



## **SOUTH EAST MADAGASCAR**

Nature Guided Adventure

# PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

## ITINERARY

South East Madagascar • Nature Guided

14 DAYS • 13 NIGHTS

Antananarivo – Antsirabe – Ambositra - Sahambavy – Faraony river -  
Ranomafana National Park – Ambalavao – Anja Park –  
Andringitra – Ambositra

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

## HIGHLIGHTS

## TOUR ESSENTIALS

- Witness the Milne Edwards Sifaka in Ranomafana, an endemic to the striking Eastern rainforests
- Go off-the-beaten track on a rustic train ride through Eastern Madagascar, a highly unique experience
- Canoe down the peaceful Faraony River which flows from the central highlands down into the Indian Ocean.
- Uncover the highlands and visit the famous Ring Tailed lemurs of the Anja Conservation Reserve, before exploring the spectacular Tsaranoro Valley.

Tour Style	Nature Expedition
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Eco-Reserve, Camping, Bungalows
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 12 Lunches, 12 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium

## THE NATURE OF THE GREAT RED ISLAND



On this trip we will explore an interesting combination of Madagascar's astounding rivers, forests & mountains through very different landscapes, cultures, climates and biotopes. Our Nature Guided South East adventure will allow you to enjoy the natural highlights of the "red island" on foot, by canoe, train and by car – accompanied by a local wildlife guide throughout the trip, as well as local guides in the National Parks. If you admire nature and have a true sense of adventure, you'll love what we have planned for you; adventuring through Ranomafana National Park, spotting lemurs; taking an off-the-beaten track train ride, canoeing the Faraony River, travelling amongst the highlands; witnessing the famous ring-tailed lemurs and exploring the remarkable Tsaranoro Valley.

# 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 Eastern Madagascar on this great tour.

## WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

We are driven by a passion for adventure travel and wildlife which we love to share, it's reflected in our uniquely wonderful itineraries. We can offer you new experiences that no one else can provide and we create for you, the most incredible adventure holidays imaginable. 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 if you are happy to share room)

We work in some of the world's most spectacular, remote and extraordinary places, whether you are looking to join one of our scheduled small group adventures such as this one, your own private tailor-made trip or a luxury family holiday. Madagascar is truly our specialty; we know it inside-out, in order to provide you with your dream Madagascan adventure... so you can enjoy it as much as we do! No one can organise dream holidays with a difference quite like Pioneer Expeditions.

## 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 this city.*



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**N/A**



Distance:  
**Airport Transfer**



Activity:  
**Personal Preference**

## Day 2: Heading south to the charming town of Antsirabe via Ambatolampy

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.*



Once out of Tana the journey takes approx. 3+ hours on a relatively 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**



Distance:  
**175km (3+hrs Drive)**



Activity:  
**Culture/Drive**

## DAY 3: Heading to Ambositra with its picturesque surroundings

This morning we will drive to Ambositra.

*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:  
**100km (3hrs Drive)**



Activity:  
**Culture**

#### DAY 4: Setting off to **Sahambavy**, famed for its tea plantations!

*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.*



This afternoon we can visit the 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.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**150km (3hrs Drive)**



Activity:  
**Culture**

#### DAY 5: Catch the train to **Manakara** & begin canoeing adventure of **The Faraony River**



Today we head out on the next part of our adventure from Fianarantsoa to Manakara (by train and canoe!). The trip will take us through dense forests and along a calm river (the few rapids we will encounter of the next few days are gentle and can be avoided if you don't want the potential of a swim..... that said the first rapid tends to be the one to catch most of us out).

We start by a half day train journey through scenic and interesting landscapes. The train ride takes approximately 5-6 hours. We will be travelling on reserved 1st class seats (the train can get pretty full!) and will disembark in Manampatrana, where the Faraony river winds gently between boulders, cliffs and cultivated banks.

We will meet our canoe team and set off on a short canoe downstream (grade 1 and 2 rapids) before stopping on one of the beaches to setup camp (afternoon showers are not unusual in this area). Your guides and canoe team are in charge of all the logistics (food, firewood etc.) and you only have to put up your own tent. All meals, mainly from fresh and local products are generously served and prepared with care.



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**5-6 hrs Train Ride**



Activity:  
**Culture and Canoe**

#### DAY 6 & 7: Canoeing down the **Faraony River** on a paddling adventure

We will dedicate these two days to canoeing down the Faraony River.



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*The Faraony flows down from the central highlands of Madagascar into the Indian Ocean. Situated on the east of the island, the area is tranquil and fairly still. Like many rivers in this region it seems to bear exploitable amounts of precious minerals so there are 'gold rushes' on many of the river bends.*



Along the way we will meet many smiling Malagasy people.



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**

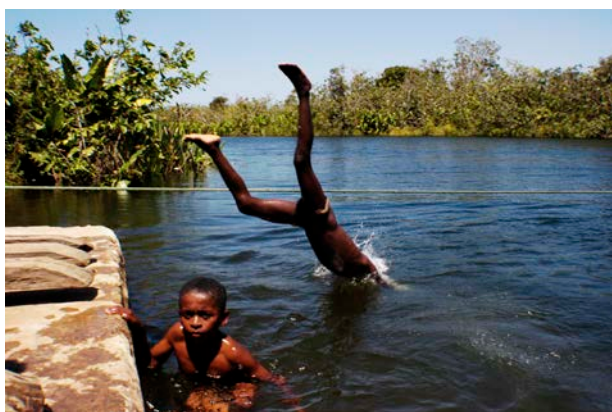


Distance:  
**N/A**



Activity:  
**Canoeing**

### DAY 8: Farewell **Faraony River** & arrival at magnificent **Ranomafana!**



This morning we will lay up our canoes and say goodbye to the Faraony - from here onwards the river starts to flow furiously through rapids and cataracts so we abandon it in its ocean race. From here we have a 4 – 5 hour trek (12 miles walking), where we will rendezvous with our driver and vehicle before heading to Ranomafana. We will get to Ranomafana in time for dinner



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**12 Mile walk + 5 hr Drive**

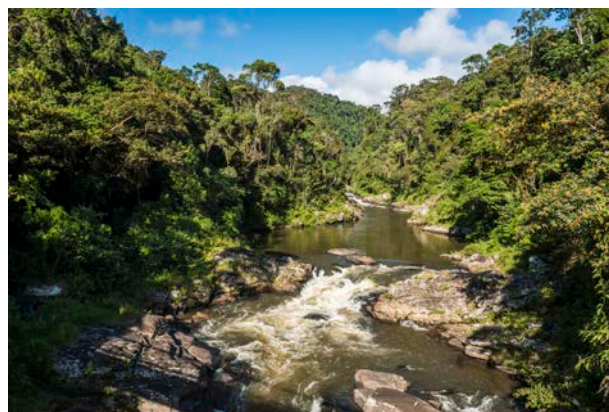


Activity:  
**Trekking and Drive**

### DAY 9: Discovering the wildlife and beauty of **Ranomafana National Park**

We will head out on a forest trail today and have lunch in the park, so we should get a chance to see much of the wildlife first hand throughout the day.

*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.*



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Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**N/A**



Activity:  
**Wildlife and Exploring**

## DAY 10: Rafting the **Namorana River** + journeying towards **Ambalavao**

This morning we will spend a couple of hours rafting on the Namorana River inside the National Park before heading to Ambalavao.

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



Distance:  
**120km (3 hr Drive)**



Activity:  
**Rafting and Culture**

## DAY 11: Discovering wildlife at **Anja Reserve** and heading to the extraordinary **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.

This afternoon we will be able to go on a short trek to explore the area or simply relax.



Overnight:  
**Bungalow**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**60km (2+ hrs Drive)**



Activity:  
**Wildlife and Exploring**



## DAY 12: Exploring the remarkable natural beauty of Tsaranoro Valley

We will spend today exploring this stunning area on foot and meeting all 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:**  
**Bungalows**

 **Meals:**  
**B, L, D**

 **Distance:**  
**N/A**

 **Activity:**  
**Exploring and Wildlife**

## DAY 13: Heading back up to Ambositra

Today we must start our long journey back to Tana, so we will head to Ambositra.

 **Overnight:**  
**Hotel**

 **Meals:**  
**B, L, D**

 **Distance:**  
**275km (8hrs Drive)**

 **Activity:**  
**Drive and Culture**

## DAY 14: 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, L**

 **Distance:**  
**250km (5hr 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. 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 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"> <li>All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)</li> <li>Accommodation as described</li> <li>English speaking Madagascan guide from day 2 – day 14</li> <li>Local guide within Ranomafana National Park</li> <li>Canoe team</li> <li>All transfers</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>Meals other than mentioned</li> <li>International flights</li> <li>Tips</li> <li>Personal expenses</li> <li>Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included)</li> <li>Sleeping bag</li> </ul>

## ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
Night 1	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Relais des Plateaux</i>
Night 2	Antsirabe	Hotel	<i>Chambres des Voyageurs</i>
Night 3	Ambositra	Hotel	<i>Hotel L'Artisan</i>
Night 4	Sahambavy	Hotel	<i>Lac Hôtel</i>
Night 5, 6 & 7	Faraony River	Camping	<i>Camping</i>
Night 8 & 9	Ranomafana	Hotel	<i>Thermal Hotel</i>
Night 10	Ambalavao	Hotel	<i>Zongo Hotel</i>
Night 11 & 12	Tsaranoro Valley	Bungalow	<i>Camp Catta</i>
Night 13	Ambositra	Hotel	<i>Hotel L'Artisan</i>





## WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

*"It really was a wonderful trip, superbly organised and completely seamless. We would not hesitate to recommend you to anyone, and indeed have done so to many friends who have seen our pictures and now want to go themselves! Thank you for everything,"*

-C. Roberts

*"I wanted a small group, more of an adventure tour to Madagascar, and I believe this is exactly what I got! Everything was so well taken care of, and everyone was so helpful! This was one of the most incredible and exciting holidays that I have ever been one. It will be remembered for many years!"*

-J. Winterstein

## Nature Guided South East 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 Nature Guided South East 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](mailto: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
- ☺ With the lack of water and food in the South, this does exacerbate the poverty in Madagascar (this is not so obvious in the North)

### 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!

### Some of OUR NATURALIST GUIDES



#### MAMY

- 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

- 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

- 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 specialities lie in Madagascan Culture and Geology as well as Wildlife.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activity Duration	2 – 5 hours per day
Season	March - December
Best Time To Go	September – December
Group Size	2-8 pax
Responsibility	As part of our commitment to responsible travel and in conjunction with Woodstock.org we finance a tree nursery and orchard in Italavina – which is a long term reforestation project.
Group Departures	We have a couple small group departures 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 beach or additional National Park 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.



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# THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

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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.

