

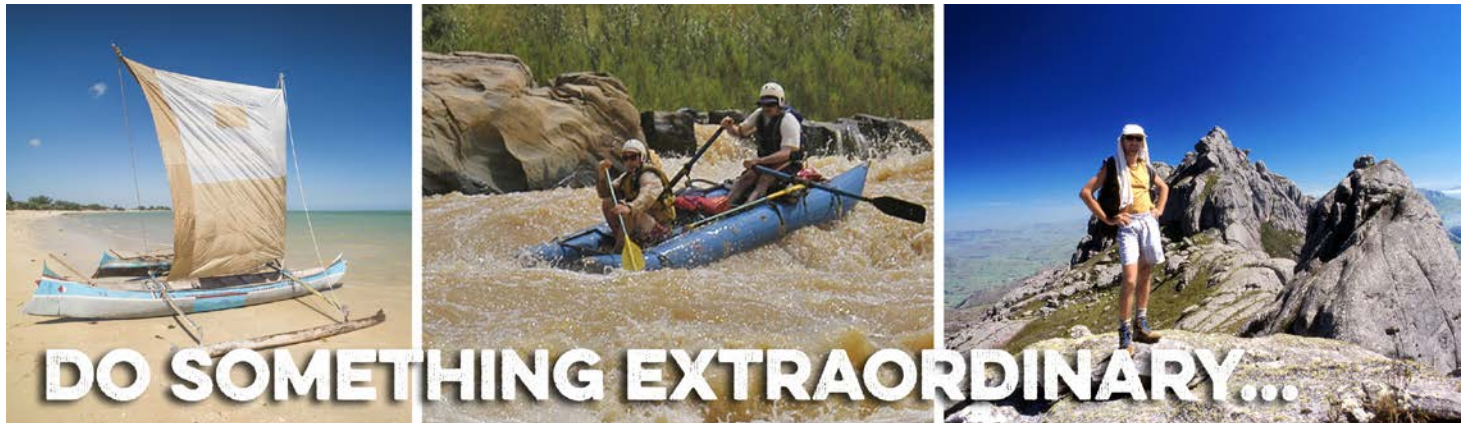


## **SOUTHERN MADAGASCAR**

Trekking and Canoe Adventure



# PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



## ITINERARY

Southern Madagascar • Trekking and Canoe Adventure

**15 DAYS • 14 NIGHTS**

Antananarivo (Tana) – Ambositra – Ambalavao – Zomandao –  
Tsarasoa – Isalo – Benahy River – Ifaty – Tana

*This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements*

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 🌀 Trek the majestic mountains of Andringitra and Canoe the vastly undiscovered Benahy River.
- 🌀 Visit local villages and explore Tsarasoa, an area filled with the most unique flora and fauna and lined with spectacular large granite mountains.
- 🌀 Encounter many forms of the unique Madagascar wildlife, including lemurs at the Anja Reserve.
- 🌀 A perfect ending to the trip, relaxing in the stunning coastal resort of Ifaty, by the Mozambique Channel.

## TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Active Expedition
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Eco-Reserve, Camping, Bungalows
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 10 Lunches, 10 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Difficult

## TREK AND PADDLE RAPIDS



From the towering cliffs of Andringitra and Tsaranoro to the deepest canyons of Isalo, this is a fantastic combination of the best mountainous areas of Madagascar and an off-the-beaten track canyon based river – the Benahy. On foot and by canoe you'll have a chance to encounter the locals who live in these isolated areas. This is a truly spectacular and unique expedition which is completely off the tourist radar. Find yourself exposed to incredible natural beauty and diverse sceneries like no-other as you journey through the south via its awe-inspiring mountains, canyons, rivers and beaches. At the end of the trip you'll be able to relax on some of the finest beaches on the South West coast

# MADAGASCAR *an overview*

Madagascar is a one-off; there is no other place like it. Its landscapes, animals and plants are simply fantastic! 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.

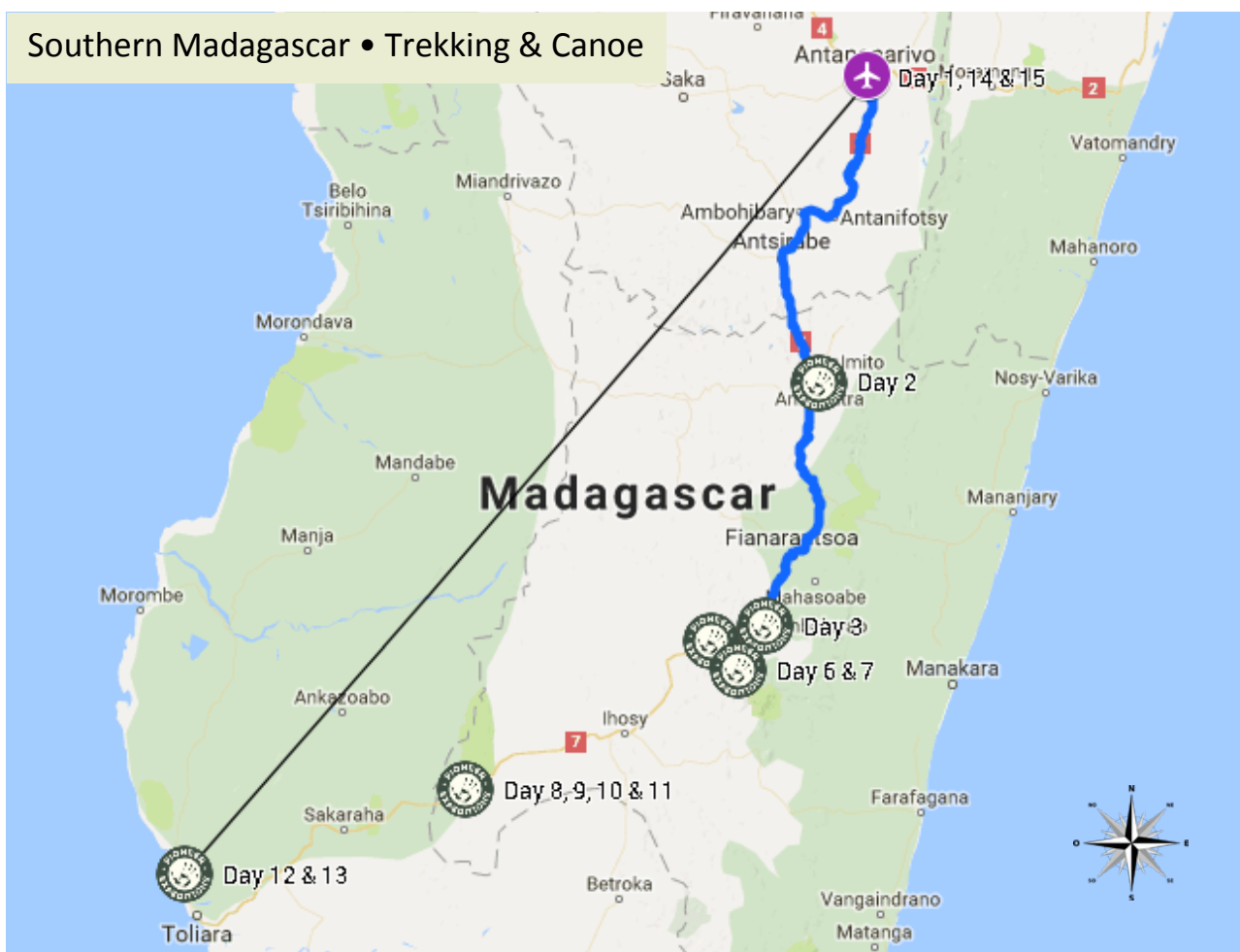
## WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

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. 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



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## 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



Distance:  
Airport Transfer



Activity:  
Personal Preference

## Day 2: Heading south to Ambositra with its picturesque surroundings

This morning you will meet your guide and will set out by road to Ambositra where we can get the chance to visit the famous woodcarving workshops.

*Ambositra is a city in central Madagascar. High on a plateau surrounded by misty green peaks, It is also the arts-and-crafts capital of Madagascar and there are over 25 artisans' shops, selling woodcarvings, raffia baskets, polished stones, marquetry (objects inlaid with colored woods) and paintings. Ambositra is a picturesque and lively town, full of tall red-brick Betsileo houses lining its crooked streets.*



Overnight:  
Hotel



Meals:  
B, L, D



Distance:  
265km (5hrs drive)



Activity:  
Culture/Drive

## DAY 3: Journeying towards Ambalavao and encountering wildlife at Anja Reserve

After breakfast this morning, we will head to Ambalavao.

*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.*



This afternoon we get a chance to visit the Anja Reserve (just a few kms from Ambalavao).



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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 an unique occasion to interact with 'wild' ring-tailed lemurs somewhere between tamed and familiar!



After visiting the reserve we can drive or walk to our hotel a few kms away.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**200km (4 hrs Drive)**



Activity:  
**Wildlife and Culture**

#### DAY 4: Setting off to Zomandao for the first part of our trek

This morning we have a short drive to Zomandao (approx. 2hrs) to the start of our trail where we will begin our trek in these rocklands. We will meet up with our logistics team and move towards the impressive walls of black granites.

*Prepare to be enchanted by the astounding landscapes, stunning red land and the beautiful and awe-inspiring massif of Andringitra. The Zomandao valley in this area is perfect for hiking and exploring! The valley is known for its mixed terrain and changing weather, including cool nights! Trekking the Zomandao valley will include mountainous terrains, steep trails and narrow tracks. You will discover impressive walls of black granite as well making this valley a real adventurers dream.*

The next 3 days will see us hiking up one Valley (the Zomandao) and crossing 6,000 ft rocky pass to plunge in Sahanambo valley and the impressive cliffs of Tsaranoro. We will safely navigate between the vertical cliffs and spend the time exploring the valley, climbing to the top of rocky spires, spotting ringtail lemurs, exploring forests and enjoying the pools and waterfalls in this area.



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**2 hrs drive**



Activity:  
**Trekking**

#### DAY 5: Trekking



We will continue our exploration of this area. Our trek will include mountainous terrains, steep trails and narrow tracks but there are no special difficulties, as long as you are ready to move on mixed terrain, and sometimes exposed ledges, and the changing weather in Zomandao valley (which includes cool nights).



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Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Varies**



Activity:  
**Trekking**

## DAY 6: Ending our trek at **Camp Tsarasoa**

We will finish our 3 day trek at our camp Tsarasoa. Tsarasoa is more a camp than a hotel. It is the base for our local agents' reforestation which is a big passion that both he and Pioneer Expeditions share. There are large nurseries where 65,000 – 70,000 trees are planted per season. Accommodation is in bungalows with a common bathroom (with the best view ever!) – the bungalows are new, clean and basic, and come complete with mosquito nets and spectacular views. Food is based on local products and they have a very good cook who uses fresh vegetables, local recipes, fruits and even makes home cooked bread.



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**N/A**



Activity:  
**Trekking and Culture**



## DAY 7: Exploring the spectacular area around **Tsarasoa**

We will spend today exploring this stunning area on foot and meeting all the locals – a visit to the local village is not to be missed. This is a great valley and a fantastic opportunity to see Madagascar in all its natural glory. Hopefully 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. Depending on the time of year we may also get the chance to plant some young saplings (this can be done between mid Oct and late March).



Overnight:  
**Bungalow**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**N/A**



Activity:  
**Exploring and Wildlife**

## DAY 8: Swapping the grand Highlands for the striking Canyonlands

*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 drag areas (the later in the season you go, the more drag areas there are).*



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We will set off relatively early today as we head to the Benahy River just outside the Isalo National Park and the launch site for the next part of our adventure. We will stop en-route for lunch at Isalo (approx. 4 hours away). We have another couple of hours of travel (along tracks) before we finally leave our car and head out on foot for the last 2 hours as we trek to set up our camp for tonight.



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**4 hrs drive**



Activity:  
**Exploring**

### DAY 9-11: Canoeing adventure down the wonderfully secluded Benahy River

Our next few days will be spent canoeing down the Benahy River, exploring the sapphire canyons. It is a great way to explore the canyon even when dragging the canoes. Our typical daily routine will consist of setting off between 8 and 9 am and stopping to camp around 4-5 pm. We stop for lunch and en-route we have time to wander through side canyons, to possibly find a fresh water source or to observe occasional lemurs.



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Varies**



Activity:  
**Canoeing**

### DAY 12: Heading to the stunning coastal town of Ifaty

We lay up our canoes and transfer to the Mozambique Channel and the superb coral reef of Ifaty. This is a full day travelling as after the canoes have been packed up onto Zebu carts we will walk (approx. 1 hr) to a local mining village. Here we will pick up a 4x4 which will transfer us to a mining town on the main road (approx. 1-2hrs). At which point we will meet our transport which will take us to Ifaty (approx. 6hrs).

*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.*



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B**



Distance:  
**8 hrs drive**



Activity:  
**Drive**



## DAY 13: Discovering Ifaty

Today can be spent at your leisure, experiencing what beautiful Ifaty and its surrounding areas have to offer.

*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:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, D**



Distance:  
**N/A**



Activity:  
**Personal Preference/Beach**

## DAY 14: 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:  
**1hr Flight**



Activity:  
**Personal Preference**

## DAY 15: End of Trip

Transfer to airport in time for flight home. If you are on the Air France or Air Kenya trip which leaves early morning of day 16, you can opt to have a day use room &/or driver/guide for the day (not included).



Overnight:  
**N/A**



Meals:  
**B**



Distance:  
**N/A**



Activity:  
**Onward Journey/Flight Home**

**NB:** This itinerary is subject to change – arrangements, routes and facilities are subject to variation depending on local conditions. We can also tailor itineraries to suit your exact requirements. 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.

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 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.



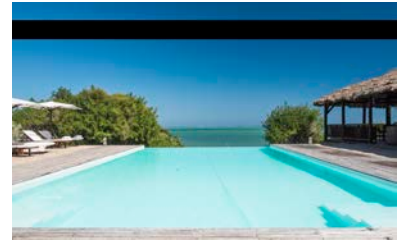
## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included	Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)</li> <li>Accommodation as described</li> <li>Water</li> <li>English speaking guide from day 2 – day 12</li> <li>All transfers</li> <li>Internal flight ticket</li> <li>All entrance fees</li> <li>All camping and canoe equipment</li> <li>Porters for trekking, you only carry your day pack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>International flights</li> <li>Meals other than mentioned</li> <li>Sleeping bag</li> <li>Tips</li> <li>Personal expenses</li> <li>Alcoholic and soft drinks - drinks in restaurants</li> <li>Personal expenses</li> <li>Optional tours/activities in Ifaty</li> </ul>

## ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
<b>Night 1</b>	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Relais des Plateaux</i>
<b>Night 2</b>	Ambositra	Hotel	<i>Hotel L'Artisan</i>
<b>Night 3</b>	Ambalavao	Hotel	<i>Zongo Hotel</i>
<b>Night 4 &amp; 5</b>	Zomandao Valley	Camping	<i>Camping</i>
<b>Night 6 &amp; 7</b>	Tsarasoa (Andringitra)	Bungalows	<i>Tsarasoa</i>
<b>Night 8, 9, 10 &amp; 11</b>	Benahy River	Camping	<i>Camping</i>
<b>Night 12 &amp; 13</b>	Ifaty	Hotel	<i>Le Paradisier</i>
<b>Night 14</b>	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Palissandre Hotel</i>





## WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

*"Wonderful holiday exceeding our expectations - such a truly beautiful country and friendly people! Food and accommodation a lot better than hoped for! We were so pleased at how all the planning we did between us really happened! Thank you for all your help in the preparations for this unforgettable expedition."*

*-H and R Bruno*

*"We had a truly wonderful time and loved Madagascar. The wildlife and scenery were breathtaking. Everything on the itinerary went smoothly and we were well looked after. We're all sad that the trip is over"*

*-F. Szegoter*





# Southern Trekking & Canoe

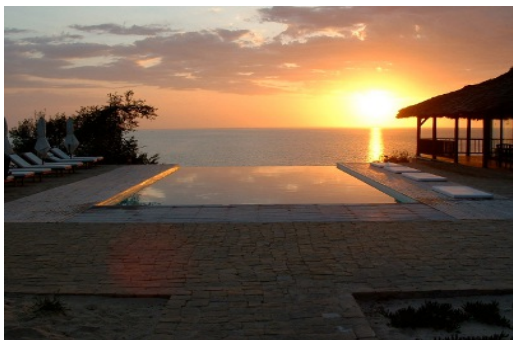
## EXTENSION EXAMPLES

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 Southern Trekking and Canoe 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](mailto: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 specialties 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 specialties 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	April - December
Best Time To Go	The trekking can be done at any time between April and December, whilst the river has more water before June. It is still an excellent waterway to explore after June, but has more 'dragging' areas.
Group Size	2-8 pax (a supplement applies for groups less than 4 for this particular trip)
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	Please see our website for group departures, alternatively this can be arranged as a tailor-made/private departure. Available from April - December.
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 'difficult level' (5 – 7 hours of activities per day. This means you will need more than a basic level of fitness and some specific training may be required.

## THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at [info@pioneerexpeditions.com](mailto: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](http://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.

