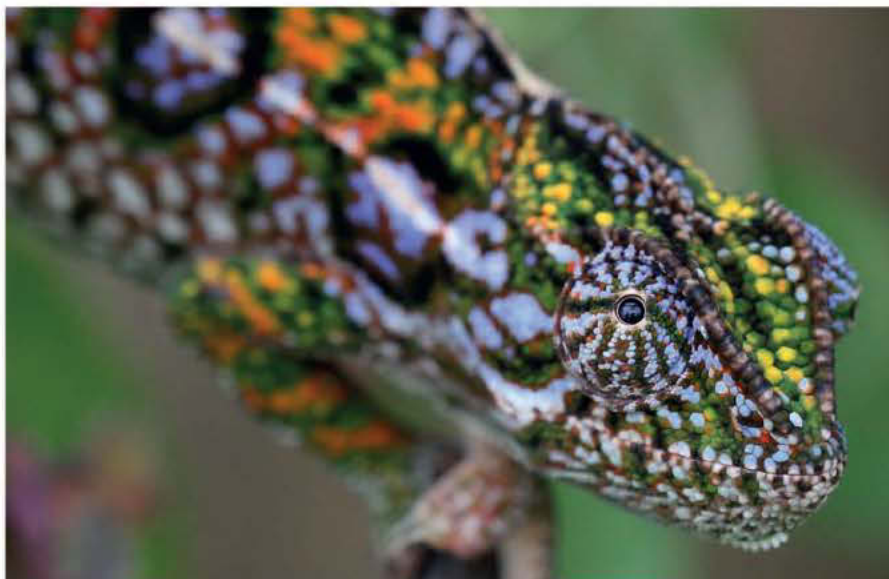


Madagascar: Endemic Birds and Lemurs

with Naturalist Journeys and Caligo Ventures



November 17 – 30, 2016

(Extension: Nov. 30 – Dec. 5)

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Isolated from any continental landmass since the Cretaceous period, Madagascar has drifted through the Indian Ocean, following its own evolutionary course, having only five major terrestrial animal colonization events since the time of the dinosaurs.

The result is an island where every land mammal is endemic, as are nearly half the bird species. Reptiles are well represented as well, like chameleons, and day and leaf-tailed geckos. The uniqueness of this island's fauna makes it one of the world's great destinations for the birdwatcher and naturalist alike.



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Our tour features both birds and mammals. We focus on Madagascar's most iconic and charismatic bird species (we hope to see over 95% of the endemics), as well as the Island's other oddities, like endearing lemurs and strikingly bizarre chameleons.

We also focus on the Island's geology and geography with resulting various habitats — from the spiny forests of Ifaty with its towering baobabs and other-worldly *Didierea* octopus trees of the south, to the verdant rainforests of Andasibe-Mantadia National Park and the delta of the Betsiboka River.



Tour Highlights:

- Explore the rainforests of Andasibe-Mantadia National Park in search of the world's largest lemur, the Indri, along with a long list of fabulous avian jewels, from Rufous-headed Ground-Roller to Madagascar Blue Pigeon
- Visit the high altitude montane rainforest of Ranomafana for a chance to see the rare Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity and quirky Brown Mesite, and up to twelve lemur species, including Milne-Edwards' Sifaka.
- Travel to Zombitse National Park and La Table for two very range-restricted, recently discovered bird species: Appert's Tetraka (Greenbul) and Rufous-shouldered Vanga (the late Phoebe Snetsinger's last bird).
- Walk through the "spiny desert" of Ifaty, with its bizarre baobabs and euphorbias, in search of Long-tailed Ground-Roller and Subdesert Mesite.
- Journey to the unspoiled islet of Nosy Ve to experience a breeding colony of Red-tailed Tropicbird, protected by generations of locals.
- Enjoy the riches of the dry deciduous forests of Ankarafantsika National Park, home of the critically endangered Madagascar Fish-Eagle, Schlegel's Asity, Coquerel's Sifaka, and Oustalet's Giant Chameleon.
- Enjoy an optional four-day extension to Ampijoroa / Ankarafantsika National Park.

Tour Summary:

14-Day / 13-Night Madagascar Wildlife Tour with Peg Abbott & Alastair Kilpin

Main tour: \$5995 DBL occupancy;
\$6765 SGL from Antananarivo.
Extension: \$1995 DBL/\$2275 SGL

Airport is Ivato International (TNR)

Journey is limited to 11 participants and Peg Abbott of Naturalist Journeys



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Thurs., Nov. 17 Arrival in Antananarivo

Welcome to Madagascar! Our journey begins in Antananarivo, the capital city of Madagascar. Lying at almost 4,200 feet above sea level in the middle of the country, the city sits atop a 2-mile long rocky ridge that overlooks extensive terraced rice paddies just west of the city.

“Tana,” as it is colloquially known, originally served as the capital for the indigenous people of the island until its occupation by the French in the first half of the 20th Century. Years of colonization and immigration from other parts of the world have created a city with an eclectic mix of indigenous Malagasy, South Asian, and French elements.

When you arrive in the airport’s arrival hall after picking up your luggage and passing through customs, look for someone to meet you with a sign showing your name. This is a driver from the hotel who handles the transfer. On the tour start day, your guide meets you to answer any questions and let you know the next morning’s breakfast and departure time. (D)



Fri., Nov. 18 Tana to Andasibe-Mantadia National Park

On this first morning, we meet for a briefing over breakfast. We then head about 150 km east of Tana to the famous Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, our base for the next three nights. This Park, established in 1989, protects a spectacular 155-square kilometer rainforest that is home to 11 species of lemurs, including the child-sized Indri. If we are lucky, we are greeted by the Indri’s calls long before we see them — they can be heard from up to a mile away! The journey takes three hours, with a stop for a meal along the way.

Accommodations in Andasibe-Mantadia National Park (B,L,D)

Sat., Nov. 19 & Sun., Nov. 20 Andasibe & Mantadia National Parks

Today we explore this incredible wilderness, an incredibly lush region that records over 200 days of rain a year, home of the iconic Indri Lemur. Also known as Anamalazaotra Special Reserve, or by the French name Perinet, Andasibe was formerly part of a tract of contiguous forest with the larger Mantadia National

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Park. Deforestation has since fragmented these protected areas. Today we visit the two now divided preserves that protect one of Madagascar's most important primary rainforest areas.

We explore the area's various trails with local guides, walking along streamsides and in ridge forest, as well as a small lake. This rainforest is Madagascar's most biodiverse ecosystem. As a result, the list of birds we can see is long; highlights may include Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Dark Newtonia, Nuthatch Vanga, and Madagascar Pygmy-Kingfisher. We may also be fortunate enough to encounter Collared Nightjar roosting almost imperceptibly on the forest floor, a species so poorly known that its vocalizations are still unknown. Another nocturnal species that we may see is Madagascar Long-eared Owl, the largest owl species on the island.

Mantadia is also the best place in the world for Ground-Rollers. With patience, visitors may find four secretive rainforest species in a single morning: Pitta-like, Scaly, Rufous-headed, and Short-legged Ground-Roller. We may also find Lesser Vasa Parrot and three species of Coua: Red-breasted, Blue, and Red-fronted.

Despite a long list of incredible birds, one of the top experiences here is the Indri's morning calls as they echo through the misty forests. These plaintive wails

from the world's largest lemur are reminiscent of whale sounds! We listen and hopefully observe them at Andasibe, along with the iconic Diademed Sifaka and Black-and-White Ruffed, Greater Dwarf, Brown, and Gray Bamboo Lemurs.

The eastern rainforest is also an excellent place to sample some of Madagascar's varied and colorful chameleons, day geckos, and leaf-tailed geckos. We search for these while birding during the day and we will have another opportunity to spot some of Madagascar's unusual reptiles and amphibians on a night walk.

Accommodations in Andasibe-Mantadia National Park (B,L,D)



Mon., Nov. 21 Andasibe to Antsirabe

After some final morning birding around Andasibe, we head southwards for approximately 300 kilometers to our next birding area, Ranomafana National Park. We pass colorful rice paddies on winding roads through the countryside until we arrive at the picturesque city of Antsirabe, the third largest city in Madagascar, known for its cool climate, thermal bath center, and plentiful rickshaw taxis.

Accommodations at Antsirabe (B,L,D)

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Tues., Nov. 22 Antsirabe to Ranomafana

This morning, we embark from Antsirabe on the second leg of our journey to Ranomafana, traveling south for just over 220 kilometers. After a long drive through rolling green mountains and past small villages, we arrive just before dark, settle in, and prepare for tomorrow's early start. We know that these days of travel are long, and strive to make them as interesting as possible!

Accommodations at Ranomafana (B,L,D)

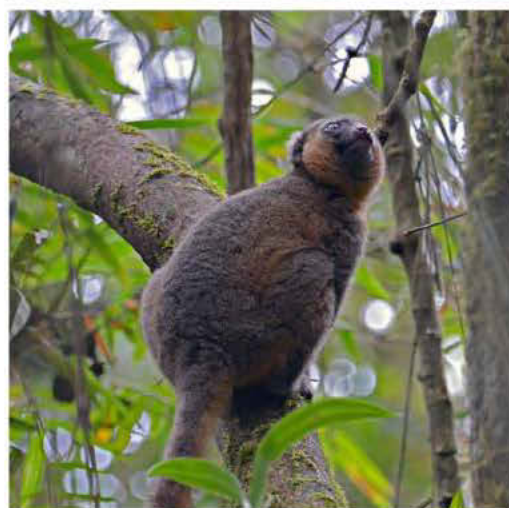
Wed., Nov. 23 – Fri., Nov. 25 Ranomafana National Park

Madagascar's government established Ranomafana National Park in 1991 to protect one of the largest remaining rainforest patches in eastern Madagascar. In 2007, the park became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This superb tract of forest, situated at a slightly higher elevation than Mantadia National Park, boasts 161 square miles of mid-altitude rainforest and higher altitude montane forest. Small streams cascade through the eternally green park, draining into the Namorana River. This river divides the park and serves as a source of electricity for the area.

This park is of special interest to primatologists: a new species of lemur, the Golden Bamboo, was discovered here in 1986. It is also one of the best places to find one of the world's rarest primate species, the Greater Bamboo Lemur. A hotspot for lemur diversity, Ranomafana boasts 12 species, including the superb Milne-Edwards' Sifaka. We explore the excellent network of paths through the forests and dense stands of giant bamboo for these and other mammal species. If we are lucky, we may see Malagasy Striped Civet and Ring-tailed Mongoose.

We also find a host of new bird species in these foothill and montane rainforests — home to most of Madagascar's avian endemics, including: Pitta-like Ground Roller, White-throated Oxylabes, Crossley's Vanga, and Pollen's Vanga. We also search for the more retiring Madagascar Wood-Rail, Brown Mesite, and Henst's Goshawk.

Vohiparara, a nearby cloud forest site, is our focus one morning. This emerald forest of mist and moss is the best site in the world to get to find the brilliantly colored Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity. Other excellent



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species here include Rufous-headed Ground-Roller, Brown Emutail, and Velvet Asity. Small patches of marsh may hold Gray Emutail and Madagascar Snipe. A nearby river holds possible Madagascar Pratincole.

Accommodations at Ranomafana (B,L,D)



Sat., Nov. 26 Ranomafana / Anjaha and Isalo's Palm Savanna

This morning, we continue south to Anjaha and Isalo. The sacred forest of Anjaha protects a population of Ring-tailed Lemur. These social, iconic, and charismatic lemurs may offer splendid photo opportunities.

We continue our way south towards Isalo on a spectacularly scenic drive. We search for the elegant Madagascar Harrier along the way on a beautiful grassland plateau, where we might also spot a few species of endemic ground orchid. The Isalo Massif itself is a landscape covered in golden grasslands with rugged sandstone outcrops with hints of silver and green. Set against the deep blue sky, this magnificent landscape is reminiscent of a John Wayne Western.

Fascinating birds here include Madagascar Partridge, Totoroka Scops-Owl, and Benson's Rock-Thrush. Accommodations surrounded by the spectacular mountains of the Isalo Massif. (B,L,D)



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Sun., Nov. 27 Isalo to Zombitse to Ifaty

We head off on an early start, heading southwest to explore Zombitse National Park, which protects tall deciduous forests and savannas, and their wildlife. Cuckoo-Roller, more closely related to falcons than either cuckoos or rollers, regularly displays over the canopy here. Males engage in flapping displays and loops accompanied by shrieking whistles.

These forests are also home to Appert's Tetraka (Greenbul), a highly endangered species restricted to just a handful of forest patches. Giant Coua, Coquerel's Coua, and Rufous Vanga are a few of the other species we may encounter here in this special transition zone between the south's flora and the western deciduous forest. After lunch, we continue along the coast to the southern part of the country, where we spend four days exploring the "Spiny Desert," mudflats, and coastal "coral-rag" scrub.

On the drive to Ifaty, scanning the mudflats we look for the distinctive Crab-Plover and vulnerable Madagascar Plover. The beach resort town of Ifaty is a popular place for beach-goers and naturalists, alike.

White sandy beaches and turquoise water offer a shocking juxtaposition to the famous "Spiny Desert," a landscape of interwoven baobabs with bulbous trunks, Ocotillo-like *Didierea*, and euphorbias so weird and wonderful that you might as well be on a different planet. This area is loaded with extravagant semi-desert endemics. We explore this fascinating ecosystem this afternoon and tomorrow.

Accommodations at Ifaty (B,L,D)



Mon., Nov. 28 Ifaty / Toliara / St. Augustin Bay

The "Spiny Desert," an ecologically diverse wonderland, is dominated by a completely foreign association of plant species. We carefully wind our way among the *Didierea*, avoiding the sharp spines, while trying to find various specialized, endemic species. The stars of this ecosystem are Long-tailed Ground-Roller and Subdesert Mesite, charismatic members of two different endemic bird families. Four species of vangas, including the spectacular Sickie-billed can also be found. The elusive Banded Kestrel is a good bonus!

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Mid-day, when temperatures soar, we take a welcome break (and perhaps a refreshing dip in the ocean!).

In the afternoon, we drive half an hour down the coast to the seaside town of Toliara and settle in at our lodge. Arid hillsides surrounding the Bay of Augustin are home to Madagascar's most recently described endemic, Red-shouldered Vanga, as well as the scarce and range-restricted Verreaux's Coua. Madagascar Sandgrouse often come frequent area drinking holes.

Accommodations at Toliara (B,L,D)

Tues. and Wed., Nov. 29 – 30 Toliara / Anakao and Nosy Ve

If we have time this morning, we search again for Madagascar Sandgrouse. Afterwards, we board a boat across the Bay of Augustin to Anakao and Nosy Ve. Please note that this excursion cannot be guaranteed, as it is subject to weather conditions and Air Madagascar flight times.

In the coastal vegetation near Anakao, our target is Littoral Rock-Thrush. We then make the very short boat trip to the uninhabited islet of Nosy Ve where we enjoy

splendidly close views of Red-tailed Tropicbird as they hover overhead. This unspoiled islet with long white beaches and aquamarine waters, also hosts roosts of resting seabirds. We scan for Lesser Crested Tern, White-fronted Plover, and Crab-Plover. Optional snorkeling can be arranged in advance.

On Wednesday we head to the airport in Toliara to board our flight back to Antananarivo to coordinate with international departures. The main tour ends today. (B,L)

Extension participants: Accommodations at Tana (D).



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Ampijoroa / Ankarafantsika National Park Extension: Nov. 30 – Dec. 4

Thurs. and Fri., Dec. 1 – 2 Ankarafantsika / Betsiboka River

After a relaxed breakfast, we drive to the airport to catch a flight to Mahajanga in the northwest, the second most important seaport on the island. Over the next few days, we explore a variety of diverse habitats: the Betsiboka Delta and Ankarafantsika National Park.

On arrival in Mahajanga, we head out to visit the Betsiboka River Delta, en route to lodgings at the park where we find a dry deciduous forest with a host of new species.

The Betsiboka River, notable for the enormous quantities of reddish-orange river sediments it carries to the sea, forms an enormous delta in Bombetoka Bay. We enjoy a boat trip in search of two endemics: Bernier's Teal and Madagascar Sacred Ibis. We hope to find both feeding along the edge of the mangroves, although numbers are always low. Please note that the Betsiboka excursion cannot be guaranteed, as it is subject to sea and weather conditions.

Accommodations at Ankarafantsika National Park (B,L,D)



Sat., Dec. 3 Ankarafantsika National Park / Lac Ravelobe

Ankarafantsika National Park protects a section of Madagascar's northwestern deciduous dry forest. Situated between the Betsiboka and Mahajamba Rivers, the park covers 135,000 ha. Within the park, scenic Lac Ravelobe hosts a small population of the critically endangered Madagascar Fish-Eagle, as well as several other uncommon wetland endemics like White-throated Rail and Madagascar Jacana. The lake is also home to Nile Crocodile, a sacred animal to the area's indigenous people.

We also explore the forest, in search of gaudy Schlegel's Asity, unique White-breasted Mesite, and the very localized Van Dam's Vanga, and more.

A highlight here are night walks with local guides in search of nocturnal lemurs, owls, and chameleons. Past tours have seen a staggering eight species of lemur, including the recently-described Golden-brown Mouse Lemur and the localized Mongoose Lemur. We also search for the astoundingly large Oustalet's Chameleon.

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Ampijoroa / Ankarafantsika National Park Extension

Our last morning at Ankarafantsika is devoted to finding any species we may have missed. On previous trips, we have even caught a glimpse of Coquerel's Sifaka, a large lemur with a white and rufous coat, right from the breakfast table! Their inquisitive nature and playful antics make them a regular favorite. Accommodation are in simple bungalows, or sometimes safari-style tents depending on our assignment by the park administration. (B,L,D)



Sun. and Mon., Dec. 4 and Dec 5 Majahanga to Ampijoroa to Tana

After some early morning birding, we transfer to the airport in Ampijoroa and fly back to Antananarivo to meet international flights out either this evening, December 4, or the following morning, December 5. Your hotel is included if you depart the next day. (B, L, D)

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COST OF THE JOURNEY

The 14-day Main Tour price is \$5995 DBL occupancy; \$6765 SGL. The 5-day extension is \$1995 DBL; \$2275 SGL. The tour price includes all flights in Madagascar, transport, guide fees (with Alastair for the main tour and local guides for the extension), local guide fees, meals, accommodation, bottled water on the bus, entry fees.

Cost of the journey does not include international airfare from your home or items of a personal nature, such as portage, drinks from the bar, telephone, and local guide gratuities (at your discretion, we will give some guidelines).

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Your destination airport in Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, is Ivato International Airport (TNR). The in-country flights are included with your tour cost and will be arranged. You may arrive in Antananarivo (commonly called "Tana") at your convenience, however, you should plan on arriving the day/night before Day 1 of the trip in order to rest up from your travels. Your best value for flights may be flying through Paris. However, travel through Johannesburg makes it very easy to add side trips to other famous game parks.

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