



# Madagascar

The Mystical Island



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# The Madagascar Experience



Enticing, enthralling Madagascar has evolved in splendid isolation for the last 165 million years, developing its own unique collection of bizarre, beautiful and extraordinary plants, animals, birds and reptiles. About 80% of all the flora and fauna is found nowhere else on earth, making the 4th largest island completely unique with tantalizing links to both Africa and Asia.

Madagascar lies 400 kilometers off the east coast of Africa and offers diverse and spectacular scenery: mountains, deserts, rainforests, dazzling beaches fringing the Indian Ocean and island archipelagos linked by coral reefs and clear turquoise waters.

## Climate:

A gorgeous warm and tropical climate can generally be enjoyed at coast resorts. Cooler temperatures can be expected up in the mountains and forested areas. Temperatures in the capital, Antananarivo can range from 27degrees Celsius in December down to 10 degrees in June. The rainy season is between November and March, with the dry seasons between April and October. Normally cool with fresh breezes for the rest of the year. The south and west regions are often hot and dry.

Like all Indian Ocean islands Madagascar can experience cyclones occasionally, this is known as the monsoon season. February is considered the most likely season for the Cyclones and can affect the north & north

east coastal areas. There is, however, a great variation in climate owing to its vast expanse, elevations and position relative to dominant winds.

## The People of Madagascar:

The citizens of Madagascar as well as their language are known as Malagasy. The Malagasy people are a mixture of African and Asian descent, though French, Arab & Indian cultures have all played their part in developing the current Malagasy culture. All the different groups contributed elements of their customs and beliefs, and today these all come together to form the Malagasy culture.

Some researchers believe that the island was uninhabited until about 2000 years ago, when Indonesian sailors settled there.

## Time:

Madagascar time is GMT + 3 hours. From South Africa + 1 hour. Flying time from Johannesburg is 3 hours to Antananarivo.





# Antananarivo

Madagascar has a population of 17 million people. The capital Antananarivo, affectionately known as Tana, has a population of approximately 3 million people and is at an altitude of 4060 ft above sea level.

Built on the hillsides and ridges of 12 sacred hills and surrounded with rice paddy fields, Tana is an interesting place to spend a few days either at the beginning or end of your holiday.



Since it is also the location of the country's major international airport, most visitors will likely pass through the city during their

holiday. There are some very interesting historical buildings and markets to explore.

The Artesian market offers everything from woven silk products to gem stones.

Haggling for the best price is fun and is expected. There is a Lemur park with shop & restaurant just 30 minutes outside Tana which is an ideal park to visit if you are laid over for several hours awaiting your connecting flight.



# The Island of *Sainte Marie*

Sainte Marie Island is the idyllic little tropical island to get away from it all and relax and enjoy nature as it should be: unspoilt. Just 15 miles off the coast of Sonierana-Ivongo (north of Tamatave), and one hours' flying time from Tana, it is a long thin island approximately 50 km by 7 km with the small island of Ile aux Nattes just off the southern tip. The island generally enjoys warm sunny weather most of the year with occasional tropical thunder storms. With secluded beaches, soft white sand, warm weather, swaying palms and lush vegetation Sainte Marie has for three centuries remained the perfect example of a pristine tropical island.

Most accommodation is in small privately owned beach hotels offering between 6 to 25 rooms. Accommodation is basic but clean and comfortable with en suite bathrooms and hot water. Breakfast is usually continental and dinner has a Malagasy & French touch with seafood featuring most evenings.

## **Whale tours:**

The channel between Sainte-Marie and Madagascar is a hot-spot for whale watching. Between July through to September substantial groups of Humpback whales migrate from the Antarctic to this idyllic breeding place.

These quiet giants find conditions here that are favourable for the growth of their young and well suited to their courtship and acrobatic games before the big return toward the cold seas.

## **Pirates:**

Ile Sainte-Marie became a popular base for pirates throughout the 17th and 18th centuries due to its close proximity to main shipping lanes and offering calm, safe anchorage as well as basic supplies.

Legendary pirates like William Kidd & Robert Culliford are known to have been in St Marie. Many of them started a family line, descendants of whom still live on the island today. The pirate cemetery draws many visitors.





### Snorkeling and Scuba diving:

Safe from sharks, the lagoon of Sainte Marie is endowed with significant coralline growth. Its underwater fauna is preserved as a natural heritage and first-class diving site in the Indian Ocean. Several authentic pirate vessels still lie within a few meters of the surface in the Baie des Forbans. These and the many corals can be explored by both scuba divers and amateurs with little more than a mask, snorkel and a set of fins.



### Beaches

The island is surrounded with beaches with some of the best white beaches in the south on Ile aux Nattes.



### Exploring

The roads beckon mountain bikers and most hotels hire bicycles, small motor bikes and snorkelling gear. Arrange a picnic lunch and head off your way.



### Activities

- ◆ Shore and boat-based
- ◆ Scuba diving & Snorkelling
- ◆ Whale viewing in season
- ◆ Hire a small motor bike and explore
- ◆ Deep Sea Fishing
- ◆ Zoo with Lemurs & Botanical garden
- ◆ Pirate cemetery
- ◆ Mountain bikes
- ◆ Jungle trekking

# The Island of Nosy Be



The Nosy Be Archipelago is situated off the north west coast of Madagascar. Commonly known as the "Big Island" with a surface area of approx 280 sq km, it includes numerous smaller surrounding islands. Its tropical climate and classical 'Indian Ocean holiday island' appeal makes it a leading sea, sun & sand destination. A fairly stable temperature year-round can be expected, between (25°C to 30°C). Though sudden tropical rain showers may occur, the atmosphere is clear and dry. It boasts 12 months of sunshine, some beautiful beaches lapped by the warm waters of the Mozambique Channel, exuberant tropical vegetation, and an ever-growing number of hotels.



## Perfume Island

Disembarking from your flight at Fascene airport, you are greeted with the various fragrant scents of Ylang Ylang, frangipani tree, coffee, cocoa, vanilla, cinnamon and sugar cane as these balmy fragrances wash over your sense of smell. Nosy Be is often called the Perfume Island with its abundance of Ylang Ylang plantations. The coast is very jagged and punctuated by a great many bays and gorgeous coves with deserted palm-lined beaches.

## Excursions

Nosy Komba & Tanikely On Nosy Komba, see the village culture where man and lemurs live in harmony with one another. Discover fascinating fauna and flora including Lemurs, Chameleons and Boa Constrictors. The Lemur sanctuary allows you to get up close and personal with these endearing little animals. Deservedly the most popular of these islands is Nosy Tanikely, a marine reserve offering world-class snorkelling right off the beach and scuba diving. Snorkelling equipment may be hired at the beach. A sumptuous seafood lunch & refreshments are served on the beach under the trees while being observed by the local Lemur population, making for an excellent day excursion.



To make the most of your time on Nosy Be, be sure to visit some of the surrounding islands. Travel is by local motorised pirogue.





## Nosy Sakatia

Nosy Sakatia (Orchid Island) is a small lush island, a 15 minute boat trip from the main island offering excellent snorkelling, diving and hiking. Full scuba & snorkelling equipment is available for hire at the lodge. Overnight or day trips are available and lunch is offered at Sakatia Lodge.

Back on Nosy Be, there is a wide choice of excursions to suit all tastes. Visit the Ylang Ylang perfume distilleries; sample the local rum at Djamandjary, the local rum manufacturer; visit the highest point on the island, Mont Passot crater lakes. A worthwhile stop would be the Artisans market on the outskirts of Hellville.



Wonderful Malagasy handicrafts can be purchased (enjoy a good haggle for the best price!).



Nosy Be is a volcanic island with eleven extinct volcanoes which now act as natural water reservoirs for both cultivation and human consumption. Some are also home to crocodiles. The highest peak, Mount Passot rises to 450m. A day exploring inland with quad bikes can be great fun.



### Activities

- ◆ Swimming
- ◆ Fishing
- ◆ Scuba diving, snorkelling
- ◆ Quad bikes
- ◆ Mountain Bikes
- ◆ Lemurs on Nosy Komba
- ◆ Hiking
- ◆ Kite surfing
- ◆ Horse riding

# Perinet Forest



The 12 000 hectare primary rainforest of Perinet is situated conveniently close to Antananarivo, approximately 3 hours by car making it the country's most popular reserve. Perinet holds a large variety of rare rainforest plants and animals including eleven species of lemur (most notably the baboon-sized Indri with its haunting call and elusive habits), large chameleons and the blue boa constrictor. The forest holds a world record for its number of frog species and is also home to numerous rare endemic birds, reptiles and other marsh-dwelling creatures, making it an essential stopover for the keen naturalist.



You may choose to walk freely through the forests and explore at your own pace, however, we would recommend you hire a local knowledgeable guide at the entrance to show you around and explain the many different fascinating plants and animals that you will come across.

## Sight-seeing

The most popular option for those who want to see a fair spectrum of Malagasy wildlife.

Perinet (Andasibe-Mantadia) is Madagascar's most visited reserve, because it is so easy to get to. It holds a large variety of rare rainforest animals, notably the baboonsized Indri, largest of the Lemurs.

Set in lush montane rainforest, Perinet is 3½ hours from Antananarivo by good road. Its trails are well-mapped. Forest guides will invariably find many animal and plant oddities.



Walks of different durations are offered as well as both daytime and evening walks to see the nocturnal animals. Remember to bring a good torch or preferably a head mounted torch, leaving your hands free and not to be forgotten, a water-proof jacket as you may experience light rain in the forest.



# Berenty Forest

Berenty Reserve bordering the Mandare river, is the world's largest Lemur reserve, and home to six different species of Lemurs. Berenty is in the weird "spiny desert" of Madagascar's sub-desert situated 2 to 3hrs by road north of Fort Dauphin in the south east of the country. Berenty is the reserve of choice for international film crews capturing documentaries of these fascinating little fellows.

The private reserve was opened in the 1930's and over the years the Lemurs, though wild, have grown accustomed to humans. The Ring Tailed Lemur, being the most outgoing, will saunter around with their tails twitching in the air waiting for a visitor to part with a banana. One of the most popular Lemurs is the white and copper coloured Sifaka Lemur. Due to the design of their feet they cannot walk like other Lemurs and move across the ground in leaps and bounds, hence they are known as the "dancing Lemurs". If you have the good fortune of seeing them with their babies then you have the pleasure of witnessing mother & baby dancing.

You can drive to Berenty from Fort Dauphin for the day, or if you decide to spend the night you can also enjoy spotting the nocturnal Lemurs. Binoculars and torch are recommended accessories.

The drive up from Fort Dauphin introduces you to the strange Spiny forest and Baobabs.



Almost all trees in this area are heavily encrusted with spines & thorns to ensure their survival in the dry climate. Sadly the locals are gradually destroying the forest to make charcoal from these wonderful rare trees.

Berenty is set amid a giant sisal plantation which you travel through before reaching Berenty Lodge. Sisal is an exotic cactus that was introduced for its value as a fibre.

Production has climbed in recent years due to the demand for biodegradable packaging. You can ask your driver to show you around the production facilities.



Tailor-made action-packed river expeditions for the adventurous can range from one to several days to suit you.

Canoeing down the meandering rivers of the region is the ideal avenue to reach natural unspoiled places, and can make for wonderfully civilized camping. How much closer can you get to nature?

Morondava offers sandy streets and vast seashores rocked by the passage of schooners and pirogues with their sails filled by the wind. Fishing is the main activity of Morondava, pulsating with the ancient rhythms of the Vezo fishermen. Shrimp is called pink gold here, sustaining many families since the opening of a processing factory.



# Morondava

Situated on the west coast of Madagascar at the mouth of the Morondava River and washed by the warm waters of the Mozambique Channel, Morondava is accessed by direct flights from Antananarivo and Fort Dauphin.

Reminiscent of a 'wild west' movie set, Morondava is the center of the Sakalava kingdom and their tombs. The Morondava basin is baobab country and is the gateway to many of the wonders of

the western region including the Kirindy Forest, the Avenue of the Baobabs, the Tsingy de Bemaraha and Belo Sur Mer.

# Some advice

for your Mystical Island  
Holiday of Madagascar

## **How to get there:**

Air Madagascar operates direct flights from Paris, Milan, Bangkok, Mauritius, Reunion, Nairobi & Comoros to Antananarivo. Currently from Johannesburg Air Madagascar operates two flights per week and SA Airlink operates four flights per week. From Antananarivo domestic connections to your holiday destination are required. Due to the shortage of flights you are well advised to plan and book your holiday well in advance.

## **Entry Visas:**

Visas are compulsory and can be obtained at the airport on arrival. Approximately Euros 23 per person.

## **Health and Immunization requirements:**

We strongly recommend that you obtain the latest information from your travel agency, or SAA flight centre. Malaria prophylaxis is strongly recommended. A Tetanus jab is always recommended no matter where you are travelling and protects you for 10 years. When travelling to Madagascar it is always a good idea to carry a small basic first aid kit. Out on the islands and in the forests there may not be a great deal of medication available.

## **What to bring:**

Shorts, T-shirts, cotton shirts, light trousers, pullover, jacket, good shoes for walking. Warmer clothes are advised for the evenings and during winter an old faithful track suit will never go amiss. Rainwear is advisable particularly in the forests. Hat / Cap, sun glasses, sun block, batteries, torch, binoculars, mosquito repellent sprays or creams.

## **Language:**

Madagascar has three official languages, namely Malagasy being their first language: French the business language but English is spoken in most tourist areas. We do however, recommend that you purchase a French / English phrase book before leaving home. In some areas you may find this a most valuable accessory.

## **Currency:**

The currency in Madagascar is the Malagasy Ariary: 1 Euro = approx. 2500 MGA (September 2007)  
The Euro is more readily accepted than the US Dollar. Credit cards are not widely accepted for shopping etc but are accepted at most hotels. Credit cards - Visa Cards are more widely accepted than Master Cards. We recommend you travel with a Visa Card and draw some Euro currency before leaving home, this will give you ready cash on arrival for those entry Visas.

## **Electricity:**

220 volts is standard and the European 2 pin round plugs are required to fit the hotel wall sockets. Strangely enough 2 pin plugs may no longer be sold separately in South Africa. However, adaptor travel kits are available at some travel agencies and electrical shops. We always recommend taking a multi-board from home and fitting a local male 2 pin plug on the end. You can then plug in all your accessories without having to change all your plugs.

## **Transport:**

Your airport / hotel transfers are prepaid and included. However, should you wish to hire a taxi to see the town and surrounding countryside we would recommend negotiating a rate with a taxi driver for a full day's rental. Haggling over the price is expected. We have found this to be cheaper than paying for individual trips. In some areas small motor bikes can be hired with a guide as an extra this can be great fun. We found that crash helmets for the driver are compulsory but not for the pillion passenger !! Driver's licenses did not appear to be important on Saint Marie Island!

# Your Mystical Madagascar Island Holiday starts the minute you board your flight



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## Terms of Booking

A contract will not exist between the passengers and Selftours cc until such time as we have received a signed copy of the company's terms and conditions and the passengers deposit as required by Selftours

## Travel Insurance

We strongly urge our passengers to avail themselves of comprehensive Travel Insurance. This can be arranged privately or Selftours can offer our AIG travel policy, underwritten by the American AIG group. Terms and coverage can be supplied upon request.



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