

Endemic birds and mammals

Madagascar has been isolated from Africa for 165 million years, allowing its wildlife to develop. Almost 80% of fauna and flora are endemic and not seen anywhere else on earth. The island has many ecosystems including eastern humid rainforests and its relative freshwater wetlands, western dry deciduous forests and western wetlands plus the unique spiny forests in the arid south of the country. Madagascar has five endemic families, over 100 endemic bird species and twenty-eight species of lemur.

■ Please note this itinerary is subject to change at short notice due to internal flight changes.

Days 1-2: Fly to Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, with arrival on the afternoon of Day 2. Our first birding spot is at Alarobia Tsarasaotra lake which has Madagascar Pond Heron, Great and Dimorphic Egrets and Green-backed Herons. Large numbers of wildfowl occur and include White-faced and Fulvous Whistling Ducks, Red-billed and Hottentot Teal and Knob-billed Duck. In the reeds we may locate Malachite Kingfisher and singing Madagascar Swamp Warblers. Tall trees around the lake attract Madagascar Kestrel, Frances's Sparrowhawk, Madagascar Wagtail, Madagascar White-eye, Madagascar Fody and Madagascar Mannikin.

Days 3-4: Morning flight to Majunga and transfer to Ampijoroa forest station which is famous for its endemic mammals, birds, and other wildlife. En route we check rice fields at Amboromalandy Barrage Lake for Glossy Ibis, Black Egret, Black-winged Stilt, Purple and the uncommon Humblot's Heron. Upon our arrival in Ampijoroa, birds around the camp include Madagascar Bee-eater, Broad-billed Roller, Madagascar Hoopoe, Crested Drongo and Sakalava Weaver. Early mornings give us our best chance of locating White-breasted Mesite and the rare Schlegel's Asity. Other key endemic species we hope to see include Madagascar Crested Ibis, Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Turtle Dove, Madagascar Green Pigeon, Grey-headed Lovebird, Coquerel's and Red-capped

Dates

Wednesday October 31st -
Wednesday November 21st 2018

*Wednesday November 21st -
Monday November 26th 2018

Leaders: Marc Rabenandrasana
and Simon Papps

Group Size: 8

Birds: 180-200

*Extension to the Masoala Peninsula

Couas, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Sickle-billed, Hook-billed, White-headed, Van Dam's, Chabert's and Red-tailed Vangas. Cuckoo Roller is often seen calling and displaying above the forest. The park vicinity is home to eight species of lemur. We should see the 'dancing lemur' – Coquerel's Sifaka, Common Brown Lemur, and with luck, the rare and endangered Mongoose Lemur. During an organised night walk, we may find Western Woolly Lemur, Fat-tailed Dwarf and Golden-brown Mouse Lemur.

Day 5: A visit to Ravelobe Lake which is home to Madagascar Fish Eagle whilst Madagascar Jacana and Allen's Gallinule are numerous on the water lilies. Return to Majunga where we spend the night.

Day 6: Morning boat trip to Bombetoka Bay where we explore the wetlands, mangrove forest and mudflats of the Betsiboka River. We should see the endemic



Long-tailed Ground Roller *Photo: Suzanne Bowden*

Madagascar White Ibis, Madagascar Teal, Lesser and Greater Flamingos and possibly Madagascar Plover. After lunch, we embark on a camping safari to Kinkony Lake, the second largest on the island.

Day 7: Today we explore the lake in search of the very rare Sakalava Rail (in one of the few accessible areas) which was only rediscovered in 2002. In the reedbeds we may observe Little Bittern, Purple Swamphen, Allen's Gallinule, and Common Moorhen.

Day 8: On the way back towards Mitsinjo, we might have an opportunity to see a group of Decken's and, with luck, Crowned Sifaka in remnant patches of the dry forest. Night in Majunga.

Day 9: Fly back to Antananarivo. On arrival in the capital we stay at Tamboho Hotel, a comfortable lodge on the Tana water-front where a marsh offers great birding opportunities for ducks, egrets and herons.

Days 10-12: Today we leave the capital and stop at the Mangoro River looking for the rock-loving Madagascar Pratincole. There are two protected areas in Andasibe – Mantadia National Park and Perinet Reserve. During our stay we should see Pitta-like, Rufus-headed, Scaly and Short-legged Ground Rollers as well as the secretive Red-breasted and Red-fronted Couas. In the understory we may find Blue Coua, Dark Newtonia, Velvet Asity, Spectacled Greenbul and Nelicourvi Weaver. Birds preferring the forest canopy include Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Common Newtonia, Wedge-tailed Jery, Red-tailed, Blue, White-headed, Chabert's, Nuthatch and sometimes Pollen's Vanga and Ashy Cuckooshrike. An isolated lake within the park holds Madagascar Grebe and occasionally Meller's Duck. A visit to Ampasipotpsy marsh in the south-west of Andasibe gives us an opportunity of seeing Madagascar Rail and sometimes Madagascar Flufftail. Andasibe is the best place to watch endemic Madagascar Long-



Schegel's Asity

Photo:
Suzanne
Bowden

eared and Madagascar Scops Owls and Collared Nightjar. During our night walk in the Andasibe forest, we might see Goodman's Mouse Lemur, the smallest primate in the world, and Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur; and with luck, Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko. Additionally, five diurnal lemurs occur in the protected area: Diademed Sifaka, Black-and-white Ruffed, Common Brown, Red-bellied and Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemurs.

Day 13: An early morning visit to Eulophylla private forest for the extremely rare Helmet Vanga at one of its few known nesting sites. Afterwards, we leave Andasibe for Antsirabe stopping en route for Hamerkop, Squacco Heron and other wetland birds.

Day 14-16: Today, we continue south to Ranomafana where we stay for three nights. This mountain rainforest area covers up to 42,000 hectares of land with waterfalls and rapids. At least, 12 lemur species live here including Golden Bamboo Lemur which was only discovered in 1986. Ranomafana Park is also famous for its avifauna – Pitta-like and Rufous-headed Ground Rollers, Velvet Asity, White-throated Oxylobes, Crossley's Babbler, Cryptic and Rand's Warblers. We also look for the

secretive and terrestrial Madagascar Wood Rail, Brown Mesite, Madagascar Yellow-browed Oxylobes and if we are really lucky, Henst's Goshawk. Species occurring at higher elevations comprise Yellow-bellied Sunbird Asity, Grey-crowned Greenbul and Brown Emutail.

Day 17: We leave Ranomafana after an early morning visit to Vohiparara mountain forest. Drive to Ranohira where we stay overnight in a comfortable lodge.

Day 18: We leave Ranohira for an early morning drive to Zombitse-Vohibasia Park, a remnant transitional dry deciduous forest. Zombitsy forest is home to Appert's Greenbul which is limited in this area, Giant Coua, Lesser and Greater Vasa Parrots, Madagascar Flycatcher, Sickle-billed, Hook-billed and Rufous Vangas and the diurnal Ring-tailed Lemur and Verreaux's Sifaka. After lunch, we revisit the park for the impressive White-browed Owl.

Day 19: A visit to Isalo where a wetland has Hottentot and Red-billed Teal, White-backed Duck and Three-banded Plover. Along the trails of the Namaza Canyon and savannah habitats we may find Madagascar Sandgrouse, Benson's Rock

Thrush, Madagascar Coucal and Madagascar Partridge. Birds of prey also feature, with opportunities of watching Sooty and Peregrine Falcons, Madagascar Harrier-Hawk and Madagascar Buzzard. After lunch we leave for Ifaty where a night walk is planned for Torotoraka Scops Owl, Madagascar Nightjar, and with luck, Grey Brown Mouse Lemur.

Day 20: Today we visit Ifaty Reniala for two localised endemics: Long-tailed Ground Roller and the arboreal Sub-desert Mesite. Other species we may encounter include Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk, Banded Kestrel, Running Coua, Thamnornis Warbler, Archbold's Newtonia and Subdesert Brush Warbler. Afternoon transfer to Tulear where we spend the night.

Day 21: Early morning visit to St Augustin for Verreaux's Coua and Red-shouldered Vanga, the latter being described in 1996. After this visit, we return to Tulear to look for shorebirds on the mudflats and salt-meadows. In the afternoon, we catch a domestic flight to Antananarivo for our last night in Madagascar.

Day 22: Depart back to Europe with arrival on the following day or take an internal flight to the northern town of Maroantsetra where we spend the night. On arrival, we take a boat trip up a forested river. Telegraph wires attract Madagascar Bee-eater and on dead branches the localised Frances's Sparrowhawk. Depending on water levels, we may find Madagascar Jacana and Allen's Gallinule. Rice paddies are an integral part of Maroantsetra attracting Madagascar Heron, Diamorphic Egret and White-throated Rail. After dinner, a short excursion is planned for Greater Dwarf and Brown Mouse Lemurs as well as Panther and Carpet Chameleons.

Days 23-25: An early start with a boat transfer to Masoala, the largest tract of protected rainforest left in Madagascar today. Entering Antongila Bay, we should encounter Humpback Whales. Our base for the next two nights is a lodge located on a remote beach. Common birds around the

lodge include Greater and Lesser Vasa Parrots, Madagascar Kingfisher and Madagascar Magpie Robin. In the afternoon, we wander around forest trails looking for feeding flocks. Our prime targets are three rare endemics – Helmet and Bernier's Vangas and Brown Mesite. Other spectacular species we may encounter include Madagascar Wood Rail, Tylas, Red-tailed and White-headed Vangas, Madagascar Green and Madagascar Blue Pigeons, Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Common Newtonia and Common Jery. At dusk we should hear and hopefully see Torotoraka Scops Owl. Early on one morning we visit a reliable spot for Scaly Ground and Short-legged Ground Rollers and the shy Madagascar Sparrowhawk.

Day 26: Before leaving for Maroantsetra, we take another walk into the forest looking for Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher. An afternoon flight to Tana via Toamasina, the latter having Madagascar Fody and Madagascar Munia. Night in Tana.

Day 27: Flights back to Europe with arrival on the following day.

Prices

Ground Price: £5,795
Single room: £440
Deposit: £600
*Air Fare: £1,190
Masoala Extension: £1,995
Single room: £200
Deposit: £200
*Air Fare: £500

This holiday is fully inclusive of accommodation and meals, permit fees, guidance, tips and taxes.

Not included: drinks, insurance, airport departure taxes and items of a personal nature. Visa to enter Madagascar.

**Please refer to our terms and conditions relating to flights*