



MAGICAL MASOALA

Trekking & Kayaking

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

ITINERARY

Madagascar • Masoala Peninsula (Trekking & Kayaking)

8 DAYS • 7 NIGHTS

Masoala Forest Lodge (Masoala National Park)

*This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements.
Shorter trips are possible (to fit with Wed and Sun flight schedule)*

HIGHLIGHTS

- Kayaking to spectacular deserted tropical islands
- Snorkelling in the coral reefs, witnessing a dazzling array of marine life
- Beachcombing and exploring the expansive pristine rainforest of the remote Masoala Peninsula.
- Relaxing at a stunning jungle eco-lodge surrounded by beautifully untouched tropical wilderness.

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Lodge
Tour Start	Maroantsetra
Tour End	Maroantsetra
Accommodation	Hotel, Eco-Lodge
Included Meals	7 Breakfasts, 7 Lunches, 7 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Easy/Medium

AN UNTOUCHED RAINFOREST PENINSULA



From your base in Masoala National Park you can explore this natural paradise, kayaking the forested coastline, into pristine mangroves overhung by primary rainforest. With plenty of opportunities to snorkel trek and discover the unique wildlife.



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MADAGASCAR *an overview*

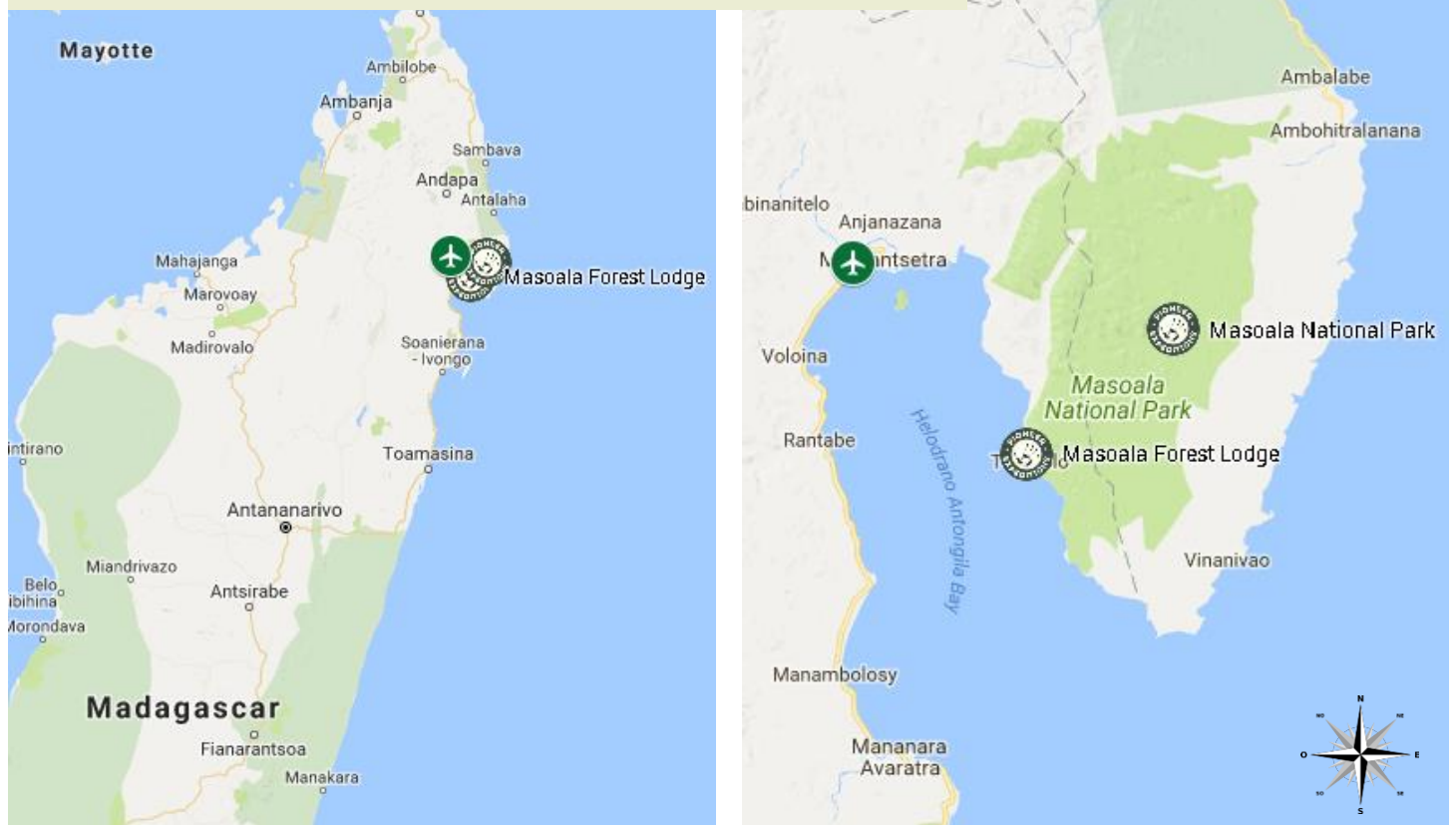
Madagascar is a one-off; there is no other place like it. Its landscapes, animals and plants are simply incredible! Near the equator with an astonishing array of habitats, ranging from rainforests to deserts and from mountain tops to mangrove swamps, it is one of the most important countries for biodiversity 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 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. Our experts are on hand whether you are looking for a small group trip or a bespoke holiday.

ITINERARY

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DAY 1: Arrive at Maroantsetra and catch the boat across the Bay Antongil



Morning charter flight to Maroantsetra. We are met on arrival at the Maroantsetra airport and transfer to the boat for the exciting voyage across the Bay d'Antongil to the Masoala Forest Lodge. The journey takes around 2 hours, passing the tropical island of Nosy Mangabe, with the possibility of dolphin and whale sightings in season and the thickly forested mountains as a dramatic backdrop to the destination.

The Antongil bay is the largest bay in Madagascar. It is at the northern end of the east coast of the island and for administrative purposes it is within Analanjirofo Region. The bay is about 60 km long and 30 km wide, and is formed by the Masoala peninsula on its eastern side. At the northern end of the bay is the island of Nosy Mangabe and the town of Maroantsetra.



Upon arrival in paradise, we freshen up and settle into our luxury lodge before lunch, which is served at the beach house.

The afternoon activities include exploring the beaches and coastal forest in the lodge area and potentially enjoying a swim in the pristine sea, before taking a guided walk along the coast past Tampolo Point, with the possibility of spotting white-fronted brown lemurs in the coastal forest.

This evening we will return to base for sundowners around the fire on the beach and dinner at the lodge.



Overnight:
Masoala Forest Lodge



Meals:
L, D



Distance:
Airport Transfer (incl. 2hr Boat)



Activity:
Beach and Wildlife

DAY 2: Masoala Forest Lodge – Rainforest Walks, Snorkelling & Sea Kayaking

We awake early and take coffee and breakfast on the sea deck overlooking the beach and then we set-off on the day's adventure. Today will involve a walk down the beach in the other direction and up into the primary rainforest in search of the Red-ruffed lemurs, dwarf chameleons and other wildlife endemic to this forest.



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This unique tropical lowland forest is home to a huge variety of chameleons, snakes and lemurs, 5 species of which are nocturnal. Tampolo Forest is situated on the east coast of Madagascar and is just one of the last remaining substantial areas of littoral forest. This area really showcases the interesting, endemic animal and plant species of Madagascar.



After some hours in the dense forest with giant hardwoods and majestic tree ferns we return to camp by boat for a well-earned lunch and rest before the afternoon activity. This could be a snorkel on the nearby reefs rich in underwater diversity, or a guided sea kayak to the look-out rock at the “Secret Cove” for the sunset, with the chance of a close encounter with Bottlenose Dolphin or Green Turtle. Dinner at the lodge.



Overnight:
Masoala Forest Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
150km (3hrs Driving)



Activity:
Wildlife Encounters

DAY 3: Masoala Forest Lodge – Coastal Forest Walks, Tampolo River & Nocturnal Walk

A relaxed start and breakfast on the sea deck for today before departing on a guided walk through the coastal forest, in search of more birds and mammals. After a couple of hours walk, we will enjoy a swim into the crystal clear water of the cascades of the Tampolo River at the foot of the forested mountains. We will return to camp on a traditional dugout canoe paddled down the shady river.

After lunch, enjoy a relaxed afternoon on the private beaches or snorkel on the coral reefs. Then we will join a guided nocturnal walk with the intriguing possibility of seeing some of the secretive nocturnal wildlife such as Leaf-tailed Gecko, Dwarf and Mouse lemurs and maybe even the elusive Aye-Aye.

Dinner will be served at the lodge.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Walking and Wildlife



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DAY 4: Masoala Forest Lodge – Sacred Island, River Kayaking & Malagasy Culture

After breakfast, be ready for an exploration by sea kayak or boat of the calm water and fantastic rock formations of Tampolo point. We will stop on the beach at the “Sacred Island” where we will relax or swim. Then we will kayak into a pristine mangrove and forested river, with the chance of spotting Blue-spotted stingrays in the shallow water or perhaps the Lesser bamboo lemurs crossing the river.



After a picnic lunch on the beach, we will head back the camp by kayak or boat, for an evening of entertainment and high spirits with the visit of the traditional Malagasy music and dance group from the local village.

We will enjoy the sundowners around the fire on the beach and have dinner at the lodge.



Overnight:
Masoala Forest Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Culture/Drive

DAY 5: Masoala Forest Lodge – Tampolo Marine Reserve and Antalavia River

Breakfast on the sea deck.

Board the boat for the voyage through the Tampolo Marine Reserve to the mouth of the Antalavia River. The forested coastline viewed from the boat is stunningly beautiful, with countless deserted beaches and calm blue sea.

On arrival on the beach at Antalavia, board the dingy for the short paddle in the estuary to the cascades of the Antalavia River. Here refreshingly cool, clear water forms perfect swimming pools, over-hung by the lush forest with a chance of seeing White-fronted brown lemurs leaping through the canopy.

After a picnic lunch on the beach and a short rest under the trees, you have the choice of returning to camp by boat or on foot.

Sundowners around the fire on the beach and dinner in the lodge.



Overnight:
Masoala Forest Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 6: Masoala Forest Lodge - Betsimisaraka Culture, Birdwatching Pirogue Trip & Evening Beach Fire

After breakfast on the sea deck, we will have a short guided walk through the coastal forest trails and farm land of the nearby village of Ambodiforaha. This is an opportunity to experience the local Betsimisaraka culture and sustainable way of life in the rainforest. You can visit their traditional houses and kitchens and perhaps see baskets, mats or hats being woven, vanilla, cloves, coffee or rice being prepared and pop in for a quick visit to the village school, co-funded by the lodge.



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After lunch at the lodge, you have the option of a stroll down the beach to the Tampolo River and enjoy a peaceful pirogue trip on the cool shady river to observe the birdlife.

This evening will involve sundowners around the fire on the beach and dinner at the lodge.



Overnight:
Masoala Forest Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 7: Masoala Forest Lodge

A day to spend as you choose –perhaps sun bathing on one of the private beaches, or birding and mammal spotting on the private forest trails at the lodge, or relaxing with a good book and a cold drink in a hammock on your private veranda or the view deck overhanging the sea.

Alternatively, take the opportunity to return to the primary forest in search of more endemic wildlife.

Sundowners around the fire on the beach and dinner in the lodge.



Overnight:
Masoala Forest Lodge



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Personal Preference

DAY 8: Last day at Masoala Forest Lodge

Enjoy an early last breakfast on the sea deck before boarding the boat for your return voyage to Maroantsetra, followed by the car transfer to the airport where your charter plane awaits you.

Enjoy the stunning view of the Masoala peninsula and Nosy Mangabe on the return to Antananarivo to either catch your international flight or continue on to the next stop of your Madagascar adventure.



Overnight:
N/A



Meals:
B, L



Distance:
Airport Transfer



Activity:
Onward Journey/Flight Home



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included	Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner) ■ Drinks ■ Accommodation as described ■ Road and boat transfers ■ Guide ■ National park fees ■ All equipment / Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ International flights ➤ Flights to/from Maroantsetra (these are private charter flights and cost £1250pp for a return flights) ➤ Accommodation in Tana to bookend the trip - -we are happy to organise this along with any other Madagascar extensions ➤ Meals other than mentioned ➤ Tips (optional) ➤ Personal Expenses

ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Name
Night 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	Masoala Rainforest Peninsula	Lodge	Masoala Forest Lodge



KAYAKING



The group kayak outings, as per the itinerary, are flexible and may vary according to the weather, the ability and desires of the group. Distances kayaked range from a few kilometers to up to twenty five kilometers, with the option of taking the support boat or kayaking back to camp. The kayaking is on sheltered water with only minor surf to be negotiated on some of the beaches we stop at. The kayaks are always available for extra private outings from the camps.

We use sit-on-top single and double sea kayaks with adjustable foot pedals and backrests. These kayaks are perfect for the warm climate as no spray decks are required and are easy to remount from the water. There are watertight hatches for storing our picnic lunch and gear for the day and the snorkeling kit. We provide feathered or un-feathered paddles, life-jackets and dry-bags. The kayak guides are highly experienced sea kayakers and with extensive local knowledge.



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ACCOMODATION



Masoala Forest Lodge

The six palm thatched tree-houses are elevated on stilted wooden platforms, to provide uninterrupted views of forest canopy and sea and allowing visitors to experience the forest from the perspective of the lemurs and birds. Each tree-house contains a fully netted and furnished safari tent and boasts an en-suite bathroom with hot running water. Guests can look forward to sleeping under canvas in the wild in total comfort and privacy.

The two communal areas are also stilted, thatched and open-plan, providing natural lighting and ventilation in a minimalistic and efficient style.

With shady hammocks catching the sea breeze on your private veranda or on the sea deck, and the sounds of the forest all around, there is ample opportunity for relaxation after the day's activities in this tropical paradise.

WILDLIFE OF MASOALA



The rainforest of the Masoala National Park is rich in fascinating wildlife. Several endemic species, including the highly vocal Red-ruffed lemur are found only in this primary forest. Many species of birds, reptiles and mammals are found in the camp area and surrounding coastal forest, with a network of private nature trails providing easy access to this wildlife, with or without a guide.

The Masoala Forest Lodge has several private beaches bounding on the warm, coral-rich waters of the Tampolo Marine Reserve. The large diversity of fish, hard and soft corals and other marine life that is found on the sand bottom and the shallow coral reefs can be viewed by exciting snorkelling right off the beach.

The Masoala rainforest is also home to many valuable timber trees, such as Rosewood, (*Dalbergia baronii*), and rare palm species, including the biggest palm in Madagascar, the "Red-ruffed lemur palm", (*Lemurophoenix halleuxii*), which can be viewed in the the lodge area.



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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



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Season	This region is best explored between April and December
Best Time To Go	Oct – Dec
Responsibility	The small local village of Ambodiforaha and their rice fields are a short walk down the coast and the friendly people of the “Betsimisaraka” tribe are eager to provide insight into their traditions and techniques of subsistence farming and life in the forest. The Masoala Forest Lodge is committed to a program of community benefit to assist these people to maintain a sustainable lifestyle in this protected environment.
Group Departures	Private Tailormade 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 ‘easy – moderate level’ – you can choose the amount of activity you would like to do in a day.

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.

