



## **BIRDING AND WILDLIFE**

Tailormade Birding Odyssey



# PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



## ITINERARY

Madagascar • Birding and Wildlife Expedition

**21 DAYS • 20 NIGHTS**

Antananarivo – Morondava – Ankarafantiska- Andasibe National Park- Mantadia National Park- Zombiste National Park- Ifaty- Isalo National Park- Antananarivo

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a **night hike** to see some of the nocturnal inhabitants of the forest.
- The chance to witness some exceptional birds including rufous vanga and fish eagle.
- Explore the famous **Andasibe & remarkable Isalo National Parks**.
- Experience close **unforgettable lemur encounters**.
- Visit the Reniala Nature Reserve '**Spiny Forest**' being of great interest to birdwatchers

## TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Bird and Wildlife Tour
Tour Start	Antananarivo Tour
End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotels and Bungalow
Included Meals	19 Breakfasts, 17 Lunches, 19 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium

## UNIQUE BIRDING AND WILDLIFE ADVENTURE



With over 100 endemic birds, Madagascar is a truly unique birding destination. Your specialist guide you will accompany you through a myriad of national parks to ensure you have the best chance of discovering some of Madagascar's exceptional birds and other wildlife. Whilst the focus is on birds, this is a tailor-made trip, which can be adapted to your interests, and the variety of places visited offer giving you a diverse and extremely interesting experience to most others who visit this incredible country.

## MADAGASCAR *an overview*

Madagascar is a one-off; there is no other place like it. Its landscapes, animals and plants are simply incredible! 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 Southern Madagascar on this exceptional nature guided tour.

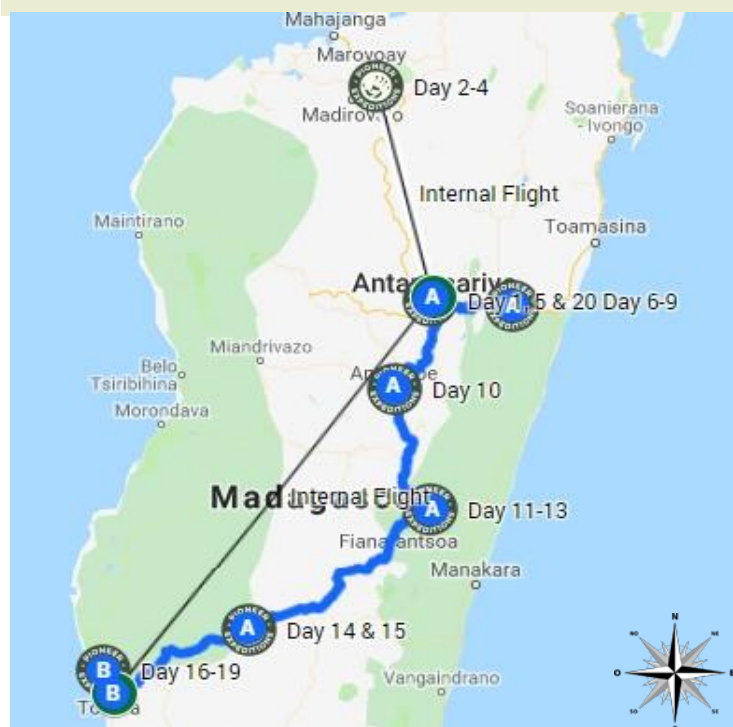
## WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

We 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. Our experts are on hand whether you are looking for a small group trip or a bespoke holiday.

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 as long as you are happy to share a room). Pioneer work in some of the world's most spectacular, remote and extraordinary places worldwide.

## ITINERARY

### Madagascar • Bird and Wildlife Adventure



## DAY 1: Antananarivo

Upon arrival in Antananarivo you will be met by our driver and transferred to your hotel for the night.

*Overnight at Relais des Plateaux.*

*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**



Distance:  
**Airport Transfer**



Activity:  
**Arrive in Tana**

## DAY 2: ANTANANARIVO – MAJUNGA

Transfer to the airport in time for your flight to Majunga. Your guide and driver who will be with you (until Diego) will meet you at the airport in Majunga. From here you will drive to Ankafantsika. You will overnight at the bungalows in the national park - these are set discreetly in the forest and face Lake Ravelobe. They are clean, comfortable and simple, and are ideal for us to get an early start in the forest tomorrow (being a 2 min walk from the park entrance).

*Overnight bungalow.*

*Ankarafantsika National Park, set on Lac Ravelobe, is a mixture of deciduous forests and wetlands. It is known for its lakes and for being a haven for lemurs and endemic birds. It is covered in varied fauna, mainly herbaceous and endemic woody plants. It is the home to the beautiful Coquerel's sifaka as well as 7 other species of lemurs (inc. western woolly, fat tailed dwarf lemur, mongoose lemurs) and exceptional birds (including rufous vanga and fish eagle). There is an organized network of paths that is perfect for wildlife viewing.*

*Here you are able to take night walks to see some of the nocturnal species which are particularly prevalent in this park (including mouse lemur – the smallest primate in the world).*



Overnight:  
**Bungalow**



Meals:  
**B, D**



Distance:  
**Short flight**



Activity:  
**Transfer**

## DAY 3: VISIT OF THE ANKARAFANTSIKA NATIONAL PARK

We set off after breakfast to explore this forest on foot, a superb and fauna rich day hike. We will take a picnic lunch to have on the trail in the national park.

This afternoon you have the option of a boat trip on the lake. After dinner we will have the option of setting out on a night hike again to see some of the nocturnal inhabitants of the forest.



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Overnight bungalow.



Overnight:  
**Bungalow**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Varies**



Activity:  
**Hiking**

#### DAY 4: VISIT OF THE ANKARAFANTSIKA NATIONAL PARK

Another chance to visit the National Park. This afternoon you have the option of a boat trip on the lake.

Overnight bungalow.



Overnight:  
**Bungalow**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Varies**



Activity:  
**Culture and exploring**

#### DAY 5: ANKARAFANTSIKA – Tana

We will transfer to the airport for your flight back to Antananarivo. Upon your return to Antananarivo, you will be met by our driver and transferred to your hotel for the night.

Overnight stay in Vakona Lodge.



Overnight:  
**Lodge**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Short drive**



Activity:  
**Exploring**

#### DAY 6: ANTANANARIVO – ANDASIBE NATIONAL PARK

This morning we will set off to the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park (previously known as Perinet) where you will spend 1 ½ days exploring this wonderful environment. En-route we will stop at a farm specialising in Madagascan reptiles and butterflies, before arriving at our hotel.. This afternoon you will get a chance to stroll around the private reserve of Vakona Lodge with the opportunity to spot lemurs and crocodiles. This evening, take a twilight/nocturnal walk, looking out for the nocturnal species of lemur by catching their eyes in the torchlight.

Overnight hotel.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 4hrs drive**



Activity:  
**Transfer**

#### DAY 7: DISCOVERING ANDASIBE NATIONAL PARK

Early this morning we will head to Vakona Lodges private reserve – lemur island for a great chance to see lemurs up close! as well as some great birdlife. We will then head out to explore Andasibe National Park.

Overnight hotel – Vakona Lodge.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 1-2hr drive**



Activity:  
**Lemur spotting**

#### DAY 8: DISCOVERING MANTADIA NATIONAL PARK



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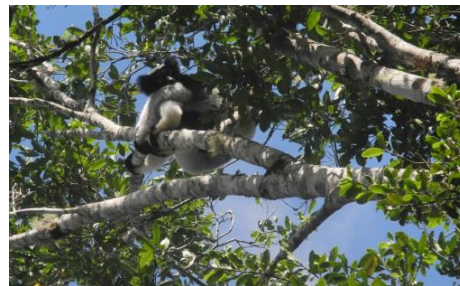
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Today we will explore Mantadia National Park.

*Andasibe-Mantadia National Park (formerly known as Perinet) is a 155 square kilometer protected area, about 150 km east of Antananarivo (approx. a three hour drive) consisting principally of primary growth forest. These are home to the teddy bear-like Indri, the largest of Madagascar's lemur species, as well 11 lemur species in total and a wide array of bird life too. Listening to the piercing yet melancholy cry of the Indri in the morning is an evocative experience and for those who are prepared to follow them through the thick rainforest, the reward is often a close-up view of these beautiful creatures. This National Park was inscribed in the World Heritage Site in 2007 as part of the Rainforests of the Atsinanana.*



Overnight hotel – Vakona Lodge .



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**N/A**



Activity:  
**Transfer and Wildlife**

## DAY 9: DISCOVERING ANTAVALOBE

Today we will explore Antavalobe, to see if we can see the Helmet Vanga.

Overnight hotel – Vakona Lodge



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 2hrs**



Activity:  
**Explore**

## DAY 10: Andasibe – Antsirabe

We will set off early this morning for a full day journey to Antsirabe (via Tana). The driving time is approximately 7 hours, however we will stop for lunch along the way. Upon arrival at Antsirabe, if time allows, you could choose to visit the stone cutting workshop where crystals are cut.

*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.*



Overnight Hotel.



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Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 7hrs drive**



Activity:  
**Exploring and transfers**

### DAY 11: Antsirabe to Ranomafana

We will set out after an early breakfast towards Ranomafana National Park (approx. 4hr journey on good roads). We will stay just outside Ranomafana (just 10 minutes from the park entrance). Upon arrival to Ranomafana we will visit the National Park for the afternoon.

Overnight Hotel.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 7hrs**



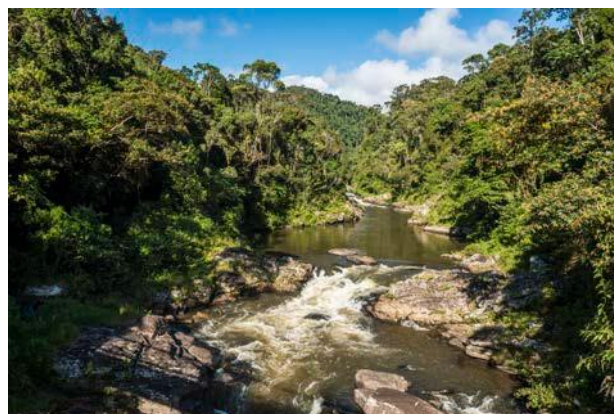
Activity:  
**Exploring**

### DAY 12-13: Discovering Ranomafana National Park

Days exploring Ranomafana National Park.

Overnight Hotel.

*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.*



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 20min drive**



Activity:  
**Exploring**

### DAY 14: RANOMAFANA – ISALO

Day drive as we transfer to our hotel near, Isalo National Park. En-route we may get the chance to stop off at a traditional market and pass through quaint villages.



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Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Approx. 10hrs  
drive**



Activity:  
**Culture and transfer**

## DAY 15: DISCOVERING ISALO NATIONAL PARK

Park visit including the opportunity to swim in a natural pool with lunch on trail.

Overnight Hotel – Le Relais de la Reine.

*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 park's most prominent feature, but there are 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:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Varies**

Activity:  
**Transfer**

## DAY 16: TRANSFER TO IFATY

We will have an early start today as we head to Zombiste National Park.

*This south-western National Park is known for the huge variety of rare bird species as well as its unique diversity. Zombitse 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. Zombitse boasts fantastic flora as well including orchids and ficus making this a stunning national park!*



We can spend the day here before heading to Ifaty and the coast.

Overnight Hotel.



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, L, D**



Distance:  
**Varies**



Activity:  
**Transfer**

## DAY 17: IFATY

Today your guide will accompany you to the Spiny Forest for a day birdwatching.



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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 – Le Paradisier



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B, D**



Distance:  
**Varies**

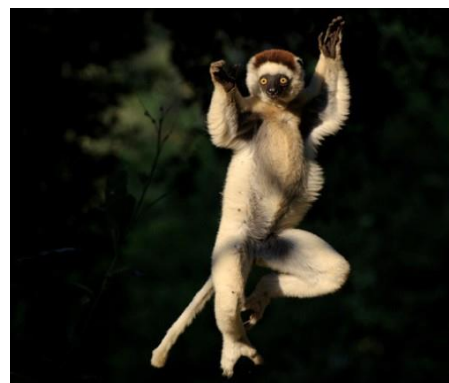


Activity:  
**Birdwatching**

### DAY 18: IFATY

Today your guide and driver will take you to explore Zombiste National Park again.

This south-western National Park is known for the huge variety of rare bird species as well as its unique diversity. Zombitse 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. Zombitse boast fantastic flora as well including orchids and ficus making this a stunning national park!



Upon arrival back in Ifaty, your driver and guide will leave you (as they will return to Antananarivo by road).

#### Overnight Hotel



Overnight:  
**N/A**



Meals:  
**B, D**



Distance:  
**Varies**



Activity:  
**Explore**

### DAY 19: IFATY

Day at leisure.

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 narrow, but (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.



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## Overnight Hotel



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B,D**



Distance:  
**Airport transfer**



Activity:  
**Travel**

## DAY 20: IFATY TO ANTANANARIVO

You will catch an inbound flight from Tulear to Tana. Depending on your time of arrival you may be able to visit the handicraft market .

## Overnight Hotel



Overnight:  
**Hotel**



Meals:  
**B**



Distance:  
**Airport transfer**



Activity:  
**Travel**

## DAY 21 : END OF TRIP (B)

Day at leisure. You will have a day use room. Transfer to airport in time for flight home.



Overnight:  
**N/A**



Meals:  
**B**



Distance:  
**Airport transfer**



Activity:  
**Travel**

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### Included

- All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- English speaking Madagascan naturalist guide from day 2 – day 14
- Accommodation as described
- Local guides within the national parks
- All transfers stated
- Internal flight ticket
- All entrance & National Park fees
- Driver and vehicle day 2-14

### Not Included

- International flights (These can be arranged through us, if needed)
- Meals other than mentioned
- Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included during tours)
- Tips
- Personal expenses
- Optional tours/activities at Beach



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# ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

Relais des Plateaux  
[www.relais-des-plateaux.com](http://www.relais-des-plateaux.com)



**ANKARAFANTSIKA**  
Gîte Ankarafantsika



Vakona Lodge  
[www.hotelvakona.com](http://www.hotelvakona.com)



Chambres des Voyageurs  
[www.chambres-voyageur.mg](http://www.chambres-voyageur.mg)



Le Relais de la Reine  
[www.lerelaisdelareine.com](http://www.lerelaisdelareine.com)





# 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
- With the lack of water and food at this time 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



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## 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*



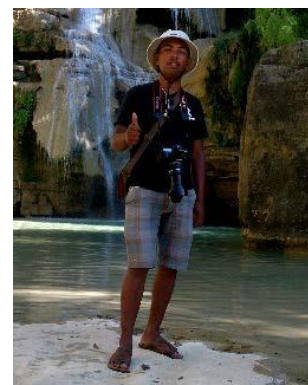
#### **MAMY**

- 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. Hery 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	<b>This region is best explored between April and December</b>
Best Time To Go	Apr – May, Sept – Nov
Group Size	<b>Max group size 8</b>
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	<b>We have a few group departures between April and December – please see website or contact us for exact dates. Alternatively we are able to arrange tailor-made or private departures to suit.</b>
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

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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.

