



CLASSIC FAMILY
Treasures of the South West

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

ITINERARY

South West Madagascar • Family Adventure

15 DAYS • 14 NIGHTS

Antananarivo – Antsirabe – Ambatolampy – Ranomafana National Park – Namorona River – Anja Reserve – Tsaranoro Valley – Isalo National Park – Ifaty – Antsokoay Botanical Park – Spiny Forest – Tuleur
This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spot wild lemurs in the magnificent rainforest National Park of Ranomafana & observe the famous, much-loved ring-tailed lemurs in the Anja Reserve.
- Explore some of Madagascar's most famous National Parks, including Isalo – with rock scrambling and an abundance of exciting, unique wildlife.
- Encounter the towering Tsaranoro Valley - bordering the majestic Andringitra National Park.
- Experience a perfect ending to your trip in the stunning coastal town of Ifaty.

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Family Expedition
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Bungalow, Eco-Lodge
Included Meals	13 Breakfasts, 10 Lunches, 9 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium
Notes	A Private Trip - suitable for children age 8 and up

WEIRD & WONDERFUL MADAGASCAR



A fantastic family adventure exploring the best of South Madagascar with stunning national parks where there is the opportunity to see lemurs and chameleons. Visit small towns and communities to experience real Malagasy life before arriving at Ifaty with its clear waters and white sands.

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 on this great family adventure which is sure to satisfy everyone in the family.

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. As parents ourselves, who have taken our children to Madagascar, our experts are on hand to help design your bespoke holiday.

Pioneer work in some of the world’s most spectacular, remote and extraordinary places worldwide.

ITINERARY



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Mad05

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



Approx. Distance:
Airport Transfer



Activity:
Personal Preference

Day 2: Heading south to the charming town of Antsirabe

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.



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 which is a 2 hour round trip to a stunning lake of volcanic origin with blue/green waters, surrounded by beautiful scenery – walking around the lake will take approximately 1 hour, 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. Today will be a great chance to experience Malagasy life on the road!



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D

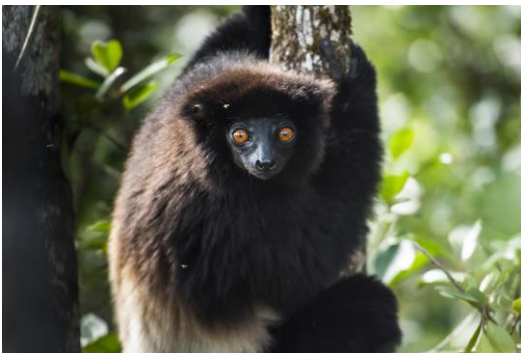


Approx. Distance:
170km (3hrs Driving)



Activity:
Culture

DAY 3: Onwards to the incredible Ranomafana National Park



This morning we will set off for Ranomafana National Park. En-route we can stop off at Ambositra where we'll get the chance to visit the famous woodcarving workshops, or possibly visit our reforestation project at Italavina.



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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.



We will stay just outside Ranomafana (just 10 minutes from the park entrance). If we arrive early there is the possibility of visiting the thermal baths.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



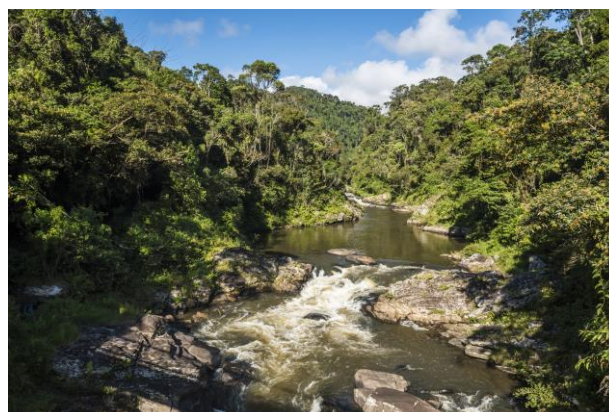
Approx. Distance:
250km (6 hrs Drive)



Activity:
Drive and Personal Preference

DAY 4: Exploring the magnificent **Ranomafana National Park**

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.



Today you have the opportunity to explore the enchanting Ranomafana National Park and search for lemurs on an adventure through lush rainforest.

We will head out on a forest trail today along some of the park's many easy mountainous tracks, there will be plenty of opportunities to see lemurs and much of the other wildlife first hand, as well as to enjoy the stunning cascades and waterfalls.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Wildlife and Exploring

DAY 5: A paddle on the **Namorona River** & discovering **Ambalavao**

This morning we have the unique option of paddling on the Namorona River within Ranomafana National Park before heading to Ambalavao, stopping off at Fianarantsoa en-route.



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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 mushing up the sisal to adding the decorative flower petals and stems to the drying phase.



After lunch, we will set off to Ambalavao.

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.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
120km (3 - 4hrs Driving)



Activity:
Culture and Paddling

DAY 6: Experience the spectacular Anja Reserve & head to Andringitra National Park

Another exciting day ahead as we visit the Anja reserve (just a few kms from Ambalavao – so you can choose to do what the Malagasy people do and walk there if you prefer).

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!



We will spend 1 ½ hrs on a guided exploration of this stunning area as well as explore caves and experience some rock scrambling. This afternoon we will drive approximately 2 ½ hrs to the Tsaranoro Valley in the Andringitra National Park, which will be our home for the next couple of days.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
2 ½ hrs drive

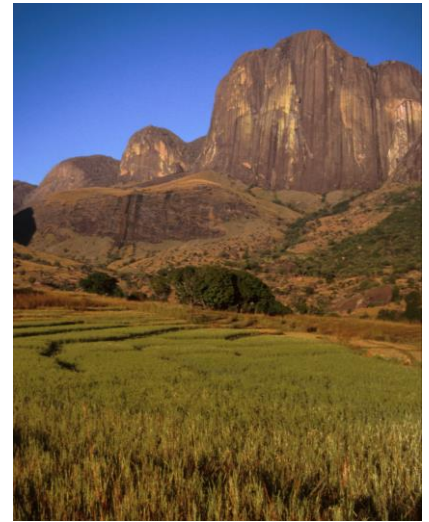


Activity:
Wildlife and Exploring



DAY 7 & 8: Discovering the remarkable natural beauty of Tsaranoro Valley

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 spend these days exploring this stunning area on foot and meeting all the locals.

There will also be a chance to visit Tsarasoa, which is the base for our local agent's reforestation effort (a passion which is shared via wood-enstock, 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:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Walking and Wildlife

DAY 9: Journeying towards magnificent Isalo

We will have another chance to explore this area before having an early lunch and setting off by car to Isalo which should take us around 4 hours on track and road.



Overnight:
Eco-Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
4 hrs drive



Activity:
Exploring and Drive



DAY 10: Unearthing the wonders of the remarkable Isalo National Park

Today we will be exploring this breathtaking National Park on foot. Included will be the opportunity to swim in a natural pool, with lunch on trail.

Isalo is the park of the Big South and the most visited parks of Madagascar. It is known for its exceptional landscape. The Isalo National Park protects over 81,000 hectares of widely eroded Jurassic sandstone massif. The grassy plains are surrounded by sandstone ridges. Most of the vegetated areas of the park are covered with dry grassland or sparse, low deciduous woodland, however near streams and in deeper canyons there are also ferns and feathery palm trees. Animal life isn't the parks most prominent feature, but there a few species to look for including six species of lemur (three nocturnal, three daytime) including the ring tail lemur and the White (dancing lemur) sifaka. It is also home to approx 55 species of bird including the rare Benson's rock-thrush.



Overnight:
Eco-Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Trekking and Wildlife

DAY 11: Heading to the stunning coastal town of Ifaty

Today we head to Ifaty and the Indian Ocean, with an optional stop en-route to visit the Antsokoay Botanical Park or Zombiste.

Zombiste

This south-western National Park is known for the huge variety of rare bird species as well as its unique diversity. Zombiste is home to 8 species of lemurs including the Verraux Sifaka (aka. the dancing lemur) and the threatened Fork-marked Lemur. The park also shelters 47% of the endemic birds of Madagascar as well as the local endemic Appert's tetraka bird. Zombiste boasts fantastic flora as well including orchids and ficus making this a stunning national park!



Antsokoay

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 Madagascar's 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.



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Our next few nights will be spent relaxing at a hotel facing the Mozambique Channel and superb reef of Ifaty, our hotel provides a perfect setting for a relaxing beach break at the end of your adventure. Upon arrival in Ifaty, your driver and guide will leave you, as you will spend the next couple of days at leisure.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Approx. Distance:
260km (5 hrs Driving)



Activity:
Drive and Wildlife

DAY 12: Experiencing the sea, beaches and beauty of Ifaty

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 and swim in the turquoise waters.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 13: Discovering the surrounding fascinations of Ifaty

Today can be spent at your leisure, experiencing what beautiful Ifaty and its surrounding areas have to offer. If you wish, this morning you can visit the Spiny Forest! - *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.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Personal Preference/Beach



DAY 14: Back to Antananarivo

You will be transferred to the airport where you will catch the Air Madagascar flight from Tulear to Tana. Upon arrival you will be met by a driver/guide - Depending on your time of arrival in Tana you can visit the handicraft market, before transferring to your hotel.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, D



Approx. Distance:
950km (1hr Flight)



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 15: 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 16, you can opt to have a day use room &/or driver/guide for the day (not included).



Overnight:
N/A



Meals:
B



Approx. 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. 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.

On this particular trip there is a minimum age of 8 and some previous outdoors experience is useful. We can also tailor itineraries to suit your exact requirements including catering for younger children

If this trip isn't quite what you are looking for, we can **tailor itineraries** to suit your exact requirements.



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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included	Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner) ■ Accommodation as described ■ English speaking guide, driver and private vehicle from day 1 – day 11 ■ Local guides within the national parks ■ All transfers ■ Internal flight ticket ■ All National Park entrance fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Meals other than mentioned ➤ International flights ➤ Tips ➤ Personal expenses ➤ Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included during tours) ➤ Personal expenses ➤ Optional tours/activities eg. Antsokoay & Spiny Forest

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 & 4	Ranomafana	Hotel	<i>Thermal Hotel</i>
Night 5	Ambalavao	Hotel	<i>Zongo Hotel</i>
Night 6, 7 & 8	Tsaranoro Valley	Bungalow	<i>Tsarasoa</i>
Night 9 & 10	Isalo	Eco-Lodge	<i>Isalo Ranch</i>
Night 11, 12 & 13	Ifaty	Hotel	<i>Le Paradisier</i>
Night 14 & 15	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Palissandre Hotel</i>



WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

'Fantastic holiday, many thanks for organising everything. The team were excellent, first class - great guiding from Max, he was perfect for our family'

-R. Sawtell

"The itinerary, guides and drivers were all spot on. We enjoyed all the parks on the way down to Tulear and managed to see most types of Lemur and Sifakas. The highlights of the trip? Too many to mention really."

-R. Walmslev



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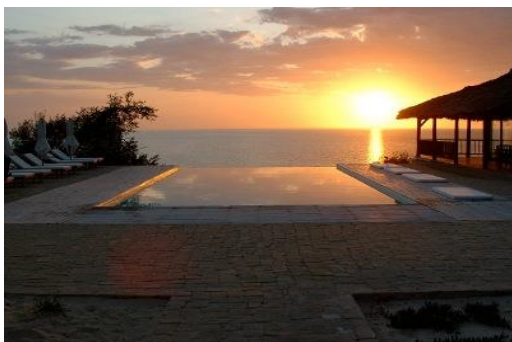
Family Adventure South West EXTENSION EXAMPLES

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 Family Adventure South West extensions:

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

Ifaty



Adding a beach extension to this trip is the best way to unwind on two of South West Madagascar's most beautiful coastal areas. Stay in Ifaty for a bit longer or to experience something different, head south to the glorious beaches of Anakao.

Anakao



2. Head North for even more adventure with our **Morondava** Extension

Why not add an extension to Morondava onto your Madagascar trip and further your adventure. This will allow you to experience the Tsingy des Bemaraha as well as the Avenue des Baobabs (approx. 7 days needed – email us for details).



(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!



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 specialities 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 speciality lies in river-based activities and adventures.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activity Duration	2 – 5 hours per day
Season	This region is best explored between March and December
Best Time To Go	Apr – December
Group Size	The price is per person & based on a private trip based on a family of 4
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	This is run as a private trip, so we are able to suit your dates and requirements. We can also tailor the trip to suit.
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, however as it is a private trip you can dictate your activity level.

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.

