



ULTIMATE TREKKING HOLIDAY

The Highlands of Madagascar

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS



DO SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY...

ITINERARY

Madagascar • Eastern Climbing Trek

15 DAYS • 14 NIGHTS

**Antananarivo – Ambositra – Vohidahy – Ranomafana – Kianjavato –
Mananjary River – Zomandao – Tsarasoa –
Fianarantsoa – Antananarivo**

This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek & climb Madagascar's mighty mountainous regions.
- Meet the locals as you stay far from the tourist track and visit some of Eastern Madagascar's rural villages, experiencing the rich culture and Madagascan lifestyle
- Rest your legs with a relaxing canoe down the Manajary River through the most peaceful of settings.
- Trek through a fascinatingly unique range of landscapes (Vohidahy + Ranomafana) witnessing Madagascar's incredible flora and fauna.

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Trekking Adventure
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Camping, Bungalow
Included Meals	14 Breakfasts, 13 Lunches, 13 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Difficult
Group Size	Max. 8 people (No Single Supplement*)

A COLOSSAL JOURNEY ALONG THE EAST



On this intense and diversified itinerary you will climb majestic mountains, explore dense forest and rockland and canoe the remote Mananjary River. Discover the spectacular natural landscapes of the highlands – a real trip to remember.

MADAGASCAR *an overview*

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.

WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

We really are one of the few specialists that really “do” off the beaten track and unique adventures in MADAGASCAR. We are driven by a passion for adventure travel and wildlife and Madagascar is one of our main specialities. We know it inside-out, and continuously collaborate with our local partners and tour guides to ensure that you have the best experiences on your dream Madagascan adventure – this focus is reflected in our uniquely wonderful itineraries. Our experts are on hand whether you are looking for a small group trip or a bespoke holiday.

Even better, our small group tours have a maximum of 8 people, making it a much more personal experience. Furthermore, we don't expect you to pay a single supplement, perfect for solo travellers! (*nb. no ss charged as long as you are happy to share a room)

Pioneer work in some of the world's most spectacular, remote and extraordinary places worldwide.

ITINERARY



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DAY 1: Tongasoa eto Antananarivo!

After arriving in Antananarivo (or Tana, as it is known by the locals), you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel.

Antananarivo is the capital and largest city in Madagascar. It is buzzing with activity and full of people flooding the streets, selling everything you could imagine! Tana (as the locals call it) resembles a Mediterranean hill town and exploring its rich cultural and architectural sites on foot is relatively easy (as long as you are willing to climb hundreds of ancient stone steps) It is a hectic city though and we would recommend a driver / guide if you want to explore!



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
N/A



Distance:
Airport Transfer



Activity:
Personal Preference

Day 2: Heading to Ambositra

After breakfast you will meet your guide and we will set out by car to Ambositra . Here we will be able to visit the famous woodcarving workshops.

Ambositra is a city in central Madagascar. High on a plateau surrounded by misty green peaks, It is also the arts-and-crafts capital of Madagascar and there are over 25 artisans' shops, selling woodcarvings, raffia baskets, polished stones, marquetry (objects inlaid with colored woods) and paintings. Ambositra is a picturesque and lively town, full of tall red-brick Betsileo houses lining its crooked streets.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
3-4hrs Driving



Activity:
Culture and Driving

DAY 3: Discovering the beautifully remote Vohidahy

We can set out early this morning for Vohidahy (1 ½ hrs on tracks). The Vohidahy is a very isolated and stunning area between Tanala and Zafimaniry country. For the next two days we will explore the deep valleys, steep and rustic trails, and forest. The locals live very basic /primitive lives in wood houses with carvings. This is definitely not on a tourist route.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
1 – 2 hea seicinf



Activity:
Walking and Culture

DAY 4: Continuing our exploration of Vohidahy

Another great day exploring the remote Vohidahy.



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Walking and Culture

DAY 5: Saying goodbye to Vohidahy and moving onto stunning Ranomafana

Today we will head to Ranomafana.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Wildlife and Exploring



DAY 6: Hiking and beginning canoeing down the Mananjary River



We will take a morning hike before moving to Kianjavato to sleep by Mananjary River. Upon arrival we will meet our canoeing team and this will be where we begin our 3 day descent of this river. The river is a mixture of flat waters & fun rapids. It is a stunning location with lots to see and do.

Mananjary is situated on the southern part of the east coast, where the Mananjary River flows into the Indian Ocean. In the town, there's a small port and an airport. The Canal des Pangalanes divides the town into two sections. Local industry focuses on vanilla, coffee, and pepper production.



Overnight:
Camping



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Hiking and Canoeing

DAY 7 & 8: Canoeing the peaceful Mananjary River



We continue our descent of the Mananjary river through the remote countryside.



Overnight:
Camping



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Canoeing

DAY 9: Finishing our river expedition and heading to Fianarantsoa

We will reach our pull out point and pack up the rafts before heading to Fianarantsoa by car. Tonight you can freshen up in a hotel before heading out on the next part of your adventure tomorrow.



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Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Canoeing

DAY 10 & 11: Trekking in the tremendous Zomandao Valley

This morning we will drive to Zomandao to the start of our trail where we will meet up with our logistics team before beginning our trek in these rocklands.

Prepare to be enchanted by the astounding landscapes, stunning red land and the beautiful and awe-inspiring massif of Andringitra. The Zomandao valley in this area is perfect for hiking and exploring! The valley is known for its mixed terrain and changing weather, including cool nights! Trekking the Zomandao valley will include mountainous terrains, steep trails and narrow tracks. You will discover impressive walls of black granite as well making this valley a real adventurers dream.



The next few days will see us hiking up one Valley (the Zomandao) and crossing 6,000 ft rocky pass to plunge in Sahanambo valley and the impressive cliffs of Tsaranoro. We will safely navigate between the vertical cliffs and spend the time exploring the valley, climbing to the top of rocky spires, spotting lemurs, exploring forests and enjoying the pools and waterfalls (early in the season) in this area.

We will continue our exploration of this area. Our trek will include mountainous terrains, steep trails and narrow tracks but there are no special difficulties, as long as you are ready to move on: mixed terrain, poorly marked, steep and sometimes exposed ledges, crests (with rope protection when necessary).



Overnight:
Camp



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
Varies



Activity:
Trekking

DAY 12: Become immersed in culture and natural beauty as we drop by at Tsaraso



Today we will arrive at our camp/lodge 'Tsaraso'. Tsaraso is more a camp than a hotel. It is the base for our local agents' reforestation which is a big passion that both he and Pioneer Expeditions share. There are large nurseries where 65,000 – 70,000 trees are planted per season.

Accommodation is in bungalows – the bungalows are new, clean and basic with mosquito nets and spectacular views.

Food is based on local products and we have a very good cook who uses fresh vegetables, local recipes, fruits, home cooked bread, and so on. We will spend today exploring this stunning area on foot and meeting all the locals – a fantastic opportunity to see Madagascar in all its natural glory. You will be able to

see many kinds of orchids, three sorts of palms including one kind which is endemic to the Andringitra, chameleons, lizards, snakes, batrachians and birds including the famous peregrine falcon.



Overnight:
Bungalow



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
N/A



Activity:
Trekking and Culture



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DAY 13: One last hike and heading back to Fianarantsoa

This morning we will hike up to the viewpoint at Tsarasoa before saying goodbye and heading to Fianarantsoa.

Fianarantsoa is the largest town in the highlands, south of Tana. The old town is a unique site which consists of old houses and buildings dating back to the 19th century. It's a must see with its labyrinths of small paths and stairways making much of it inaccessible to cars. You may be in the Antaimoro paper factory where you can watch a family go through each stage of paper making, from mushing up the sisal to adding the decorative flower petals and stems to the drying phase.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
Approx. 3 hrs drive



Activity:
Hiking and Culture

DAY 14: Onwards to Antsirabe

We will have a full drive today as we head back up on the RN7. Tonight we will stay at Antsirabe

Antsirabe is a tidy, well maintained town which combines the tranquility of a small European provincial town with the exuberance of traditional Malagasy buildings. The third largest city in Madagascar, Antsirabe is known for its relatively cool climate (as the rest of the central region of the country), its industry and the high concentration of pulled rickshaws.



Overnight:
Hotel



Meals:
B, L, D



Distance:
Approx. 3 hrs drive



Activity:
Hiking and Culture

DAY 15: Drive back to Antananarivo + End of Trip

Today we will head back to Antananarivo (approx. 3 hours). Depending on your time of departure we can visit the handicraft market in Tana on the way to the airport. If your flight is later, we can organise a day use room in a hotel.



Overnight:
N/A



Meals:
B



Distance:
Approx. 3 hrs drive



Activity:
Onward Journey/Flight Home



GETTING AROUND

- ☉ When you're not trekking, transport will consist of 4x4, to give you the most authentic, off-the-beaten track experience. These vehicles are best at tackling the challenging roads that Madagascar primarily consists of.
- ☉ Madagascar is notorious for the unreliability of its domestic flights in terms of time. The flights schedules are always subject to change at anytime and can experience cancellations, which are not ideal when following a schedule! ; For this reason we tend to travel by road for the most part.
- ☉ Distances and times will of course be lengthy due to the vastness of the island and lack of good-quality road systems throughout the country. However, this all adds to the adventurousness of any Madagascar trip; but is definitely something to be aware of whilst travelling around Madagascar.



NB: This itinerary is subject to change – arrangements, routes and facilities are subject to variation depending on local conditions. Please note times given are approximate driving times and do not include stops, the journey times are therefore longer. When driving times are given, this is only an indication. It aims to reflect the actual driving time (and doesn't include stops, lunch, and traffic). The road journeys, while often long, are one of the great ways to experience Madagascar. There is so much life on the road and many photographic opportunities along the way from a natural and people perspective.

If this trip isn't quite what you are looking for, we can **tailor itineraries** to suit your exact requirements.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included	Not Included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☉ All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner) ☉ Water ☉ Accommodation as described ☉ English speaking guide from day 2 – day 15 ☉ All transfers ☉ All entrance fees ☉ All camping and canoe equipment ☉ Porters for trekking, you only carry your day pack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Meals other than mentioned ➤ International flights ➤ Tips ➤ Personal expenses ➤ Alcoholic and soft drinks (water included during tours) ➤ Personal expenses ➤ Sleeping bag

ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
Night 1	Antananarivo	Hotel	<i>Relais des Plateaux</i>
Night 2	Ambositra	Hotel	<i>Hotel L'Artisan</i>
Night 3 & 4	Vohidahy	Camping	N/A
Night 5	Ranomafana	Hotel	<i>Thermal Hotel</i>
Night 6, 7 & 8	Mananjary River	Camping	N/A
Night 9	Fianarantsoa	Hotel	<i>Tsara Guest House</i>
Night 10 & 11	Zomandao Valley	Camping	N/A
Night 12	Tsarasoa	Hotel	<i>Tsarasoa Bungalows</i>
Night 13	Fianarantsoa	Hotel	<i>Tsara Guest House</i>
Night 14	Antsirabe	Hotel	<i>Chambres des Voyageurs</i>



Eastern Climbing Trek

EXTENSION EXAMPLES

Feel free to **contact us** for more information on all of our Madagascar Extensions. Alternatively, browse through our extension document, available from our website.

Here are some of our most popular Nature Guided South West extensions:

1. A paradise ending to your trip with our **Beach Extensions**

Ifaty



Adding a beach extension to this trip is the best way to unwind on two of South West Madagascar's most beautiful coastal areas. Stay in Ifaty for a bit longer or to experience something different, head south to the glorious beaches of Anakao.

Anakao



2. Head North for even more adventure with our **Morondava** Extension

Why not add an extension to Morondava onto your Madagascar trip and further your adventure. This will allow you to experience the Tsingy des Bemaraha as well as the Avenue des Baobabs (approx. 7 days needed – email us for details).



(Email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com for costings and more information on these extensions, as well as even more extension ideas)



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WHEN TO GO...

The majority of our Madagascar trips take place March to December, this is when Madagascar is at its best. The weather and climate can change a lot throughout the year and when you go to experience this remarkable country, depends on your preferences.

Madagascar Autumn: **March - May** (Dry and Warm)

- ☺ After the rains have passed. Everything is lush and green and fertile
- ☺ March is great in the South West, but some roads in the North and West can still be recovering from the monsoon season.
- ☺ April and May is the perfect time to visit. Great wildlife, great weather and not too many tourists.
- ☺ This is the best time of year for the scenery in this area.

Madagascar Winter: **June - August** (Dry)

- ☺ This ideal season for trekking / activities as is the coolest time in Madagascar. Temperature vary in the different areas but typically around 20 degree C
- ☺ Evenings (especially in the highlands) can get very cool at night (10 degrees C)
- ☺ Good time for seeing lemurs, but due to the cooler weather smaller mammals and reptile will be less active
- ☺ July and August can be busier in the national parks due to school holidays.
- ☺ August and September are ideal for keen birdwatchers to visit Madagascar.

Madagascar Spring: **Sept - November** (Dry and Hot)

- ☺ September to November is highly popular, as even North Eastern Madagascar is dry now.
- ☺ August and September are ideal for keen birdwatchers to visit Madagascar.
- ☺ It is hotter with very little rain, great for spotting chameleons and lizards, but quite hot for trekking / activities – in November temperatures start to rise rapidly.
- ☺ As it is arid, this does impact on your trekking area (gone are the lush green forests etc)
- ☺ October is particularly perfect for witnessing baby lemurs.
- ☺ Main downside with this time of year is that it is the peak season so national parks are busier with more tourists

Madagascar Summer: **December – March** (Hot and Rainy Season)

- ☺ The rains start to come. The North East is still relatively dry in December and we offer many Christmas trips.
- ☺ January/February should definitely be avoided as it becomes monsoon season - due to the heavy rainfall causing the already difficult roads to become muddy and impassable. The RN7 is still drivable so the 'classic' Madagascar route is still possible for those who can only travel in this season
- ☺ This is the best time of year for orchid lovers



*"My favourite time of year is **May** because the rains have finished so everything is lush and green. You don't see many other tourists as they tend to go in September and October, but everything is just beautiful – it's pretty perfect."*

- **Laurenne Mansbridge**
Pioneer Director



MEET THE GUIDES *of Madagascar*

Our guides are at the forefront of your trip, so it's important you know who will be looking after you and showing you the wonders of this extraordinary country. We pride ourselves on having talented, trustworthy, knowledgeable and caring local guides. We have both Naturalist guides and Adventurist guides who will make your trip even more special. Nobody knows Madagascar quite like them!



MAMY
NATURALIST GUIDE

- 🕒 Mamy is highly experienced and has been working as a guide since 1996.
- 🕒 His main interests as a guide are fauna and flora, nature and landscapes, forestry, villages and cultures.
- 🕒 His specialities are Birdwatching and Wildlife!



HERY
NATURALIST GUIDE

- 🕒 Hery has worked as a guide since 2006, where he trained in the Ranomafana National Park.
- 🕒 He has a passion for amphibians and reptiles as well as botany. Hery has a particular interest in Orchids!
- 🕒 His specialities are in Plants and of course, Wildlife.



TOKY
NATURALIST GUIDE

- 🕒 Toky has been working a guide since 2014, having previously studied Tourism in Antsirabe.
- 🕒 His main passions as a guide are: Flora and Fauna, Cultures, Geography and History.
- 🕒 His specialties lie in Madagascan Culture and Geology as well as Wildlife.



JOE
ADVENTURIST GUIDE

- 🕒 Following a considerably tough childhood, Joe has been happily and successfully working as a guide since 2005.
- 🕒 His main passions as an adventurist guide are: rafting, kayaking, sea-kayaking as well as trekking.
- 🕒 Following many years of experience, Joe's specialty lies in river-based activities and adventures.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activity Duration	5 -7 hours per day
Season	September through to January
Best Time To Go	April through to December
Group Size	Max group size 8
Responsibility	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.
Group Departures	Annual scheduled Group Departure – see web for details or Tailor made between March - December
Difficulty Level	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity your are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a 'Difficult' level (5-7 hours per day). This means that you will need more than a basic level of fitness and some specific training may be required.

THE PIONEER BOOKING PROCESS

Where do you go from here? Well, you can feel free to email us at info@pioneerexpeditions.com if you're interested in this trip, or any of our other expeditions from around the world. Visit our website www.pioneerexpeditions.com to unearth all of our other equally amazing trips and destinations.

1. Contact us -

We will be happy to answer any questions or enquiries you may have. From here we will begin to plan and put together your dream adventure holiday! Alternatively, on our website you will find our booking and enquiry forms; once filled in, we will be notified of your enquiry and will get back to you ASAP.

2. Leave everything to us -

Everything will be arranged and booked by us, but we will make sure to keep you updated every step of the way. In addition, we can arrange your international flights if needed, as we have access to competitive airfares. We can also arrange any additional tours or additional night's accommodation.

3. Wait for your adventure to begin -

Sit back and count down the days until your trip of a lifetime with Pioneer Expeditions. We'll handle all of the last minute preparations and provide you with everything you need. All practical information will be sent out to you, prior to your trip.

If you feel like altering this itinerary to suit your personal preferences, we can arrange all of that and more – just get in contact with us and let us know your requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.

