

For tours departing beyond 2009, itineraries may be subject to change. This will be confirmed by the publication of the 2010 brochure (issued in Oct 09).

2009  
Tour Dossier

# EXPLORE!

WORLDWIDE

MADAGASCAR Dossier Ref. MD

## The Lost Continent

Amended 25 Sep 2009. Valid from 01 Apr 2009 to 31 Dec 2009

Since first issue this dossier has been updated with amendments to the following sections: itinerary, special highlights, foreign exchange & sightseeing

As our itineraries may be amended from time to time, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers, please ensure you have the most up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel. You can download the dossier from our website, [www.explore.co.uk](http://www.explore.co.uk). Of course we will notify you of any significant changes, but sometimes minor changes may simply be added to the tour dossier.

### JOINING TOUR ABROAD

13 days/12 nights Land Only  
Antananarivo to Antananarivo

Join Antananarivo (day 1)

End Antananarivo (day 13)

Clients booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point in Antananarivo. Please refer to separate 'Joining Instructions' for name and address of hotel and time of rendezvous with tour leader.

### GROUP TRAVEL FROM LONDON

15 days/14 nights Tour including  
Connecting Group Flights  
London-Antananarivo-London

Depart from London Heathrow airport to Paris, change to fly Paris to Antananarivo, arriving following morning. Transfer to hotel.

Return from Antananarivo (day 13 of Land Only itinerary) on overnight flight to Paris, change to fly Paris to London Heathrow.

Passengers with non-group flights booked through Explore should refer to their individual confirmation invoice for flight details. Transfers to and from the airport are not included unless purchased in addition to the tour package.

### SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Among the many highlights featured on this tour, we particularly mention:

- \* **ANDASIBE RESERVE** Rainforest walks and Indri Indri.
- \* **ANTSIRABE** Excursion to Lake Tritriva.
- \* **HIGHLAND SCENERY** Rice paddies and villages.

### CO<sub>2</sub> Offsets Included

The biggest environmental impact of your holiday with Explore is the CO<sub>2</sub> generated by your flights. As a responsible tour operator, we have included in our tour prices the costs of offsetting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from all international and domestic flights forming part of the tour. Our chosen offset partner is Climate Care. If you are making independent flight arrangements to join one of our tours, may we urge you to take responsibility for your CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by offsetting through Climate Care, or a similar offsetting scheme.

**MD18OCT09 to 29NOV09 please note:** due to foreign office advice against travel to the centre of Antananarivo we will now stay outside of the city and visit a nearby crocodile and wildlife park rather than a city tour. Also at the tour end due to flight schedule changes we will arrive back in Tana earlier than expected so have day rooms at a hotel until the evening flight departure.

- \* **RANOMAFANA N. PARK** Rainforest walks and lemurs.
- \* **ISALO NATIONAL PARK** The 'Grand Canyon' of Madagascar.
- \* **ANAKAO** Relaxing by the warm waters of the Mozambique channel.

The wildlife and isolation of this ancient island 'continent' make it one of the most fascinating yet least travelled areas of all Africa. Like a giant Noah's ark, it offered a life raft for numerous animals and plants found nowhere else on Earth. The Malagasy people are also culturally distinct, of Afro-Asian descent, bound together by a common belief in ancestral spirits. Madagascar is a glimpse into a unique world. Travel is mainly by bus on surfaced roads through Southern Madagascar with an amazing diversity of scenery. Some accommodation within the National Parks is fairly basic and we also stay at a rural development centre. Lemur spotting is undertaken on foot with walks easy-paced and generally lasting around 2-3 hours. A local guide/interpreter and various National Park nature guides support an Explore tour leader during the tour.

### LAND ONLY ITINERARY

**Be Prepared:** While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route printed below, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and there are some long drives through some stunning scenery.

**Accommodation and Included Meals:** please find the key to our accommodation ratings overleaf, and note that included meals are indicated in the itinerary below and are shown on the day they are provided (B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner).

#### Day 1. Join tour Antananarivo

Arrive at hotel and check-in. Cheerfully stacked on the sloping sides of the Highlands, the medieval capital of Antananarivo, affectionately known as 'Tana', enjoys a pleasant climate (1350m). This afternoon we will make a visit to a crocodile farm and wildlife sanctuary. **Overnight hotel H+.**

#### Day 2. Visit Ambohimanga Palace; Drive to Andasibe

This morning we head to the oldest palace in Madagascar situated on Ambohimanga, a forested hill, north of Antananarivo. It was from this fortress that the Merina, a highland

### Earth Matters

- **The Travel Foundation**  
Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk)
- **Tourism Concern**  
Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk)
- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>



tribe, first established an effective administration and military command under the King Andrianampoinamerina. The fort includes the original king's hut and later European buildings. From here we have magnificent views over the fertile rice fields below. We drive on to Andasibe village where we will make an evening walk in search of nocturnal wildlife. **2 nights forest lodge H+ (included meals: B, L).**

#### Day 3. Walks in Andasibe Reserve

Although only eight square kilometres, Andasibe Reserve boasts nine species of Lemur, including the largest, the indri indri, whose piercing voice can be heard throughout the forest. Colourful chameleons and many birds can also be seen as we spend the day walking trails in this beautiful forested reserve. There may also be a chance to walk round the local village outside the reserve. **(Included meals: B, D).**

#### Day 4. Drive to Antsirabe

Heading south we reach the spa town of Antsirabe, the coolest place in Madagascar. Its climate made it a favourite spot with European missionaries and their influence can still be seen in the colonial architecture and churches. Antsirabe is also the agricultural and administrative centre of Madagascar and is also regarded as the 'pousse-pousse' capital. **Overnight hotel H+ (included meals: B).**

#### Day 5. Drive to Ambohitra

This morning we drive to the volcanic Lake of Tritriva. Local myths and taboos have grown up around this mysterious lake which seems to have many guises, changing colour from one day to the next. We have the opportunity to walk round the lake before driving to Ambohitra in the afternoon. We'll visit some of the craft shops, which produce carvings of Malagasy life, furniture and detailed marquetry work. We shall stay at a local development guest house, and there maybe the opportunity to see a folk dancing display this evening. This adds a fascinating insight into the local life and provides a unique chance to visit and learn from the local people. **Overnight dorm-style guesthouse H (included meals: B, L, D).**

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### Day 6. Drive to Ranomafana N. Park

The drive to Ranomafana takes up most of the day, however the winding road passes varied landscapes of rugged ridges, huge boulders and rural villages surrounded by rice paddies. In 1987 a new species of lemur named the Golden Bamboo was found in Ranomafana National Park. There are many hidden waterfalls and the Namorona river flows through some impressive gorges, flanked on either side by tropical rainforest. **2 nights forest lodge H+ (included meals: B, L, D).**

### Day 7. In Ranomafana N. Park

Most lemur species are endangered, the last survivors of a once abundant family of primates, now confined to pockets of forest and bush throughout Madagascar. Deforestation has taken a heavy toll on these arboreal creatures – only 30 species remain. With luck we may see some of the species found in the park including Red-Bellied lemur, Grey Gentle lemur, Milne-Edwards' sifaka and perhaps the Black and White Ruffed lemur and the extremely rare Golden Bamboo lemur. We may also spot the Malagasy boa constrictor, chameleons, the black parrot, cuckoo roller and many other birds. **(Included meals: B, L, D).**

### Day 8. Drive to Isalo N. Park (Ranohira)

Returning to the main road this morning, we continue south via the regional capital of Fianarantsoa, the academic centre of Madagascar. Leaving the highland plateau and descending through superb mountain scenery to the plains we pause at Ambalavao paper workshop before arriving at Anja Community Reserve. Here we have the chance to watch troupes of ring-tailed lemur coverting among the grainte boulders. Continuing south the pine trees thin out and the fertile soil of the highlands gives way to drier savannah, cactus, termite mounds, and the dust of the mid-south. We finally reach our destination, Ranohira, situated on the edge of the Isalo National Park. **2 nights hotel H+ (included meals: B, L, D).**

### Day 9. Exploring Isalo N. Park

One of the highlights of our trip is Madagascar's 'Grand Canyon' in Isalo National Park. Dervla Murphy, in her book 'Muddling through Madagascar' describes it thus – "Landscapes that are literally incredible. You don't believe it. You think you're hallucinating. How can wind and water have done all this?". Natural erosion has produced fantastic canyons and bizarre outcrops of wind-blasted sandstone. Sparse dry deciduous forest, including species of dwarf baobab and succulents, is found in the park. We plan to walk to a natural oasis pool known as 'Piscine Naturelle' and see tombs of the Bara people. Watching the sun set through the natural rock arch of 'La Fenetre' provides a memorable climax to our day. **(Included meals: B, L, D).**

### Day 10. Drive to Toliara

The temperature rises as we lose height and head for the coast, crossing the savannah plain, dotted with herds of Zebu cattle. The south of Madagascar is largely desert, and weird cactus-like plants unique to the island smother the land and make up the vast areas of so called 'spiny desert'. Close to Sakaraha is the Zombitse National Park. Here we will walk near the remarkable dry forest which is home to many birds, including black parrots, the Madagascar buzzard and the cuckoo roller. The very rare Apperts' Greenbull is also here. As we continue our drive, we'll pass by a number of fascinating Mahafaly Tombs before reaching the town of Toliara once an important port of call for Dutch and English ships plying the trade routes during the 16th and 17th centuries. **Overnight hotel H (included meals: B).**

### Day 11. Boat to Anakao; free afternoon

After breakfast this morning we transfer from Toliara to the small fishing village of Anakao, located to the south, just past the Onilahy river estuary. The rich turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean beckon from our beach hideaway and this afternoon is free to explore a little of our surroundings, or enjoy the warm waters of this tranquil setting. **2 nights hotel H (included meals: B).**

### Day 12. In Anakao; optional snorkeling or visit to Nosy Ve

Today has again been left free to enjoy Anakao as you see fit. You may wish to spend your last day here relaxing on the beach, or snorkelling. Alternatively there is the option to take a trip out to the island of Nosy Ve, located just off Anakao's western shore. The island is still considered a sacred site for the local Vezo people and with its excellent reefs and colonies of red-tailed tropicbirds, it is an ideal place to soak up the tropical atmosphere of this island paradise. **(Included meals: B).**

### Day 13. Transfer to Toliara and fly to Tana. Tour ends Tana

This morning we depart Anakao and return to Toliara for our flight back to Tana, where our tour ends. **(Included meals: B).**

## PERSONAL EXPENSES

You will need some extra money to cover meals not included in the tour price, optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### Foreign Exchange

**Local Currency:** Malagasy Ariary.  
**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** We recommend taking most of your money in US Dollars or Euro cash. Please note that US\$100 bills are not accepted and credit cards are rarely accepted.

**Where to Exchange:** Limited to Antananarivo, Antsirabe and Fianarantsoa. Your tour leader will advise on arrival.

**ATM Availability:** Antananarivo only, but ATMs cannot be relied upon.

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Very limited in Antananarivo and not to be relied upon.

**Travellers Cheques:** Take some travellers cheques in case of emergencies, though note that they are very difficult to exchange.

Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currency-express.com/explore/>

## Meal Plan

**Local Food and Drink:** 12 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 5 dinners are included on this trip; please be prepared to pay for all other meals. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location and the prices below are given as an average guide only.

	UK	Madagascar
Coffee/Tea	£1.20	£0.30
Soft Drink	0.80	0.50
Bottle of Beer	2.50	0.70
Bottle of Water	0.80	0.50
Bottle of Wine	10.00	3.00
2 Course Meal*	10.00	6.00
3 Course Meal**	18.00	12.00

\*Cheap local fare in a small cafe or restaurant.

\*\*Typical food in a simple, reasonably comfortable mid-range restaurant.

## Tipping

**Local Staff:** Tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of Africa. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approx. £35 for tipping.

**Tour Leader:** At your discretion you might also consider tipping your tour leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

## AZAFADY

Explore supports Azafady; an award winning organisation working on a variety of projects in south east Madagascar which benefit the most vulnerable communities. Projects include installing wells and pharmacies to combat cholera and other potentially fatal water-borne diseases training community health workers and equipping schools.

### What you can do

Development in Madagascar is limited, so even a small donation can really make a difference.

[www.azafady.org](http://www.azafady.org)

**EXPLORE ACCOMMODATION RATINGS :** An important feature of many Explore tours is the wide range of accommodation used, and since the beginning our philosophy has been to select accommodation to suit the itinerary - not the other way round.

To help gauge the comfort level on your chosen tour, we have graded the accommodation standards at all night-stops using the rating guide below. Please keep in mind however that standards can vary from one trip to the next, and occasionally we may need to change a night-stop without advance warning.

### Hotels / lodges / guesthouses - or similar

**H++ :** Comfortable hotels, lodges or guesthouses with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. With air-conditioning/heating where appropriate and with reliable hot and cold water. Generally good levels of service and often with added amenities such as restaurant, bar, gardens or swimming pool.

**H+ :** Standard hotels, lodges or guesthouses, usually with twin or single rooms and en suite facilities. These are generally standard, no-frills hotels with adequate amenities and service standards. Whilst comfort levels are perfectly acceptable to most, please don't expect too much! These are often small, family run establishments.

**H :** Basic hotels, lodges or guesthouses (also village houses, mountain huts, hotels etc often come into this category). Accommodation may be communal or dorm-style, and WC / washing facilities are usually shared. Running hot and cold water may be unreliable or even unavailable. These can be the most rewarding and memorable places to stay, but comfort levels are low.

### Camping

**C++ :** Comfortable, full service camping generally in permanent, fixed camps with walk-in tents, proper beds and often with en-suite facilities and other amenities such as dining area, bar, gardens and a swimming pool. Your bed-linen is provided.

**C+ :** Standard camping in private or public campsites, usually with WC and washing / showering facilities in a shared ablutions building. Typically in two person tents, and some level of participation is often required. Generally bed linen or sleeping bags are not provided.

**C :** Basic camping in wild camps where facilities / amenities may be limited or non-existent. Generally there is no running water, and we dig a temporary bush toilet. Two person tents are often used, but occasionally we sleep under the stars. Participation normally required and sleeping bags usually not provided.

**Note:** other accommodation, for example, aboard boats or on overnight sleeper trains is described individually at the appropriate point in the tour itinerary above.

**To book please call 0844 499 0901 • [www.explore.co.uk](http://www.explore.co.uk)**

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## Other Sightseeing

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date this dossier was originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

The majority of optionals can be paid for by credit card (NOT debit card). Please check with your tour leader for the most up-to-date information in this regard. Please note that any credit card transactions may attract an approximate rate of 5% per transaction.

All sightseeing is dependent on the group size.

**ANDASIBE** Nocturnal walk €4.00.

**RANOMAFANA** Bird walk approx €5 depending on numbers, massage 30 mins €3.50.

**ANAKAO** Snorkelling €40, piroque to Nosy Ve €12 plus €3.50 for grilled fish lunch.

**TOLIARA** Arboretum £6 pp, Spiny forest from Toliara using 4WDs approx €30 depending on numbers.

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## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Seasonal Climate

The climate is tropical, but cooler in the highlands (dropping as low as 5°C at night in July/August in Antananarivo and Andasibe). The dry season is March to October continuing into November in most areas. The east coast is best March-May and September-November, January-March is cyclone season. The south west area is hot, dry and semi-arid. March-April is the best time for flowers and reptiles. November (spring) is generally the best time for wildlife and birds, but lemurs can be viewed all year round.

Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

### Visa Requirements

An entry visa is required by UK, AUS, NZ, USA and CAN. citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

## Vaccinations & Protection

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A plus Polio and diphtheria. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria.

**Yellow fever please note: if you have previously visited a country where yellow fever is prevalent, you will need to produce a certificate of vaccination against yellow fever on entry to Madagascar. If you cannot produce a certificate, you will be required to visit the Institut Pasteur in Antananarivo to be vaccinated.**

**Following the advice given by the Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, we strongly recommend the wearing long sleeved shirts and the liberal application of insect repellent as a precautionary measure to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. These precautions should be taken at all times as the mosquitoes are also active during daylight hours.**

**Special Note:** Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

### Electric Supply and Plugs

For comprehensive information regarding voltages and plug types in use in the countries visited, follow the relevant link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

### Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all bookings. You must take your policy document with you on tour, as your tour leader will ask to see this at the start of the trip. Your documentation must state in writing that you are the named policyholder and that the cover is valid for your period of travel. Your policy document must also indicate that you have medical expenses and emergency repatriation cover and a 24-hour contact telephone number for your Insurance Company must be shown on your documentation in case of emergency.

**If you are unable to provide all this information at the start of the trip you will not be allowed to join the trip.** If you have purchased Explore Insurance you should carry the Master Certificate leaflet with you, which outlines the conditions of the policy together with a copy of your Confirmation Invoice, which is your proof of purchase of insurance. Explore Worldwide are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority.

## Know Before You Go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs, including advice re: the legality of and local attitudes towards same-sex relationships. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Traveladvice/>

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## PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

A complete list of clothing and personal gear is contained in Explore's '**General Information Booklet**', available only after a booking has been accepted. Here we make a few specific recommendations with regard to your tour.

**Luggage:** One kitbag/rucksack or old but sturdy suitcase (luggage travels on the roof rack during the day) and a daysac. Total weight allowance **15kgs/33lbs maximum** per person.

**Clothing:** Pack for '**All Tours**' plus '**Hot Conditions**'. Clothing should be lightweight, but a warm sweater or jacket is advisable as nights at altitude and under desert conditions can be very cold (>10°C), even in summer and especially in July to September. Rainwear is recommended for the occasional shower on the east coast. Don't forget your swimwear.

**Footwear:** Lightweight walking boots/shoes and trainers or sandals.

**Equipment:** Take a strong torch for nocturnal wildlife walks, a water bottle, camera film (and spare batteries), binoculars and a beach towel and swimming costume. Rain proof pants are very handy for walks in the rainforest. Walking poles maybe useful in Ranomafana NP and Andasibe.

**Trek Kit Bag:** For an exclusively designed Explore Trek Bag, follow the relevant link at [www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore)

**Personal First Aid Kit:** For an exclusively designed Explore Medical Kit, visit [www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore)

### Need help on clothing or equipment?

Then we suggest you contact Nomad Travel, our equipment partner, who specialise in kitting people out for adventurous travel. You receive a special 10% discount in-store or online. Visit one of their stores, phone 0845 260 0044, or visit their website [www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore](http://www.nomadtravel.co.uk/explore) for further information.

**To book please call 0844 499 0901 • [www.explore.co.uk](http://www.explore.co.uk)**

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