PIONEER EXPEDITIONS

SOUTH WEST MADAGASCAR

Land of the Lemurs

PIONEER EXPEDITIONS

ITINERARY

South West Madagascar • Nature Guided Adventure

12 DAYS • 11 NIGHTS

Antananarivo – Perinet Reserve – Andasibe National Park – Antsirabe – Ranomafana National Park – Isalo National Park – Ifaty
(Optional Extensions: **Beach extension** and/or **Morondava extension)**
This itinerary can be tailored to suit your exact requirements

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the outstanding **Ranomafana National Park** – home to **12 lemur species**.
- Explore the famous **Andasibe** & **remarkable Isalo National Parks**.
- Close **unforgettable lemur encounters**. Potential of seeing **Madagascar's largest lemur, the mighty 'Indri'**.
- Experience a perfect ending to your trip in the **stunning coastal town of Ifaty.**

TOUR ESSENTIALS

Tour Style	Nature and Wildlife Tour
Tour Start	Antananarivo
Tour End	Antananarivo
Accommodation	Hotel, Eco-Lodge
Included Meals	11 Breakfasts, 8 Lunches, 9 Dinners
Difficulty Level	Medium
Group Size	Max. 8 people (No Single Supplement*)

UNCOVERING THE LAND OF THE LEMURS

Explore the wonders of Southern Madagascar on this nature guided trip of a lifetime, whilst taking in the most diverse environments at a comfortable pace. We will visit some of the best national parks, sites and arboretums & of course some off the beaten track places along the way. You'll be accompanied by a local wildlife guide to ensure you have the best chance of witnessing as well as learning about all of the wonderfully unique flora and fauna of Madagascar. The south west is filled with adventure, iconic Madagascan animals, fabulous wildlife watching opportunities, outstanding landscapes, an abundance of culture and gorgeous hidden beaches lining the Indian Ocean; all waiting to be explored, encountered and cherished.

MADAGASCAR *an overview*

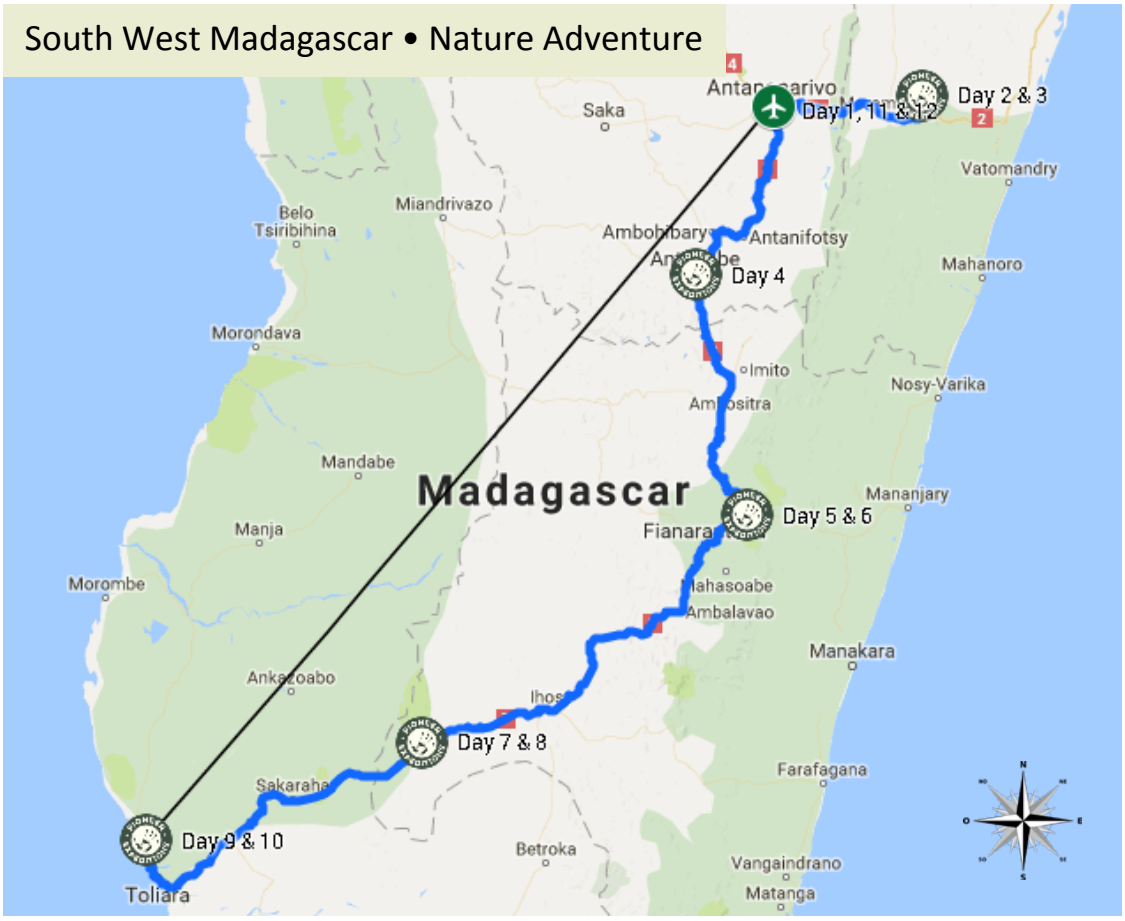
Madagascar is a one-off; there is no other place like it. Its landscapes, animals and plants are simply incredible! Near the equator with an astonishing array of habitats, ranging from rainforests to deserts and from mountain tops to mangrove swamps, it is one of the most important countries for biodiversity 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. We will see much of the unique flora and fauna of Southern Madagascar on this exceptional nature guided tour.

WHY PIONEER EXPEDITIONS?

We 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

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 **Andasibe National Park** to experience our first encounter with lemurs!

This morning we will set off to the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park (previously known as Perinet) where you will spend 1 ½ days exploring this wonderful environment. En-route we will stop at a farm specialising in Madagascan reptiles and butterflies, before arriving at our hotel. Depending on time of arrival, this afternoon or tomorrow you will get a chance to stroll around the private island reserve of Vakona Lodge with the opportunity to spot plenty of lemurs. This evening, take a twilight/nocturnal walk, looking out for the nocturnal species of lemur by catching their eyes in the torchlight.

Overnight: ***Hotel*** | *Meals:* ***B, L, D*** | *Distance:* ***150km (4hrs Driving)*** | *Activity:* ***Wildlife Encounters***

DAY 3: Discovering the beauty and wildlife of the unforgettable **Andasibe National Park**

Today we will explore Andasibe National Park.

Andasibe-Mantadia National Park (formerly known as Perinet) is a 155 square kilometer protected area, about 150 km east of Antananarivo (approx. a three hour drive) consisting principally of primary growth forest. These are home to the teddy bear-like Indri, the largest of Madagascar's lemur species, as well 11 lemur species in total and a wide array of bird life too. Listening to the piercing yet melancholy cry of the Indri in the morning is an evocative experience and for those who are prepared to follow them through the thick rainforest, the reward is often a close-up view of these beautiful creatures. This National Park was inscribed in the World Heritage Site in 2007 as part of the Rainforests of the Atsinanana.

Overnight: ***Hotel*** | *Meals:* ***B, L, D*** | *Distance:* ***N/A*** | *Activity:* ***Walking and Wildlife***

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DAY 4: Heading south to the charming town of **Antsirabe**

We will set off early this morning for a full-day journey to Antsirabe (via Tana). We will stop for lunch along the way. Before arriving in Antsirabe, today will be a great chance to experience Malagasy life on the road.

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: ***310km (8hr Driving)***

Activity: ***Culture/Drive***

DAY 5: To **Ranomafana** and the Hot Springs

We will set out after an early breakfast towards Ranomafana National Park. Our accommodation is located just outside of Ranomafana (just 10 minutes from the park entrance). This afternoon you have the option of visiting the thermal baths in Ranomafana or looking around the village which offers the most superb scenery.

Overnight: ***Hotel***

Meals: ***B, L, D***

Distance: ***225km (5hr Driving)***

Activity: ***Personal Preference***

DAY 6: Exploring the magnificent **Ranomafana National Park**

Ranomafana is particularly rich and beautiful, a mountainous subtropical park which contains lowland moist forest, cloud forest and high plateau forest and is the home to a large number of lemur species (13 in total), as well as 118 birds and more than 70 amphibians and reptiles so is really a great place to see some of the unique species living in Madagascar. Lemurs include the brown lemur, golden bamboo lemur and the exceptionally rare greater bamboo lemur which is relatively easy to see in Ranomafana. Wildlife viewing is good all year round but is most productive from mid-Sept to May.

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Today you have the opportunity to explore the enchanting Ranomafana National Park and search for lemurs on a full day nature walk through lush rainforest.

Overnight: ***Hotel*** | *Meals:* ***B, L, D*** | *Distance:* ***N/A*** | *Activity:* ***Trekking and Wildlife***

DAY 7: Goodbye **Ranomafana**. Hello **Isalo**!

Transfer to our hotel near the Isalo National Park. En-route we may get the chance to stop off at a traditional market and pass through quaint villages.

Overnight: ***Eco-Lodge*** | *Meals:* ***B, L, D*** | *Distance:* ***480km (8hrs Driving)*** | *Activity:* ***Culture/Drive***

DAY 8: Unearthing the wonders of the remarkable **Isalo National Park**

Today we will visit this breathtaking National Park. This extraordinarily unique area of natural beauty is unlike any other place in Madagascar.
Included will be the opportunity to swim in a natural pool with lunch on the trail.

Isalo is the park of the Big South and the most visited parks of Madagascar. It is known for its exceptional landscape. The Isalo National Park protects over 81,000 hectares of widely eroded Jurassic sandstone massif. The grassy plains are surrounded by sandstone ridges. Most of the vegetated areas of the park are covered with dry grassland or sparse, low deciduous woodland, however near streams and in deeper canyons there are also ferns and feathery palm trees. Animal life isn't the parks most prominent feature, but there a few species to look for including six species of lemur (three nocturnal, three daytime) including the ring tail lemur and the White (dancing lemur) sifaka. It is also home to approx 55 species of bird including the rare Benson's rock-thrush.

Overnight: ***Eco-Lodge*** | *Meals:* ***B, L, D*** | *Distance:* ***N/A*** | *Activity:* ***Trekking and Wildlife***

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DAY 9: Journeying to **Zombiste National Park** and the stunning coastal town of **Ifaty**

Today we head to Ifaty and the Indian Ocean. We plan to stop by Zombiste National Park en-route.

This south-western National Park is known for the huge variety of rare bird species as well as its unique diversity. Zombitse is home to 8 species of lemurs including the Verraux Sifaka (aka. the dancing lemur) and the threatened Fork-marked Lemur. The park also shelters 47% of the endemic birds of Madagascar as well as the local endemic Appert's tetraka bird. Zombitse boasts fantastic flora as well including orchids and ficus making this a stunning national park!

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. Ifaty is a small fishing village with palm-fringed white beaches on the south-western coast of Madagascar, and is an ideal place to relax after visiting the central highlands. The beach is relatively narrow, but the (off shore) snorkeling and diving is good. In July and August, you may see migrating whales pass nearby through the Mozambique Channel. Between May and October, the humpback whales can sometimes be seen with their whale-calves.

Upon arrival in Ifaty, your driver and guide will leave you. Your time at the coast will be at your leisure

Overnight: ***Hotel*** | *Meals:* ***B, L, D*** | *Distance:* ***260km (5hr Driving)*** | *Activity:* ***Beach and Wildlife***

DAY 10: Discovering the surrounding fascinations of **Ifaty**

Today can be spent at your leisure, experiencing what beautiful Ifaty and its surrounding areas have to offer.

Just north of Ifaty you can find the Reniala Nature Reserve 'Spiny Forest' , a remarkable habitat adapted to the heat and drought of the area giving it the resultant thorny &/or bloated drought resistant trees and plants. The spiny forests inland from Ifaty are of great interest to birdwatchers and botanical enthusiasts alike. 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). A visit here can be organized by the hotel, and you can even travel there by pirogue – which we highly recommend.

Overnight: ***Hotel*** | *Meals:* ***B, D*** | *Distance:* ***N/A*** | *Activity:* ***Personal Preference/Beach***

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DAY 11: Back to **Antananarivo**

You will have a transfer to Tulear Airport, where you will catch the Air Madagascar flight from Tulear to Tana. We will meet you again at Tana airport and depending on your time of arrival, you can visit the handicraft market, before transferring to your hotel.

Overnight: ***Hotel*** *Meals:* ***B*** *Distance:* ***Short Flight*** *Activity:* ***Personal Preference***

DAY 12: End of Trip

Transfer to airport in time for flight home. If you are on the Air France or Air Kenya trip which leaves early morning of day 13, you can opt to have a day use room &/or driver/guide for the day (not included).

Overnight: ***N/A*** *Meals:* ***B*** *Distance:* ***N/A*** *Activity:* ***Onward Journey/Flight Home***

GETTING AROUND

- 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 cann 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.*

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Included	Not Included
All meals as described (B=breakfast, L=lunch, D=dinner)	International flights (These can be arranged through us, if needed)
Water during tour day 2 – day 9	Meals other than mentioned
Accommodation as described	Alcoholic and soft drinks
English speaking naturalist guide from day 2 – day 9	Tips
All transfers	Personal expenses
Internal flight ticket	Optional tours/activities at Beach
All entrance & National Park fees	

ACCOMMODATION *at a glance*

	Location	Accommodation	Example
*Night **1***	Antananarivo	Hotel	*Relais des Plateaux*
*Night **2 & 3***	Andasibe	Hotel	*Andasibe Hotel*
*Night **4***	Antsirabe	Hotel	*Chambres des Voyageurs*
*Night **5 & 6***	Ranomafana	Hotel	*Thermal Hotel*
*Night **7 & 8***	Isalo	Eco-Lodge	*Isalo Ranch*
*Night **9 & 10***	Ifaty	Hotel	*Le Paradisier*
*Night **11***	Antananarivo	Hotel	*Palissandre Hotel*

WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

"The itinerary, guides and drivers were all spot on. We enjoyed all the parks on the way down to Tulear and managed to see most types of Lemur and Sifakas. The highlights of the trip? Too many to mention really."
-R. Walmsley

"Thank you for running such a smooth operation in a wonderful country with wonderful people."
-A. Fernandez

"Overall it was wonderful, and maybe people will think I am crazy, but I enjoyed tremendously the drive on the extension part of the trip. It was hard on all of us, including the driver, but it was a beautiful journey through a country of great beauty plus I saw and learned things that otherwise I wouldn't have. Thanks for everything."
-R. Williams

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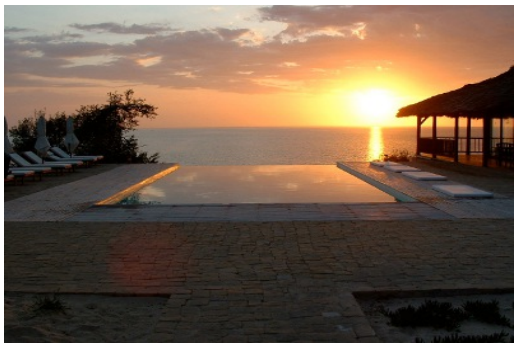
Nature Guided South West
EXTENSION EXAMPLES

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 **Anakao**



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.

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.

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.
- 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
- With the lack of water and food at this time in the South, this does exacerbate the poverty in Madagascar (this is not so obvious in the North)

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

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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!

Some of OUR NATURALIST GUIDES

MAMY

- 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

- 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. Heri has a particular interest in Orchids!
- His specialties are in Plants and of course, Wildlife.

TOKY

- 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Activity Duration	2 – 5 hours per day
Season	This region is best explored between April and December
Best Time To Go	Apr – May, Sept – Nov
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	We have a few group departures between April and December – please see website or contact us for exact dates. Alternatively we are able to arrange tailor-made or private departures to suit.
Difficulty Level	Our grades have been designated based on our perception of the degree of physical activity you are likely to require to enjoy the adventure. These are only a guideline. This itinerary has a 'Medium' level (2 – 5 hours of activities per day). This means that you will need an average level of fitness.

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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 you requirements and wishes. From here, we can simply tailor-make your dream holiday.

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