



## **NORTH COAST ADVENTURE**

Exploring and Island Hopping



# PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



## ITINERARY

## Madagascar • North Coast Adventure

**13 DAYS • 12 NIGHTS**

Antananarivo – Montagne des Français – Amber Mountain National Park - Ankarana - Ankify – Nosy Be and Surrounding area –

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

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 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.
- Enjoy a truly off the beaten track dhow/ pirogue safari – Island hopping around the Nosy Be archipelago.

## TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Adventure Expedition
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Nosy Be
Accommodation	Hotel, Camping, Bungalow, Tree Bungalow
Included Meals	12 Breakfasts, <del>9</del> 3 Lunches, <del>11</del> 0 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium
Group Size	Max. 8 people (No Single Supplement*)

## EMBRACING THE RUGGED NORTH COAST



An action packed adventure through the wild North West. You'll trek, canoe, bike and observe wildlife before finishing your trip with a truly unique island hopping experience that includes wild camping on tropical beaches. Starting from the red highlands, 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.

# 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.

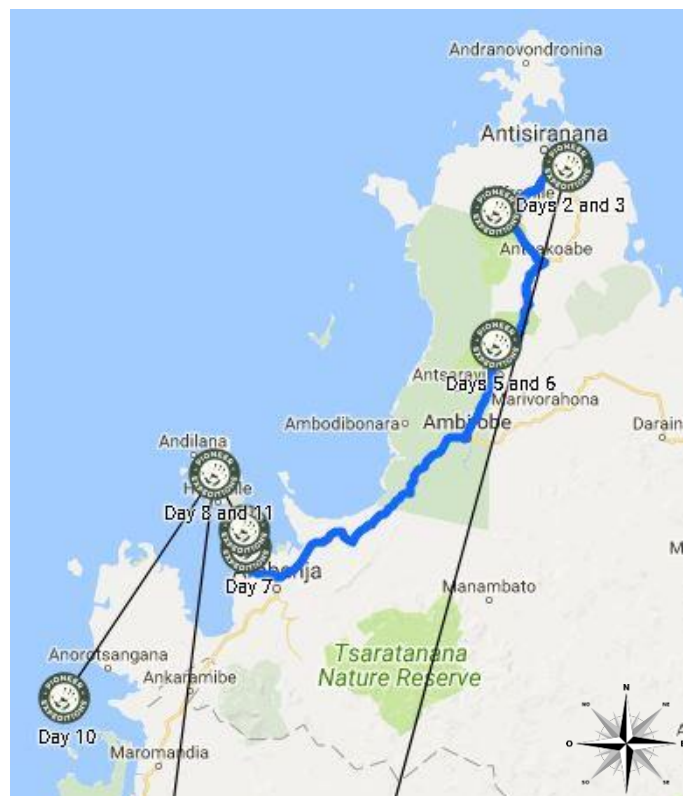
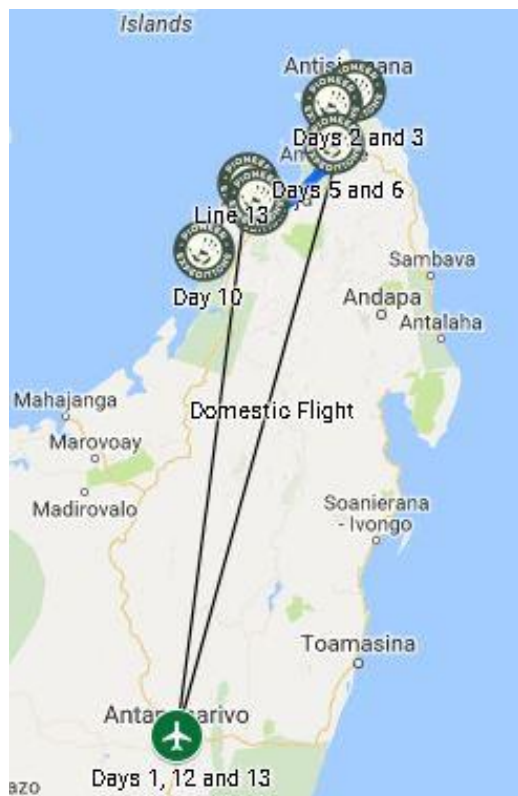
## WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

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

### Madagascar • North Coast Adventure



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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: Flight to Diego before visiting the dry forest of Montagne Des Français

This morning you will transfer to the airport for your flight to Antsiranana (Diego Suarez). Upon arrival in Diego you will be met by your driver and guide who will be with you for the next 7 days and will 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 Français is part of the larger Ramena protected area complex and is home to fish eagles and crowned lemurs.*



This afternoon we will have a trek in this area to discover some of the inhabitants.

Tonight 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 3: Montagne Des Francais – Jofreville

This morning is at leisure. There are plenty of activities you can choose to partake from climbing, mountain boarding, slack lining, adventure course etc, or another trek. You can discuss your preferences with your guide (some of the activities are charged for additionally). This afternoon we will head Jofreville (and the Montagne d'Ambre – the Amber Mountain).



Overnight:  
**Tree  
Bungalow**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**n/a**



Activity:  
**At Leisure**

### DAY 4: Amber Mountain

Today we will set out on a trek to explore the Amber Mountain

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

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Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**1 ½ hrs driving**



Activity:  
**Wildlife and Exploring**

### DAY 5: Ankarana

This morning we will head to Ankarana. This afternoon we will visit Perte de Riviere – which is the gateway to a series of caves leading to the ocean.



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 5 hours**



Activity:  
**Trekking and Wildlife**



## DAY 6: 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).

*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, Perrier'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.*

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 7: Hit the road towards the Ankify

This morning we head to Ambanja and then onwards to Ankify. After lunch in Ambanja, we will take to our mountain bikes as we explore this area and the Cacao plantation on 2 wheels. At the end of the cycle we will head to the coast of Ankify (a short hop – approx. 20 minutes). Tonight we will stay at lovely beach bungalows.



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, ~~L~~-D**



Distance:  
**160km (5hrs Driving)**



Activity:  
**Culture & Cycling**

## DAY 8: ANKIFY

Today we will take to our kayaks and depending on the river depth, will either explore the Sambarino River, or the mangroves around the coast.

Your afternoon is at leisure and you will stay once again at the beach bungalows.



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, D**



Distance:  
**1 hr boat ride**



Activity:  
**Boat ride. At leisure**



## DAY 9: ANKIFY - NOSY-BE

Your driver and guide will leave you this morning as a private boat will take you to Nosy Be. Upon arrival you will be met by a taxi and transferred to your hotel. This afternoon you can relax at your stunning hotel on the beach. At a pre-determined time you will walk along the beach, where you will meet your team who will be accompanying you on your dhow / pirogue safari tomorrow. A debrief will be given before you return to your hotel for dinner.



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**varies**



Activity:  
**Boat, snorkeling, trek, relaxing**

## DAY 10: NOSY-BE/ANJIABE

First thing this morning you will meet the Alefa Office for breakfast before boarding your Dhow/ Pirogue (depending on number in the group) to explore an area where the sea is the only path. Swimming, snorkelling and a discovery of an incredibly rich and diverse underwater world awaits us.

Please note the actual itinerary for the next 3 days will be decided by the team following your meeting, but will be something like the following:



After a dhow journey we will land at Anjiabé, a 3km long beach bordered by a semi-abandoned coconut plantation, a site with extraordinary low tide. This is where we will camp for tonight. After a drink and a stunning meal of seafood prepared for us by our chef, we will have the chance to nap, swim and for those who wish, walk trails to observe the many species of birds, mostly endemic to Madagascar. Sunset, cocktails, meals ... And good night!

Nights will be spent wild camping on beaches



Overnight:  
**Camp**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**varies**



Activity:  
**Boat, snorkeling, trek, relaxing**



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## DAY 11: SNORKELLING AND NATURE WALKS

Depending on the tide we will depart relatively early towards the Island's northernmost archipelago Radama. (approx. a 2 1/2hr crossing). Along the way we will get a chance to swim. Nosy Ambariopôtaka rises to 166 meters and includes a different landscape to last night and we camp facing the majestic Mozambique Channel. In the next bay we tend to find a Sakalava carpenter at work – with one or more shells of dhows resting on a bed of pink and white periwinkles. The whole island is surrounded by a lagoon. Nature walks in the jungle and lazing are the order of today.

### Overnight Camp



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**varies**



Activity:  
**Boat, snorkeling, relaxing**

## DAY 12: Island hopping – Nosy-Be

You will spend morning exploring by boat, snorkeling. After lunch you will head back to Nosy Be where you will stay once again at the lovely beach hotel  
Afternoon at leisure



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Short Flight**



Activity:  
**Leisure, Personal Preference**

## DAY 13: End of Trip

You will transfer to the airport where you will catch your flight home



Overnight:  
**N/A**



Meals:  
**B**



Distance:  
**30 mins**



Activity:  
**Flight Home**



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## 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.

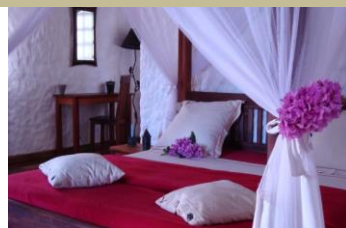
## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included	Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)</li><li>■ Accommodation as described</li><li>■ Water during tours</li><li>■ English speaking guide from day 2 – day 7</li><li>■ Driver and 4WD from day 2 – day 7</li><li>■ English speaking guide and boat team from day 9 - 11</li><li>■ All transfers, ferries</li><li>■ Internal flight ticket x 2</li><li>■ All entrance fees</li><li>■ Camping equipment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ International flights</li><li>➤ Meals other than mentioned</li><li>➤ Sleeping bag</li><li>➤ Tips</li><li>➤ Personal expenses</li><li>➤ Alcoholic and soft drinks - drinks in restaurants</li><li>➤ Personal expenses</li><li>➤ Optional tours/activities</li></ul>



## ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
Night 1	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Relais des Plateaux</i>
Night 2 & 3	Montagne des Français	Tree Bungalows	<i>Tree Bungalow in Jungle</i>
Night 4	Joffreville	Hotel	<i>The Litchi Tree</i>
Night 5 & 6	Ankarana	Hotel	<i>Ankarana Lodge</i>
Night 7	Ambanja	Bungalow	<i>Le Baobab</i>
Night 8 & 11	Nosy Be	Hotel	<i>L'heure Bleue</i>
Night 9 & 10	Nosy Be and Surrounds	Camping	
Night 12	Nosy Be	Hotel	<i>L'heure Bleue</i>



## 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

*"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

*"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

*"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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# 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 specialties 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. Heri has a particular interest in Orchids!
- His specialties 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 specialties 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.



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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.

