

BIRDERS REST FAR AND WIDE PRESENTS:

MADAGASCAR – a 3 week tour & extension

2020 GENERAL INFORMATION

DATES & ITINERARIES

Tour dates are tentatively as follows:

21 day tour – Saturday 24th October to Friday 13th November 2020

Extension to the Masoala Peninsula – 13th to 18th November 2020

- This itinerary follows the route we took on our 2018 tour and is a typical one to maximise the variety of birds and mammals. There are other options, some of which are more adventurous, may take us to different scenery (such as the 'tsingy' of parts of the western dry forests), may offer more interesting hikes and may provide better chances of less well-known species like Sakalava Rail, Fossa and Madame Berthe's Mouse Lemur.
- At present, with still more than a year to go, I will wait for feedback on itineraries from those interested in coming to one of the world's most intriguing countries.
- This 21 day tour takes us from Antananarivo to the eastern rainforest at Andasibe and Mantadia, the dry deciduous and spiny forest of the far south-east at Tolagnaro and Berenty, the coastal spiny forest of the south-west at Toliara and Ifaty, the offshore tropical island of Nosy Ve, the limestone hilly country of the central south at Isalo, more eastern rainforest at Ranomafana, the north west coast at Mahajanga, dry deciduous forest inland from there and by boat in the Betsiboka delta.
- The extension involves a journey from the capital to the north-eastern rainforest at Maroantsetra and the Masoala Peninsula, with target species like Helmet Vanga, Red Owl, Red-ruffed Lemur and Aye-Aye. The rather high cost reflects the fact that we will charter the flight, the scheduled service is often unreliable.
- The main focus will be birds and lemurs but there will be plenty of other mammals, a variety of reptiles including chameleons and snakes, and many fascinating insects and spiders; also some amazing plants.
- You will get the most out of the tour by purchasing some wildlife guides (see below) and try to become familiar with some of the common species, or at least the typical Madagascan families of birds and mammals, even some of the families are endemic.
- A reasonable level of fitness is required but although there are some quite long walks, there are no mountain climbs. Some trails are muddy, rough and steep in parts. If you feel unable to tackle the longer walks, you may opt out and stay at or near the accommodation if it is a day when we are not moving on.
- Anyone interested in linking other destinations on route should let us know. Mauritius and Reunion have a number of interesting and endemic birds.
- **NOTE:** Internal flights are not always reliable and the itinerary is therefore subject to change if circumstances require it. More on this at a later date.

COST

My ground agent gives tour prices in Euros.

The cost of the 21 day tour is as follows:

6,900 Euros per person - 2 sharing or:

7,700 Euros for singles not sharing.

At present (May 2019) these convert roughly as follows:

Main tour: **US\$7,720 - NZ\$11,770 – AU\$11,140 – GBP 6,080**

For singles: **US\$8,610 - NZ\$13,130 – AU\$12,430 – GBP 6,780**

The Masoala Peninsula extension:

3,200 Euros per person - 2 sharing or:

3,400 Euros for singles not sharing.

The prices for the main tour include:

- All overnight accommodation in reasonable quality hotels & lodges (but note the one night at Farankaraina, on the extension, is basic).
- All meals & packed lunches
- Most bottled water
- All internal flights – there are 4 of these on the main tour: Tana to Tolagnaro, Tolagnaro to Toliara, Tana to Mahajanga and Mahajanga back to Tana.
- Transport throughout in suitable vehicles
- River and sea transport
- Entry fees to parks & reserves
- Guiding both by me and local guides
- Transfers to and from airports

It does not include:

- International flights to and from Antananarivo
- Any visas required
- Soft and alcoholic drinks
- Medical requirements
- Insurance
- Tips
- Personal laundry
- Bank charges
- Other personal requirements, souvenirs etc.

Deposits should be paid to my foreign currency account in Euros.

Tour needs a minimum of 6 people to run, maximum number 8.

FIELD GUIDES

I recommend the following:

Birds of Madagascar by Hawkins, Safford & Skerrett – Helm Field Guides

Published in 2015, this is now the standard recommended guide for birds. It includes the Comoros, the Mascarene Islands and the Seychelles.

Apart from this there is a Pica Press guide 'Birds of Madagascar' which is a photographic guide by Morris and Hawkins; also 'Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands' by Sinclair and Langrand, published by Struik, is a nice light weight book.

For mammals you should see Nick Garbutt's book 'Mammals of Madagascar' published by Pica Press.

Nick was the leader of our 2004 trip but his book has been revised in 2007.

I will be reviewing other books (also on other wildlife) and welcome any comments from our trip guests.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please note the following:

- I will bring both the latest bird Field Guide by Hawkins, Safford & Skerrett and Nick Garbutt's Mammal Guide.
- Bring enough cash to cover visa costs, drinks, souvenirs, any other shopping, tips, etc in US dollars (preferred), Euros or UK sterling – these are easiest to change into Madagascan ariarys.
- Visas at the airport. Nobody needs more than a 30 day visa, this costs at present 35 Euros or 40 US\$ each, you should have the cash for this ready in one of these currencies.
- You need to fill in a landing form before arrival.
- Airport procedure is a little slow and chaotic. You queue to hand in a health form, then to pay for the visa, then to the police check where they put the visa in your passport. Baggage reclaim and customs check are both slow too.
- We hope that our guide throughout the tour will be Claude Rambelason who guided our 2018 tour and was superb. He is a top wildlife guide in the country and has led wildlife tours for our ground agent for many years.
- Check current vaccination recommendations and those for malarial prophylactics.
- Stomach upsets are a likely problem in Madagascar (as in many 3rd world tropical countries). Be prepared and bring your choice of medication for this, e.g Imodium. Personally I haven't suffered for more than one day per trip.

Detlef Davies

May 2019

www.birdersrest.com