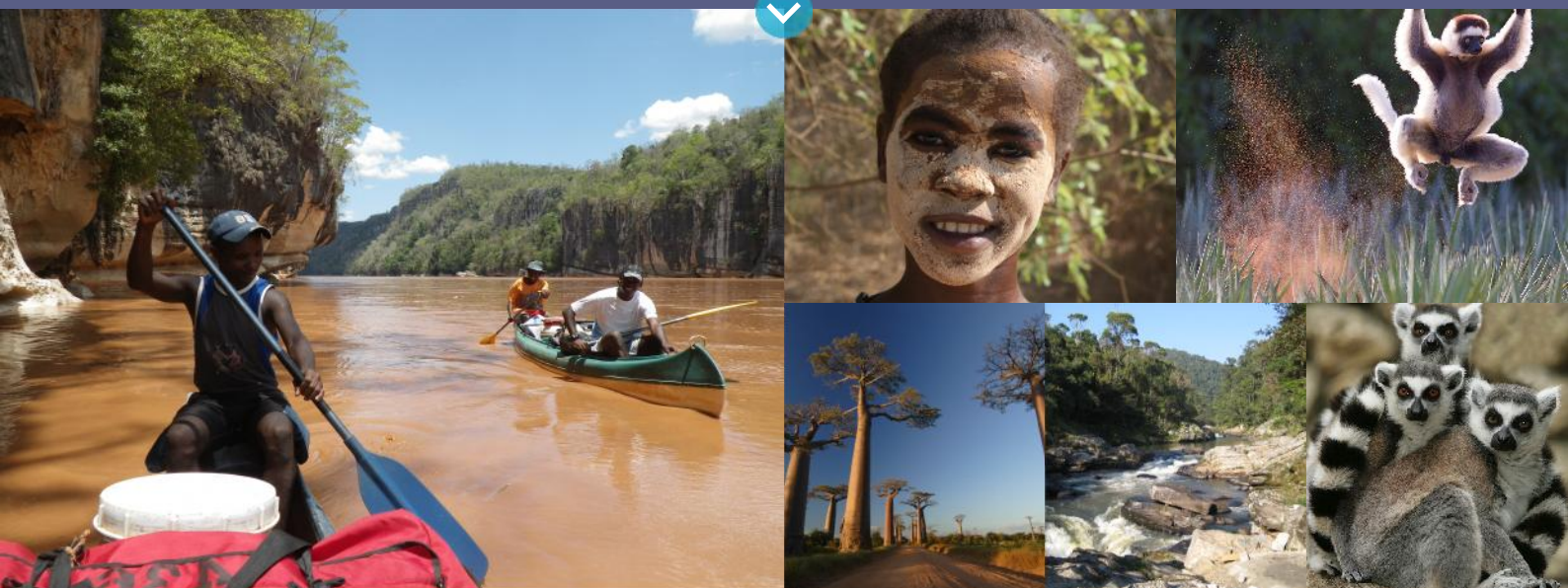


Madagascar

Lemurs, Baobabs and Boats!



This genuine expedition to the world's fourth largest island explores the rich ecology and landscape of this unique country. As you trek and canoe through pristine wilderness and camp out on unforgettable beaches, you'll discover one of the richest ecosystems in the world. With luck, you'll spot a lemur or two and plenty of other wildlife on this memory-rich adventure. Marvel at the diverse landscapes – from lush tropical rainforest to the semi-arid and to the jagged limestone pinnacles. However, it is the people who are unlike anywhere else that will make this expedition special. Descendants of seafarers from the Indian Ocean; they are proudly distinct from the peoples of continental Africa and are unfailingly polite and hospitable. On your journey you'll meet with Malagasy people of all backgrounds. In rural areas you'll learn about day to day life in traditional villages, whilst your local guides will be able to offer an insight into how society is changing and explain the differences between traditional rural life and living in urban areas.



Recommended itinerary

Culture shock rating: 

Day 1 Depart UK and fly to Antananarivo On arrival you will be met at the airport and transferred to your accommodation.

Physical rating: 

Day 2 Antananarivo to Tsironomandidy We begin our exploration of Madagascar with a drive in to the remote and rugged western mountains, en-route to the start of our trek.

Day 3 Drive to Belobaka, begin trekking A morning driving through the starkly eroded hills of western Madagascar brings us to the start of our trek in to the Bongolava Mountains. At the village of Belobaka we leave the vehicle and trek in to the mountains and our first camp.

Day 4 Trekking Bongolava Deep in the Bongolava Mountains we trek west through the eroded massif, numerous small canyons reveal both rich colours and the loss of soil and vegetation. At the edge of the escarpment we have panoramic views over the Menabe region and our objective, the Manombolo River.

Day 5 Trekking Ankavandra, begin canoeing We trek down to the more arid and remote Menabe region and the Manombolo River. At Ankavandra we meet our canoe guides, transfer our gear to the canoes and begin our river journey. The Manombolo River is a wide river with braiding channels through the sandy riverbed. Canoes are the ideal way to travel through this remote region. We camp on a sandy riverbank.

Days 6-7 Canoeing Manombolo River This is a spectacular and isolated part of Madagascar that is only accessible by boat or by foot. We pass through gorges, and will see some local people on the river as well as seeing our first wildlife - Lemur and plenty of endemic water birds. Our camp is on the sand banks at the edge of the forest.

Day 8 Canoeing Manombolo Gorge The Manombolo River carves a deep gorge in to the Limestone Plateau, with towering cliffs and craggy caves lining the river. The vegetation changes and the side canyons reveal pockets of rainforest with Lemurs jumping through the trees. We may enjoy a short trek exploring these canyons before camping on a sandy river bank in the heart of the gorge.

Day 9 End canoe safari, Bekopaka Our final day of canoeing brings us to the end of the gorge and the village of Bekopaka. A comfortable campground is our base for the next couple of evenings. We visit the nearby "Tsingy of Andadoany" and walk through the jagged limestone pinnacles and the World Heritage listed Tsingy of Bemaraha - the largest reserve in Madagascar and home to diverse wildlife including many species of Lemur.

Day 10 Tsingy of Bemaraha Today we visit another site of the Tsingy limestone karst. There may be an option to take one of the rugged routes traversing the Tsingy. A harness clipped to a steel cable provides protection on the vertiginous and exposed scramble amongst the pinnacles.

Day 11 Bekopaka to Kirindy Forest Today is a rugged 4WD journey through the remote west of Madagascar. We travel south and cross the Tsiribinhia River by local ferry. The drive beyond passes through Madagascar's endemic western dry deciduous forests. Of great biological importance, these forests are home to many endemic species of flora and fauna.

Day 12 Kirindy Forest to Morondava Kirindy Forest is the only place in Madagascar where we may see fosa (the island's largest carnivore), striped mongoose and the giant jumping rat if we are very lucky. Dusk and dawn are the best times to observe wildlife. We depart later today for Morondava, visiting the iconic "Baobabs Alley" en route.

Day 13 Fishing Village Today we head out on to the mangroves on traditional 'Pirogues', local canoes and explore a local fisherman's village. This is a relaxing day, with opportunities for swimming and relaxing on the beach when we return to Morondava.

Day 14 Fly Toliara, drive to Isalo Massif Catch the flight to Toliara on the South West coast and begin our journey northwards. In the afternoon we arrive at the dramatic Isalo Massif, a mysterious landscape of imposing rock formations, called "ruiforme". Here we discover the semi arid landscape known as 'Spiny Desert' and the famous erotic 'Mahafaly Tombs'.

Day 15 Isalo Heading out on foot, we explore the rugged canyons cut deep in to the sandstone, to the "Piscine Naturelle" – a natural swimming pool. Lush vegetation in the moist canyons is home to many species of Lemur and Chameleon.

Day 16 Andringitra We drive across the Horombe Plateau with its grasslands dotted with termite mounds. We stop in the town of Ambalavao, with its colourful houses and local craftspeople who make Antaimoro paper from the bark of Ahova tree, before driving on to Andringitra National Park and its rugged granite peaks.

Day 17 Andringita A full-day trekking in the Andringita National Park amongst the massif of unique granite and gneiss formations. There are a number of options from easy to demanding, depending upon the ability of your group.

Days 18-19 Ranomafana Over these two days we head out on foot to explore the evergreen primary forest, home to some of Madagascar's rarest Lemurs, the Golden Bamboo Lemur. We also enter the forest on a night walk to discover the nocturnal wildlife within the reserve such as the Striped Civet and Mouse Lemur.

Day 20 To Antananarivo Early in the morning we commence our drive to Antananarivo via Ambositra, the arts and crafts capital of Madagascar. Today will be a long day but arrival in the capital city once again is a satisfying conclusion to our journey and a celebratory meal is well deserved.

Day 21 Head for home We transfer to the airport and fly back to the UK.

Important information: It is important to realise that the itinerary needs to be flexible. While every effort will be made to follow the above schedule, in the event of political problems, airline schedule changes or natural events, we will do our best to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, but it is important to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED and be prepared to accept some slight changes. Relax and have faith in your guides.

 **The School**
Travel Consultancy

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