

MADAGASCAR

Eco Expedition

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

ITINERARY

Madagascar • Eco Expedition

14 DAYS • 13 NIGHTS

Antananarivo – Antsirabe – Ambohimasoana — Andringita –
Tsarasoana – Ifaty – Antsoakoay – Tulear
This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

- Contributing to making a difference and positive environmental impact in Madagascar – helping with the reforestation effort
- Gaining a highly cultural experience - meeting and socialising with the locals in remote villages
- Explore the majestic mountains of Andringita
- Experience a perfect paradise ending to your trip on the stunning Mozambique Channel Coast in Ifaty.

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Eco Expedition
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Camping, Bungalow
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 9 Lunches, 8 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium
Notes	A great extension or add on to a Madagascar tour – can be tailored to suit

THE EXTRAORDINARY ECO-EXPERIENCE



As part of Pioneer Expeditions' commitment to responsible travel, we have an eco-tourism expedition in partnership with Wood En-Stock a local Madagascan NGO (specialising in reforestation).

The basic idea is to continue to offer you a great trip off the beaten path, whilst giving you the opportunity to compensate for your trip by actively participating in local reforestation /eco conservation projects. Explore much of hidden Madagascar, whilst making a difference to help the growth and rehabilitation of the country's much loved environment. Planting new life into the highlands, hiking through some truly spectacular landscapes and immersing yourself into true Malagasy life is in on the agenda, with a relaxing ending spent on the tranquil beaches of Ifaty.

ECO EXPEDITION & MADAGASCAR *an overview*

This trip intends to present a very positive carbon balance and results in consequent planting of young trees on the basis of 10 to 15 trees per person per day.

Not only will you get the chance to discover great sceneries, people and cultures but have the privilege to interact with the projects and really make a difference whilst you are on holiday.

The duties and missions set in these eco-friendly adventures depend mainly upon the season of travel. Different sites, different tasks - there is so much to do before we can physically replant a young tree in the ground! Starting from scratch and seeds, we also have to tend to past plantations, protect new ones and so on.

Different types of tree are planted in different locations:

- Fast growing species on community lands for locals needs
- Fruit bearing species are given directly to villager's
- Forest and oil bearing species are planted on public land

That means very diverse day chores and we'll try to alternate between working with locals and exploring these stunning surroundings.

Specific arrangements can be organised for groups and families, whether you are looking for a 1 day eco add-on or your own special eco tour. We will be happy to fit your plans.

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.

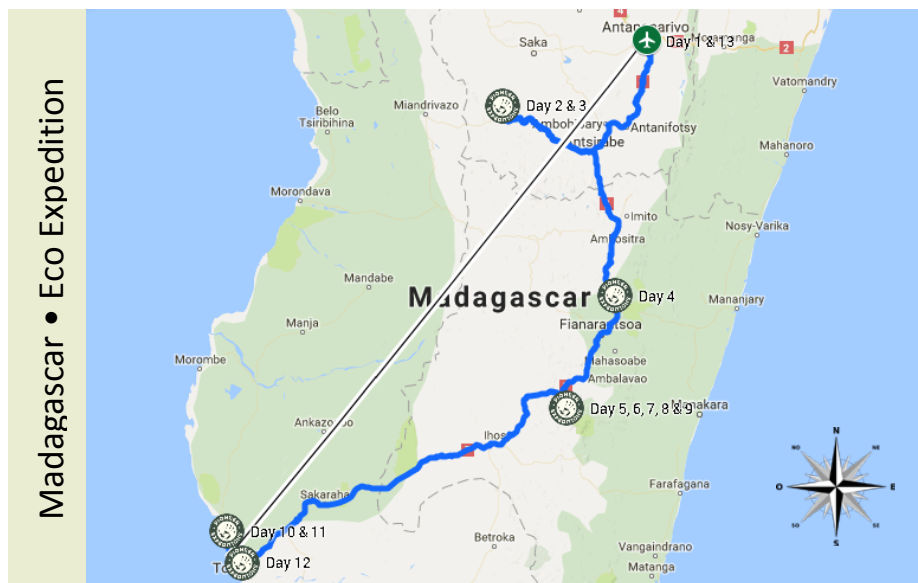
WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

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. Our experts are on hand whether you are looking for a small group trip or a 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 this city.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
N/A



Distance:
Airport Transfer



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 2: Heading to Andranomangatsiaka via Antsirabe to begin our eco experience

After breakfast you will meet your guide and we will set out by car to our first eco-camp, south of Antsirabe. There stands Mount Ibity, standing over 2250m high.

Wood En Stock, started a reforestation project just two years ago along Manandona river and is currently developing a local campground on the foot of these steep gorges. The association maintains a 5000 tree nursery and the project works in a 1000 Ha zone, totally barren from the riverside to the top of the mountains.

We usually have an early lunch in Antsirabe, (a tidy, well maintained town which combines the tranquility of a small European provincial town with the exuberance of Madagascar) so we can proceed on our trail early in the afternoon. This splendid hike (mainly flat and downhill) towards sunset takes us to Andranomangatsiaka where a group of enthusiastic young locals terraced the ground and developed a campground for visitors on this off the beaten path spot, away from mass tourism.



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The scenery is spectacular with unique mineral formations and interesting vegetation growing on rock faces and boulders. Kalanchoes, succulents and pachypodiums will delight the botanist as well as curious travelers.

The trail goes through a couple of villages involved in this project and will allow us to see the rural, social and geographical organization of those remote communities. Tonight we will camp in tents under thatched roofs nearby the roaring Manandona rapids. Andranomangatsiaka is a cold spot, so be prepared for cold evenings by the fireplace with occasional showers.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
300km (4+hrs Driving)



Activity:
Culture/Drive

DAY 3: A day of **Planting!**

Mornings are cool in the highlands and after breakfast, we start the day's work. Duties will depend on the season. Planting goes from Nov to May as the area receive fairly frequent rainfall, especially on the mountain top.

On this site, we also have to maintain a lot of fire barriers, mulch as much as we can and hopefully will start tending the growing young trees from past seasons. Whatever the duties, we'll work with the local manager of the project, on the fields with a stunning backdrop, as well as have great interaction with the locals.



People are very dedicated to work in this area and their energy could surprise you. They are far from the typical "mora-mora" laid back attitude popularized by poorly documented guide books. Asian influence is strong on those highlands and farmers do work a lot compared to other Malagasy tribes. The name itself of the Betsileo means "the many not lazy" gives a clear indication of their courage and energy.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Planting



DAY 4: Hiking mountains and climbing to continue planting

Combined hike and work through the morning. We usually climb to the top of the mountains we want to replant, put in a few more trees and hike down to a vehicle for an afternoon transfer further south.

Tonight we will stop in Ambohimaso, a rustic, but charming lodge, north of Fianarantsoa, set in the forest, which provides tented bungalows for our accommodation and home grown/raised food. The owners/managers of the structure are in charge of a large 2600 Ha of forest and struggle to keep at bay illegal logging and poaching. They have developed some great eco trails, employing local guides in their conservation effort and working closely with local communities. This is not an easy task with the pressure of an increasing population.

Even though we don't physically participate in this restoration/protection work our presence and money have direct and positive effects on this large patch of forest. This is also an excellent occasion to discover the eastern version of Malagasy culture through dense tropical rain forest.



Overnight:
Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
300km (5-6hrs Driving)



Activity:
Hiking, Planting & Drive

DAY 5: Hiking in the forest

Today starts with a good hike, hunting for Varricas, Indris and other goodies from the forests. Your local guide is just as endemic to this forest as the other plants and living creatures so is a passionate and interesting source of information. We should be back in camp around midday and will then drive down to Fianarantsoa (1 hr) for a quick lunch in town.

Fianarantsoa is the largest town in the highlands, south of Tana. The old town is a unique site which consists of old houses and buildings dating back to the 19th century. It's a must see with its labyrinths of small paths and stairways making much of it inaccessible to cars. You may be in the Antaimoro paper factory where you can watch a family go through each stage of paper making, from mashing up the sisal to adding the decorative flower petals and stems to the drying phase.



The owner of this restaurant is a supporter of our project, the food is good and atmosphere very convivial with lots of locals hanging out. That is the last urbanized setting for a while. This afternoon, we drive two more hours before leaving the paved road south of Ambalavao and roughing up dirt tracks to the Sahanambo valley on the western side of Andringitra Mountains. The location of our camp there is totally spectacular. On base of Langela, facing Tsaranoro 800ms cliffs and the 1500ms of Andringitra western side, the panoramic views are stunning. Simple bungalows offering comfort, country cooking, solar energy and large nurseries will be the basic bio diet for the next few days....



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
165km (1hr + 2+hr Drive)



Activity:
Hiking, Wildlife & Drive



DAYS 6 - 9: Setting off to the spectacular Tsaranoro Valley and Tsarasoa



Tsarasoa itself is the base for our local agents reforestation which is a big passion which is shared (via wood-en-stock) by Pioneer Expeditions. Planting 100,000 trees per year is a challenge and although we have totalled over 300,000 trees over the three seasons of activity, we're never totally satisfied and try to increase the figures every season.

For you, that means a lot of work to be done over those action packed days.

From the village orchards, to mountains summits, we have numerous planting sites spread in the Andringitra-Tsaranoro complex. Depending on the season, duties can

be very different and in any case we try to combine your actions with great trails, discovery of Nature, real interaction with locals and very unique moments of pure contemplation.

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



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Planting and Exploring

DAY 10: Goodbye Tsarasoa. Say hello to the stunning coastal town of Ifaty!



At mid morning, we will leave this blessed valley for a long road transfer, all the way to the Mozambique channel (7+hrs away). We will stay in Ifaty, a great beach area, away from the touristy parts for a couple of days of well-earned relaxation in the sun.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
470km (7+hrs Driving)



Activity:
Culture/Drive



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DAY 11: Discovering the beauty of Ifaty

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

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:
N/A



Activity:
Beach & Personal Preference

DAY 12: Visiting Antsokoay Arboretum



Today, we will visit Antsokoay arboretum near Tulear to discover the most exotic vegetation from malagasy south west.

A stunning botanical park near Tulear, and home to the most exotic vegetation (spiny, thorny plants and trees) which have adapted to the scorching sun, extreme dryness and sandy soils of Madagascars South West. This park was established in 1980 with the sole purpose to breed and grow plants and trees which are most at risk as a result of deforestation, and bushfires etc. A guided tour through the botanical trail is a great way to see much of the diverse South Western Madagascan flora.

Tonight you'll stay in vibrant Tulear, the southern city which doesn't sleep. Enjoy it!



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
40km (1hr Drive)



Activity:
Wildlife & Personal Preference

DAY 13: Back to Antananarivo

This morning you will catch the morning Air Madagascar flight from Tulear to Tana. Depending on your time of arrival in Tana you can visit the handicraft market (time to fill up your suitcases with curios and vanilla pods) before transferring to your hotel for your last night in Madagascar.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
Short Flight



Activity:
Personal Preference



DAY 14: 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 15, 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

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. 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.*

*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 ☉ All transfers ☉ Internal flight ticket ☉ All entrance fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ International flights ➤ Meals other than mentioned ➤ Sleeping bag ➤ Tips ➤ Personal expenses ➤ Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included during tours) ➤ Optional tours/activities in Ifaty

ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
Night 1	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Relais des Plateaux</i>
Night 2 & 3	Andranomangatsiaka	Camping	<i>N/A (Tents)</i>
Night 4	Ambohimaso	Lodge	
Night 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9	Tsaranoro Valley	Bungalow	<i>Tsaraso</i>
Night 10 & 11	Ifaty	Hotel	<i>Le Paradisier</i>
Night 12	Tulear	Hotel	<i>Arboretum Atsokay</i>
Night 13	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Palissandre Hotel</i>



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



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activity Duration	2 – 5 hours per day
Season	This region is best explored between April and December
Best Time To Go	Apr – May, Sept – Nov
Group Size	Tailormade
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.
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.

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.

