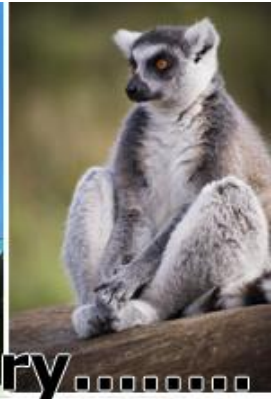


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Do something extraordinary.....

Madagascar Benahy Descent

13 Days • 12 Nights - £1995

This expedition aims to achieve a canoeing descent of the Benahy river before continuing down the Onilahy river. The Benahy, a narrow river running through canyons that are only a few meters wide, is not marked on the maps of Madagascar. Along the route we will encounter truly fantastic landscapes, learn new skills and face interesting and challenging situations. This is a unique Pioneer expedition which offers a fantastic opportunity to explore a remote area of Madagascar. Madagascar is a one-off; there is no other place like it. Its landscapes, animals and plants are simply fantastic! Near the equator with an astonishing array of habitats, ranging from rainforests to deserts and from mountain tops to mangrove swamps, it is one of the most important countries for biodiversity on the planet. The tropical climate is a perfect host to the process of nature and, like nowhere else, the variety and richness of life has flourished.

On this expedition we get to explore the arid South West region of Madagascar. We will follow the isolated Benahy river (a mixture of drag and float) into the Onilahy river (more white water) and continue all the way down through the delta to the coast at Saint Augustin.

We start deep in the Isalo canyons south of Isalo National Park, this part of the canyon is, unlike in the north, remote and untouched by tourism. The only people we will encounter while crossing this range are locals - cattle rustlers and sapphire diggers.

We may get the chance to see some of the unique Madagascan fauna including lemurs and chameleons. We can also expect to spot crocodiles (from the safety of our raft) during our time on the Onilahy. We can also arrange an extension to enable you to visit some of the other national parks (such as Ranomafana) which are richer in wildlife.

We will spend the last few days of our time in Madagascar relaxing at the beach on the Mozambique Channel.

As part of our commitment to responsible travel and in conjunction with Woodstock.org we finance a tree nursery and orchard in Italavina – which is a long term reforestation project.

Itinerary

Day 1 (B,L,D)

After your arrival in Antananarivo (nb. It may be best arriving the day before, we can arrange a hotel in Tana) and introductory briefing from the expedition leader, we will take an internal flight to Tulear. We will drive up to the Isalo

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region for the start of our Madagascan adventure. We will leave our car and spend the next 1 ½ - 2 hrs hiking down to a shallow part of the river where we will find our camp set up on the river bank.

Camping, all meals

Days 2,3,4 Descent of the Benahy (B, L, D)

The Benahy, though adjacent to Isalo National Park, has not seen many visitors. It cuts its way through breath-taking canyons, crawling with lizards, and lined with palm trees, aloe, baobabs, cacti, and a great variety of indigenous plants you may never have come across before.

It runs atop a section of land teeming with sapphires, and as a result, we may pass local miners, sifting sand through metal sieves.

Benahy navigation is smooth and easy, and we will raft in light canoes. A typical days rafting is a combination of paddle and drag areas (the later in the season we go, the more drag areas there are). The white water starts after the junction with Imaloto river and all the way down to the coastal plain just after junction with Onilahy river.

Our typical daily routine will consist of setting off between 8 and 9 am and stopping to camp around 4-5 pm. We stop for lunch and en-route we have time to wander through side canyons and observe occasional lemurs.

During our time on the Benahy, we hope to see lizards, birds, and possibly even lemurs, turtles and bats as well as some exotic and unique vegetation, including baobabs, pachypodiums and succulents.

Camping, all meals

Days 5,6,7,8 Descent of the Onilahy (B,L,D)

The Onilahy river is the largest river in the southwest. The river banks are sparsely populated - with settlements springing up to mine gemstones - but the floodplain does have lots of towns and rice paddies in areas that are not prone to flooding.

For our Onilahy descent we will transfer to larger more stable rafts and we will experience class III-IV rapids. After 3 rowdy days on the white water, our final day on the Onilahy should be more relaxing, with sections of flat meandering water. We can observe the changing landscapes along the route and enjoy the wildlife (including crocodiles), birds and riverside settlements.

Camping with all meals.

Day 9 (B,L)

When we reach Benenitra, we will transfer by road to the beautiful coastal resort of Ifaty, just North of Tulear. En-route we may stop at the Bezaha-Mahafaly reserve if there is time.

This reserve contains 5 resident species of lemur including the ring-tailed lemur & sifaka (or dancing lemur) It is also home to other small mammals, snakes, tortoises, butterflies as well as more than 100 species of birds including many endemic vangidae (shrikes),

Overnight beach bungalow

Day 10,11(B)

Facing the Mozambique Channel and the superb coral reef of Ifaty, less than 20 kms from Tuléar, you will discover the beauty of beaches not tainted by mass tourism. Between May and October, the humpback whales can sometimes be seen with their whale-calves. Snorkelling and diving are highly recommended (the coral reef is totally captivating) &

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visibility is great. Local fishermen will also be happy to offer you a trip in their traditional fishing boats (pirogues). Or if you prefer you can simply relax on the stunning white sandy beaches or swim in the turquoise waters.

Overnight Beach Bungalow

Day 12 (B,)

Another day at leisure. If you choose you can visit the Spiny Forest (there are 3 pockets), a remarkable habitat adapted to the heat and drought of the area giving it the resultant thorny &/or bloated drought resistant trees and plants. Here you will be able to see some very large iconic Baobab trees, an abundance of birds (a true paradise for ornithologists) as well as possibly some locally endemic species such as the long-tailed ground roller and sub-desert mesite.

This unique habitat is severely threatened by deforestation and by visiting these sites, you will not only enjoy some of the little remaining spiny forest in Madagascar, but also actively contribute to its conservation (the sites are currently not protected). This is a great morning trip especially if you travel there by pirogue.

Overnight Beach Bungalow

Day 13 (B)

We will catch the Air Madagascar flight from Tuleur to Tana. Depending on your time of arrival in Tana you can visit the handicraft market and you will also have a day use room at Au bois vert. If the internal flight is later in the day, we may recommend spending an additional night in Tana, however many flights leave around midnight so you don't need to get to the airport until 10pm. If you arrive early you will have a day use room at the beautiful Au bois vert. Transfer to the airport in time for your flight home

NB: This itinerary is subject to change – arrangements, routes and facilities are subject to variation depending on local conditions. We can also tailor itineraries to suit your exact requirements.

Group Departures

We have the following group departures planned for 2012. We are also able to arrange tailor-made departures for 2 or more people

2nd April 2012

20th May 2012