FAN MAIL

## Adventure Madagascar

What an adventure! Madagascar was a revelation to us - a country unlike any other with so much to see and experience. Unique flora and fauna, beautiful unspoiled coastlines, a diverse population, challenging roads and tracks for the 4-wheel driver. And who can resist the amazing lemurs close up!

Russ & Sue Smith, Sydney Australia

