



**Madagascar**  
Benahy River Descent



# PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



Do something extraordinary

## Itinerary

## Madagascar • Benahy River Descent

13 Days • 12 Nights

Antananarivo – Tulear – Benahy river – Onilahy river - Bezaha-Mahafaly reserve – Ifaty - Spiny Forest

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Unique canoe descent of a little explored river deep within the canyons
- Wild camping
- Rare insight into the real Madagascar
- Relax at the end at a lovely beach hotel

## TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Canoeing Adventure
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Camping, Beach bungalow
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 9 lunches, 8 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium / Difficult

This expedition aims to achieve a descent of the Benahy river before continuing down the Onilahy river. The Benahy, a narrow river running through canyons that are only a few meters wide, is not marked on the maps of Madagascar. We use inflatable canoes and along the route we will encounter truly fantastic landscapes, learn new skills and face interesting and challenging situations. This is a unique Pioneer expedition which offers a fantastic opportunity to explore a remote area of Madagascar.

# Overview

On this expedition we get to explore the arid South West region of Madagascar. We will follow the isolated Benahy river into the Onilahy river and continue all the way down through the delta to the coast at Saint Augustin.

We start deep in the Isalo canyons south of Isalo National Park, this part of the canyon is, unlike in the north, remote and untouched by tourism. The only people we will encounter while crossing this range are locals - cattle rustlers and sapphire diggers. The trip gives you a great insight into the real Madagascar and the Malagasy people.

We will get the chance to see some of the unique Madagascan fauna including lemurs and chameleons. It is possible we may also spot crocodiles (from the safety of our raft) during our time on the Onilahy river. We are happy to arrange an extension to enable you to visit some of the other national parks if you are interested to experience more of the Madagascan wildlife.

We will spend the last few days of our time in Madagascar relaxing at a beautiful hotel in Ifaty on the Mozambique Channel.

# Itinerary



## DAY 1: ANTANANARIVO TO TULEAR (B,L,D)

After your arrival in Antananarivo (NB: If you need to arrive the day before, we can easily arrange a hotel in Tana) and introductory briefing from the expedition leader, we will take an internal flight to Tulear. We will drive up to the Isalo region for the start of our Madagascan adventure with a hike down a shallow part of the river. Here we will find our camp set up on the river bank. NB. If the flight arrives in Tulear later than 3pm, we will overnight at Ranohira and hike down to our rafts on day 2.

*Overnight Camp*

## DAYS 2 – 4: DESCENT OF THE BENAHY (B,L,D)

Our typical daily routine will consist of setting off between 8 and 9am and stopping to camp around 4-5 pm. We stop for lunch and en-route we have time to wander through side canyons and observe occasional lemurs.

*The Benahy, though adjacent to Isalo National Park, has not seen many visitors. It runs atop a section of land teeming with sapphires, and as a result, you will pass many local miners, sifting sand through metal sieves. There is the chance to see lizards, birds, turtles and bats and possibly even lemurs as well as some exotic and unique vegetation. Benahy navigation is smooth and easy, so rafting in light canoes is a good idea. A typical days rafting is a combination of paddle and drag areas (the later in the season you go, the more drag areas there are).*



During our time on the Benahy, we hope to see lemurs, chameleons, birds, turtles and bats as well as some exotic and unique vegetation, including baobabs, pachypodiums and succulents.

The white water starts after the junction with Imalo to river and all the way down to the coastal plain just after the junction with the Onilahy River.

*Overnights Camp.*

## DAYS 5 – 8: DESCENT OF THE ONILAHY (B,L,D)

The Onilahy river is the largest river in the southwest. The river banks are sparsely populated - with settlements springing up to mine gemstones - but the floodplain does have lots of towns and rice paddies in areas that are not prone to flooding.

For our Onilahy descent we will transfer to larger more stable rafts and we will experience class III-IV rapids. After 3 rowdy days on the white water, our final day on the Onilahy should be more relaxing, with sections of flat meandering water. We can observe the changing landscapes along the route and enjoy the wildlife (including crocodiles), birds and riverside settlements.

*Overnights Camp.*



## DAY 9: BENENITRA & BEZAHA-MAHAFALY RESERVE (B,L)

When we reach Benenitra, we will transfer by road to the beautiful coastal resort of Ifaty, just North of Tulear. En-route we stop at the Bezaha-Mahafaly reserve.

*The Beza Mahafaly Reserve in the southwest includes a gallery forest, with the trees forming a corridor along the river. It is the second smallest protected area in Madagascar and is home to 102 bird species and 21 species of mammals with a large lemur population, which includes the Ring-tailed and the White Sifaka – also known as the dancing lemur! It is a great location for reptiles too, as well as an interesting selection of flora.*

Overnight Camp.

## DAYS 10 & 11: DISCOVERING IFATY (B)

*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.*



Local fishermen will also be happy to offer you a trip in their traditional fishing boats (pirogues). Or if you prefer you can simply relax on the stunning white sandy beaches or swim in the turquoise waters.

Overnights Beach Bungalow.

## DAY 12: IFATY with optional VISIT TO SPINY FOREST (B)

This morning (if you choose) we can visit the Spiny Forest (there are 3 pockets). Please note this excursion is not included in the itinerary however can be booked directly with the hotel.

*Just north of Ifaty you can find the Reniala Nature Reserve 'Spiny Forest', a remarkable habitat adapted to the heat and drought of the area giving it the resultant thorny &/or bloated drought resistant trees and plants. The spiny forests inland from Ifaty are of great interest to birdwatchers and botanical enthusiasts alike. Here you will be able to see some very large iconic Baobab trees, an abundance of birds (a true paradise for ornithologists) as well as possibly some locally endemic species such as the long-tailed ground roller and sub-desert mesite. This unique habitat is severely threatened by deforestation and by visiting these sites, you will not only enjoy some of the little remaining spiny forest in Madagascar, but also actively contribute to its conservation (the sites are currently not protected). A visit here can be organized by the hotel, and you can even travel there by pirogue – which we highly recommend.*



The afternoon will be spent at leisure.

*Overnight Beach Bungalow.*

### DAY 13: TRANSFER TO TANA & FLIGHT HOME

We 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 and you will also have a day use room at Au bois vert. Most flights leave around midnight so you will have a day use room at the beautiful Au bois vert. Transfer to the airport in time for your 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.*





# What our clients have said

*“Words cannot describe how amazing this trip...I absolutely loved the flexibility of the trip and how we were an integral part. I look forward to seeing our guide next year, maybe to do a different river”*

- J. Shields

## Important Information

### INCLUDED

- 🌱 All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- 🌱 Accommodation as described
- 🌱 Water
- 🌱 English speaking guide from day 1 – day 10
- 🌱 All transfers
- 🌱 Internal flight tickets x 2
- 🌱 All camping and canoe equipment

### NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Meals other than mentioned
- Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included)
- Sleeping bag
- Tips
- Personal expenses
- Optional tours/activities in Ifaty

## Additional Information

ACTIVITY DURATION	5 – 7 hours per day
SEASON	April to September
BEST TIME TO GO	The river levels are much better between April and June. After this time there are much more dragging areas (but still a great trip).
GROUP SIZE	2 – 8 pax
RESPONSIBILITY	As part of our commitment to responsible travel and in conjunction with <a href="http://Woodenstock.org">Woodenstock.org</a> everyone who travels to Madagascar with Pioneer are contributing towards a unique community reforestation effort run by Pioneer Expeditions
GROUP DEPARTURE	Regular group departures between March and June – please see website or contact us for dates.
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 to difficult’ level (there is between 5 – 7 hours of activities per day – however the pace is relatively slow). This means that you will need an average level of fitness

