



ULTIMATE ADVENTURE

Biking, Kayaking, Trekking and Wildlife

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

ITINERARY

South East Madagascar • Nature Guided

**12 DAYS • 11 NIGHTS
+ OPTIONAL EXT.**

Antananarivo – Antsirabe – Ranomafana National Park – Ambalavao
– Mananantana River - Anja Park – Andringitra National Park –
Ambositra - Tana

This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

TOUR ESSENTIALS

- Witness the Milne Edwards Sifaka in Ranomafana, an endemic to the striking Eastern rainforests.
- Go off-the-beaten track on a rustic train ride through Eastern Madagascar, a highly unique experience.
- Canoe down the peaceful Faraony River which flows from the central highlands down into the Indian Ocean.
- Uncover the highlands and visit the famous Ring Tailed lemurs of the Anja Conservation Reserve, before exploring the spectacular Tsaranoro Valley.

Tour Style
wildlife

Active Adventure with

Tour Start

Antananarivo

Tour End

Antananarivo

Accommodation

Hotel, Eco-Reserve,
Camping, Bungalows

Included Meals

11 Breakfasts, 2
Lunches, 10 Dinners

Difficulty Level

Medium

THE NATURE OF THE GREAT RED ISLAND



A great mix of wildlife and adventure as you discover some of Madagascar's Southern rivers, forests & mountains. With a mixture of camping and lodges – you'll explore on foot, by canoe, bike and car, spotting lemurs and meeting locals. If you admire nature and have a true sense of adventure, you'll love what we have planned for you.



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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 Eastern Madagascar on this great tour.

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.

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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: Heading south to the charming town of Antsirabe via Ambatolampy

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.



Once out of Tana the journey takes approx. 3+ hours on a relatively good, windy road, and 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. This afternoon we will have the chance to explore Antsirabe.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, D



Distance:
175km (5 hrs Drive)



Activity:
Culture/Drive

DAY 3: Lake Tritriva and Lake Andraikiba & Cycling back to Antsirabe

Today we will head by car to Anraikiba Lake. This reservoir provides the drinking water for Antsirabe. We will visit the lake and see the rice fields, fruit and vegetable plantations. We then head on, as we reach the village of Belazoo we will be able to see Mount Tritriva and we continue on to reach another, more spectacular lake – Lake Tritriva



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This Crater Lake with its volcanic landscape was formed following the collapse of the now extinct volcano.

Nestled at an altitude of about 1880m to the hollow of a small mountain, Tritriva Lake is a very sacred lake with much history. We will learn about some of this history whilst we visit this area and local market. After a picnic lunch we will start our cycle – back to Antsirabe through multiple small villages and rice fields as we get to experience authentic Malagasy life.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
20km drive / 20 km cycle.



Activity:
Culture/Cycle

DAY 4: Arriving at the magnificent **Ranomafana National Park**

This morning we will set off for 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.



We will stay just outside Ranomafana (just 10 minutes from the park entrance).



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, D



Approx. Distance:
7+ hrs driving



Activity:
Culture/Drive

DAY 5 : Discovering the wildlife and beauty of **Ranomafana National Park + Hot Springs**



Today you have the opportunity to explore the enchanting Ranomafana National Park through lush rainforest and search for lemurs along some of the 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.



This afternoon we will spend a couple of hours kayaking on the Namorana River inside the National Park. This is a great opportunity to get off the beaten track and see the locals go about their daily business from the couples panning for gold, to the illegal bootleggers! It is also a perfect opportunity to see many of the water birds who inhabit on or around the river.



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Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Wildlife and Exploring

DAY 6: Journey towards Ambalavao

Today we will head to Ambalavao and will head to the edge of the Mananatanana, in the village of Iarintsena. This village is actively involved in the development of rural tourism.

After preparing our boats, we board the kayak or raft for our new adventure.

The first crocodiles are waiting for you, only a few minutes after departure. Over the course of the day, you will see even more crocodiles, although you have to remain quiet and calm due to the timid nature of this elite predator, which is still hunted for its meat, skin and oil.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, D



Approx. Distance:
3hrs Drive



Activity:
Culture and Rafting

DAY 7: Begin thrilling descent of the Manantanana River in search of crocodiles!

We will spend the day on the river

Bury yourself in the heart of a fascinating world. A calm river that weaves between high granite walls. It is home to numerous crocodiles, which can be regularly seen sunbathing and living in relative harmony amongst the riverside population. Hunting has made them wary of humans, but in recent years their number seem to be increasing, decreasing pressure on the species and allowing them to roam more freely. Our trips also help to promote their presence, encouraging local people to protect them from poaching.



In the evening, we will set up our camp to face the mountain of "lying woman" that dominates the Antsakaviro reserve.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Approx. Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Kayaking

DAY 8: Visit Antsakaviro Village + continue Manantanana River adventure

The reserve is only 1 km from the camp and we will enjoy using the rays of the sunrise to guide us to the remains of this forest, which is set in gigantic puzzle blocks.

Antsakaviro village is a reserve initiated by a local association. Ideally located at the foot of the 'woman lying,' it deserves our support. The ring-tailed lemurs may be waiting for you at the foot of this huge cliff face that gives its character to this spectacular site. The reserve is relatively small, being on twenty hectares and the villagers have begun restoring the site by replanting endemic species on the edge of the forest.



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It is a great opportunity to encourage local people to protect the natural heritage of their land and is also a beautiful walk in the shadow of the impressive mountainside of Antsakaviro. On the way, we will discover many graves, including the impressive standing stones called the vatolahy, which means locally “the male stone”, and stand as a tribute to the tumultuous past of this region.

We will arrive back at camp at approximately 10:30 from here we paddle a short distance to our picnic area which is often visited by crocodiles. From here we only have a few more miles to the finish of our descent. We will arrive 400 meters away from where we met our car and driver, from which we will head back 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:
N/A



Activity:
Culture and Kayaking

DAY 9: Discovering wildlife at Anja Reserve and heading to the extraordinary Tsaranoro Valley

After breakfast, we will start our drive to Anja Park, which lasts a little more than 3 hours.

Created in 2001 and 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!



After visiting the reserve we will drive to our next destination – the Tsaranoro Valley (approx. 2 hrs away). This afternoon we can explore on a short trekking adventure or simply relax. Our accommodation here will be a traditional bungalow situated at the foot of Tsaranoro’s cliff.

This afternoon we will be able to go on a short trek to explore the area or simply relax.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, D



Distance:
200km (Approx. 6hrs Driving time)



Activity:
Driving, Wildlife and Exploring



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DAY 10: Exploring the remarkable natural beauty of Tsaranoro Valley

We will spend today exploring this stunning area on foot and meeting all the locals.

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 also have the chance to visit the base for our local agents reforestation effort (a passion which is shared (via wood-en-stock) 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:
Bungalows



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Exploring and Wildlife

DAY 11: Heading back up to Ambositra

Today we must start our long journey back to Tana, so we will head to Ambositra. Or this is where you can choose to extend your trip to the coast.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, D



Distance:
275km (10hrs Drive)



Activity:
Drive and Culture

DAY 12: Arrival in Antananarivo + Flight back home

We will head back to Tana today, so that it suits an afternoon flight. If you are booked on the Air France flight (which leaves around 1.30am), you can visit the handicraft market in Tana and have the option of a day use room at a local hotel. If you are on an earlier morning flight, you may need to spend an additional night in Tana, which we are happy to organise for you.



Overnight:
N/A



Meals:
B



Distance:
250km (7hr Drive)



Activity:
Onward Journey/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. 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.



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We can also **tailor itineraries** to suit your exact requirements including catering for younger children.

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.



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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included

- All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)
- Accommodation as described
- English speaking Madagascan guide from day 2 – day 12
- Local guide within Ranomafana National Park
- Canoe team
- All transfers
- All entrance fees
- All camping and canoe equipment

Not Included

- Meals other than mentioned
- International flights
- Tips
- Personal expenses
- Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included)
- Sleeping bag

ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
Night 1	Antananarivo	Hotel	Relais des Plateaux
Night 2 & 3	Antsirabe	Hotel	Pulmeria
Night 4 & 5	Ranomafana	Hotel	Thermal Hotel
Night 6	Ambalavao	Hotel	Zongo Hotel
Night 7 & 8	Tsaranoro Valley	Bungalow	Camp Catta
Night 11	Ambositra	Hotel	Hotel L'Artisan



WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

"It really was a wonderful trip, superbly organised and completely seamless. We would not hesitate to recommend you to anyone, and indeed have done so to many friends who have seen our pictures and now want to go themselves! Thank you for everything,"

-C. Roberts

"I wanted a small group, more of an adventure tour to Madagascar, and I believe this is exactly what I got! Everything was so well taken care of, and everyone was so helpful! This was one of the most incredible and exciting holidays that I have ever been one. It will be remembered for many years!"

-J. Winterstein



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OPTIONAL EXTENSION

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

DAY 11: Heading to Isalo National Park

After visiting the reserve we will drive to our next destination – Isalo National Park.



Overnight:
Eco-Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
5 hr Driving



Activity:
Wildlife and Travelling

DAY 12: Unearthing the wonders of the remarkable Isalo National Park

Today we will visit this breathtaking National Park. This extraordinarily unique area of natural beauty is unlike any other place in Madagascar.

Included will be the opportunity to swim in a natural pool with lunch on the 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



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Trekking and Wildlife



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DAY 13: Journeying to Zombiste National Park and the stunning coastal town of Ifaty

Today we head to Ifaty and the Indian Ocean. We plan to stop by Zombiste National Park en-route.

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!



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.



Upon arrival in Ifaty, your driver and guide will leave you. Your time at the coast will be at your leisure



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
260km (5hr Driving)



Activity:
Beach and Wildlife

DAY 14: Discovering the surrounding fascinations of Ifaty

Today can be spent at your leisure, experiencing what beautiful Ifaty and its surrounding areas have to offer.

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.



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Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Personal Preference/Beach

DAY 15: Back to Antananarivo

You will have a transfer to Tulear Airport, where you will catch the Air Madagascar flight from Tulear to Tana. We will meet you again at Tana airport and depending on your time of arrival, you can visit the handicraft market, before transferring to your hotel.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B



Distance:
Short Flight



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 16: End of Trip

Transfer to airport in time for flight home. If you are on a flight 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



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Onward Journey/Flight Home

(Email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com for costings and more information on this extension, 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
- With the lack of water and food 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 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	March - December
Best Time To Go	September – December
Group Size	2-8 pax
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	We have a couple small group departures during this time – please see website or contact us for exact dates. Alternatively we are able to arrange tailor-made or private departures to suit, and are happy to add beach or additional National Park 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

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.

