



Birders Rest
Brisbane, Queensland
Birding, Wildlife &
Photography
Tours Far & Wide

Detlef Davies
PO Box 3108, Warner 4500,
Queensland, Australia
(+61) 414041207
detlefdavies@yahoo.com

BIRDERS REST FAR & WIDE offers its second itinerary to:

NORTH & WEST MADAGASCAR
OCTOBER to NOVEMBER 2020

Main Tour itinerary – 24 Oct to 14 Nov.

Saturday 24 October – Arrive Antananarivo

Arrival in Antananarivo (often abbreviated to 'Tana') – Ivato Airport. Possible air routes include flights from Mauritius, Johannesburg, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Istanbul and (less often) Bangkok. Transfer to hotel. o/n Relais des Plateaux 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, Madagascar Cisticola, Madagascar Lark and Madagascar 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 & up to 4 of those wonderful Ground Rollers. 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 at Vakona 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 some 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 Diademed Sifaka and Black & White Ruffed Lemur. Spotlighting is likely to produce new and fascinating creatures each night. 2 more nights at Vakona 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 Relais des Plateaux Hotel.

Thursday & Friday 29 & 30 October – Tana to Morondava & Kirindy Reserve

We take a morning flight from Ivato Airport to Morondava on the central west coast of Madagascar. We drive the 50 km road to Kirindy forest reserve on a rough sandy track. We can expect to see many of the typical dry forest endemic birds such as Sickie-billed Vanga, Red-capped, Coquerel's & Giant Couas, White-browed Owl & Madagascar Sandgrouse. Lemurs include Verreaux's Sifaka, Red-fronted Brown Lemur & many nocturnal species. Kirindy is considered the best place in Madagascar to see the Fosa, the island's largest carnivore, and the only known area to find the Giant Jumping Rat. Overnight at Relais de Kirindy.

Saturday 31 October – Kirindy to Bemaraha

A full day's travelling by road northwards to Bemaraha. This is a more grandiose place and the reserve protects a large area of limestone tsingy which form long deep canyons, a change from the flatness of Kirindy. It is an interesting drive with many large baobab trees & a river crossing by car barge across the Tsiribihina river. Overnight at Olympe de Bemaraha.

Sunday & Monday 1 & 2 November – Bemaraha Reserve

Two days to explore Bemaraha. As well as wildlife appreciation, there is an opportunity for some adventurous treks through the tsingy, the most demanding being the walk to the 'Grand Tsingy'. We can do a canoe trip along a river south of the reserve to get to some cave systems. As we are here for 3 nights, there are shorter walks for the less energetic. There are Ring-tailed & Red-fronted Brown Lemurs, and a chance to find the much rarer Decken's Sifaka. Dry country birds will be similar to those at Kirindy, with the addition of the range-restricted Tsingy Wood Rail. Overnight at Olympe de Bemaraha.

Tuesday 3 November – Bemaraha to Mahajanga & Katsepy

We leave Bemaraha by private plane to take us to the NW city of Mahajanga on the northern side of the Betsiboky river. From there we take a ferry across the mouth of the river to the village of Katsepy. It's a large ferry carrying anything from cars & trucks to livestock, chickens etc. Vehicles exit straight onto the beach. Although mainly a travelling day, there will be some wildlife opportunities. Overnight at Andafiroi.

Wednesday 4 November – Lake Kinkony

It's a rough drive from Katsepy to the edge of the lake, one of the largest lakes on the island. However, the birding should be very rewarding. The chief prize we shall look for is the highly endangered Sakalava Rail. There were only a handful of sightings in the whole of the last century but it was discovered at this lake in the early 2000s and although off the usual tour itineraries, visits are getting more frequent. Also occurring here are a variety of water birds such as Madagascar Pratincole, Openbill Stork, White-faced & Fulvous Whistling Ducks, Little Bittern, Greater Painted Snipe, Three-

banded Plover, Madagascar Jacana & Allen's Gallinule. Overnight - this is the only night's camping on the main part of the tour, in the village of Makary.

Thursday 5 November – Lake Kinkony to Mahajanga

We may have seen the Sakalava Rail the first afternoon but first light this morning will give us the best opportunity, we head out into the reedy vegetation of the lake in canoes. After a morning's birding, we will retrace our steps to Mahajanga by road and ferry. Overnight at Karibu Lodge.

Friday 6 November – Mahajanga to Antananarivo

The next destination is the far north of the island at Antsiranana. Although it is possible to drive there from Mahajanga, it would take 2 days of rather mundane scenery so we have opted for a return to Tana by air, one night there & a flight to the top end. Depending on the time of the flight to Tana, it may be possible to look for Crab Plovers, other shorebirds & Bernier's Teal on the muddy shores of the river islands before heading off. Overnight: Relais des Plateaux Hotel.

Saturday 7 November – Antananarivo to Antsiranana / Joffreville / Amber Mountain

After the flight up, we will hopefully enjoy the cooler rainforest and a change to forest birding. We will look for Amber Mountain Rock Thrush, visibly different from Forest Rock Thrush but perhaps only a subspecies; also Pitta-like Ground Roller, the only ground roller to reach this far north. There are different lemurs up here such as Crowned Lemur, Sanford's Brown Lemur & Northern Sportive Lemur. Great opportunities for productive night walks for 'brookesia' chameleons, frogs and mouse lemurs. Overnight at Joffreville Nature Lodge.

Sunday 8 November – Adrafiomena

It's back to drier forest today with a chance for the shy White-breasted Mesite, as well as more typical dry forest birds. The reserve here is the only site where we could see the Perrier's Black Sifaka, one of the rarest lemurs. Overnight: Black Lemurs Camp.

Monday & Tuesday 9 & 10 November – Ankarana Reserve

This is another scenic reserve covered in tsingy, like a forest of knives. There are many typical dry forest birds including White-breasted Mesite, Crested Ibis and Madagascar Button-Quail. Great place for mammals, Ring-tailed Mongoose is common, several species of bats in the caves, even Fosa is possible. Overnight: Ankarana Lodge.

Wed, Thurs & Fri – 11, 12 & 13 November – Ramena Beach or Eden Lodge

The plan is to finish at a coastal resort for relaxation, swimming, snorkelling but walking & wildlife pursuits are available at these places too. If we stay at Ramena Beach (which is cheap but very pleasant), we can go back into Amber Mountain again or go out to the '3 bays' or to the Emerald Sea. Eden Lodge is on the mainland but near the offshore island of Nosy Be, further south, a good ecolodge without a touristy feel.

Sat 14 November – Return to Antananarivo for flight home

EXTENSION 1 – BEMANEVIKA

This ambitious trip, involving an extra 6 nights, is for those wanting to see the rare endemics which the standard tours don't find, including Red Owl, Madagascar Serpent Eagle, Madagascar Pochard & Slender-billed Flufftail. Without returning to Tana, 4x4 vehicles will leave for Bealanana where we

stay at a local style hotel before & after our 3 nights camping at Bemanevika. From here we will try our luck at the specialities. Camping equipment will be sent up in advance from Tana.

EXTENSION 2 – MASOALA FOREST LODGE

In terms of comfort, this is in complete contrast to Extension 1. One couple on my 2018 tour joined me afterwards at this beautiful coastal lodge on the Bay of Antongil, with the hills towering behind being covered with the most extensive rainforest left in Madagascar. Access is by boat from the town of Maroantsetra to which we will probably take a charter flight from Tana. 3 full days & 4 nights at the Lodge should suffice to find many of Helmet Vanga, Bernier's Vanga, Brown Mesite, Red-breasted Coua, Scaly & Short-legged Ground Rollers, Dusky Tetraka, Cryptic Warbler, Red Ruffed Lemur & Aye-aye. We may stay the first night at Farankaraina, a basic lodge further north in the forest for the best chance of Aye-aye.

The timing, and even the order of the extensions will be dictated by demand.

TOUR CHARGE

Pax	Charge per person in EUROS
3	9750
4	9500
5	8500
6	7900
7	7500
8	7200
Single Supplement	750 Euros per single room

Tour charge includes all ground services, local English-speaking wildlife guide and expenses for a tour leader, all excursions in the reserves and parks with local wildlife guides, domestic flights Tana to Morondava & Antsiranana to Antananarivo, private flight Bemoraha to Mahajanga, all meals, transfers.

Extra if staying at Eden Lodge for 3 nights – 750 Euros per person, single supplement 150 Euros.

Extension 1 to Bemanevika

Charge per person:

3 persons – 1750 Euros

4 persons – 1750 Euros

5 persons – 1350 Euros

Single supp. 120 Euros per single room

Extension 2 to Masoala Forest Lodge

Charge per person:

4 nights in shared room – 1750 Euros per person

4 nights in single room – 2150 Euros per person

Return flights – 990 Euros

Accommodation and transfers in Antananarivo not included on extensions.