



NORTH MADAGASCAR
Nature Guided Adventure

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



ITINERARY

North Madagascar • Nature Guided Adventure

12 DAYS • 11 NIGHTS

Antananarivo – Ambohitantely National Reserve – Ankarafantsika – Ambanja – Ankarana – Joffreville – Amber Mountain – Montagne des Français – Diego
(Optional Extensions: Beach Extensions (including Nosy Be) and/or Island Hopping Extension)

This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

- Fully escorted with a local guide. They will help you spot much of the unique wildlife on offer!
- We will discover 5 of Madagascar's outstanding National Parks and reserves including Ankarafantsika
- We visit Madagascar's last major highland forest and spend time hiking amongst its diverse flora & fauna
- We will explore the astounding fields of spiky limestone tsingy in Ankarana National Park.

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Nature and Wildlife Adventure
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Camping, Bungalows
Included Meals	10 Breakfasts, 10 Lunches, 9 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium
Group Size	Max. 8 people (No Single Supplement*)

ADVENTURE OF THE MAGNIFICENT NORTH



Unearth Madagascar's magnificently wild Northern region. Starting from Madagascar's last major highland forest, we'll move through barren Tampoketsa to join the North West before ending up at the natural harbor of Diego Suarez (Antsiranana). A region often overshadowed by its famous beach resorts, this adventure will allow you to go truly off the beaten track; being guided through the remotest of villages and national parks, witnessing striking landscapes as well as spotting the enchantingly unique Madagascan wildlife. Become a part of the adventurous minority as you journey towards Madagascar's far north, experiencing incredible nature and the most remarkable scenery including tsingy and waterfalls. You'll have the chance to spot sifakas, crowned lemurs, leaf-tailed geckos and so much more on this nature expedition!

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. We will see much of the unique flora and fauna of Northern Madagascar on this exceptional off-the-beaten-track, nature guided expedition.

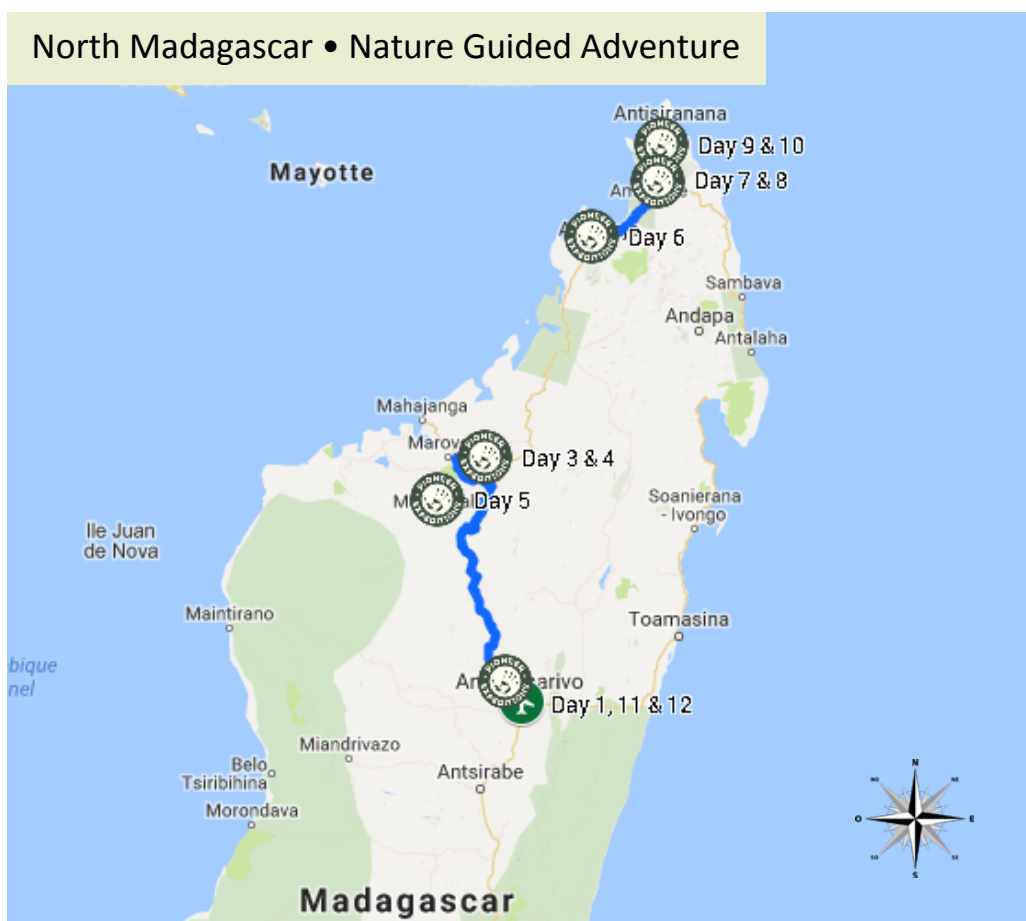
WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

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

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: Experiencing the last of the original highlands forest at Ambohitantely National Reserve

After breakfast you will meet your guide and we will head towards Ambohitantely National Reserve (approx. 3 hrs). This afternoon we will spend time hiking through this special reserve.

Ambohitantely special reserve protects the last of the original highlands forest. It is covered with natural forest and grassy plains and is known for its astonishing populations of palms. It is inhabited by 12 mammal species including the common brown lemur, the brown mouse lemur and the eastern woolly lemur (the latter two being nocturnal). It is a great location to see birds – with over 48 species including the Madagascar crested Ibis.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
50km (5hr Driving)



Activity:
Hiking and Wildlife

DAY 3: Journeying towards Ankarafantsika

This morning we head towards Ankarafantsika.

Ankarafantsika National Park, set on Lac Ravelobe, is a mixture of deciduous forests and wetlands. It is known for its lakes and for being a haven for lemurs and endemic birds. It is covered in varied fauna, mainly herbaceous and endemic woody plants. It is the home to the beautiful Coquerel's sifaka as well as 7 other species of lemurs (inc. western woolly, fat tailed dwarf lemur, mongoose lemurs) and exceptional birds (including rufous vanga and fish eagle). There is an organized network of paths that is perfect for wildlife viewing.

Here you are able to take night walks to see some of the nocturnal species which are particularly prevalent in this park (including mouse lemur – the smallest primate in the world).



We will overnight at the bungalows in the national park - these are set discreetly in the forest and face Lake Ravelobe. They are clean, comfortable and simple, and are ideal for us to get an early start in the forest tomorrow (being a 2 min walk from the park entrance).

This evening we can go for a quick night walk to see if we can see any mouse lemurs, chameleons.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
400km (7 hrs Driving)



Activity:
Drive

DAY 4: Encountering the unique inhabitants of the **Ankarafantsika National Park**



We set off after breakfast to explore this forest on foot, a superb flora and fauna rich day hike. We will take a picnic lunch to have on the trail in the national park.

There is the option of a boat trip on the lake in the afternoon if you wish.

After dinner we will have the option of setting out on a night hike again to see some of the nocturnal inhabitants of the forest.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Wildlife and Hike

DAY 5: Heading to the rural village of **Antsohihy**, immersing ourselves in local culture.

After another morning exploring the forest, before we drive to Antsohihy. Along the way we will pass through villages and animated markets so there is always something to look at en-route.

An isolated coastal village, accessible only by boat or plane in the rainy season. Antsohihy is connected inland with the River Loza. The people of Antsohihy live from forestry, trade and transport activities and the area is renowned for seafood too.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L



Distance:
6hrs Driving



Activity:
Culture



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DAY 6: Arriving at quaint **Ambanja** to explore and revel in its beauty and tranquility



Today we will head for Ambanja (and its coastal town Ankify). Upon arrival in Ambanja, you may choose to go for peaceful bike ride around the plantations, relax on the beach or even partake in a mangrove canoe trip.

Ambanja boasts a stunning location on the Sambirano river and is a buzzing, farming community with plantations, with crops like coffee, ylang ylang pepper and vanilla but most importantly for the community, cacao. There is a local airport and a small maritime harbor at Ankify which notably is the gateway to the Islands of Nosy Be and Nosy Komba.



Tonight we will sleep in bungalows on the beach, to experience north coast Madagascar in true off-the-beaten-track style and wake up to a beautiful view.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
4hr driving



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 7: Hit the road towards **Ankarana** and delve into some incredible caves



This morning we head to Ankarana. Upon arrival we will set up our camp and we will then get a chance to explore. This afternoon we will visit Perte de Riviere – which is the gateway to a series of caves leading to the ocean.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
50km (5 hrs Driving)



Activity:
Exploring

DAY 8: Exploring and unearthing the striking landscapes of **Ankarana Reserve**

Today will be spent exploring this amazing park along with the Tsingy and the canyons. The trails are not easy but are feasible for anyone with a moderate level of fitness and we recommend visiting this park in the dry season (May-Nov).



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Ankarana Special Reserve covers 18,220ha and is known for its limestone karst pinnacles called Tsingy along with its extensive cave system and network of underground rivers. Ankarana possibly has the highest density of primates of any forest (with 11 species of lemurs being found here) and here you may see the crowned lemur, Sanford's brown lemur, Perrieri's (black sifaka) lemur, the northern sportive lemur and dwarf lemurs as well as a variety of chameleons and leaf-tailed Uroplatus gecko and great flora.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Trekking and Exploring

DAY 9: Visiting charming Joffreville and the renowned tropical forest of Amber Mountain

Today we head to Joffreville along some bumpy roads and the Montagne d'Ambre – the Amber Mountain.

This stunning National Park is comprised of a huge tropical forest with waterfalls and volcanic lakes. This islet of verdant forest is a haven of freshness that escaped the stuffy heatwave of this region. There are numerous animals that inhabit this national park including the ring-tailed mongoose, the fossa and 8 lemurs (which are not always easy to see). It is also home to 75 bird species – 35 of them are endemic, 60 reptiles (from leaf tailed gecko's to a number of chameleon species, 35 frogs and 40 butterflies. Due to its relative proximity to Diego, this park can get quite busy (by Madagascan standards) in the high season, however it is really worth visiting.



Our accommodation whilst here will be a charming boutique hotel.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
75km (5hr Driving)



Activity:
Exploring and Wildlife

DAY 10: Discovering the beauty concealed within the Amber Mountain

Today we will spend the day exploring the forest trails and waterfalls in the Montagne d'Ambre.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Exploring and Wildlife

DAY 11: Back to Antananarivo or optional extension (e.g. Nosy Be or Island Hopping)

Your driver and guide will transfer you to the airport, where you will catch the Air Madagascar flight from Diego to Tana. We will meet you in Tana and depending on your time of arrival in Tana you can visit the handicraft market, before transferring to your hotel.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
Short Flight



Activity:
Personal Preference



DAY 12: 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 13, 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 is the Wild North and is not on the usual tourist route, so the accommodation quality does vary and some of the drives are long.

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.

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

- All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- Water during tours day 2 – day 10
- Accommodation as described
- English speaking Madagascan naturalist guide from day 2 – day 11
- Local guides within the national parks
- Driver and vehicle
- All camping equipment
- All transfers
- Internal flight ticket
- All entrance & NP fees

Not Included

- International flights
- Meals other than mentioned
- Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included)
- Tips
- Personal expenses
- Optional tours in Ambanja
- Sleeping Bag



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ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
Night 1	Antananarivo	Hotel	Relais des Plateaux
Night 2	Ambohitantely	Camp	Ambohitantely Camp
Night 3 & 4	Ankarafantsika	Bungalow	Gîte Ankarafantsika
Night 5	Antsohihy	Bungalow	Belle Vue
Night 6	Ambanja	Bungalow	Le Baobab
Night 7 & 8	Ankarana	Hotel	Ankarana Lodge
Night 9 & 10	Joffreville	Hotel	The Litchi Tree
Night 11	Antananarivo	Hotel	Palissandre Hotel



WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

"Just a quick note to say very many thanks for arranging our trip last week to Madagascar - we had an amazing time. Everything worked well with connections and arrangements. The guides assigned were excellent - Apolinia's eyesight was just amazing and he spotted so many wonderful things. We really enjoyed the trekking and the camping, and overall the itinerary was a good mix and timings were perfect too."

– Ryland Day

"It was a great hols & thank you so much for arranging it. everything went like clockwork. The choice of Mammy & our driver Zoo was an excellent plan & we couldn't fault their professionalism . The stay at Eden Lodge in Nosy Be was super"

- M. Pharaoh



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Nature Adventure North

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 Nature Adventure North extensions:

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

Nosy Be



Diego - Sakalava



Nosy Sakatia



Incorporating an idyllic beach extension to this trip is the best way to unwind at some of Madagascar's and the Indian Ocean's greatest paradise destinations. The itinerary for our main trip conveniently concludes near the locations of our recommend extensions; so why not explore further and experience something different for the perfect paradise ending to your nature adventure. Head off to the highly popular and much-loved island of **Nosy Be**, to experience a combination of gorgeous beaches, sublime scenery and wildlife as well as rich Malagasy culture. Alternatively, for even more paradise seclusion and tranquillity and famed for its orchids, **Nosy Sakatia** (an equally stunning Island, neighbouring Nosy Be) can offer you a peaceful setting with great snorkelling/diving opportunities as well as equally fabulous beaches. Both Island extensions are perfect for a spot of relaxation and even more discovery, before heading home. Overshadowed by its more famous and luxurious counter-parts, our **Sakalava** beach extension offers white sandy beaches, fantastic windsurfing and kitesurfing opportunities as well as a remote, peaceful location.

2. An adventurous trip ending in paradise with our spectacular **Island Hopping Trip** around **Nosy Be**

Why not add a sublime Island Hoping adventure onto your Madagascar trip and further your time in Madagascar with something a little different. This unique extension combines sunsets, cocktails, white-sandy beaches, swimming, snorkelling, Madagascan vanilla scented air, heavenly turquoise waters, meals under the stars with journeying on dhows (Madagascan sailing boats), nature walks, wildlife and beach camping.

With the air scented with Madagascan vanilla and tranquil, sparkling clear turquoise water, Nosy be is a charming destination for anyone. There are plenty of hotels and excellent restaurants serving seafood feasts on the sand. The sunset over the beach is unbeatable – a real escape from the hustle and bustle of Madagascan city life. Nosy Be means 'big island' in traditional Malagasy language and is a fantastic place to dive and snorkel.



(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 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	This region is best explored between May and November
Best Time To Go	May – June - Sept – Nov
Group Size	Max group size 8 (or private trips available upon request)
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	We have a scheduled group departure during this time – please see website or contact us for exact dates. Alternatively we are able to arrange tailor-made or private departures to suit, and are happy to add extensions.
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.

