



NORTH MADAGASCAR
North Coast Adventure

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

ITINERARY

Madagascar • North Coast Adventure

14 DAYS • 13 NIGHTS

Antananarivo – Gondwana Island – Ambanja – Sambirano River – Ankarana – Jofreville – Amber Mountain National Park – Montagne des Français – Sakalava – Diego - Antananarivo
This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

- Canoe the peaceful Sambirano River through the mangroves, absorbing the fabulous flora and fauna.
- Experience a 2 day trek through the striking alien-like fields of spiky tsingy in Ankarana. A geological phenomenon and a sight to behold.
- Uncover the thriving wildlife, crater lakes, waterfalls and rich rainforest of Montagne D'ambre, known as the region's water tower.
- A perfect end to your expedition, hiking towards the tranquil, white sand beaches of Sakalava.

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Adventure Expedition
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Camping, Bungalow, Tree Bungalow
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 12 Lunches, 12 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium
Group Size	Max. 8 people (No Single Supplement*)

EMBRACING THE RUGGED NORTH COAST



An action packed trip through Madagascar's wild North West. Starting from the red highlands, whilst on our unique expedition, we move on through the wide open spaces and the green valley of Sambirano to the white sands of Madagascar's northern tip. A region often overshadowed by its famous beach resorts such as the North's pièce de résistance, Nosy Be, 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. On this expedition you will be rafting, canoeing down river and through mangroves, hiking the Tsingy, sleeping in tree huts, exploring Ankarana, hiking to the north's white sandy beaches and so much more, you're guaranteed to experience plenty of excitement in this 2 week Madagascan adventure.

MADAGASCAR *an overview*

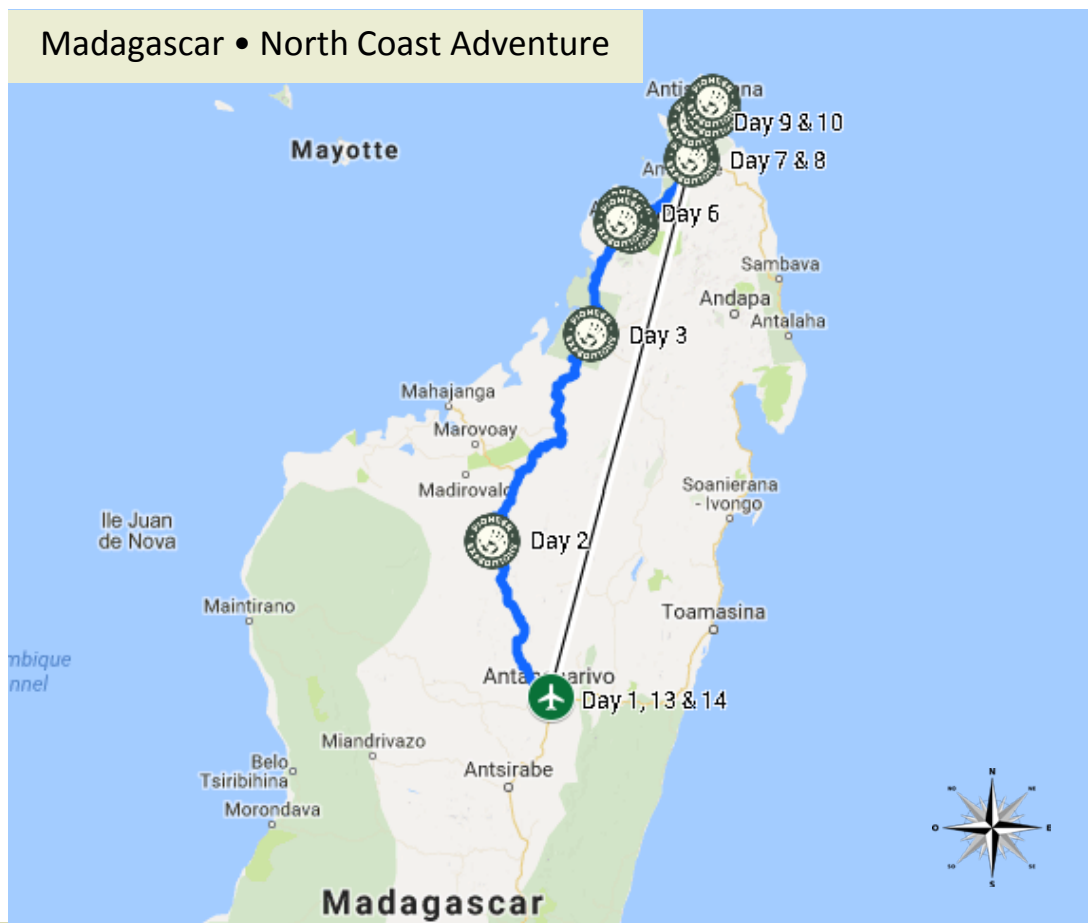
Madagascar is a one-off; there is no other place like it. Its landscapes, animals and plants are simply fantastic! Near the equator with an astonishing array of habitats, ranging from rainforests to deserts and from mountain tops to mangrove swamps, it is one of the most important countries for biodiversity 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 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

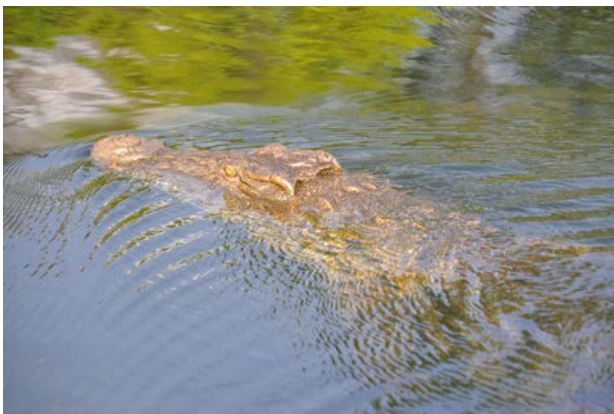


Distance:
Airport Transfer



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 2: Off-the-beaten track camping on and paddling towards rural Gondwana Island



After breakfast you will meet your guide and we will set out by car and head towards Gondwana Island, located on the Ikopa River. Upon reaching the river we will transfer to our rafts and spend the next hour paddling to the island – the river is quite wide and the rapids are easy. Gondwana is a relatively new camp on this 50 ha island and is a brilliant place to spot birds with the possibility of seeing crocodiles.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
(5hrs Driving + 1hr Paddling)



Activity:
Wildlife and Paddling

DAY 3: Heading to the rural village of Antsohihy, immersing ourselves in local culture.

We will get back into our rafts for our return journey back to shore. Our car will be waiting for us and we will set out on our relatively long journey to Antsohihy. This journey provides a great chance to view Malagasy life on the roads. (Driving time approx. 6 hrs, depending on road conditions).

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, D



Distance:
Approx. 6hrs Driving



Activity:
Drive and Culture



DAY 4: Setting off to charming **Ambanja** for the start of our canoe trip

Later in the season (August onwards) the Sambirano river levels are too low for the canoe trip. We therefore have 2 programs depending on the time of year for this trip...

Day 4

DAY 4 (April – July): Setting off to charming **Ambanja** for the start of our canoe trip

Today we will head to Ambanja (approx. 3 hours), a pleasant little town set amongst a green backdrop. We will stop for lunch while the team prepare the canoe on the Sambirano river. This afternoon we will transfer by car to our put in point where we meet up with our canoe team and reach our camp for tonight.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
190km (3hrs Drive)



Activity:
Canoeing

DAY 4 (August - November): Setting off to charming **Ambanja** for the start of our canoe trip

Today we will head to Ambanja (approx. 3 hours), a pleasant little town set amongst a green backdrop. We will stop for lunch while the team prepares the canoe on the Sambirano river. This afternoon we will set off by canoe for approx. 3 hours. This evening we will camp by the village of Ankatafana.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
190km (3hrs Drive)



Activity:
Canoeing

Day 5

DAY 5 (April – July): Canoeing the **Sambirano River**

This morning we set off by canoe along the Sambirano River. The river is mainly flat with a small rapid midway and we will spend the next two days making our way back to Ambanja. There is great bird watching along this river and we will also be able to see a lot of agricultural activity along the banks as well as some traditional fisherman.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Canoeing

DAY 5 (August – November): Canoeing through the Mangroves

We leave Ankatafana after the breakfast; we can stop on the mangrove to discover the daily life of the fisherman.



Overnight:
Camp on the Beach



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Canoeing

Day 6

DAY 6 (April – July): Concluding our Canoeing Descent



We continue our descent down the Sambirano River until we arrive back at Ambanja. We will then head just up the road to Ankify. Tonight we will stay at the beautiful Baobab Hotel. This afternoon will be at leisure on the in the beach outside our bungalows.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Canoeing

DAY 6 (August – November): Kayaking to Ankify

We will paddle for 02 - 03hours this morning before arriving at Ankify before lunch. Tonight we will stay at the beautiful Baobab Hotel. This afternoon will be at leisure on the beach outside our bungalows.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Canoeing

DAY 7: Hit the road towards the spectacular Ankarana Reserve

We have a short hop this morning (approx. 4hrs driving time) to Ankarana. We will stay at a lovely lodge just outside the park. After enjoying a lunch at this lodge, we will head out for our first trek into Ankarana.

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.



The next two days will be spent trekking through this remarkable reserve.



Overnight:
Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
160km (5hrs Driving)



Activity:
Trekking and Wildlife

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



Today will be spent exploring this amazing park. 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).

You will hopefully get a chance to cool off in the lodge swimming pool at the end of a hard days trekking.



Overnight:
Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Trekking and Wildlife



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

After another morning in Ankara we will head back to the car and drive to Joffreville (approx. 3+ hrs on another bumpy road) and the Montagne d'Ambre – the Amber Mountain. Our accommodation whilst here will be a charming boutique hotel The Litchi Tree.

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.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
75km (5hrs Driving)



Activity:
Wildlife and Exploring

DAY 10: Discovering the beauty concealed within the Amber Mountain



We can spend the day trekking in this national park before heading back to the hotel in the late afternoon.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Trekking and Wildlife

DAY 11: Yet more discovery with a visit to the dry forest of Montagne Des Français

Today we head to Montagne des Français, just a short 1 ½ hour by road, but a very different environment.

The Montagne des Français reserve protects deciduous dry forest characteristic of the north of Madagascar. Much of the forest is on a calcareous massif that has been eroded into Tsingy. This is one of the best places to see one of the most beautiful baobabs, Adansonia suarezensis. Montagne de Francais is part of the larger Ramena protected area complex and is home to fish eagles and crowned lemurs.



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We will have a unique experience here as we will overnight in the tree bungalows – literally huts built in trees!



Overnight:
Tree Bungalows



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
40km (1 ½ hrs Driving)



Activity:
Exploring and Wildlife

DAY 12: Hiking to the gorgeous beaches of **Sakalava** – a perfect paradise ending to your trip

Today we will hike the 3 hours to Sakalava.

With beautiful white sand and a shallow lagoon with pristine waters Sakalava is the perfect place to relax. Its 3 mile stretch of beach enclosed by barrier reef make this area a perfect place for wind or kite surfing (it's a safe place to learn as the wind blows you back into shore).



You will be staying in a "bush" hotel, for guests who want to stay off the beaten path, in a quiet and magical environment.



Overnight:
Sakalava Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
16km (3hrs Hike)



Activity:
Hiking and Wildlife

DAY 13: Back to **Antananarivo** or optional extension (e.g. Nosy Be or Island Hopping)

We will catch the Air Madagascar flight from Diego 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:
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 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



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.



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. Please note times given are approximate driving times and do not include stops, the journey times are therefore longer. When driving times are given, this is only an indication. It aims to reflect the actual driving time (and doesn't include stops, lunch, and 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.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included	Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner) Accommodation as described Water during tour English speaking guide from day 2 – day 13 All transfers Internal flight ticket All entrance fees All camping and canoe equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International flights Meals other than mentioned Sleeping bag Tips Personal expenses Alcoholic and soft drinks - drinks in restaurants Personal expenses Optional tours/activities

ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
Night 1	Antananarivo	Hotel	Relais des Plateaux
Night 2	Gondwana Island	Camp	GondwanaCamp
Night 4 & 5	N/A - Canoeing	Camp	Camping
Night 6	Ambanja	Bungalow	Le Baobab
Night 7 & 8	Ankarana	Hotel	Ankarana Lodge
Night 9 & 10	Joffreville	Hotel	The Litchi Tree
Night 11	Montagne des Français	Tree Bungalows	Tree Bungalow in Jungle



Night 12

Sakalava

"Bush" Hotel

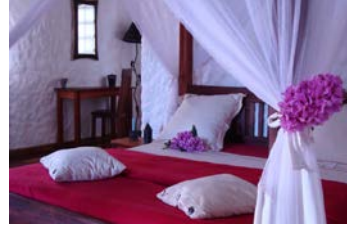
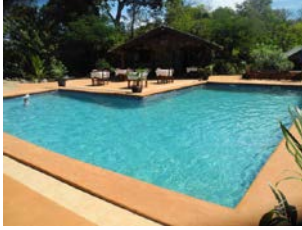
Royal Sakalava

Night 13

Antananarivo

Hotel

Palissandre Hotel



WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

"I have wanted to visit Madagascar for some time and this trip looked like a wonderful way to do so - I was especially attracted by the range of activities and the small group size. I loved this trip!"

-Catherine

"This has been an amazing trip. We have really loved it. The organisation was superb. The guides completely trustworthy. Food was superb and our safety was paramount when out and about. It is truly away from everything. Thank you"

-N. Morton

"We had a great holiday thank you! We really enjoyed the trip and the company of our guides. The team were fantastic and were completely dedicated to delivery the best service to us. The Alefa boat trip was a sensational experience - luxury with food that was out of this world!"

-J. Faulds

"Our Madagascan trip was excellent. I think your local partners and their knowledgeable freelance guide really made the trip for us. The local company could not do enough for us and I would recommend them. Everything was extremely well organized."

-J. Cosker

"We really enjoyed our trip. Madagascar is fascinating, we loved the parks and the wildlife, and our guides were excellent. The food provided (both by the guides and at the hotels) was of a very high standard, and we liked the mix of hotels - especially the tree house, which was our favourite!"

-Langan / Spauls



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North Coast Adventure

EXTENSION EXAMPLES

Feel free to **contact us** for more information on all of our Madagascar Extensions. Alternatively, browse through our extension document, available from our website.

Here are some of our most popular North Coast Adventure 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. With this extension, you can choose to extend your stay in Sakalava.

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, Madagascar 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 Madagascar 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 Madagascar 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 Autumn: **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!

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	This region is best explored between May and November
Best Time To Go	April – November in the dry season
Group Size	Max group size 8 (<i>or private trips available upon request</i>)
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	Fixed Group Departures and Tailor Made departures from May throughout November. 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.

