



Benahy River Descent
Madagascar Adventure

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY..

Itinerary

Benahy River Descent • Madagascar Canoe Adventure

13 Days • 12 Nights

Antananarivo – Tulear – Benahy River – Onilahy River – Bezaha-Mahafaly reserve – Ifaty – Spiny Forest

This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

Highlights

- A Pioneer Expeditions signature trip involving a unique canoe and rafting descent of a little explored river, hidden deep within the Madagascan canyons.
- Camp under the stars on riverbanks after a full day of adventure, in the great Madagascan wilderness.
- Gain a rare insight into the real Madagascar, where no other tourists get the opportunity to explore.
- Experience a perfect ending to your trip in the stunning coastal town of Ifaty.

Tour Essentials

Tour Style	Canoeing Adventure
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Camping, Beach Bungalow & Hotel
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 9 Lunches, 8 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium/Difficult
Group Size	Max. 8 people (No Single Supplement*)

the Hidden Benahy River Expedition



Descending the unmapped Benahy River can offer a uniquely wonderful, secluded adventure involving paddling past some truly fantastic landscapes. The journey along this river all the way down to the coast will offer the opportunity to learn new skills and face interesting and at times challenging situations. Unleash your inner adventurer as you engross yourself in this narrow journey through canyons and camp on deserted river banks. Unexperienced to the most experienced of adventure seekers looking for an entirely off the beaten track expedition, packed with natural wonders look no further than a descent down Benahy River.

Madagascar Benahy River Descent *an overview*

On this expedition we get to explore the arid South West region of Madagascar. We will follow the isolated Benahy River into the Onilahy River and continue all the way down through the delta to the coast at Saint Augustin. We start deep in the Isalo canyons south of Isalo National Park, this part of the canyon is, unlike in the north, remote and untouched by tourism. The only people we will encounter while crossing this range are locals - cattle rustlers and sapphire diggers. The trip gives you a great insight into the real Madagascar and the Malagasy people. We are happy to arrange an extension to enable you to visit some of the other national parks if you are interested to experience more of the Madagascan wildlife. We will spend the last few days of our time in Madagascar relaxing at a beautiful hotel in Ifaty on the Mozambique Channel.

Why Pioneer Expeditions?

We really are one of the few specialists that really “do” off the beaten track and unique adventures in MADAGASCAR. We are driven by a passion for adventure travel and wildlife and Madagascar is one of our main specialities. We know it inside-out, and continuously collaborate with our local partners and tour guides to ensure that you have the best experiences on your dream Madagascan adventure – this focus is reflected in our uniquely wonderful itineraries. Our experts are on hand whether you are looking for a small group trip or a bespoke holiday. Even better, our small group tours have a maximum of 8 people, making it a much more personal experience. Furthermore, we don't expect you to pay a single supplement, perfect for solo travellers! (*nb. no ss charged as long as you are happy to share a room) Pioneer work in some of the world's most spectacular, remote and extraordinary places worldwide.



Itinerary

DAY 1: Tongasoa eto Antananarivo + flight down to Tulear

After your arrival in Antananarivo (NB: If you need to arrive the day before, we can easily arrange a hotel in Tana) and introductory briefing from the expedition leader, we will take a domestic flight down to Tulear. Upon arrival, we will drive up to the Isalo region for the start of our Madagascan adventure, with a hike down a shallow part of the river. Here we will find our camp set up on the river bank. (NB. If the flight arrives in Tulear later than 3pm, we will overnight at Ranohira and hike down to our rafts on day 2)



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
Short Flight +235km (4 hrs Drive)



Activity:
In transit + Hike

DAY 2 - 4: Your off-the-beaten-track descent of the Benahy River

Our typical daily routine will consist of setting off between 8 and 9am and stopping to camp at around 4-5 pm. We stop for lunch and en-route we have time to wander through side canyons and observe lemurs.

The Benahy, though adjacent to Isalo National Park, has not seen many visitors. It runs atop a section of land teeming with sapphires, and as a result, you will pass many local miners, sifting sand through metal sieves. There is the chance to see lizards, birds, turtles and bats and possibly even lemurs as well as some exotic and unique vegetation. Benahy navigation is smooth and easy, so rafting in light canoes is a good idea. A typical days rafting is a combination of paddle and lots of drag areas (the later in the season you go, the more drag areas there are).



During our time on the Benahy, we hope to see chameleons, birds, turtles and bats as well as some exotic and unique vegetation, including baobabs, pachypodiums and succulents.

The white water starts after the junction with Imalo to river and all the way down to the coastal plain just after the junction with the Onilahy River.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
Varies (6hrs per day)



Activity:
Canoeing and Wildlife

DAY 5 - 8: Descending the largest river in the South West - The Onilahy River

The Onilahy River is the largest river in the southwest. The river banks are sparsely populated - with settlements springing up to mine gemstones - but the floodplain does have lots of towns and rice paddies in areas that are not prone to flooding.





For our Onilahy descent we will transfer to larger, more stable rafts and we will experience class III-IV rapids. After 3 rowdy days on the white water, our final day on the Onilahy should be more relaxing, with sections of flat meandering water. We can observe the changing landscapes along route and enjoy the wildlife (including crocodiles), birdlife and riverside settlements.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
Varies



Activity:
Canoeing/White-Water Rafting and Wildlife

DAY 9: Finishing our canoeing adventure and heading to Ifaty via Bezaha-Mahafaly Reserve

When we reach Benenitra, we will transfer by road to the beautiful coastal resort of Ifaty, just North of Tuléar. En-route we stop at the Bezaha-Mahafaly reserve.

The Beza Mahafaly Reserve in the southwest includes a gallery forest, with the trees forming a corridor along the river. It is the second smallest protected area in Madagascar and is home to 102 bird species and 21 species of mammals with a large lemur population, which includes the Ring-tailed and the White Sifaka – also known as the dancing lemur! It is a great location for reptiles too, as well as an interesting selection of flora.



Overnight:
Beach Bungalow



Meals:
B, L



Distance:
Varies



Activity:
Wildlife

DAY 10 & 11: Discovering the stunning coastal town of Ifaty and its surrounding fascinations

Facing the Mozambique Channel and the superb coral reef of Ifaty, less than 20 kms from Tuléar, you will discover the beauty of beaches not tainted by mass tourism. Ifaty is a small fishing village with palm-fringed white beaches on the south-western coast of Madagascar, and is an ideal place to relax after visiting the central highlands. The beach is relatively narrow, but the (off shore) snorkeling and diving is good. In July and August, you may see migrating whales pass nearby through the Mozambique Channel. Between May and October, the humpback whales can sometimes be seen with their whale-calves.



Whilst in Ifaty, local fishermen will be happy to offer you a trip in their traditional fishing boats (pirogues), you can visit the Spiny Forest; or if you prefer, you can simply relax on the stunning white sandy beaches and swim in the turquoise waters.



Just north of Ifaty you can find the Reniala Nature Reserve 'Spiny Forest', a remarkable habitat adapted to the heat and drought of the area giving it the resultant thorny &/or bloated drought resistant trees and plants. The spiny forests inland from Ifaty are of great interest to birdwatchers and botanical enthusiasts alike. Here you will be able to see some very large iconic Baobab trees, an abundance of birds (a true paradise for ornithologists) as well as possibly some locally endemic species such as the long-tailed ground roller and sub-desert mesite. This unique habitat is severely threatened by deforestation and by visiting these sites, you will not only enjoy some of the little remaining spiny forest in Madagascar, but also actively contribute to its conservation (the sites are currently not protected). A visit here can be organized by the hotel, and you can even travel there by pirogue – which we highly recommend.



Overnight:
Beach Bungalow



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Beach and Wildlife

DAY 12: Flight back to Antananarivo

We will catch the Air Madagascar flight from Tulear to Tana. Depending on your time of arrival in Tana you can visit the handicraft market, before transferring to your hotel.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
In-transit and Culture

DAY 13: End of Trip

Transfer to the airport in time for your flight home.



Overnight:
N/A



Meals:
B



Distance:
Short Airport Transfer



Activity:
Onward Journey/Flight Home

Getting Around

- Transport will consist of 4x4, to give you the most authentic, off-the-beaten track experience. These vehicles are best at tackling the challenging roads that Madagascar primarily consists of.
- Madagascar is notorious for the unreliability of its domestic flights in terms of time. The flights schedules are always subject to change at anytime and can experience cancellations, which are not ideal when following a schedule! ; For this reason we tend to travel by road for the most part.
- Distances and times will of course be lengthy due to the vastness of the island and lack of good-quality road systems throughout the country. However, this all adds to the adventurousness of any Madagascar trip; but is definitely something to be aware of whilst travelling around Madagascar.



NB: This itinerary is subject to change – arrangements, routes and facilities are subject to variation depending on local conditions. Please note times given are approximate driving times and do not include stops, the journey times are therefore longer. When driving times are given, this is only an indication. It aims to reflect the actual driving time (and doesn't include stops, lunch, and traffic). The road journeys, while often long, are one of the great ways to experience Madagascar. There is so much life on the road and many photographic opportunities along the way from a natural and people perspective.

If this trip isn't quite what you are looking for, we can **tailor itineraries** to suit your exact requirements.

Important Information

Included	Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner) ☉ Accommodation as described ☉ Water ☉ English speaking guide from day 1 – day 10 ☉ All transfers ☉ Internal flight tickets x 2 ☉ All camping and canoe equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ International flights (These can be arranged through us, if needed) ➤ Meals other than mentioned ➤ Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included during tours) ➤ Sleeping bag ➤ Tips ➤ Personal expenses ➤ Optional tours/activities in Ifaty

Accommodation at a glance

	Location	Accommodation	Example
Night 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8	River Descent	Camping	N/A
Night 9, 10 & 11	Ifaty	Hotel/Beach Bungalow	Le Paradisier
Night 12	Antananarivo	Hotel	Palissandre Hotel



WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

"Words cannot describe how amazing this trip....I absolutely loved the flexibility of the trip and how we were an integral part. I look forward to seeing our guide next year, maybe to do a different river"

- J. Shields



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Benahy River Descent Extension Examples

Feel free to **contact us** for more information on all of our Madagascar Extensions. Alternatively, browse through our extension document, available from our website.

Here are some of our most popular Benahy River Descent extensions:

1. A paradise ending to your trip with our **Beach Extensions**

Ifaty



Adding a beach extension to this trip is the best way to unwind on two of South West Madagascar's most beautiful coastal areas. Stay in Ifaty for a bit longer or to experience something different, head south to the glorious beaches of Anakao.

Anakao



2. Head North for even more adventure with our **Morondava** Extension

Why not add an extension to Morondava onto your Madagascar trip and further your adventure. This will allow you to experience the Tsingy des Bemaraha as well as the Avenue des Baobabs (approx. 7 days needed – email us for details).



(Email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com for costings and more information on these extensions, as well as even more extension ideas)



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WHEN TO GO...

The majority of our Madagascar trips take place March to December, this is when Madagascar is at its best. The weather and climate can change a lot throughout the year and when you go to experience this remarkable country, depends on your preferences.

Madagascar Spring: **March - May** (Dry and Warm)

- After the rains have passed. Everything is lush and green and fertile
- March is great in the South West, but some roads in the North and West can still be recovering from the monsoon season.
- April and May is the perfect time to visit. Great wildlife, great weather and not too many tourists.

Madagascar Winter: **June - August** (Dry)

- This ideal season for trekking / activities as is the coolest time in Madagascar. Temperature vary in the different areas but typically around 20 degree C
- Evenings (especially in the highlands) can get very cool at night (10 degrees C)
- Good time for seeing lemurs, but due to the cooler weather smaller mammals and reptile will be less active
- July and August can be busier in the national parks due to school holidays.
- August and September are ideal for keen birdwatchers to visit Madagascar.

Madagascar Spring: **Sept - November** (Dry and Hot)

- September to November is highly popular, as even North Eastern Madagascar is dry now.
- August and September are ideal for keen birdwatchers to visit Madagascar.
- It is hotter with very little rain, great for spotting chameleons and lizards, but quite hot for trekking / activities – in November temperatures start to rise rapidly.
- October is particularly perfect for witnessing baby lemurs.
- Main downside with this time of year is that it is the peak season so national parks are busier with more tourists

Madagascar Summer: **December – March** (Hot and Rainy Season)

- The rains start to come. The North East is still relatively dry in December and we offer many Christmas trips.
- January/February should definitely be avoided as it becomes monsoon season - due to the heavy rainfall causing the already difficult roads to become muddy and impassable. The RN7 is still drivable so the 'classic' Madagascar route is still possible for those who can only travel in this season
- This is the best time of year for orchid lovers



*"My favourite time of year is **May** because the rains have finished so everything is lush and green. You don't see many other tourists as they tend to go in September and October, but everything is just beautiful – it's pretty perfect."*

- **Laurenne Mansbridge**
Pioneer Director



Meet the Guides *of Madagascar*

Our guides are at the forefront of your trip, so it's important you know who will be looking after you and showing you the wonders of this extraordinary country. We pride ourselves on having talented, trustworthy, knowledgeable and caring local guides. We have both Naturalist guides and Adventurist guides who will make your trip even more special. Nobody knows Madagascar quite like them!



Mamy
Naturalist Guide

- 🕒 Mamy is highly experienced and has been working as a guide since 1996.
- 🕒 His main interests as a guide are fauna and flora, nature and landscapes, forestry, villages and cultures.
- 🕒 His specialities are Birdwatching and Wildlife!



Hery
Naturalist Guide

- 🕒 Hery has worked as a guide since 2006, where he trained in the Ranomafana National Park.
- 🕒 He has a passion for amphibians and reptiles as well as botany. Hery has a particular interest in Orchids!
- 🕒 His specialities are in Plants and of course, Wildlife.



TOKY
Naturalist Guide

- 🕒 Toky has been working a guide since 2014, having previously studied Tourism in Antsirabe.
- 🕒 His main passions as a guide are: Flora and Fauna, Cultures, Geography and History.
- 🕒 His specialties lie in Madagascan Culture and Geology as well as Wildlife.



Joe
Adventurist Guide

- 🕒 Following a considerably tough childhood, Joe has been happily and successfully working as a guide since 2005.
- 🕒 His main passions as an adventurer guide are: rafting, kayaking, sea-kayaking as well as trekking.
- 🕒 Following many years of experience, Joe's specialty lies in river-based activities and adventures.



Additional Information

Activity Duration	5-7 hours per day
Season	This region is best explored between April to September
Best Time To Go	The river levels are much better between April and June. After this time there are much more dragging areas (but still a great trip).
Group Size	2- 8 pax
Responsibility	As part of our commitment to responsible travel and in conjunction with Woodstock.org we finance a tree nursery and orchard in Italavina – which is a long term reforestation project.
Group Departures	Regular group departures between March and June – please see website or contact us for dates. Alternatively we are able to arrange tailor-made or private departures to suit.
Difficulty Level	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity your are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a ‘medium to difficult’ level (there is between 5 – 7 hours of activities per day – however the pace is relatively slow). This means that you will need an average level of fitness.

The Pioneer Booking Process

Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com if you’re interested in this trip, or any of our other expeditions from around the world. Visit our website www.pioneerexpeditions.com to unearth all of our other equally amazing trips and destinations.

1. Contact us -

We will be happy to answer any questions or enquiries you may have. From here we will begin to plan and put together your dream adventure holiday! Alternatively, on our website you will find our booking and enquiry forms; once filled in, we will be notified of your enquiry and will get back to you ASAP.

2. Leave everything to us -

Everything will be arranged and booked by us, but we will make sure to keep you updated every step of the way. In addition, we can arrange your international flights if needed, as we have access to competitive airfares. We can also arrange any additional tours or additional night’s accommodation.

3. Wait for your adventure to begin -

Sit back and count down the days until your trip of a lifetime with Pioneer Expeditions. We’ll handle all of the last minute preparations and provide you with everything you need. All practical information will be sent out to you, prior to your trip.

If you feel like altering this itinerary to suit your personal preferences, we can arrange all of that and more – just get in contact with us and let us know your requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.

