



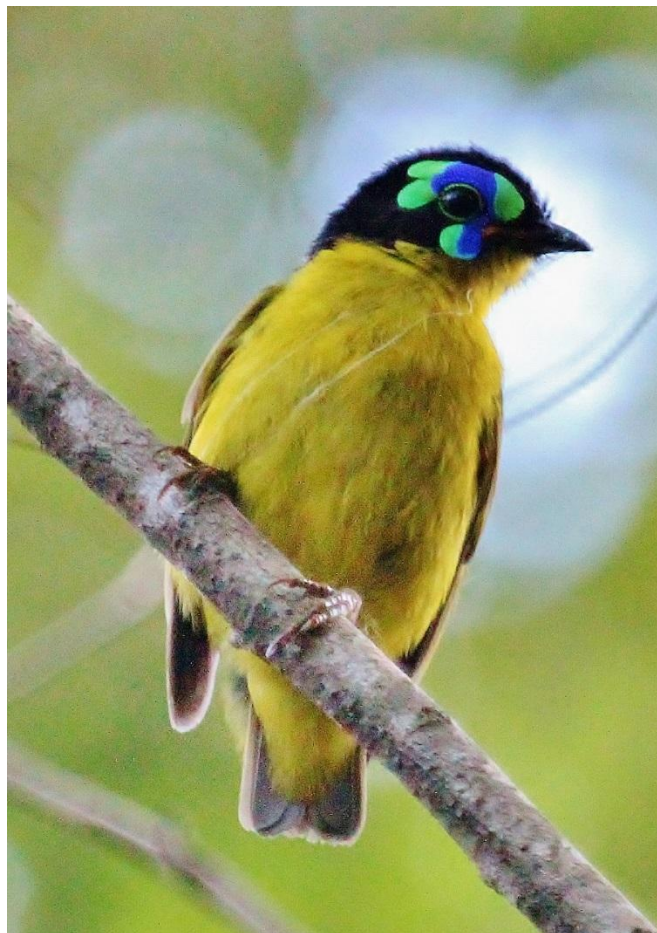
# MADAGASCAR HIGHLIGHTS

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# AMPIJOROA-BETSIBOKA PRE-TRIP

*October 9 - 24, 2026*  
*October 5 - 11, 2026*

Unique is the adjective most often used to describe Madagascar. This huge island first began to split away from the African continent during the age of the dinosaurs and has since followed an independent evolutionary course, allowing an amazing variety of different life forms to evolve from a few colonizing ancestors. Ranging from the bizarre to the sublime, this is island evolution gone wild, and there is no other destination like it. Few places in the world are as threatened as the native environments of Madagascar and nearby islands. Intense human settlement and population increase for at least 1500 years has led to the destruction of vast areas of the native habitats. Rainforests that once covered the wet eastern slope of the island are now fragmented and mostly inaccessible. While the special spiny forests of the south western coastal strip are still in good shape, there are few protected examples of these restricted habitats. Long gone are the giant lemurs, dwarf hippos, and elephant birds, and today, even the remaining lemurs and native birds, survive precariously. There is a sense of urgency to visiting Madagascar. The country is at a critical turning point and if ample reserves are not created and protected in the near future, many species will soon become extinct. This tour is designed to visit a wide



*Male Schlegel's Asity © Dion Hobcroft*

range of Madagascar's habitats, with enough time in each to seek out the special endemic birds, lemurs, and other fascinating creatures

Of the birds, five entire families are endemic to the Madagascar region: the Mesites, Ground-rollers, Cuckoo-roller, Asities and Madagascar Warblers. Recently the previously endemic family of Vangas has expanded to include the Woodshrikes of Asia. The distinctive Vasa Parrots, including a species from New Guinea, have been proposed to be elevated to a new family within the parrot assemblage. An endemic subfamily of large cuckoos, the couas, forms an important part of the avifauna. Even more remarkable is the high degree of endemism among the land-birds. October is the best season for observing the avifauna, as breeding activity peaks from September to December. Birding here is not easy, for the diversity is not high, the habitats are often dense, and bird populations are low (40% of the endemic species are considered endangered or at risk) – but the big reward is seeing some very distinctive forms that few naturalists have encountered in the wild.

The lemurs are the most famous of Madagascar's wildlife. These “primitive primates” range in size from the tiny mouse lemurs (at 7 inches total, the smallest primates in the world) to the child-sized Indri. These attractive and appealing animals are found throughout the forests. Of the 87 surviving species



(recent taxonomic revision has split some thirty new species) some are colorful, social, and diurnal while

others are drab, solitary, and nocturnal. Other larger mammals are few on the island, but include primitive insectivores like the tenrecs and several carnivorous relatives of the mongoose like the Fossa. Among the highly endemic reptile fauna is an incredible array of weird and colorful chameleons (over 60% of the world's species), cryptic leaf-tailed geckos and fluorescent day geckos, skinks and other lizards. The flora is surprisingly rich, including over 1000 species of orchids and many spectacular flowers that have become popular in tropical gardens the world over. In the desert southwest we will find some of the world's strangest plants.

This year we will offer a pre-trip to the remote Ampijoroa National Park. This extensive protected area with nearby wetlands will give us the chance to add more Madagascar endemics to our list including several highly threatened species like Madagascar Fish-Eagle, Madagascar Harrier, Madagascar Jacana, White-breasted Mesite, Schlegel's Asity and Van Dam's Vanga. A boat trip on the nearby Betsiboka Delta will enable us to search for the critically endangered Bernier's Teal and Madagascar Sacred Ibis. We will also encounter a good variety of different lemurs including the beautiful Coquerel's Sifaka and maybe the unusual Mongoose Lemur.

## October 9-11, Days 1-3: Travel To Madagascar; Arrive Antananarivo

Participants who are **not on the pre-trip** should plan to arrive at Antananarivo Madagascar (known as *Tana*, airport code TNR) on or before October 11<sup>th</sup>. We will meet in the lobby of our charming hotel at **6:30 p.m. on October 11th**, for a get acquainted session and dinner. Depending on your route to Tana, flights may require departure from your home as early as October 9<sup>th</sup>. Transfers between the airport and hotel will be provided for all participants, regardless of your arrival date and time. The beautiful boutique hotel conveniently located near the airport is home to quite a few birds. The gardens can produce Madagascar Brush-Warbler, Madagascar Wagtail, and Madagascar Bulbul. We have occasionally seen Madagascar Hoopoe and the scarce Sooty Falcon here. When you arrive in this bustling city, one cannot help being struck by the distinctness of the Malagasy culture, a strange mixture of African and Asian influences which are reflected in the landscape and architecture. This is a

delightfully friendly and safe city (although be aware of pickpockets) despite the sometimes-seeming chaos and undoubted poverty. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to make lodging arrangements for early arrivals.

**NIGHTS (October 9 & 10):** In transit

**NIGHT (October 11):** Hotel Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo (Tana)

## October 12, Day 4: Morning Birding Lake Alarobia; Fly to Tulear

This morning we will make our introduction to Malagasy birding with an excursion to nearby Lake Alarobia, a private sanctuary. Set within the city, this reserve protects large numbers of ducks and egrets from persecution including good numbers of White-faced Whistling-Duck and Red-billed Teal, which are usually accompanied by smaller numbers of Blue-billed Teal, and with luck, both Knob-billed Duck, and the rare endemic Meller's Duck. A fantastic assortment of egrets roost or breed in the sanctuary, including a few splendidly adorned Malagasy Pond-Herons as well as the more common Squacco Heron, along with Black Heron and Little Egret. Mascarene Martins are common overhead and in surrounding areas we may encounter Malagasy Kestrel, Malagasy Coucal, Malagasy Swift, Madagascar Wagtail, Malagasy Brush-Warbler, Madagascar Swamp-Warbler, Malagasy White-eye, Madagascar Munia and Red Fody.

This afternoon we will fly southwards to Toliara on Madagascar's arid southwest coast, followed by a one-hour drive north on the recently improved road to Ifaty. The coastline north of Tulear is delightful with clear blue water, small fishing villages fringing coral reefs, and beautiful sandy beaches. The zebu cattle are the cultural basis of this region and carts drawn by them are a frequent sight. Amidst the coastal scrub, cotton fields, and dry flats near town can be found some of the typical birds of the west-coast, including Namaqua Dove, Olive Bee-eater and Madagascar Cisticola.

**NIGHT:** Vovo Telo, Ifaty

## October 13, Day 5: Spiny Forest Reserve, Ifaty

The semi-desert region of southwestern Madagascar is unique, and this will be an outstanding day to explore the spiny forests, patches of coastal scrub, mudflats, and an area of freshwater lakes. These isolated, dry forests are botanically fascinating with some of the strangest plants on our planet found here. The spiny forest is composed almost entirely of endemic plants such as *Didiera* (spiny octopus-like trees), cactus-like *Euphorbia*, *Pachypodium* (Elephant's Foot) and *Adansonia* (towering baobab trees). Birding along a trail through the spiny forest is a fascinating experience, for the birdcalls are distinctly different from anywhere else in the world. Venturing out at dawn, before the day becomes uncomfortably hot, we will stroll amongst the myriad multi-stemmed succulents, squat baobab trees and thorny scrub in search of such spectacular endemics as Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk (scarce), Madagascar Sparrowhawk (scarce), Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Green-Pigeon, Gray-headed Lovebird, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Olive-capped and Running Couas, Madagascar Hoopoe, *Thamnornis*, as well as Sickle-billed, Hook-billed, White-headed, Lafresnaye's and Chabert Vangas, Archbold's *Newtonia*, Sakalava Weaver and Souimanga Sunbird.

Two very special birds here are the near mythical Subdesert Mesite, which we may find adopting its strange, cryptic posture on a thorny branch, and the Long-tailed Ground-Roller, an elusive ground dweller best located by its low, hooting call. This elusive bird is primarily crepuscular in habit and can be extremely difficult to locate, but by rising early and working the forest at dawn we have a good chance of seeing it. Local villagers who specialize in showing visitors the Long-tailed Ground-Roller will track these through the sandy desert and locate them for us. They track them by their footprints, an amazing feat by a family team. We regularly have superb views of this strange bird, which is somewhat reminiscent of a roadrunner. While looking for the ground-roller and other special birds, we will have the opportunity to see many of the strange plants of the spiny desert. As the day warms up, so too does reptile activity and with a bit of luck we should see the numerous Three-eyed Lizards or a Chameleon species or two. We may be lucky enough to find a beautiful Spider Tortoise, rare Dumeril's Boa or obscure mammals like Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec or day roosting Petter's Sportive-Lemur.

Following our early morning excursions to the spiny desert, we will return to our beachside hotel for the afternoon. With its relaxed ambience and very comfortable facilities, our hotel is a most pleasant place in which to rest and relax during the heat of the day. When the tide is low, some interesting shorebirds turn up on the adjacent beach. Shorebird possibilities include Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, Terek and Curlew Sandpipers, White-fronted Plover and Greater Sand-Plover.



*The enigmatic Long-tailed Ground-Roller © Dion Hobcroft*

During the late afternoon we will search for the rare endemic Madagascar Plover in addition to the more abundant and widespread Madagascar Lark, Kittlitz's and Three-banded Plovers. With luck, an area of freshwater wetlands may produce Little Bittern, Greater Painted-Snipe and the elusive Baillon's Crake. If necessary, we will return to the Spiny Forest in search of any of the unique birds we may have missed.

**NIGHT:** Vovo Telo, Ifaty

## October 14, Day 6: Ifaty to Tulear to Nosy Ve; On to Anakao

This morning we will board a speedboat for our excursion to the small, uninhabited, coralline islet of Nosy Ve. Located to the south of Toliara, Nosy Ve supports a notably accessible colony of Red-tailed Tropicbirds, which permit close approach as they have been left unmolested by local people due to a taboo or *fady*. With a bit of luck, we may also find the spectacular Crab Plover roosting on the sandbar here, as well as small numbers of other migrant shorebirds and a tern roost (if the tide is correct). Please note it may be a wet landing at Nosy Ve so a pair of sandals or reef/water shoes is useful here. After exploring Nosy Ve, we will then continue by boat to the spectacular Anakao Ocean Lodge, hopefully having seen all of the target birds. The lodge, which is stunningly beautiful, is also home to the endemic Littoral Rock-Thrush and Subdesert Brush Warbler. On previous visits, we have seen Lafresnaye's Vanga, Madagascar Button-quail and flocks of Grey-headed Lovebirds.

**NIGHT:** Anakao Ocean Lodge, Anakao

## October 15, Day 7: Tsimanampetsotsa National Park

In 2016, we visited this remote national park and our visit was so successful we felt it would be great to include it in every tour. This large national park is centered on a giant brackish lake that supports a resident population of both Greater and occasional Lesser Flamingos. The nearby escarpments of uplifted limestone have numerous sink holes and caves (complete with blind fish). The old growth woodlands of Baobabs and Elephant Foot trees support good populations of Verreaux's Coua and Lafresnaye's Vanga while Ring-tailed Lemurs can also be quite numerous. Giant Banyan figs grow into the sinkholes in a tangle of roots and shady canopy. Fruiting trees may attract Greater Vasa Parrot or Madagascar Green-Pigeon while the nutritious leaves are food for the rare Radiated Tortoise. On the barren flats that cover the margins of the lake can be found quite good populations of the rare Madagascar Plover, and small freshwater soaks will give us our best chance for the elusive Madagascar Sandgrouse.

**NIGHT:** Anakao Ocean Lodge, Anakao



*Verreaux's Coua--a challenging-to-find endemic © Dion Hobcroft*

## October 16, Day 8: Anakao to Isalo

In the early morning, we will depart Anakao by boat for Toliara. Here we will explore a small flat-topped mountain aptly known as *La Table* in search of the recently discovered and increasingly rare and localized Red-shouldered Vanga. The coral scrub is also home to the localized endemic Verreaux's Coua. Later in the morning we will visit the Arboretum d'Antsokay, an excellent birding location where we have a good chance of finding Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Nightjar at a day roost, Gray-headed Lovebird, Malagasy Coucal, Crested Drongo, Chabert Vanga, Olive-capped Coua, and Sakalava

Weaver. The Arboretum, developed by Swiss botanist Petignat Hermann (1923-2000) is a fabulous botanic garden that demonstrates both the floral diversity of south-west Madagascar and also the medicinal use of plants by the local tribal people.

Following lunch, we will drive north towards Isalo in the remote interior of southern Madagascar, a geographically diverse region of grasslands, rugged sandstone formations and uplifted massifs. The grasslands here are home to some special birds including the elusive Madagascar Partridge, while the localized Forest Rock Thrush can often be spotted around our excellent hotel. If conditions are suitable, one night at dusk we will try and spotlight the White-browed Owl.

**NIGHT:** Le Relais de la Reine, Isalo

## October 17, Day 9: Isalo to Zombitse Forest National Park and return to Tulear

We will spend the best birding part of the day exploring the Zombitse Forest. This 185 square kilometer forest is a remnant example of dry deciduous forest which allows comfortable access to a network of forest trails. Birding is outstanding at Zombitse which is home to more than eighty species, most of which are endemic. It is home to the extremely localized Appert's Tetraka. A recent genetic assessment has indicated that the Madagascan Tetrakas should be elevated to a new endemic family - the Malagasy Warblers called the Bernieridae. Zombitse also provides a very good chance to see Coquerel's Coua, Crested Coua (one of the most attractive members of this endemic subfamily known for its wide range of weird vocalizations), Giant Coua (another southern specialty), displaying Cuckoo-Roller, the scarce Rufous Vanga and with a bit of luck hopefully a day roosting White-browed Owl. Other birds we will look for include the France's Sparrowhawk, Banded Kestrel (scarce), Madagascar Buttonquail, Malagasy Turtle-Dove, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Madagascar Spinetail, Gray-headed Lovebird, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Common Newtonia and Malagasy Paradise-Flycatcher.

We have an excellent chance to see the spectacular nearly-white Verreaux's Sifaka, amongst the most spectacular of all lemurs. Less well known but frequenting Zombitse are the Red-fronted Brown Lemur,

the nocturnal Pale Fork-marked Lemur and endemic Zombitse Sportive Lemur. These smaller lemurs can sometimes be seen at their day roosts in tree hollows.

**NIGHT:** Bakuba Lodge, Tulear

## October 18, Day 10: Tulear and return flight to Antananarivo

Depending upon the flight schedule we may try for any of the specialty birds we have been unable to locate. We will then fly north to Antananarivo and return to the L'Aubois Vert hotel.

**NIGHT:** Hotel Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo

## October 19, Day 11: Tana to Perinet

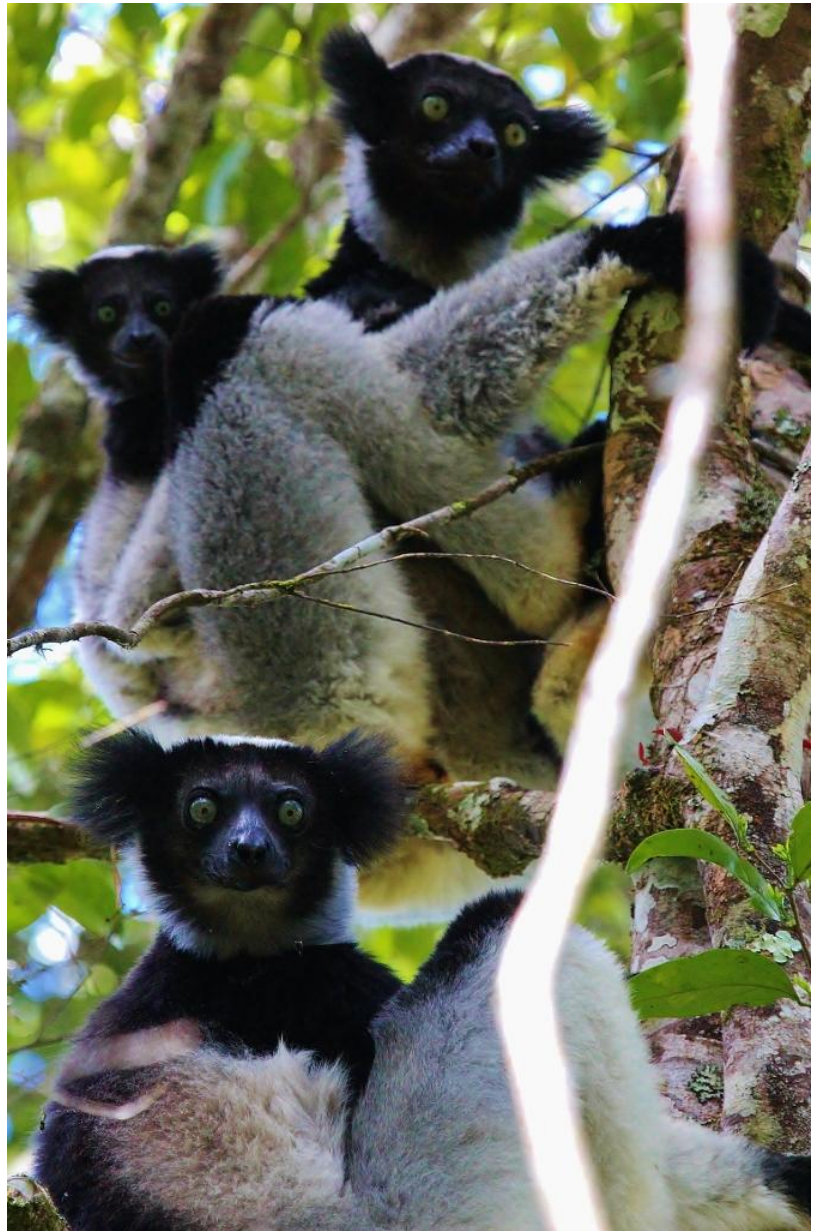
Following breakfast, we will make our way out of Tana and head eastwards across the Highland Plateau to the famous reserve of Andasibe and the superb forest of Mantadia National Park. Along the way we should encounter several open country species such as the peculiar Hamerkop, Black Kite, Madagascar Martin and Madagascar Cisticola. With a bit of luck, we may also find the attractive Madagascar Pratincole at Mangoro River. It is about a five-hour drive to our final destination.

Our accommodations for the next four nights will be in the spacious and very comfortable Mantadia Lodge, ideally located on a high ridge set in extensive forest. Being so close to the reserve means that wildlife is often right on our doorstep: fluorescent green day geckos scuttle on the outside walls of our chalets; Madagascar Wagtails flit along the paved walkways. We may well encounter such gems as Madagascar Nightjar, Greater Vasa-Parrot and African Stonechat right around our rooms.

**NIGHT:** Mantadia Lodge, Andasibe

## October 20-22, Days 12-14: Mantadia National Park and Perinet Special Reserve

Among the most sought-after of Madagascar's birds are those families endemic to the Malagasy region: the peculiar Mesites, exquisite Ground-rollers, the Cuckoo-Roller, elusive Asities, Madagascar warblers, and the near endemic Vangas and Vasa-Parrots. Some species, such as the ubiquitous Cuckoo-Roller, Pitta-like Ground-Roller, and a number of the vangas are reasonably common and regularly encountered, while many of the others remain rare, local or elusive. We will, of course, make a special effort to locate as many representatives of these charismatic families as possible, as well as those of the endemic sub-family, the couas. In order to be successful, at times we will need to focus on certain local specialties and this is especially so in Madagascar's eastern forests.



*Indri Family, Andasibe © Dion Hobcroft*

The moist rainforest cloaking Madagascar's eastern escarpment protects the richest assemblage of birds and other wildlife on the island, including many that are rare or poorly known. The superb Mantadia National Park protects a large expanse of some of Madagascar's most gorgeous primary forest. Though it has only recently been opened to the public, Mantadia is now an essential destination on any birding trip to Madagascar, having rapidly gained a reputation as an excellent site for a handful of highly sought-after forest birds. Not least among these are a number of species formerly considered to be restricted to the poorly

accessible rainforests of the far northeast, such as Red-breasted Coua and Scaly Ground-Roller. We will have one full day exploring Mantadia where there is a good chance of several highly desirable forest birds such as Madagascar Blue-Pigeon, Scaly, Pitta-like and Short-legged Ground-roller, Common and Dark Newtonias, Green and Stripe-throated Jerays, Forest Fody and Crossley's Vanga. Previously called a babbler, recent DNA-analysis suggests the Crossley's Vanga is an aberrant terrestrial vanga! We also hope to find Red-fronted and Blue Couas, Velvet Asity (increasingly difficult), and flocks of vangas that may include White-headed, Chabert, Blue, Red-tailed, Hook-billed or the bizarre Nuthatch Vanga. Other attractions in this scenically beautiful reserve include the vocal Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur, the elusive Diademed Sifaka (considered by many to be the world's most beautiful lemur) and Painted Mantella, a spectacularly colored forest frog reminiscent of South America's poison-dart frogs. Much of the birding in Mantadia National Park can be enjoyed from the wide road that runs up into the reserve, although seeing the skulkers of the forest understory will require that we take to the forest trails.

On one of our days here we will explore the Andasibe Special Reserve. Over 100 species have been recorded from within this small reserve and here we will search for such specialties as Madagascar Ibis, Henst's Goshawk, Madagascar Flufftail, the elusive Madagascar Forest-Rail, White-throated Rail, Madagascar Rail, Madagascar Blue-Pigeon, Greater Vasa Parrot, Madagascar Cuckoo, Madagascar Spinetail, the sensational Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Malagasy Paradise-Flycatcher, Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike, Ward's Flycatcher, Tylas Vanga, Madagascar Starling, Long-billed Bernieria and Spectacled Tetraka, White-throated Oxylabes, Nelicourvi Weaver and Souimanga Sunbird. If we are lucky, we may locate one of Perinet's forest rarities such as Madagascar Serpent Eagle or Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk.

While in the Perinet area, we will also make a special effort to see the reserve's most famous resident: the huge, singing lemur known as Indri, the world's largest extant species of lemur. If we are fortunate, we will be treated to a close encounter with a family group, their eerie, whale-like cries echoing through the forest. Other lemurs we hope to see include Common Brown and Gray Bamboo lemurs, and we will also search known roosting sites for the nocturnal Eastern Avahi, often called the Woolly Lemur. Another "must see" member of the island's fauna is the Giraffe-necked Weevil, a tiny red and black insect named for its unusually proportioned neck.

Nocturnal outings are thrilling and indeed an essential part of any trip to Madagascar, and Andasibe is undoubtedly one of the best sites to search for the island's night birds, lemurs and chameleons. Specialties here include Madagascar Owl, Madagascar Scops-Owl and the rare and little-known Collared Nightjar. While seeing these birds will be the focus of our walks, we will not neglect the immense variety of non-avian life that emerges after dark. Although Madagascar is famous for the spectacular lemurs that have adapted to a daytime existence, a number of species of these primitive primates remain, like their African cousins the galagos, denizens of the night. We will search for and should find Crossley's Dwarf and the diminutive Goodman's Mouse lemurs, and we may also encounter some of Madagascar's other evolutionary masterpieces such as the bizarre Lowland Streaked Tenrec. The island's reptile and amphibian fauna are equally fascinating and even the most hardened birder would not fail to be impressed by the plethora of colorful and bizarre frogs, chameleons and geckos to be seen on an evening's stroll through the rainforest. In particular, we will search for the giant Parson's Chameleon and two species of bizarre leaf-tailed geckos: the huge *Uroplatus fimbriatus* and the aptly named *Uroplatus phantasticus*.

Another site we will visit is an important protected wetland called Torotorofotsy Marsh. With local people, we will explore across the best area of marsh and with luck see the rare Madagascar Snipe and hopefully Gray Emutail. Occasionally we connect with the scarce Marsh Owl and Common Quail here. A lot depends on the water levels at the time our visit. We also hope to visit the Maromizaha Forest where, on previous visits, we have had good luck with the elusive Rufous-headed Ground-Roller, Velvet Asity, Common Sunbird-Asity, Dark Newtonia and Red-bellied Lemur. Amazingly we had a Fossa on one visit, and that is a bit of a Holy Grail. There will be plenty to search for and our days will be action-packed.

**NIGHTS:** Mantadia Lodge, Andasibe

## October 23, Day 15: Return to Tana

We will have a final morning of birding to target any species we may have missed before we retrace our steps to Tana.

**NIGHT:** Hotel Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo (Tana)

## October 24, Day 16: Departure for home

The remainder of your time in Tana will be free for you to shop, do some sightseeing or relax. A shopping excursion to a nearby craft market can also be organized. Transfers will be arranged from the hotel to the airport according to departing flight times.

# **AMPIJOROA-BETSIBOKA PRE-TRIP**

## **October 5-11, 2026**

This pre-trip visits the remote west coast of northern Madagascar, where we will spend time exploring the Ampijoroa National Park. This lovely park protects varied habitats, from rainforest pockets to dry woodland with extensive wetlands nearby. We will have the chance to see several highly endangered and localized birds, including the remarkable Schlegel's Asity, White-breasted Mesite, Van Dam's Vanga, and the ultra-rare Madagascar Fish-Eagle and Madagascar Jacana.



The park supports many other bird species and is especially good for a variety of vangas and couas, and we can hope for rarities like Malagasy Harrier, Banded Kestrel, Eleonora's and Sooty falcons, and Madagascar Ibis. We will spend time exploring the Betsiboka Delta by boat, where our main focus will be the endangered Bernier's Teal and Malagasy Sacred Ibis that survive only here.

Lemur-watching will be excellent, with a variety of species possible, including the beautiful Coquerel's Sifaka.

## October 5-7 Days 1-3: Travel To Madagascar; Arrive Antananarivo

Participants should plan to arrive at Antananarivo, Madagascar (known as *Tana*, airport code TNR) on or before October 7<sup>th</sup>. We will meet in the lobby of our charming hotel at **6:30 p.m. on October 7<sup>th</sup>**, for a get-acquainted session and dinner. Depending on your route to Tana, flights may require departure from your home as early as October 5<sup>th</sup>. Transfers between the airport and hotel will be provided for all participants, regardless of your arrival time. The beautiful boutique hotel conveniently located near the airport is home to quite a few birds. The gardens can produce Malagasy Brush-Warbler, Madagascar Wagtail, and Malagasy Bulbul. We have occasionally seen Madagascar Hoopoe and the scarce Sooty Falcon here. Upon request, the VENT office will be happy to make lodging arrangements for early arrivals.

**NIGHTS (October 5 & 6):** In transit

**NIGHT (October 7):** Hotel Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo (Tana)

## October 8, Day 4: Antananarivo to Ampijoroa

Today will largely be a travel day as we make the drive north and west from Antananarivo towards the town of Mahajanga. One stretch is quite good for the rare Madagascar Harrier but largely the habitats have been completely deforested. The distinctive endemic subspecies of Alpine Swift is another interesting species to keep an eye out for. As we reach the Betsiboka River, we should find Madagascar Pratincoles in good numbers on the riverine rocks, and, hopefully, the Madagascar Flying-fox (a giant fruit bat) will have a camp nearby which we can study in the scope. In the afternoon, we will reach Ampijoroa, and a walk around the park headquarters may well produce Sickie-billed Vanga and the stunning Coquerel's Sifaka.

**NIGHT:** Tia Asity Lodge, Ampijoroa

## October 9, Day 5: Ampijoroa National Park

We will spend the day searching for all of the key endemic species this outstanding park offers. With luck they may well have Schlegel's Asity staked out nesting. Hopefully after superb views of this quite unbelievable bird we will move into drier habitats to search for other key special endemics like White-breasted Mesite and Van Dam's Vanga which may require some searching as they are both low density species. After a break in the heat of the day we will take a boat trip out on a nearby reservoir, Lac Ravelobe, where we hope to see one of the pairs of the extremely rare Madagascar Fish-Eagle. The extensive wetland is a good site for a view of the scarce Humblot's Heron. We will have a short drive to a nearby village wetland that supports one of the few known populations of publicly accessible Madagascar Jacana. Hopefully African Pygmy-geese will be present. This species decline seems to be linked to the proliferation



*Coquerel's Sifaka © Dion Hobcroft*

of introduced aquatic weeds like Water Hyacinth. There will be plenty of other birds to distract us ranging from Allen's Gallinule (scarce), Madagascar Green-Pigeon, Coquerel's, Crested and Red-capped Coua, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Broad-billed Roller to Rufous, Blue and White-headed Vanga, Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike, Long-billed Bernieria and, with luck, Madagascar Pygmy-Kingfisher, Madagascar Crested Ibis, France's Goshawk, Sooty Falcon or the scarce Banded Kestrel. We will go spot-lighting on one night along the edge of the national park. We should have a good chance to see both Golden-brown Mouse Lemur, Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur, maybe Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemur and, with luck, the Western Avahi or a Madagascar Scops-owl.

**NIGHT:** Fano's Asity Lodge, Ampijoroa

## October 10, Day 6: Ampijoroa to Mahjunga; afternoon boat-trip to Betsiboka Delta

We will have the cool of the morning to search for any of the special birds we are still trying to track down. Later we will make the drive to Maajanga where we will embark on a boat trip to the Betsiboka Delta. Here, with the right timing, we have a decent chance find the rare Bernier's Teal and the Madagascar Sacred Ibis. Both species are only currently being seen in this location. In addition, there should be quite a few shorebirds including the delightful Terek Sandpiper. Other possibilities include Yellow-billed Stork, Crab-Plover, Greater and Lesser flamingos.

**NIGHT:** Karibu Lodge, Mahjunga

## October 11, Day 7: Return to Antananarivo

Depending upon the flight schedule of Air Madagascar, we may fly back or drive back to Tana. We will meet any incoming participants for the main tour this evening for a get acquainted session and dinner.

**NIGHT:** Hotel Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo (Tana)

## **PLEASE NOTE:**

- This Madagascar tour itinerary depends closely on Air Madagascar internal flights which may change without notice. If this happens, the itinerary will be altered, and we will take all reasonable precautions and actions to ensure the tour follows the advertised itinerary as closely as possible with all of the special regions still being visited.
- In some areas it can be very hot. Field activity is best restricted to early and late in the day. On most mornings, we will be up and out very early.
- At times in Andasibe and Ifaty, we may be walking on narrow and/or steep forest trails (entirely optional) to find a few special birds. Virtually all birding will be done on foot which does require substantial time spent walking these trails. Anyone considering this tour should be able to spend several hours at a time on their feet (with rest breaks in between). Our pace will, however, be slow as we bird in the forests.

**If exploring Antananarivo on your own be aware that pickpockets are possible, especially in the crowded markets, so please secure your valuables in your room safe before heading out.**

## **Essential Tour Information**

**TOUR SIZE:** This tour is limited to 8 tour participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space is available

**TOUR LEADER(s):** This tour is led by **Dion Hobcroft**.



**Dion Hobcroft** has been working for VENT since 2001. He has led many tours (more than 200) to Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Bhutan, Indonesia, India, China, Southwest Pacific, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Malawi, Myanmar, Japan, Russia, Alaska, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Antarctic. In 2007 and 2013–2019, 2022-2024 alone, Dion showed more than 2,000 species of birds to VENT clients. His informative, relaxed, and educational nature,

combined with sharp eyes and ears, has established Dion as a favorite of many tour participants. His fieldwork for over 40 years on birds and other terrestrial vertebrates has allowed him to amass an extraordinary knowledge of the biodiversity in the Asia-Pacific region. Born in Tasmania and based in Sydney, Dion has traveled widely throughout Australasia, listing over 1,200 species, placing him in the top echelons of the region's birders. He is very tuned-in to the songs of bird species in the Asia-Pacific region and specializes in rare and elusive species. He is delighted to show these skulking rarities to his travel companions. Dion has published several papers on field ornithology, served on national and state rare bird committees, managed *Birdline NSW*, run introduction to ornithology courses for Sydney University, and, before he traveled so continuously, was a popular speaker with various natural history societies. Dion has worked for many research and government agencies ranging from the Antarctic Division, Department of Environment NSW, Agriculture Protection WA, Taronga Zoo, Australian Museum, and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry. Dion lives in Sydney with his wife, Lise, and two children, Grace (age 23) and Daniel (age 19).

### **TOUR COSTS & PAYMENT INFORMATION**

**MAIN TOUR FEE: \$10,955** per person based on double occupancy. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 3 through breakfast on Day 16, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground and boat transportation during the tour, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes alcoholic beverages, laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the "TIPPING" sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:** If you request single accommodations, a single supplement of **\$895** will be added to your tour fee.

**REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** You may register for this tour through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit

of **30% of the remaining tour fee** is due 180 days prior to departure (April 12, 2026). We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

**PRE-TOUR FEE: \$3,895** per person based on double occupancy. This includes all meals from dinner on Day 3 through lunch on Day 7, accommodations as stated in the itinerary, all ground and boat transportation during the tour, park entrance fees, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does **not** include airfare to nor from the starting/ending city; however, flights within the tour (if any) are included. The fee also excludes alcoholic beverages, laundry, personal expenses, and other items of a personal nature. For information about gratuities, please see the “TIPPING” sub-section below. If the minimum group size is not met, each participant will be charged a small-group supplement—shared equally and communicated in advance—to allow the tour to proceed.

**SINGLE SUPPLEMENT:** If you request single accommodations, a single supplement of **\$135** will be added to your tour fee.

**PRE-TOUR REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT:** You may register for this tour, as an add-on to the main tour, through the VENT [website](#) or by calling our office (512-328-5221). The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **30% of the remaining tour fee** is due 180 days prior to departure (April 8, 2026). We accept MasterCard and Visa for both deposits.

**PAYMENTS:** All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the main tour fee is due 120 days (June 11, 2026) prior to the tour departure date. Full payment of the pre-tour fee is due 120 days (June 7, 2026) prior to the tour departure date.

**EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS:** Should you wish to make arrangements to arrive early or extend your stay, please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date. We can very easily make hotel arrangements and often at our group rate, if we receive your request with enough advance time.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** Tour prices are based on the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If rates change drastically, it may be necessary to impose a surcharge. If a

surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges have been passed on to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

**FUEL SURCHARGES:** Our prices are based on fuel prices at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**TIPPING:** An important part of the value of a VENT tour is knowing that tips for local service providers at our destinations—restaurant staff, hotel staff, drivers, local guides, and various other support staff—are included in your tour fee. If you would like to offer any of your local guides an additional tip, \$5 to \$10 a day is a common amount.

Tips for your VENT tour leader(s) are **not** included, but it is customary to tip one or both if you feel that you have received exceptional service. To assist in your planning, we recommend tipping your VENT tour leader(s) \$15 to \$20 per day, or the equivalent of approximately 2–4% of the tour fee.

If you plan to give tips by cash, they should be given directly to your tour leader at the end of the tour and **not** sent to the VENT office. Some of our tour leaders use mobile payment applications such as Venmo, PayPal, and Wise. If you would like to use this method, please ask your tour leaders directly whether they can accept tips through such an application.

We emphasize that tipping is optional and that these amounts are only recommendations. The amount you decide to tip is based entirely on your experience and at your discretion.

## **CANCELLATION & REFUNDS**

### **CANCELLATION BY PARTICIPANT:**

- **More than 120 days prior to the tour start date:** A refund of all monies paid will be issued, less 50% of the deposit (including initial and second deposit)
- **120 days or fewer prior to the tour start date:** No refund will be provided.
- **Optional add-ons:** Some tours offer optional add-ons that are designated as non-refundable. Any such add-ons are clearly identified as non-refundable at the time of

booking. By selecting and purchasing an optional add-on, the participant acknowledges and accepts its non-refundable status. Fees paid for non-refundable add-ons are not refundable under any circumstances, regardless of when the tour is cancelled.

This cancellation policy applies to all participants and all tours. Because unexpected events can occur, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance.

**CANCELLATION BY VENT:** If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A **“Force Majeure”** event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

## **TRAVEL INSURANCE**

**MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE/PROTECTION REQUIREMENT:** This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may not be available. **For this reason, travel insurance/travel protection which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Alternatively, comparable service can be obtained through **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist** plan. If you choose not to purchase insurance/travel protection through Ripcord or Medjet, you are required to obtain it through another provider. Please refer to the TRAVEL INSURANCE/TRAVEL PROTECTION section for additional information.

**SUGGESTED OPTIONS:** To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with **Redpoint Travel Protection** as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its comprehensive Ripcord plan, which includes a medical evacuation benefit. With this in mind, it is important to note that medical evacuation is not offered by Redpoint as a stand-alone policy or benefit. For travelers not interested in comprehensive travel insurance, VENT recommends **Medjet** and its **MedjetAssist®** plan. Medjet is not an insurance company, and Medjet Assist is not an insurance product; rather, Medjet is a membership-based air-medical transport company specializing in moving hospitalized travelers from an admitting hospital to a medical facility of choice. Medjet does not provide medical evacuation service from the point of injury or illness; yet, the MedjetAssist plan offers robust enough travel protection to satisfy the medical evacuation insurance requirement in place for many VENT tours.

#### **About Redpoint Travel's Ripcord Plan**

Ripcord is a completely integrated travel insurance program with single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims. Critical benefits include comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice; medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of

a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.\*

For a price quote or to purchase travel insurance, please visit: [Ripcord Travel Insurance](#); or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help > Preparation and Insurance > Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

\*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, second deposit, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces upfront expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip costs in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint maintains a [Coronavirus FAQ page](#) on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

### **About Medjet’s MedjetAssist Plan**

MedjetAssist is a membership program that functions like AAA for motorists. The company’s primary service is air medical transport. Critical benefits of MedjetAssist include a staff on call and ready to provide assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; all-expenses-paid air medical transport in the United States and internationally to medical facility of choice, regardless of medical necessity; repatriation of remains; and no exclusions for pre-existing conditions.

For travelers under 75, MedjetAssist may be purchased as Short-Term Memberships of 8, 15, 21, and 30 days, or Regular Annual Memberships from 1 to 5 years. For travelers 75–84, Medjet offers a Diamond Membership that is the same program but with a few additional conditions.

For a price quote or to purchase MedjetAssist, please visit: [Medjet.com/VentBird](https://www.Medjet.com/VentBird) or call 1-800-527-7478. Pricing is based on type and term of membership.

## **GETTING THERE & REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS**

**AIR TRAVEL:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.\* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

\*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

**BAGGAGE:** Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage and one carry-on. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and/or airline to find out specific weight restrictions.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that you check the website of the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](#) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items.

#### **TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:**

**PASSPORTS:** A passport valid for at least six months beyond your planned departure from Madagascar with at least three blank pages is required for United States and Canadian citizens to enter Madagascar. **It is very important that your passport be on your body at all times. We caution against carrying your passport in your backpack or purse.**

**VISAs:** Visas are required for U.S. citizens traveling to this destination. U.S. citizens staying in Madagascar for less than 30 days will be able to receive a visa upon arrival. Longer stays do have a cost. If you hold a passport from another country, please check with your consulate or embassy for the most accurate guidance.

**IMPORTANT:** The visa details above are current for U.S. citizens as of 12/19/25. Because entry requirements can change without notice, we kindly remind all participants to double-check the latest information before traveling. Travelers using non-U.S. passports are responsible for confirming any entry requirements that apply to their home country.

**OTHER DOCUMENTS:** If you have been to certain countries in mainland Africa (excludes South Africa) or Asia or had a stop-over for one night *en route*, Madagascar health authorities may check to see that your cholera and yellow fever inoculations are up to date and shown on your International Health Card, although this has not been the case in recent experience.

#### **WHAT TO BRING**

**CLOTHING:** Light-weight, neutral (dull) colored clothing that can be easily rinsed out and dried quickly (cottons or cotton blends) is recommended for the field. Dress is casual throughout.

- **Long-sleeved shirts and long pants:** will help protect you from insects, thorny plants and sunburn.
- **Shorts:** appropriate for some occasions
- **Sweater or jacket:** useful for cooler nights and early mornings
- **Bathing suit:** there will be opportunities to swim
- **Wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen:** highly recommended for protection from the sun
- **Raingear including an umbrella**

#### **FOOTWEAR:**

- **Strong-soled shoes or hiking boots:** essential as we will spend a good amount of time on our feet
- **Reef-walking shoes or sandals:** we will have a wet landing on the island of Nosy Ve

**EQUIPMENT:** Having the right equipment makes the travel experience more enjoyable. Below is a list of items that will ensure you are well-prepared:

- **Walking Stick:** helpful on trails that may be steep and possibly slippery (if it has been raining) for very limited sections, typically about 100 yards or less

**Binoculars:** We strongly recommend you bring a pair of good binoculars of 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. Please do not bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. You will find that 8x32 binoculars are compact and light enough.

**Spotting Scopes:** Your tour leaders will have scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

### **DESTINATION INFORMATION & LOCAL CONDITIONS**

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** The temperatures will be warm to hot during the day and pleasantly warm at night. At Andasibe, it can be cloudier and distinctly cool at night. At Ifaty, Toliara and Isalo, it can become very hot during the mid-day. We retire for a siesta during the heat of the day when possible.

Although this is Madagascar's dry season, rain is possible.

**CONDITIONS:** We have designed this tour to avoid as much of the difficult terrain as possible and overall it is an easy tour. The uphill walks are all optional.

**FOOD & WATER:**

**CURRENCY & SPENDING:** *It is only possible to exchange US dollars, Euros and Pounds Sterling in Madagascar* and the best place to do it is at the airport upon arrival. Please remember cash notes have to be printed after 2007, and in mint condition to be exchanged, with no tears, discoloration or other damage. The local currency known as Ariary is the only acceptable or usable form of cash. Visa, American Express, MasterCard and Diners Club credit cards are accepted at just a very few locations in Tana, but have limited use elsewhere in the country. Please note Ariary cannot be changed outside of Madagascar when you leave, so if you have surplus currency please change it back at the airport.

**ELECTRICITY:** 220/240 volts, two prong European type plugs

**INTERNET ACCESS & PHONE USAGE:** WiFi is available in most of our hotels and is typically restricted to the lobby area. It is often quite slow and frustrating; ok for small emails, but not good for sending videos! It is quite easy to get your phone set to international roaming and text message home as an easy alternative. Contact your wireless provider for the best plan. As a general rule turn off your mobile data in your phone settings when overseas.

**LANGUAGE:** Madagascar: Malagasy, French; very little English is spoken

**TIME:** Madagascar is 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** Inexpensive laundry service will generally be available throughout the tour which should help you in deciding what to pack. Making use of laundry service means you will not need to bring as many items of clothing as you *would otherwise*.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

**HEALTH:** VENT follows Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for standard travel precautions, which includes vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases. Among these so-called Routine Vaccinations are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine,

diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers), and Varicella (Chickenpox). You should also be up-to-date with Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccinations. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636), or you can check their website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel).

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

It is important to note that modern medical facilities and prescription drugs are not common in Madagascar, so you should be in reasonable health to consider this tour. If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Malaria is present including the chloroquine-resistant strain; all areas are at risk with the coastal regions more so than others. There are several options for malaria prophylaxis including mefloquine (lariam), malarone, and doxycycline. These medications are available by prescription only. Please consult your physician or local travel clinic for recommendations. Yellow fever vaccinations are required for entry into Madagascar if you are arriving from an infected area although the situation is subject to change as doctor's are often unwilling to provide Yellow Fever vaccinations recently. It is recommended to carry your Vaccination booklet with you and your doctor can fill out the Yellow Fever section accordingly and this will be sufficient. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. There are occasional reports of Plague, something that happens periodically even in the

south-west United States. This bacterial borne disease is treatable with antibiotics and has never posed a problem on our tours here.

**COVID-19:** We continually emphasize that our number one priority is the health and safety of our customers and employees. Although VENT no longer maintains any of its COVID-era prevention protocols, we strongly recommend best practices for protecting yourself and your fellow travelers against COVID-19 illness. These measures include receiving the primary series vaccinations for those eligible, staying “Up to Date” with COVID-19 booster shots, wearing high filtration N-95 or KN-95 masks when in airports and on airplanes, and avoiding risky social settings in the lead-up to your tour. These recommendations are firmly rooted in CDC guidance for avoiding COVID-19.

**SUN EXPOSURE:** The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes), even in winter and early spring. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

**BITING INSECTS:** Insects are few and generally not a problem, but the best way to avoid any chance of disease is to not get bitten, so bring a small amount of repellent such as Cutter's or OFF. Rarely, small terrestrial leeches can be a minor nuisance at some sites, but fortunately they also are discouraged by standard insect repellents.

### **SUGGESTED READING & TRIP PREPARATION**

A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) which has a wide selection; [buteobooks.com](https://www.buteobooks.com) and [nhbs.com](https://www.nhbs.com) which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and [abebooks.com](https://www.abebooks.com) for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

### **FIELD GUIDES:**

The following books are highly recommended and offer complete and up to date information on all the birds and mammals of Madagascar:

Garbutt, Nick. *Mammals of Madagascar; a Complete Guide*. 2007. A&C Black Publishers. A superb, detailed account of all Madagascar's mammals. **This is a MUST for this tour.**

Morris, Peter and Frank Hawkins. *Birds of Madagascar, a Photographic Guide*. 1998. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press. A very attractive, useful and informative photographic guide to the birds of Madagascar.

Safford, R., Skerrett, A and Hawkins, F. *Birds of Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands*. 2016. Helm Field Guides. A complete and pocket-sized account of all birds in Madagascar with most up to date information available for the birds of this region. **This is THE field guide to have on this tour.**

Sinclair, Ian and Olivier Langrand. *Chamberlain's Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands (including Madagascar)*. 2013. Struik Nature. A complete and pocket-sized account of all birds in Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Rodrigues, Seychelles, and the Comoros. The original field guide to this region is also excellent.

Other books worth considering are:

### ***Birds***

Langrand, Olivier. *Guide to the Birds of Madagascar*. 1990. New Haven: Yale University Press. This expensive, yet informative guide is now somewhat outdated but worth reading for additional life history information about the birds of Madagascar.

### ***Mammals***

Harcourt, Caroline. *Lemurs of Madagascar and the Comoros: The IUCN Red Data Book*. 1990. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. (available from Island Press: 1-800-828-1302). Not intended to be a field guide, but has black-and-white photographs of each species, and information on ecology and distribution.

Mittermeier, R. A., I. Tattersall, W. R. Konstant, D. M. Myers and R. B. Mast. *Lemurs of Madagascar*. 1994. Conservation International. ISBN 1-881173-08-9. A durable paperback field guide to all species, with range maps and photos and discussions of lemur biology. Probably the best book on lemurs for most visitors.

Tattershall, Ian. *The Primates of Madagascar*. 1982. New York: Columbia University Press. A more comprehensive and technical work; also contains chapters on the extinct, giant lemurs and the early history of western exploration of Madagascar.

### ***Reptiles & Amphibians***

Glaw, Frank and Miguel Vences. *A Fieldguide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*. 3rd ed. 2007. M. Vences & F. Glaw Verlags GbR. ISBN 3-929449-01-3. This is the recommended fieldguide to the diverse reptiles and amphibians of Madagascar. Other chapters briefly cover the mammals and freshwater fishes of Madagascar.

### ***General Natural History***

Garbutt, Nick, Hillary Bradt, and Derek Schuurman. *Bradt Wildlife Guides: Madagascar Wildlife, a Visitor's Guide* 2nd ed. 2001. Bradt Publications. A useful and compact guide to general wildlife and ecotourism destinations in Madagascar, with superb photographs.

Burney, David A. and Ross D.E. MacPhee. *Mysterious Island: What Killed Madagascar's Large Native Animals?* 1988. *Natural History*: 47-55.

Durrell, Gerald. *The Aye-aye and I: A rescue mission in Madagascar*. 1993. Harper Collins. An enjoyable book on Durrell's adventures in Madagascar.

Goodman, Steven and Jonathan Benstead (editors). *The Natural History of Madagascar*. 2004. Chicago University Press. This huge volume is the ultimate guide to Madagascar's natural history with sections written by the leading experts covering every environmental aspect. Much new research is presented here in a comprehensive form, however, this book is only recommended for those with a serious interest in the subject.

Jolly, Alison. *A World Like Our Own: Man and Nature in Madagascar*. 1980. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Jolly, Alison. *Lords and Lemur: Mad Scientists, Kings with Spears and the survival of diversity in Madagascar*. 2004. A highly recommended book about Berenty in particular and Madagascar wildlife in general. Houghton Mifflin.

Jolly, Alison and Frans Lanting. *Madagascar's Lemurs: On the Edge of Survival*. 1988. *National Geographic*. 174(2):132-161.

Lanting, Frans. *Madagascar: A World Out of Time*. 1990. Aperture Press.

Preston-Mafham, Ken. *Madagascar, A Natural History*. 1991. Facts On File, Inc. (460 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016). ISBN 0-8160-2403-0. Foreword by Sir David Attenborough. Includes 300 superb color photographs. An excellent coffee-table book on Madagascar.

Shoumatoff, Alex. *Look at That*. *New Yorker*, March 7, 1988: pp 62-83.

Tyson, Peter. *The Eighth Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in the Lost World of Madagascar*. 2000. Avon Books. A highly recommended and informative book with recent coverage of a wide range of Malagasy natural history and cultural topics.

Wilson, Jane. *Lemurs of the Lost World: Exploring the Forests and Crocodile Caves of Madagascar*. 1995. Impact Books. An enjoyable read about two expeditions and further wildlife explorations in Madagascar.

Wright, P.C. *Lemurs Lost and Found*. *Natural History*, July 1988: pp 56-60.

### ***Fish***

Lieske, E. and R. Myers. *Collins Pocket Guide to the Coral Reef Fishes of the Indo-Pacific and Caribbean*. 1996. Harper Collins. This comprehensive book illustrates over 2000 species of coral reef fishes and most of the species likely to be seen in Madagascar are covered.

### ***General Travel***

Bradt, Hilary. *Bradt Country Guides: Madagascar*, July 2014. Bradt Publications. **The recommended travel guide.** Others are the Lonely Planet Madagascar and Comoros guide and Marco Turco's "Visitor's Guide to Madagascar".

Dodwell, Christina. *Madagascar Travels*. 1995. Hodder & Stoughton. A story of the author's travels through Madagascar, with particular emphasis on the cultural and social aspects of traditional Malagasy life.

## **TERMS, CONDITIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc.**, a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "**VENT**") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on December 19, 2025 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

View the complete [Terms and Conditions](#) on our website.

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