

Madagascar Private Tour

Blue Dot Travel

Go somewhere different





MADAGASCAR

Madagascar, 400 km off the East coast of Africa, is the world's fourth largest island (excluding Australia), a fragment of Gondwanaland left behind when the ancient landmass split to form the continents of Africa, India and Australia; it stretches 1600 km from north to south and is 650 km across at its widest point.

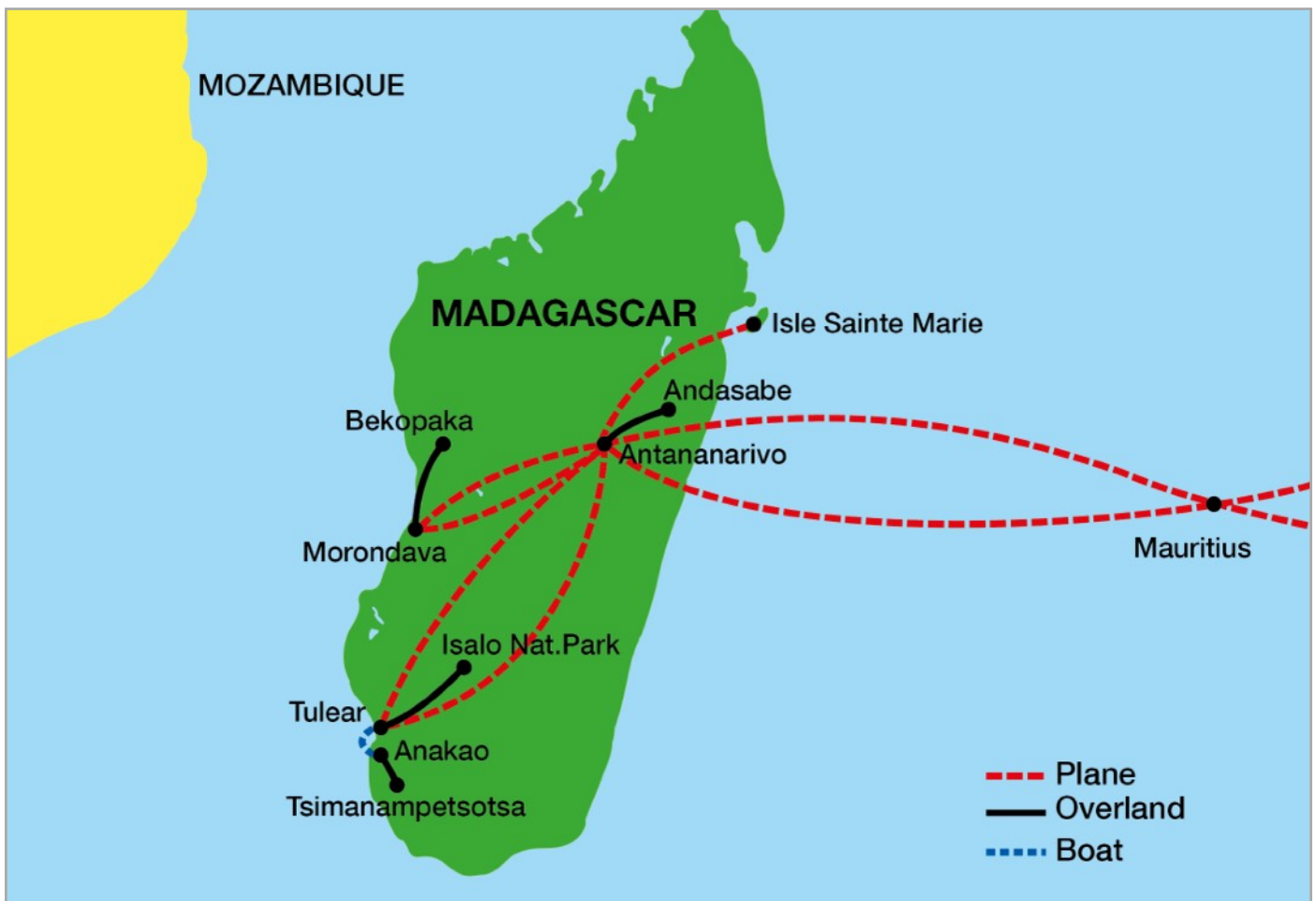
The most astonishing thing about the island is not its size however, but its flora and fauna, which are found nowhere else in the world. The island has been referred to as "nature's design laboratory", because of the many unique creatures and vegetation, some of quite a primitive nature, which are found here. The terrain varies from tropical rainforest to desert, from high stony plateaus to lush green islands with many amazing geological and geographical formations throughout.

Madagascar has a whole range of unique animals and plants, which have evolved here separated from the rest of the world. The most notable are the Lemurs of which nearly 30 are described. We will visit a number of their known habitats and search both day and night, so that, with just a little luck we will see a fair number of these pro-simian primates. For the bird fancier there are over 250 species of which 106 are endemic, whilst for lovers of reptiles most of the world's chameleons are found here, in fact, the country is nearly as well known for its chameleon population as for its lemurs.

The flora has its own peculiarities, the vegetation varying greatly by climatic region - thorny scrub in the south-west, tropical rainforest along the east coast, heath-land and moss forests on the central plateau and savannahs in the western lowlands. The two best-known examples of these unusual plants are the fan shaped Ravinala, known as the Traveller's Palm, and the Baobab of which there are 10 different species. We will see many examples of these throughout while in the tropical forests we will see trees lush with ferns, fungi, mosses and orchids. Most of this unique flora and fauna, together with some now extinct species, were here when the first humans arrived some 1500 to 2000 years ago. The first inhabitants were Malay-Polynesians who crossed the Indian Ocean in large canoes from Indonesia and South East Asia. These early settlers mixed with later arrivals, African, Arab, Indian and Portuguese traders and French colonials have formed the current 18 official tribes, which are collectively termed the Malagasy. French is the official language and is spoken in all but the remotest areas.

The country has recovered from its recent political problems, everywhere things are improving – new roads, airports and other infrastructures are being built. The country is in great need of foreign currency as part of this income can be used to help preserve what remains of the Island's natural wonders.

For those looking for something different, this is really it!



Day 1 DEPARTURE

Depart Perth for Mauritius on Air Mauritius (TBC). Arrive in the evening and transfer to the hotel just 5 minutes drive. Here you will overnight. Meal in flight and dinner at the hotel. *D*

Day 2 MAURITIUS – ANTANANARIVO

After breakfast, if time permits, there'll be an opportunity to have a quick visit of Mahebourg (at own expense). After that, transfer to the airport for flight MK288 to Tana (flight TBC). On arrival, you will obtain your short-stay visa (about \$30 Euros) and meet your guide, who will assist you in making your way to the money exchange to acquire some local currency before a transfer to the hotel which is situated in the centre of Antananarivo ("Tana" for locals). This is a fascinating hour-long drive, and you'll see locals in the capital city go about their day. Overnight at the quirky but lovely Royal Palissandre Hotel. The hotel offers good food and is named after the Palissandre tree, a commonly used hardwood in Madagascar. *B/D*

Day 3 ANTANANARIVO

Today you will see some of the core sites of the capital city. Start with a trip to the Queen's Palace – about 45 45-minute drive. You'll learn the fascinating

story of the region's history and then take a short walk for the panoramic view back towards Tana. The group will then drive back towards town for lunch and head to the lookout in the city where you will see the Tana from above. *B/L/D*

Day 4 ANTANANARIVO – ISLE SAINTE MARIE

Start today with an early breakfast before transferring to the airport and flying to the eastern part of the country to Isle Sainte Marie, a gorgeous island just 45 km long with small fishing villages. Its strategic position meant it attracted pirates around the year 1700. The Pirates Cemetery is a relic of this history, and we will see the graves of some of the famous pirates from that era. Isle Sainte Marie offers a rich cultural history, lush vegetation, sandy beaches shaded by coconut palms, bays and coves protected by coral reefs. The island is known for the humpback whales which migrate close to the coastline from July to September, one of the main reasons to visit. Overnight at the lodge. *B/L/D*

Day 5 SAINTE MARIE

Today, enjoy a whale safari excursion. Every year, hundreds of giant mammals come to the warm waters of the Sainte-Marie lagoon to give birth. You'll have the opportunity to discover their graceful ballets and

fascinating jumps outside the water, making the experience a once in a lifetime. The excursion will be about 3 hours on a smallish boat owned by the hotel. (If you are not good on boats, you may need to reconsider this excursion). Then, the group will take the boat south of the island to enjoy lunch on a small islet. After a stroll around the local village, you'll drive back to the lodge, arriving late in the afternoon – just in time for drinks at the bar, with a view. **B/L/D**

Day 6
SAINTE MARIE –ANTANANARIVO – ANDASIBE

After an early breakfast, fly back to Tana and then transfer by coach to Andasibe (also known as Perinet). This is about a 4 hour drive east through a windy, but picturesque landscape. The area is in a rainforest so expect some rain. Depending on flights, lunch will either be on arrival or en route. Check in to the lodge accommodation and take a walk (with your torch) to spot the active wildlife in the evening. **B/L/D**

Day 7
ANDASIBE

Today, a morning expedition to Mantadia National Park for wildlife spotting. This 155sq km park is the premier rainforest in the region and provides the chance to hear and see the Indri and Sifaka lemurs. If we are lucky, we may find other species of lemurs, reptiles, and birds. The flora is very interesting in the



lower elevation dominated by fern trees. At higher elevations, moss and lichen grow superbly. Mantadia is a superb example of lowland and mid-altitude rainforest (a certain fitness level is needed

for this 3-4 hour walk). Enjoy a picnic lunch inside the park and continue to the natural pool in the afternoon before returning to the lodge. Those interested can take another evening stroll to sport the nocturnal wildlife. Overnight at the lodge. **B/L/D**

Day 8
ANDASIBE – ANTANANARIVO

After breakfast, transfer to Analamazaotra for more wildlife spotting by foot and to enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Lunch is back at the lodge before stopping at Lemur Island (right next to the hotel) to interact with wild, but friendly lemurs. Those interested can take a short walk through the town of Andasibe (highly recommended) before the transfer back to Tana where we will check in and have dinner at the hotel. **B/L/D**

Day 9
ANTANANARIVO – MORONDAVA

After breakfast, drive to the airport and fly to Morondava, on the western side of Madagascar.

Transfer to the hotel where we will have lunch. Enjoy the hotel grounds, pool and beach in the afternoon. Later, you can visit to the local marketplace to mix it with the locals – about 30 minute enjoyable walk or, order a pousse pousse for a few ariary. Back to the hotel to enjoy its facilities and have dinner. **B/L/D**

Day 10
MORONDAVA – BEKOPAKA

After an early breakfast, head off on a long day's drive on a dirt and sand road towards the village of Bekopaka. The first stop is the famous Avenue of the Baobabs where you can take photos of these giant trees in the morning light. Lunch is at Belo at the halfway mark. We undertake a 45-minute transfer by local barge (with cars on board) and then continue to the second river crossing before arriving at the small village of Bekopaka. Arrival will be late in the afternoon. This is a long and bumpy drive in 4WD vehicles, but worth the visit. The river barge trip with the locals is a great experience. Overnight at the hotel. **B/L/D**



Day 11
BEKOPAKA

Activity rating: Challenging.

Today's expedition is to the Big Tsingy. Trekking inside the limestone forest, passing through a hanging bridge to go from one side to another and arrive at the panoramic view to have an overall view offered by this spectacular, unique, UNESCO-listed landscape. There are three options for today as certain fitness and flexibility are required. You'll also need to be good with heights and able to climb up a series of steep ladders (harness supplied). If climbing is too hard (your guide can help decide), then you will have the option of taking a walk through another section of the forest or, simply enjoying the hotel's facilities. Overnight at the hotel. **B/L/D**



Day 12
BEKOPAKA – MORONDAVA

After breakfast, start the drive back to Morondava in the 4WD vehicles. Cross both rivers by barge and then have lunch at Belo. The main sight today is the Avenue of the Baobabs, this time in the afternoon light where you'll enjoy the sunset through the giant trees. Have your cameras ready, as this is one of the great sights of Madagascar. Arrive back at Morondava in the evening (it will be dark) for dinner. Overnight at the hotel. **B/L/D**



Day 13
MORONDAVA – ANTANANARIVO

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the airport and fly to Antananarivo. A late lunch today, at the Combava Restaurant on our way to the city centre. You'll make two more stops before arriving at the hotel. Firstly at the artisan market just up the road from the restaurant and then at the large supermarket if you want to stock up on any essentials. Overnight at the hotel. *B/L/D*

Day 14
ANTANANARIVO – TULEAR

Today, you'll fly to the southwest of the island to Tulear (most likely via Fort Dauphin). This part of the island is quite different from the places you have previously visited. On arrival, check in to the hotel and tour the township, including its markets and the Arboretum. Overnight at Victory Hotel, which is clean but basic. *B/L/D*



Day 15
TULEAR – ANAKAO

This morning, transfer to the dock and take the speed boat to Anakao to the Safari Vezo Hotel. If lucky, you'll



see whales in the Mozambique Channel. The 40-minute speed boat ride can be bumpy, but here is no other option unless you take a full-day, slow, bumpy drive by road. The afternoon is at leisure. Enjoy the locals in the

village right next door. Overnight at Safari Vezo a beach hotel, simple but with all the comfort needed. Bungalows are right at the beach. The food served here is mainly seafood. Note that hot water is provided by buckets, not running taps. *B/L/D*



Day 16
ANAKAO – TSIMANAMPETSOTSA

After breakfast, drive to the reserve of Tsimanampetsotsa, about 1.5 hours drive on dirt and sand roads in 4x4 vehicles. Tsimanampetsotsa is one of the most interesting parks on the island. You'll trek about 1.5 hours on a steep trail until we reach the plateau. The viewpoint of the salt lake – where you can see the pink flamingos who have migrated from Africa - is special. Enjoy a picnic lunch inside the park. On the way, you'll see the unique blind fish in one of the caves, "Grandmother", the island's oldest Baobab tree and the huge Bunyan tree with its mega root system. In the afternoon, drive back to Anakao. Overnight at the safari lodge. *B/L/D*



Day 17
ANAKAO – TULEAR – ISALO

In the morning, take the speed boat back to Tulear from Anakao. The bus will then take you to Isalo via a delightful 4-hour drive. After check-in at the hotel, have a late lunch. The afternoon is for relaxation. Enjoy the beautiful pool, gardens and pet tortoises at your hotel. *B/L/D*



Day 18
ISALO

Walking shoes on... today is a physical one, where you will undertake an expedition inside the National Park. Drive to the canyon of Maki and walk through the forest to see an array of lemurs, birds and reptiles. The trek may not be for everyone as it could be considered physical for some. You will visit the waterfall and blue and black waterholes. Your guide will explain the physicality and the time required. You'll have a picnic lunch inside the park then walk back to the bus and drive to the hotel. Overnight at the hotel. *B/L/D*



Day 19
ISALO

A slower pace to the day after yesterday's walking adventure. After lunch at the hotel, we will transfer to another part of the beautiful national park for some sightseeing and light trekking to a beautiful natural swimming pool that looks like a Tarzan movie scene! (Pack your swimmers and towel). Later in the afternoon, enjoy the sunset through the window of Isalo, before returning to the hotel for dinner. *B/L/D*

Day 20
SALO – TULEAR – ANTANANARIVO

Today is pretty much a day of transfers. Time permitting there will be a stop at one of the few sapphire towns for a stroll. Arrive in Tana for dinner (Flight TBA) via Fort Dauphin where you will not need to alight. On arrival into Tana, you'll take the hour's drive to the hotel and have Dinner. Overnight at the hotel. *B/L/D*

Day 21
TANA – MAURITIUS – PERTH

Today, a visit to the Lemur Park before we depart Madagascar for our flight back to Perth, via Mauritius. *B/ Meals in flight*

Day 22
PERTH – HOME

Transfer for your flight to Sydney or Melbourne arriving home in the afternoon/evening.



Icon indicates a day where there is **moderate physical exertion**. A basic level of fitness is required: eg. A trek over 'mostly flat' terrain or climbing several flights of steps without the support of handrails or elevators.



Icon indicates a day where there is a **particularly active section**. A good level of fitness is required: eg. A longer trek over non-groomed, uneven terrain, or ascending to reach a panorama. May also include exposure to higher altitude. **An alternate activity may be offered if you choose to sit out an active section.** Please call - we are happy to discuss each tour in more detail.