

# Madagascar's Endemic Flora

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

### Outline itinerary

<b>Day 1 – 2</b>	Depart London / Arrive Tana
<b>Day 3 – 4</b>	Andasibe (Perinet).
<b>Day 5</b>	Andasibe / Tana.
<b>Day 6 – 7</b>	Isalo.
<b>Day 8</b>	Ifaty.
<b>Day 9</b>	Ifaty / Tana.
<b>Day 10 – 12</b>	Berenty.
<b>Day 13</b>	Fort Dauphin.
<b>Day 14 – 15</b>	Fly Tana and onto London.

### Departs

November

### Focus

Primarily plants, though all Malagasy wildlife will be enjoyed

### Grading

A/B. Easy to moderate day and night walks

### Dates and Prices

See website (tour code MDG02) or current brochure

### Highlights:

- Discover a unique flora on a pioneering tour
- Wander amongst the Baobabs and *Didiereaceae* of the Spiny Desert
- Explore a range of habitats including Spiny, Littoral, Transitional, Gallery and Rain Forests
- Hear the plaintive dawn song of the Indri at Perinet



Images from top Bottle Baobab, Verreaux's Sifaka (Paul Stanbury)



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## Introduction

The island of Madagascar is truly a lost world, an experiment in evolution that pushed forward in complete isolation from the rest of the natural world for 165 million years. Today, over 80% of all life here is endemic, occurring nowhere else on earth, its uniqueness and ecological importance cannot be overstated. Although these unique ecosystems have suffered badly from the march of humankind, Madagascar still retains a wonderful network of national parks and other protected areas home to a wealth of plants, birds, reptiles and lemurs. Following on from the great success of our existing tours, we are delighted now to offer an alternative itinerary; two-weeks dedicated to the unique flora of this fascinating island. During the holiday we will visit a number of Madagascar's very best wildlife reserves, including Berenty, Isalo, Zombitse and Andasibe (Périnet). Here we will spend our time in search of some of the unusual and intriguing plant life that inhabits this unique island. It is important to note that, in general terms, the Madagascar Flora remains a mystery. There is very little information committed to literature and, as such, only the most conspicuous and unusual species have been studied in any detail.



*Angraecum viguieri*

## Itinerary

*Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.*

### Days 1 – 2

### Antananarivo

We depart London Heathrow this evening on an overnight flight to Tana via Addis Ababa or Nairobi (please see section below regarding flight connections). We then connect with a mid-morning flight to Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, arriving in the early afternoon. On arriving at Madagascar's international airport we will purchase our visas, clear immigration and customs and transfer to a comfortable hotel, our base for the first night of the tour. This afternoon, depending on our flight arrival time, there should be the opportunity to enjoy an excursion to a nearby wildlife spot in Tana, or, for those that wish, to simply to catch up on some sleep!

### Day 3

### Andasibe

After breakfast, we will head out east towards Andasibe or Périnet as it used to be called. As we leave the capital we pass through the high plateau country, passing blocks of *Eucalyptus globulus* and the pines *Pinus patula* and *Pinus kesiya*, as well as areas of coppiced *Eucalyptus robusta*, used for producing charcoal, and terraced slopes and paddy fields. Eventually, the road begins its winding descent to the east coast, when we will start to see patches of rainforest on the steeper

slopes. The forest on the wet western side of the scarp has almost all been destroyed and here *Ravenala madagascariensis* (Travellers Tree or Palm) invades. Not a palm at all, *Ravenala* is in fact a member of the *Strelitzia* family, Bird of Paradise Lilies. We will spend the next 2 nights in a comfortable forest lodge.

## Day 4

## Andasibe

Today we will rise at dawn to visit the forests in order to watch, and listen to, the Indri (*Indri indri*), Madagascar's largest and most vocal lemur whose eerie cries, once heard, are never forgotten. The Andasibe reserves complex includes two distinct protected areas. The special reserve of Analamazaotra is the most well know of the two and protects the Indri, and is also where we can look for the beautiful Diademed Sifaka. The lesser known Mantadia National Park, a much larger area of primary evergreen montane rainforest (10,000 hectares), is also well worth exploring. In Mantadia we have a chance of finding the Black & White Ruffed Lemur, a lemur species not found in Analamazaotra. This is also a good site to see three ground roller species - Rufous-headed Ground Roller, Scaly-legged Ground Roller and Pitta-like Ground Roller. Here there is much to challenge botanist and taxonomist alike. Plant species include *Garcinia*, *Symphonia* and *Mammea* species, as well as *Cryptocarya* and *Ocotea* both members of the *Lauraceae*. The herbaceous flora includes many ferns, ground orchids and members of the *Labiatae*, *Rubiaceae* and *Acanthaceae* families.



In the evening we will head out into the forest on a night walk in search of Eastern Woolly Lemur and Goodman's Mouse Lemurs, along with various chameleons, lizards and frogs.

## Day 5

## Andasibe / Tana

We will have the morning to further explore the forests of Périnet before leaving after lunch to drive back to Tana and transfer to a comfortable hotel for the night.

## Day 6

## Toliara / Isalo

Today we will catch the plane for the one hour flight from Tana to Toliara in the south west of the Island. Here, the common trees are *Terminalia catappa* (Indian Almond) and *Melia azederach* (Persian Lilac). Our ultimate destination today, however, is the Isalo National Park, approximately 3 hours drive from Toliara. Our journey takes us in a north easterly direction, passing the magnificent tombs at Andranovory en-route. These splendid and accessible tombs were built by the Mahafaly,

Antandroy and Masikoro tribes and are very ornate. Depending on our flight time, there may be the opportunity for an afternoon excursion into Isalo National Park on arrival.

## Day 7

## Isalo National Park

The whole of today will be spent within Isalo National Park. This location is world renowned for its bizarre, wind-sculpted sandstone formations of canyons and pillars. This landscape holds considerable spiritual significance for the Bara tribe, containing many tombs and burial sites. Here we should encounter the endemic *Uapaca bojeri* (Tapia Tree), the rock-clinging *Pachypodium rosulatum* (Elephant's Foot), the local *Aloe isaloensis*, and *Chrysalidocarpus isaloensis* (Feather Palm). Isalo is also home to birds including Madagascar Hoopoe, Grey-headed Lovebirds, Madagascar Bee-eater, the rare Reunion Harrier and Benson's Rock Thrush (now considered the same species as Forest Rock Thrush) which have been recorded from around the hotel. In the park, we may also see Red-fronted Brown Lemurs, Ring-tailed Lemurs and perhaps a troupe of Verreaux's Sifakas.

## Day 8

## Ifaty

Retracing our steps, today we make the return journey to Toliara. En-route, we will take a break to visit the Zombitse-Vohibasia National Park, where western and southern habitat types merge. Here the spiny forest meets the western tropical deciduous woodland. This is the larger of two remaining



*Pachypodium geayi*

remnants of dry western deciduous forest on the island, and an ideal place to see this 'transitional' forest habitat. It is an area of some 36,000 hectares, designated as a National Park as recently as September 2002, and the home of Appert's Tetraka, a bird that occurs nowhere else on Earth!

On arrival in Toliara we will visit the fifty hectare Antsokay Arboretum in Toliara. Established in 1980 by the late Hermann Petignat and his wife Simone, who continues to run the site with her son, Andry, this amazing botanical garden boasts some five hundred species in some sixty families. Following this visit, we will transfer north some 29 kilometres to Ifaty Beach, and the Hotel Paradisier, our base for the night. This is a fascinating botanical area with such plant families as *Pachypodium*, *Adansonia*, *Hildergardia*, *Moringas* and the drought resistant *Didierea*. We should have time for an evening walk in the nearby Reniala reserve, and after dark, we can look for Grey-Brown Mouse Lemurs as they leave their daytime 'roosting' holes in the trees around our hotel.

## Day 9

## Ifaty / Tana

We will rise early this morning to visit the bizarre Spiny Forest. This unique habitat is best described as a desert and a forest all rolled into one. Known locally as 'Ala Maiky', the Spiny Forest receives very little rain annually and is distinguished by the existence of a unique family of trees, the *Didiereaceae*, including the strange Octopus Tree (*Didierea madagascariensis*) and *Didierea trolli*. Among other species we may encounter are Songo-be (*Alluaudia ascendens*), *Alluaudia procera*, *Xerosicyos danguii*, *Euphorbia stenoclada*, *Pachypodium lamerei*, *Aloe capitata* and the Bottle Boabab (*Adansonia za*). It is also possible that we will record two bottle trees, *Delonix adansonioides* and *Delonix regia*.

Although our focus on this tour is principally botanical, we will also be on the lookout for some of Madagascar's striking endemic birdlife such as Long-tailed Ground Roller, Sickle-billed Vanga, Verreaux's Coua and Lafresnaye's Vanga. Reptiles are represented by Spider and Radiated Tortoises as well as various chameleons. After a full morning we will return to our hotel for lunch and our departure back to Toliara, and an evening flight back to Tana where we spend tonight.



Long-tailed Ground-roller (by Tony Williams)

## Day 10

## Berenty

This morning we take a flight to Tolagnaro (Fort Dauphin). Upon our arrival we will make our way to Berenty, where we will be spending the next three nights in comfortable bungalow accommodation. This privately run reserve lies some 80 kilometres to the west and the journey will take us around four hours. At first we will pass paddy fields, which eventually give way to Lychee and Jak fruit orchards set against a mountainous background. Along the way we will pass scattered *Raphia farinifera* (Raffia Palm) and the knee-high *Philippia floribunda* as well as the resplendent *Aphloia theaeformis* (Vofotsy), this local name meaning 'White Fruit'. Further on we will pass stands of *Melaleuca papyrifera* (Paperbark). Growing in the gullies along with the young trees there are populations of the endemic, yellow flowered, *Nepenthes madagascariensis* (pitcher plants). This species is particularly striking as the 'lids' are a contrasting red colour. The Berenty reserve belongs to Jean D'Heaulme, whose father established considerable Sisal plantations in the region in the 1930's. Some small pockets of Spiny Desert and Tamarind Gallery Forest were saved from plantation development, however, and Berenty is now world famous for its wildlife, in particular its confiding lemurs.



*Nepenthes madagascariensis*

## Days 11 – 12

## Berenty

Set beside the Mandrare River, Berenty Reserve has an extensive network of easy-to-walk paths which makes wildlife viewing straightforward. The reserve is world famous, however, for its confiding Ring-tailed Lemurs, Red-fronted Brown Lemurs and Verreaux's Sifakas and the familiarity of these animals to humans makes observation endlessly rewarding with many wonderful photo opportunities. We will spend the next two days in Berenty Reserve fully exploring this fascinating area. Magnificent specimens of *Tamarindus indica* (Tamarind Tree) are to be found here. These trees provide an abundant food source for the lemur populations along with the wine-coloured flowers of *Rinorea greweana*, an under story tree and a member of the Violet family. The path sides are often lined with spiny shrubs of *Azima tetraantha*, *Hazuntia modesta*, with white scented



Ring-tailed Lemurs

flowers, and *Capparis chrysomeia*, with numerous small pinkish flowers. We will also be seeking *Ravenala madagascariensis* (Travellers Tree or Palm), so named because it traps high levels of rain water, often as much as a litre and more than enough for a drink. All in all, Berenty is a botanical experience not to be missed. We should also be able to enjoy some good bird-watching, and hope to see such species as Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, Sickle-billed and White-

headed Vangas, Giant Coua, Broad-billed Roller, Souimanga Sunbird and many others. But above all the great joy of Berenty is observing the troops of Ring-tailed Lemurs either high in the Tamarind Trees or as they move along the ground. At this time of year the females will be carrying young on their backs and during breakfast we may well get to see the celebrated 'dancing lemurs', the Sifakas of Berenty which untypically come down to the ground to cross in crab-wise hops between the trees.

In the evening we will take a nocturnal walk looking for Grey Mouse Lemur and White-footed Sportive Lemur. We also hope to see a few nocturnal birds including Madagascar Nightjar and Totoroka Scops Owl and maybe another mammal or two such as Small Indian Civet or Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec.

## Day 13

## Fort Dauphin

Today, following breakfast, we will return to the Fort Dauphin area. We will make this a leisurely journey stopping along the way to see more examples of Spiny Forest. We will also take the opportunity to get close to *Nephenthes madagascariensis* and *Neodypsis (Dypsis) decaryi* (Triangle or Three-cornered Palm). This palm has an extremely limited distribution, and is found only here. Our destination, Fort Dauphin, was founded as French settlement in 1768 by the Count de Mondave. He imported *Opuntia* (Mexican prickly Pear) to improve defence of the settlement. Soon the local Antandroy tribes people realised how efficient this plant was as a way of defending their animals.

This legacy still remains with many Malagasy towns having the name 'Beraketa', (Many Racquet Cactus). Tonight will be spent in Fort Dauphin.

## Days 14 – 15

## In Flight

After a leisurely breakfast we will return to the airport for the internal flight back to the capital, Tana. Here we have the use of a day room at a comfortable hotel, before transferring in the late evening to Ivato International Airport for our flight home, arriving into London in the afternoon of Day 15.

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## Holiday Inclusions / Extra Expenses

The following costs are included in the price of the holiday:

- International and domestic flights in economy class
- Full board accommodation throughout (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner)
- All transport and guiding
- Park fees and reserve entry fees

The following are not included and should be budgeted for:

- Visa (currently purchased on arrival in Tana at a cost of around EUR 25)
- Drinks (though your guides will keep a supply of bottled water on the bus for you to help yourself to during the day)
- Discretionary tipping
- Any other personal spending e.g. souvenirs

## Tour Grading

We have graded this tour A/B - easy to moderately difficult at times. There is no major trekking on tour, but there will be plenty of daytime walks in a variety of Malagasy habitat types and in some of the major forest reserves of Madagascar we will organise night-walks to see nocturnal lemurs, reptiles and birds (NB - night walks are not permitted within the boundaries of the national parks). All walks are optional and taken at a leisurely pace, but they will often be over hilly, rocky or forested terrain, and in hot, humid conditions. Since animal activity dies away quite quickly after the first few hours of daylight we will need to make full use of the early hours and so early starts will be encouraged, especially at Berenty, Andasibe and Ifaty.

It should be noted that there are several long vehicle journeys included in this tour. Madagascar's top wildlife sites are well spread out and so one or two long drives cannot be avoided if you wish to see a good cross-section of the island's habitats and plant life. When travelling in Madagascar it is necessary to accept that the roads may be poor on occasion and the internal airlines may not always leave exactly on time! Likewise, whilst we will provide comfortable lodge accommodation (with private facilities) throughout, it must be stressed that Madagascar is a very poor country and has yet to establish the same standard of tourist facilities found in many other African destinations.

Several of the hotels/lodges are basic in nature and lacking in many of the comforts found in western hotels. What is needed more than anything, therefore, is a good sense of adventure and if you come equipped with this you are sure to enjoy the fascinating plants, animals, birds, culture and landscapes of this unique African island.

## Accommodation

As outlined above, Madagascar has yet to develop the same standard of tourist infrastructure as some other mainland Africa countries. All of the hotels and lodges we use are comfortable and have private facilities, though the rooms can be a little spartan in nature and the food quite simple.

It is also worth noting that hotels and lodges in Madagascar are notorious for overbooking their rooms. Although we always strive to keep our groups in the same lodge whilst exploring a park, on rare occasions it may be necessary to split the stay, or group, between two. The names of the hotels and lodges will be confirmed a little closer to the departure date but if you require any additional information on accommodation please do not hesitate to call.



Parson's Chameleon

## International Flights

Our preferred routes to Madagascar are with Ethiopian Airlines or Kenya Airways, flying via Addis Ababa or Nairobi respectively (there are no direct flights from the UK to Madagascar). Flight routes and timings will be confirmed on your invoice once these have been booked. You do not need a visa for either route. Flights are usually overnight in both directions.

Air France does provide a viable alternative, flying via Paris, but we have found this route unreliable in recent years, with difficult connection times in Paris and an extremely late arrival into Tana. Should you wish to instead fly with Air France, we would strongly recommend flying to Paris and staying overnight at an airport hotel ahead of your flight to Tana the next morning. This flight arrives in very late the same day as the Ethiopian/Kenya Airways arrival, meaning that you would meet up with the rest of the group at breakfast on your first morning in Madagascar.

Flying with Ethiopian Airlines / Kenya Airways means that we arrive on a much smaller aircraft at a more civilised time of day, making the (somewhat chaotic!) process of purchasing a visa on arrival a little easier. It also allows the afternoon to recover from the long journey. The downside is that there is a fairly long transfer in Nairobi on the way out when flying with Kenya Airways or in Addis Ababa on the way home when flying with Ethiopian Airlines. Both airlines offer upgrades to business class; please contact the Naturetrek office for a quote.



## Regional Departures

Ethiopian Airlines is due to introduce a Manchester/Addis flight from autumn 2018, which we will be very happy to book if it coordinates with our tour schedule. Connecting flights to and from Heathrow with British Airways (currently from Manchester, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Belfast, Dublin and Jersey) are also available from around £185 return. Flying with Turkish Airlines from Manchester, Edinburgh or Dublin to Istanbul and on to Tana is also a possibility. Please contact the Naturetrek office for further information.

## Your Safety & Security

Risks to your safety and security are an unavoidable aspect of all travel and the best current advice on such risks is provided for you by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In order to assess and protect against any risks in your chosen destination, it is essential that you refer to the Foreign Office website – <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/madagascar> regularly prior to travel.

## How to Book Your Place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website.