

# MADAGASCAR – OCTOBER to NOVEMBER 2020

## Main Tour itinerary – 24 Oct to 13 Nov.

### **Saturday 24 October – Arrive Antananarivo**

Arrival in Antananarivo (often abbreviated to 'Tana') – Ivato Airport. Likely air routes include flights from Mauritius, Johannesburg, Istanbul and (less often) Bangkok. Transfer to hotel. o/n Hotel (near the airport?).

### **Sunday 25 October – Antananarivo to Andasibe**

Leave Tana early in the tour bus, heading north-eastwards to Andasibe, sometimes known by its French name of 'Perinet' and a popular tour destination because of its proximity to the capital. The 4 hour journey passes through agricultural areas, highland scenes of terraced slopes and rice fields in the valley bottoms. The route then goes downhill towards the coast and takes us into one of the well-known parts of the eastern rainforest which extend intermittently all down the eastern escarpment of the island. We will make several stops on route for common open country birds such as Hammerkop, Madagascar Kestrel, M Cisticola, M Lark and M Coucal; and try a site for the uncommon Madagascar Pratincole.



Afternoon and evening birding at Andasibe looking for forest specialities, such as Velvet Asity, Madagascar Snipe, Grey Emutail, Red-fronted Coua, Cuckoo Roller, White-throated Rail, Madagascar Little Grebe, vangas including Nuthatch Vanga & Pitta-like Ground Roller. We should see our first lemurs today, perhaps Brown and Red-bellied Lemurs and the huge Indri; chameleons, other reptiles and frogs. We will be spotlighting each night for nocturnal lemurs – such as Greater & Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemurs and Brown Mouse Lemurs; also other nocturnal mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Overnight – further down the road at Mantadia Lodge.

### **Monday & Tuesday 26 & 27 October – Andasibe & Mantadia National Park**

We spend 2 more full days and nights in the area, particularly to Mantadia (declared a reserve in 1991) which holds species missing at Andasibe. In particular we will look for the rarer ground rollers (Scaly, Short-legged and Rufous-headed), both Vasa Parrots, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Ward's Flycatcher, Tylas Vanga, skulkers like White-throated Oxylabes, Madagascar Flufftail & Madagascar Wood-Rail. Lemurs further afield include Diademmed Sifaka and Black & White Ruffed Lemur. Spotlighting is likely to produce new species each night. 2 more nights at Mantadia Lodge.

### **Wednesday 28 October – Andasibe to Tana**

After a final morning at Andasibe, we leave after lunch and arrive back in Tana late afternoon. Overnight at hotel near the airport.

### **Thursday 29 October – Tana to Tolagnaro (Fort Dauphin)**

We take a morning flight from Ivato Airport to Tolagnaro on the south-east coast of Madagascar. In the late morning we will visit one of 2 forested National Parks. The most accessible is Andohahela National Park c.40 kms north-west of Tolagnaro. This is where the

habitat changes from rainforest to dry spiny forest and there is a transitional zone in the centre. The other possibility is to try and get to a new National Park called Tsitongambarika. This is pure rainforest, north of Tolagnaro and although preferable to Andohahela from the wildlife point of view, it is not yet easily accessible and few tours go there at the moment. Either site might produce the rare Red-tailed Newtonia. We can spend the rest of the day in the forest and perhaps go spotlighting. Overnight at Hotel Le Dauphin, Tolagnaro.

### **Friday 30 October – Fort Dauphin to Berenty**



In the morning we will travel west for a couple of hours to the well-known reserve at Berenty, a private reserve by the Mandrare river, which although quite extensive, is surrounded by a large area of sisal plantations. It is our first introduction to the pure spiny forest, consisting of a host of endemic plants such as the wide-branching, octopus-like plants in the family Didiereaceae. This is very dry country with sandy soil and creates a landscape unique to Madagascar. Naturally it holds special wildlife such as a variety of lemurs including Ring-tailed Lemurs and Verreaux's Sifaka which are often remarkably tame and wonderful to watch and photograph. Many endemic, dry country birds can be found here such as Giant and Green-capped Couas, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, France's and Madagascar Sparrowhawks, White-headed, Hook-billed & Sickle-billed Vangas, Souimanga Sunbird &

Madagascar Hoopoe. Spotlighting for White-browed & Torotoroka Scops Owls, nocturnal lemurs such as White-footed Sportive Lemur, chameleons and more. Overnight in bungalows at Berenty.

### **Saturday 31 October**

A full day at Berenty with further exploration of the unique spiny forest. Overnight in bungalows at Berenty.

### **Sunday 1 November – Berenty to Ifaty via Toliara**

Return to Tolagnaro in time for late morning flight to the coastal town of Toliara (pronounced as in the French name 'Tulear') on the west-facing coast of the south-west of Madagascar. We will drive for about an hour north of here to the coastal resort of Ifaty. Again we are in the botanical wonderland of dry spiny forest which extends for some distance up this coast but sadly still being cleared for agriculture. Birds to look for include Banded Kestrel, Madagascar Sparrowhawk, Green-capped and Running Couas, Thamnornis Warbler and Subdesert Brush Warbler. The pristine tropical sea here has superb underwater life, a great place to relax and snorkel. Spotlighting in evening. Overnight Hotel Le Paradisier, Ifaty.

### **Monday 2 November – Spiny Forest and coast at Ifaty**

A full day in the spiny wonderland enjoying the variety of wildlife. Here where the spiny forest meets the coast we will be looking for further very special birds not occurring in the south-east. These include the amazing Long-tailed Ground Roller, the strange Subdesert Mesite, the Madagascar Plover, Sickle-billed and Lafresnaye's Vangas and a number of special wetland birds around the nearby freshwater pools, other shorebirds, perhaps Greater Painted Snipe and flamingos. Overnight Hotel Le Paradisier, Ifaty.

## **Tuesday 3 November – Ifaty back to Toliara, Table Mountain and Anakao. Boat trip to island of Nosy Ve.**

After travelling back south, we will check sites for specialities like Verreaux's Coua and Red-shouldered Vanga (a recently recognised split from Red-tailed Vanga). From the port in Toliara it is an hour's boat ride to Anakao where we will look for the range-restricted Littoral Rock Thrush, before boarding a boat to Nosy Ve, a lovely tropical island of sand and forest just over a km long. Here there are breeding Red-tailed Tropicbirds, flocks of Crab Plovers, Lesser Crested and Saunders Terns and sometimes several species of shorebirds. Pristine sea for swimming and snorkelling. Overnight at Anakao Ocean Lodge.



## **Wednesday 4 November – Anakao to Tulear and on by road to Isalo National Park**

We travel back from Anakao to Tulear by boat and then take Route 7 inland as far as Isalo National Park, a journey taking several hours. We may stop in the dry deciduous woodland of Zombitse Forest on route and look for the endangered Appert's Tetraka (formerly known as Appert's Greenbul) along with other dry woodland species like Cuckoo Roller, Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, several species of Vanga, etc. Overnight at Le Relais de la Reine Hotel and Spa, Isalo.

## **Thursday 5 November – Zombitse Forest and Isalo National Park**

Another day in this area. Zombitse forest if we didn't get there yesterday. The road through Isalo passes through steep limestone rocky hills and bizarre rock formations. Birding here might find us Grey-headed Lovebird, Namaqua Dove, Madagascar Buttonquail, Stripe-throated Jery and the very local Benson's Rock Thrush (perhaps just a race of Forest Rock Thrush), possibly Madagascar Partridge and Marsh Owl. Overnight at Le Relais de la Reine Hotel and Spa, Isalo.

## **Friday 6 November – Isalo to Ranomafana National Park**

We continue our journey by road north-eastwards to Madagascar's second largest city, Fianarantsoa and then back to the eastern escarpment of rainforest but much further south than Perinet and holding a number of species which are difficult or absent further north. Ranomafana also covers a much larger area than Perinet and Mantadia. We have 2 days to try and find a great variety of endemic forest birds including the skulking Brown Mesite, Nelicourvi Weaver, Pollen's Vanga, Crossley's Vanga (formerly Crossley's Babbler), Spectacled Tetraka and Madagascar Starling. At higher elevations we may find Madagascar Yellowbrow, Red-fronted Coua, Brown Emutail, Rand's and Cryptic Warblers and the very local Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity. Overnight Centrest Sejour Hotel, Ranomafana.

## **Saturday 7 November – Ranomafana National Park**

A full day exploring this extensive forest and seeking out the specialities above. There are many mammals here including the Golden Bamboo Lemur, discovered here in 1987, also Greater and Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur, Red-fronted Brown Lemur, 2 species of sportive Lemurs, tenrecs and Ring-tailed Mongoose. Plenty of nocturnal species to see when spotlighting here. Overnight Centrest Sejour Hotel, Ranomafana.

## **Sunday 8 November – Ranomafana to Antsirabe**

The drive north from here will take several hours and we will stay overnight in the town of Antsirabe which is still well south of Antananarivo. This is mainly a travelling day but there are places worth stopping on route – it is generally quite heavily populated but quite scenic with traditional villages, terraced rice-paddies, extensive grasslands and granite rocks. Overnight Couleur Café, Antsirabe.

### **Monday 9 November – Antsirabe to Tana, Flight to Mahajanga, by road to Ampijoroa**



We complete the long northward bus journey to Antananarivo and to Ivato airport. Midday flight to Mahajanga on the north-west coast and on the north side of the wide Betsiboka River and delta. Travel by road inland from Mahajanga to Ampijoroa Forestry Station in the Ankarafansika National Park. We pass Lake Ravelobe, a large expanse of water and one of the best places to see the highly endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle. Birding in the forest from mid-afternoon and we expect to find a number of commoner dry forest birds such as

Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Red-capped and Crested Couas, M Green and M Blue Pigeons and Sakalava Weaver. Overnight at lodge in Ankarafansika National Park.

### **Tuesday 10 November – Ampijoroa / Ankarafansika**

A full day in this superb forest. As well as plenty of familiar species, we will look particularly for Madagascar Crested Ibis, Schlegel's Asity, Van Dam's Vanga and White-breasted Mesite. Among the lemurs are the beautiful Coquerel's Sifaka. Spotighting here is one of the best on this tour with lots of possible lemurs, chameleons, snakes, frogs and bizarre insects. Overnight at lodge in Ankarafansika National Park.

### **Wednesday 11 November – Ampijoroa back to Mahajanga**

Morning birding at Ampijoroa, return by road to Mahajanga (2 hours), stops on route if desired. North up the coast from the town to Hotel Les Roches Rouges where overnight.

### **Thursday 12 November – Mahajanga and boat trip on Betsiboka Delta. Fly to Tana**

Morning excursion by boat on the Betsiboka Delta. Variety of coastal and river birds to look out for including Bernier's Teal (among many other possible ducks), flamingos, Madagascar White Ibis, Crab Plover, Crested and other terns, shorebirds. Afternoon flight back to Antananarivo. Overnight at hotel near airport.

### **Friday 13 November – Return to Ivato airport**

We all head for the airport in the morning. End of the main tour, some return home. Those booked on the extension take a charter flight today to Maroantsetra in the north-eastern rainforest.

## **Masoala Extension itinerary – 13 Nov to 17/18 Nov.**

### **Friday 13 November – Antananarivo to Maroantsetra**

Private charter flight to Maroantsetra in the north-east rainforest. Transfer by boat, via lunch on Nosy Mangabe, to Farankaraina for bird and mammal watching until after dark. Although not guaranteed, this is one of the best places to see that bizarre lemur, the Aye-Aye. Overnight in basic accommodation.

### **Saturday to Monday 14 to 16 November – Masoala Peninsula**

Boat takes us further east. 3 days of birding and lemur watching in the pristine rainforest north of the Bay of Antongil. Very good chance of the amazing Helmet Vanga, also looking for Bernier's Vanga, Red-breasted Coua, Dusky Tetraka, Brown Mesite, Scaly & Short-legged Ground Rollers, Cryptic Warbler, possibly Red Owl. Several lemurs including the lovely Red-ruffed Lemur. 3 nights at Masoala Forest Lodge. Price includes the final night in Tana on 17<sup>th</sup> November prior to departure.

### **Tuesday 17 November – Return to Antananarivo**

Private charter flight back to the capital, onward flights home can be booked for today if they leave after 5 pm, otherwise we need another night in Tana and return to the airport to head home on 18<sup>th</sup> November.