

Madagascar



Madagascar Trek



Activity: Trek Grade:  Duration: 12 days

This exciting trek takes us to remote Madagascar, where spectacular scenery and amazing wildlife awaits! From canyons and gorges to bush-covered plains and dense forests, rocky ridges and the summit of the island's highest accessible mountain peak, this is a unique and highly varied trek steeped in natural beauty.

Our route takes us to the valleys and ridges of Andringitra National Park, where our goal is Pic Boby (2658m), Madagascar's second-highest mountain. Madagascar is a very adventurous destination, with rough roads making travelling distances long and arduous. The rewards more than make up for the efforts of seeing the country – this is a truly unforgettable trek.



Challenge Grading

Our trips are graded from Challenging (Grade 1) to Extreme (Grade 5).

This trek is graded **Tough (3)**. Main challenges lie in the rough conditions underfoot and the long days of walking, especially on summit day.

Many factors influence Challenge Grading, such as terrain, distances, climate, altitude, living conditions, etc. The grade reflects the overall trip; some days are likely to feel more challenging than others. Unusual weather conditions also have a significant impact, and not all people are tested by the same aspects.

Our grading levels are intended as a guide, but span a broad spectrum; trips within the same grade will still vary in the level of challenge provided.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1: Depart London

Day 2: Arrive Antananarivo (Tana), transfer to Antsirabe

We arrive into Madagascar's capital, Tana, early afternoon and meet our local team. After loading up we start our Madagascan adventure proper as we transfer south through the highlands - a beautiful introduction to the island. Antsirabe is a beautiful city with many buildings and its wide tree-lined boulevards reflecting its French colonial past. It is known for its rickshaws, known as 'pousse pousse'. Night hotel.

Drive approx 4-5 hours

Day 3: Antsirabe – Ranomafana National Park

We continue our long drive south. Despite travelling on the country's main transit road we're quickly reminded that this is Africa; the lack of road infrastructure makes the driving long and tough. There's great scenery to soak up, and we make short stops to break the journey. We arrive at Ranomafana, an area of tropical rainforest which is home to many species of lemurs and other endemic wildlife. Once we've checked in we have the opportunity for a gentle night walk – a great way to stretch our legs after the drive. Look out for tree-frogs, chameleons and nocturnal lemurs among the varied fauna. Night hotel.

Drive approx. 8-10 hours; walk approx 1 hour



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Trekking Information

Terrain is varied. We trek through grassy plains, dirt tracks and rocky trails, forest paths which may be overgrown and slippery at times, and barren rocky mountain paths with some clambering over boulders on the ascent of Pic Boby. The ascent day is particularly demanding.

Our highest point is at 2658m; this is not serious altitude and you are unlikely to feel any major effects of being at a higher elevation. You will trek approximately 60-70km on this trip overall; it's much more useful when training to think about the hours you will be walking for, and the terrain! This trek is achievable for most people provided they train well in advance on different types of terrain. We supply you with a thorough training guide on registration.

Andringitra National Park is a wonderful trekking destination, but it is not easy to get to. Part of the challenge of this trip is to embrace travel in Madagascar; in a country with limited infrastructure and funding for roads, this can be tiring and, at times, quite trying. It is more than worth the effort as you will meet few other trekkers, but be prepared!

Passport & Vaccinations

A ten-year passport is essential, valid for at least six months after entry into Madagascar. UK citizens require a visa.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (including Tetanus); check with your GP for additional travel health advice. There is a risk of malaria at elevations lower than 1000m.

Detailed Itinerary (cont)

Day 4: Ranomafana – Fianarantsoa – Ambalavao

Early morning is the best time to see wildlife, so we keep our eyes peeled as we set off through the rainforest, hoping to see a range of lemurs including the athletic sifaka, as well as geckos and chameleons. While our trail is quite well-used, it is steep in places and quite challenging, especially after recent rain (a frequent occurrence!) How far we trek depends on local conditions, but it provides a great warm-up for the days to come – and a notable contrast to the rocky mountain landscapes awaiting us. After lunch we drive via Fianarantsoa, a university town set in picturesque rolling green hills, to Ambalavao, the end of our road. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 2-4 hours; drive 4-5 hours

Day 5: Ambalavao – Namoly – Imitso

We load into 4x4 vehicles for the beautiful but bumpy ride over red-earth track to Andringitra National Park, with its remarkable domed granite peaks and sheer cliffs, many eroded into fluted towers by wind and water. We start our trek at Namoly, the northern gateway to the Park, with great views of the mountains ahead. We walk past Betsileo villages and photogenic rice-terraces carved into the mountain slopes, heading up into the forests of Imitso. Many of the plants have medicinal qualities. We camp on the edge of the forest. Night camp.

Drive approx. 3-4 hours; trek approx. 2-3 hours (8km); ascend 300m

Day 6: Imitso – Andriampotsy

Our trek continues through the forests of Imitso, the beginning of a vast forest corridor that connects to Ranomafana National Park. The diversity of flora and fauna is impressive at these lower elevations, and this area of lush primary rainforest is a wonderful place to trek. Several different types of lemur live here – Andringitra provides a habitat for 15 species in total – so keep your eyes and ears open! The forest is also home to many colourful birds and plants. After a fairly easy start, we climb up onto a high mountain plateau, an open prairie where many wildflowers and orchids grow; the views over the mountains and back down over Namoly Valley are wonderful. Our trail criss-crosses over the plateau, still ascending; we gain over 1000m in elevation today. Our camp lies at the foot of Pic Boby; we can relax and enjoy a well-earned river swim at the end of the day. Night camp. (2050m)

Trek approx. 6-7 hours (11km); ascend 850m

Day 7: Andriampotsy – Pic Boby – Iatanomby

Today is a long day and the focus of our challenge! Pic Boby, or Imarivolonitra as it is known in Malagasy (meaning 'close to the sky'), is the second-highest peak on the

Weather

The dry season runs from April to mid-November. Although warm by day, and hot on the valley floor, it will get cooler as you climb higher. UK summer months are winter on the highlands, with warm days and cooler nights. It is hotter nearer the coast. Average temperatures in Tana range from 13-31°C at the times we travel.



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Crew & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first-aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader.

An expedition doctor or medic also accompanies trips unless run below minimum group size. The crew will have radios and emergency satellite phones, extensive medical kit and other safety apparatus where necessary.

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, drivers, cooks and porters. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local customs and lifestyles. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.

Accommodation & Food

We camp during the trek in two-man tents. Some campsites are quite simple, others are permanent tented camps with wooden or thatched shelters and very good facilities. All have great views! The hotels are comfortable and clean with en-suite facilities; they are on a twin-share basis. Some are like guesthouses and others more international in style, so expect some variation.

All food is included except where specified in the itinerary. The food is great, will give you plenty of energy, and there is plenty of it. Meals will be generally local-style.

Detailed Itinerary (cont)

island; its French name originated in the 1920s, when an explorer apparently discovered the path to the summit when looking for his dog (Boby). We set off very early, planning to reach the summit before cloud and mist cover it, as often happens during the day. Our trail to the summit is steep and rocky, much of it made up of large flat slabs of granite, with some boulders to clamber over. After 2-3 hours we reach the summit of Pic Boby (2658m). From the top there are far-reaching and impressive views over the Andringitra Mountains, and for miles around if it's clear. After some time to soak up the vistas, we start our descent to the foot of the mountain, and continue down through a rocky, barren landscape strewn with boulders. This is the so-called 'alien track', a surreal moon-scape surrounded by mountain panoramas. As we drop lower we come into a forest of endemic palms, passing granite outcrops on a well-made path of steps that takes us steeply downhill. We camp by a river, another great spot for a refreshing dip. Night camp (1510m)

Trek approx. 8-11 hours (21km); ascend 608m, descend 1058m

Day 8: Iatranomby – Tsaranoro Valley

The hardest part of our challenge is behind us, and we continue downhill through the foothills into the beautiful Tsaranoro Valley. We pass several Barabory villages, which provide a great insight into the way of life here. There is more vegetation now we are lower, including the small baobab-like pachypodium, and the views are incredible! Our wonderful camp lies between Tsaranoro Mountain and the giant mountain chains of Andringitra National Park on the other – the views are incredible, as is our sense of achievement! Night camp (900m).

Trek approx. 5-6 hours (13km); descend 700m

Day 9: Tsaranoro Valley – Ambositra

Before we leave this beautiful area we explore Tsaranoro in the hope of seeing some of the wildlife that inhabits the forest here, including ring-tailed lemurs. We then hit those rough red dirt roads in our 4WD vehicles, before picking up the main road and heading north to Ambositra, a beautiful town in the central highlands known for its woodcarvings and fine wooden houses. Night hotel.

Drive approx. 7-9 hours

Days 10-11: Ambositra – Antsirabe – Project Visit – Tana

We continue our return journey north to Antsirabe, and make time for our WaterAid project visit; our night-stop will depend on project arrangements and be confirmed nearer the time. After a fulfilling visit, we continue our journey to Tana and the airport. We'll have time for a celebration meal to mark our achievements before taking our international flight home (overnight on plane).

(Lunch and Dinner not included)

Drive approx. 6-8 hours

Day 12: Arrive UK

Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

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