



SOUTH EAST MADAGASCAR

Family Adventure

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

ITINERARY

South East Madagascar • Family Adventure

13 DAYS • 12 NIGHTS

**Antananarivo – Antsirabe – Sahambavy - Ranomafana National Park
– Namorana River – Manantanana River – Ambalavao – Anja Reserve
– Tsaranoro Valley – Camp Catta – Ambositra – Fianarantsoa**
This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit charmingly traditional and remote villages, where you'll become immersed in the rich local culture.
- Experience crocodile spotting during a thrilling 2 day river trip on the Manantanana River.
- Spot wild lemurs in the magnificent rainforest National Park of Ranomafana & observe the famous, much-loved ring-tailed lemurs in Anja Reserve.
- Explore the impressive Andringitra highlands with its untouched nature and striking landscapes.

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Family Expedition
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Camping, Bungalow
Included Meals	12 Breakfasts, 11 Lunches, 11 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium
Notes	A Private Trip - suitable for children age 8 and up

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL MADAGASCAR



Embark on this unique & exciting adventure which combines an exceptional river trip, enchanting forests and mountain trails, marvelous waterfalls and freshwater pools and off-the-beaten track camping and eco-lodges. We will get the chance to spot crocodiles in their natural environment and there are of course plenty of lemurs to be seen; witnessing these charismatic creatures in their natural habitat is truly a sight to behold! Exploring the captivatingly unspoilt, dramatic landscapes, spectacular parks/reserves, local villages and winding rivers of South East Madagascar makes for a truly adventurous family getaway, with an abundance of highly sought-after endemic plant and animal species. From the moment your family arrives in Madagascar you will know you have travelled somewhere truly remarkable, on this exhilarating & authentic Madagascan quest, suitable for the whole family. There's so much to do, see and learn about!

MADAGASCAR *an overview*

Madagascar is a one-off; there is no other place like it. Its landscapes, animals and plants are simply incredible! Near the equator with an astonishing array of habitats, ranging from rainforests to deserts and from mountain tops to mangrove swamps, it is one of the most important countries for biodiversity on the planet. The tropical climate is a perfect host to the process of nature and, like nowhere else, the variety and richness of life has flourished.

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. As parents ourselves, who have taken our children to Madagascar, our experts are on hand to help design your bespoke holiday.

Pioneer work in some of the world’s most spectacular, remote and extraordinary places worldwide.

ITINERARY



DAY 1: Tongasoa eto Antananarivo!

After arriving in Antananarivo (or Tana, as it is known by the locals), you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel.

Antananarivo is the capital and largest city in Madagascar. It is buzzing with activity and full of people flooding the streets, selling everything you could imagine! Tana (as the locals call it) resembles a Mediterranean hill town and exploring its rich cultural and architectural sites on foot is relatively easy (as long as you are willing to climb hundreds of ancient stone steps) It is a hectic city though and we would recommend a driver / guide if you want to explore!



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
N/A



Approx. Distance:
Airport Transfer



Activity:
Personal Preference

Day 2: Heading south to the charming town of Antsirabe

After breakfast you will meet your guide and we will set out by car to Antsirabe.

Antsirabe is a tidy, well maintained town which combines the tranquility of a small European provincial town with the exuberance of traditional Malagasy buildings. The third largest city in Madagascar, Antsirabe is known for its relatively cool climate (as the rest of the central region of the country), its industry and the high concentration of pulled rickshaws.



The journey takes approx. 3+ hours on a good, windy road, and along the way you can choose to stop off and visit Ambatolampy (the biggest town between Tana and Antsirabe) where we may get the chance to see craftsmen building aluminium pots amongst other things. Alternatively, if time allows, you can also visit lake Tritriva (2hr round trip) – a stunning lake of volcanic origin with blue/green waters, surrounded by beautiful scenery – we can walk around the lake in approx. 1 hour and during this time we will likely meet many local Malagasy people. Where we will stop and what you will do today will depend on your preferences. Before arriving in Antsirabe, today will be a great chance to experience Malagasy life on the road.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
3+hrs Drive



Activity:
Culture/Drive

DAY 3: Setting off to Sahambavy

Today we will be heading towards Sahambavy.

Upon arrival, we can visit the tea plantations and tonight we will stay at the Lac Hôtel with a breathtaking view of the islands unique tea plantation (520 hectares) which spreads out as far as the eye can see. The beautiful landscape with the charming lake is the perfect destination for a relaxing stop-off.



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Sahambavy is a small town on the railway from Mankarana to Fianarantsoa. Its main attraction is the Sahambavy Lake, nestled at the foot of a hill. It is also famed for the only Madagascan tea plantations.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
5hrs Drive

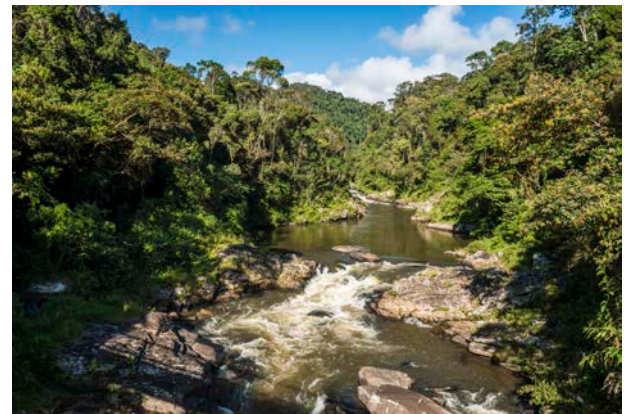


Activity:
Culture

DAY 4: Arriving at the magnificent **Ranomafana National Park**

This morning we will set off for Ranomafana National Park

Ranomafana is particularly rich and beautiful, a mountainous subtropical park which contains lowland moist forest, cloud forest and high plateau forest and is the home to a large number of lemur species (13 in total), as well as 118 birds and more than 70 amphibians and reptiles so is really a great place to see some of the unique species living in Madagascar. Lemurs include the brown lemur, golden bamboo lemur and the exceptionally rare greater bamboo lemur which is relatively easy to see in Ranomafana. Wildlife viewing is good all year round but is most productive from mid-Sept to May.



We will stay just outside Ranomafana (just 10 minutes from the park entrance).



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
1hr Drive



Activity:
Wildlife

DAY 5: Discovering the wildlife and beauty of **Ranomafana National Park + Hot Springs**



Today you have the opportunity to explore the enchanting Ranomafana National Park through lush rainforest and search for lemurs along some of the many easy mountainous tracks. There will be plenty of opportunities to see lemurs and much of the other wildlife first hand, as well as to enjoy the stunning cascades and waterfalls.



This afternoon you have the option of visiting the thermal baths in Ranomafana or looking around the village which offers the most superb scenery.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Wildlife and Exploring



DAY 6: Rafting the Namorana River + journey towards Ambalavao

This morning we will spend a couple of hours rafting on the Namorana River inside the National Park. After we pull out, we will head to Ambalavao.

If time allows, you should get a chance to visit the vibrant town of Ambalavao before heading to your accommodation and some time to relax.

Situated in tropical surroundings in the most southern part of the central highlands, near Fianarantsoa, Ambalavao is noted for its houses with wooden balconies with elaborate carvings and tiled roofs. It is also known for its lively cattle market on Monday and Thursdays on the outskirts of town where you will be able to see a large number of Zebu and herdsmen on the roads. Seen as one of the most beautiful towns in the high plateaus boasting brightly painted buildings on the main street that look a bit like gingerbread houses.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
3hrs Drive



Activity:
Culture and Rafting

DAY 7: Begin thrilling descent of the Manantanana River in search of crocodiles!

Today we arrive at the edge of the Manantanana, in the village of Iarintsena. This village is actively involved in the development of rural tourism.

After preparing our boats, we board the kayak or raft for our new adventure.

The first crocodiles are waiting for you, only a few minutes after departure. Over the course of the day, you will see even more crocodiles, although you have to remain quiet and calm due to the timid nature of this elite predator, which is still hunted for its meat, skin and oil.

Bury yourself in the heart of a fascinating world. A calm river that weaves between high granite walls. It is home to numerous crocodiles, which can be regularly seen sunbathing and living in relative harmony amongst the riverside population. Hunting has made them wary of humans, but in recent years their number seem to be increasing, decreasing pressure on the species and allowing them to roam more freely. Our trips also help to promote their presence, encouraging local people to protect them from poaching.



In the evening, we will set up our camp to face the mountain of "lying woman" that dominates the Antsakaviro reserve.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Kayaking

DAY 8: Visit Antsakaviro Village + continue Manantanana River adventure

The reserve is only 1 km from the camp and we will enjoy using the rays of the sunrise to guide us to the remains of this forest, which is set in gigantic puzzle blocks.

Antsakaviro village is a reserve initiated by a local association. Ideally located at the foot of the 'woman lying,' it deserves our support. The ring-tailed lemurs may be waiting for you at the foot of this huge cliff face that gives its character to this spectacular site. The reserve is relatively small, being on twenty hectares and the villagers have begun restoring the site by replanting endemic species on the edge of the forest.



It is a great opportunity to encourage local people to protect the natural heritage of their land and is also a beautiful walk in the shadow of the impressive mountainside of Antsakaviro. On the way, we will discover many graves, including the impressive standing stones called the vatolahy, which means locally “the male stone”, and stand as a tribute to the tumultuous past of this region.

We will arrive back at camp at approximately 10:30 from here we paddle a short distance to our picnic area which is often visited by crocodiles. From here we only have a few more miles to the finish of our descent. We will arrive 400 meters away from where we met our car and driver, from which we will head back to Ambalavao.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Culture and Kayaking

DAY 9: Experiencing wildlife at Anja Reserve and journeying to Tsaranoro Valley

This morning we visit Anja Park, just a short drive from Ambalavao.

Created in 2001 and located near Ambalavao, the Anja Community Reserve is a woodland area and freshwater lake, at the base a large cliff. Most of the reserve is dominated by fallen rocks and boulders but interestingly there are two small caves providing habitat for bats and owls. The reserve was created to help preserve the local environment and wildlife and is one of the more touristy places you visit, however is perfect for lovers of walking and wildlife and offers a unique occasion to interact with ‘wild’ ring-tailed lemurs somewhere between tamed and familiar!



After visiting the reserve we will drive to our next destination – the Tsaranoro Valley (approx. 2 hrs away). This afternoon we can explore on a short trekking adventure or simply relax. Our accommodation here will be a traditional bungalow situated at the foot of Tsaranoro’s cliff.

Visiting the Tsaranoro Valley is a fantastic opportunity to see Madagascar in all its natural glory. Prepare to be enchanted by the astounding landscapes, stunning red land and the beautiful and awe-inspiring Massif of Andringitra. You will be able to see many kinds of orchids, three sorts of palms including one kind which is endemic to the Andringitra, chameleons, lizards, snakes, batrachians, birds including the famous peregrine falcon as well as the especially friendly Catta (ring-tailed) Lemurs living in small families around the camp. The spectacular rock walls of the massif and the mind-blowingly beautiful valley offer numerous climbing routes and hiking trails and a thriving village which can be visited.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
Short Drive + 2 hrs Drive



Activity:
Wildlife and Exploring



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DAY 10 & 11: Exploring the remarkable natural beauty of Tsaranoro Valley

We will spend these couple of days exploring this stunning area on foot and meeting all of the locals.

Visiting the Tsaranoro Valley is a fantastic opportunity to see Madagascar in all its natural glory. Prepare to be enchanted by the astounding landscapes, stunning red land and the beautiful and awe-inspiring Massif of Andringitra. You will be able to see many kinds of orchids, three sorts of palms including one kind which is endemic to the Andringitra, chameleons, lizards, snakes, batrachians, birds including the famous peregrine falcon as well as the especially friendly Catta (ring-tailed) Lemurs living in small families around the camp. The spectacular rock walls of the massif and the mind-blowingly beautiful valley offer numerous climbing routes and hiking trails and a thriving village which can be visited.



We will also have the chance to visit the base for our local agents reforestation effort (a passion which is shared (via wood-en-stock) by Pioneer Expeditions). Here we will have the opportunity to visit and see the reforestation effort for ourselves. Depending on the time of year we may also get to plant some young saplings.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Wildlife and Culture

DAY 12: Road trip up to Ambositra

Today we must start our long journey back to Tana, so we will head to Ambositra. Along the way we can stop at some of the towns.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
8hrs Drive (Excluding Stops)



Activity:
Drive and Culture

DAY 13: Arrival in Antananarivo + Flight back home

We will head back to Tana today, so that it suits an afternoon flight. If you are booked on the Air France flight (which leaves around 1.30am), you can visit the handicraft market in Tana and have the option of a day use room at a local hotel. If you are on an earlier morning flight, you may need to spend an additional night in Tana, which we are happy to organise for you.



Overnight:
N/A



Meals:
B



Approx. Distance:
5hrs Drive



Activity:
Onward Journey/Flight Home

NB: This itinerary is subject to change – arrangements, routes and facilities are subject to variation depending on local conditions. When driving times are given, this is only an indication. It aims to reflect the actual driving time (and doesn't include stops, lunch, 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.

On this particular trip there is a minimum age of 8 and some previous outdoors experience is useful. We can also **tailor itineraries** to suit your exact requirements including catering for younger children.



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 often experience cancellations, which are not ideal when following a schedule; this makes it a lot more reliable 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.



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 2 – day 13 All transfers All entrance fees All camping equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals other than mentioned International flights Tips Personal expenses Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included) Sleeping Bag

ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
<i>Night 1</i>	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Relais des Plateaux</i>
<i>Night 2</i>	Antsirabe	Hotel	<i>Chambres des Voyageurs</i>
<i>Night 3</i>	Sahambavy	Hotel	<i>Lac Hôtel</i>
<i>Night 4 & 5</i>	Ranomafana	Hotel	<i>Thermal Hotel</i>
<i>Night 6</i>	Ambalavao	Hotel	<i>Zongo Hotel</i>
<i>Night 7</i>	Manantanana River	Camping	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Night 8</i>	Ambalavao	Hotel	<i>Zongo Hotel</i>
<i>Night 9, 10 & 11</i>	Tsaranoro Valley	Bungalow	<i>Camp Catta</i>
<i>Night 12</i>	Ambositra	Hotel	<i>Hotel L'Artisan</i>





South East Family Adventure **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 is an example of one of our most popular South East Family Adventure extensions:

1. Heading West – Isalo National Park & Ifaty Extension

Why not extend this trip with a visit to one of Madagascar's other amazing National Parks – Isalo, as well as a relaxing, paradise ending in the stunning coastal resort of Ifaty, to peacefully unwind after your adventure.



(Email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com for costings and more information on this extension, 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 adventurist 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	2 – 5 hours per day
Season	March - December
Best Time To Go	September – December
Group Size	The price is based on a private trip for a family of 4.
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	This is run as a private trip, so we are able to suit your dates and requirements. We can also tailor the trip to suit.
Difficulty Level	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity you are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a 'Medium' level (2 – 5 hours of activities per day). This means that you will need an average level of fitness, however as it is a private trip you can dictate your activity level

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.

