

Trip report – Madagascar, October/November, 2022.

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Madagascar, the world's fourth largest island, has unparalleled environmental diversity and an incredible collection of mammal species. Coupled with challenging infrastructure, one trip is rarely going to be enough to fully sample its wonders. This was my second trip to the island but Tracey's first. We spent the initial week with Patrick, our guide, and Tiarey, our driver, and then were joined for the next two weeks by Jon Hall, also making his second trip to the island, Amber Melhouse, his partner, Jean-Michel Bompar and Luqman Patel. Jon stayed on to further explore the island

The trip began for Tracey and me with the usual taxi, ferry and bus ride to Vancouver International Airport. I managed to leave my wallet in the taxi but luckily remembered just in time to reclaim it, a somewhat inauspicious start to any trip. Air France had cancelled our previously-booked return flight from Madagascar and rescheduled us on another. Unfortunately, it appeared the agent had forgotten to re-book our out-bound trip at the same time so there were a few palpitations while this issue was resolved. Fortunately, Air France staff pour champagne with a heavy hand even in economy class so that relieved the last of the palpitations. The transfer in Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris was uneventful and we arrived at 10:45 pm the following night in Antananarivo. The E-visa site for Madagascar had been down but immigration was straightforward. Visas were available on arrival for €35 each, the chap in immigration was very friendly and we were waved past the scanner without our bags being examined. Because of an early morning departure to Toliara the next morning we stayed at Hotel Avamada close to the airport. Our first mammal of the trip was bit of a letdown, given Madagascar's status as one of the

world's top biodiversity hotspots - a Brown Rat seen by the side of the road as we were driving to the hotel. We arrived at the hotel after midnight and realized we needed to be back at the airport at 4:00 am for check-in for our 6 o'clock flight, which allowed for some restless tossing and turning and about an hour's sleep.

Back at the airport we were greeted by the sight of a lineup extending out the door but it moved quickly once started and with a flight delay of an hour we had plenty of time. We arrived in Toliara about 8:50 am. After a quick stop for ATMs and water we drove north to Mangily, near Ifaty. This road has recently been paved and is now one of the finest roads we encountered in Madagascar. We checked in to Chez Cecile which consisted of straightforward, clean bungalows on the beach for a mid-morning nap followed by lunch in the hotel restaurant. Beef brochette and fillet of grouper were delicious, confirming my long-held belief that former French colonies tend to do food significantly better than former colonies of other countries. After another brief nap we left about 3:30 pm for the nearby Raniala reserve and our first endemic mammals, Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec, White-footed Sportive Lemur, Ring-tailed Lemur, and Grey Mouse Lemur. These were complemented by some stunning reptiles including Dumeril's Boa, Warty Chameleon, Three-eyed Lizard and several *Phelsumas* and some interesting birds including Crested Coua and Subdesert Mesite. We returned to the hotel well-satisfied at about 7:00 pm for a delicious dinner and an early night to bed.



The next morning we left about 5:30 am for the Fonyala Reserve where we again saw White-footed Sportive Lemur and a collection of outstanding birds, including Long-tailed Ground-roller and Lesser and Greater Vasa Parrots. By 9:00 am it was getting hot, so we returned to the hotel for breakfast and a nap. We awoke mid-afternoon to go snorkelling. Captain Nicholas and his assistant poled and paddled their boat a little ways south along the coast, then pulled up on a beach and rigged up a sail of old rice bags sewn together. We headed out to the reef, which was mostly bleached but had a reasonable assortment of small reef fish. After snorkelling, they set the sail squarely and with a tailwind we arrived back about 5:30 pm for a shower and another trip out to Fonyala Reserve. We saw the same mammals and reptiles as the previous night and headed back to the hotel.

After an early morning walk and breakfast the next day we headed out. Patrick suggested we pick up picnic supplies for lunch on the road and directed us into a gas station. The only foodstuffs available were chips and cookies, which didn't appear to deter Patrick, but we managed to convince him to head to the supermarket instead where we purchased bread, cheese, yogurt, and fruit. We then drove to Zombitse National Park, arriving about 1:00 pm. We had our first sighting of a Giant Coua on the walk to the picnic site. After lunch, despite being in the heat of the day, we went for a surprisingly productive hike. A short way down the trail a Giant Hog-nosed Snake was lying in the middle of the trail with its nose in a burrow. We stamped on the ground and it withdrew its head in a threat display. It then stuck its head back in the burrow and pulled out a Western Big-footed Mouse while another couple of mice leapt out of nearby holes and bounded away. Further along the trail we got views of both Giant Coua and Coquerel's Coua and then found a small group of Verreaux's Sifakas, one of which had an infant. Shortly thereafter, the guide beckoned us to a tree which contained a Hubbard's Sportive Lemur. We left the reserve about 4:00 pm and drove through a landscape reminiscent of a blend of Arizona mesas and Alberta badlands. About 6:00 pm we arrived at Satrana lodge in Isalo National Park. The rooms here consist of large safari tents with wooden balconies looking out on a stunning landscape. After a welcome swim in the pool we went for a brief night hike around the grounds but saw only a scorpion.







I was awakened about 2:48 am when someone in a nearby tent got a cell phone call, somewhat spoiling the illusion of a luxurious African safari from a previous century. After breakfast we drove into Ranohira where we picked up a local guide, Hery. We stopped on the drive in for a close look at an Oustalet's Chameleon and then went for a hike. We found a number of habituated Verreaux's Sifakas and Ring-tailed Lemurs near the campsite, accompanied by one Red-fronted Brown Lemur. We also discovered another Dumeril's Boa at the campsite, likely searching for rodents. Hiking into a canyon we came across a snake poised next to a chameleon. The snake clearly knew the chameleon was in the vicinity but may not have been able to sense it until it moved, at which point the snake caught it and the chameleon turned a brilliant yellow-green in distress. We hiked as far as some lovely pools at the end of the canyon, where we turned around and headed back, arriving at the car about noon. Continuing on our way we arrived in Fianarantsoa about 6:00 pm, picked up some snacks and then headed out through Ranomafana National Park to Kianjavato. We arrived at KAFS in Kianjavato about 10:00 pm, had supper and then retired to one of the comfortable tents pitched within a cabin with latticed walls.







The next morning we investigated some bats in a half-finished restaurant building which turned out to be Peters' Sheath-tailed Bats. We then drove to a nearby patch of forest called Sangasanga. Here we found a group of Greater Bamboo Lemurs in a small grove of bamboo close to a stream and then headed up a steep hillside following some loud noises. We eventually got brief but decent views of some Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs, a species which had eluded me on my last trip to Madagascar. After lunch and a brief nap back at KAFS we returned to Sangasanga about 3:00 pm. Under the curled leaf of a Travelers' Palm we found several Eastern Sucker-footed Bats. We then had a steep, hot hike up the hill to position ourselves near the nest of a radio-collared Aye-aye. Just after dark, "Boozy", the Aye-aye emerged and spent the next hour extensively grooming herself, which largely consisted of wiping snot or other secretions all over her face and body and fluffing out her extravagant tail. While we were watching her we had a brief look at a Jolly's Mouse Lemur. Hiking back in the dark down the exceptionally steep hillside we saw a total of three Groves' Dwarf Lemurs and then, arriving on flat ground near an abandoned building, the guides saw a Greater Hedgehog Tenrec which they were able to corral until we arrived.



After breakfast of creamy custard pie and some fruit we left at six the next morning and made it to Ranomafana National Park in a couple of hours. The only stop along the way was in a village to observe an enormous eel which had just been caught. At the entrance to Ranomafana we met up with two wildlife spotters, Roger and Joseph, and headed into the woods. We found a small group of Golden Bamboo Lemurs high in some bamboo and then three Red-bellied Lemurs which were extremely tolerant of our presence and allowed close views. We saw further Black-and-White Ruffed Lemurs and Red fronted Brown Lemurs. At noon we drove back to the village of Ranomafana to Chez- Gaspard, a small Catholic-run hostelry. After a lunch of garlic prawns and veggies Tracey decided to stay behind to relax while Patrick and I headed back into the park. We had reasonable views of a Pitta-like Ground-roller and then Roger called to say that he had found a Lowland Streaked Tenrec, high on my list of most-desirable target species for this trip. After reluctantly leaving the tenrec we headed into a patch of bamboo which contained Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemurs as well as a lone Greater Bamboo Lemur. There had previously been a population of these extremely endangered lemurs in the park, but at present this was the only known remaining specimen left, who had joined the Eastern Bamboo Lemurs, presumably



for company and the protective benefits of group living. Dusk arrived and we reluctantly left the park, driving back to the hotel to pick up Tracey and then proceeded along the road just past the park to a spot where guides had been smearing bananas on a branch. A Brown Mouse Lemur obligingly appeared and we also had a brief view of a dwarf lemur. At this point it started to rain heavily, so we headed back to Grenat restaurant in town for a delicious dinner.





After breakfast and a short walk in town we left the next morning, stopping at a cave near some waterfalls to observe a small colony of Major's Long-fingered Bats. The remainder of the day consisted of the long drive back to Antananarivo, stopping for lunch at Ambositra and arriving back in Ivato by about 9:00 pm. The most surprising discovery of the day was the number of small towns advertising foie gras for sale. Its production is a larger industry in Madagascar than I had imagined. We met up briefly with Jon Hall and then headed to bed before another early morning flight.

We were up early in the morning and drove over to pick up Patrick at his hotel. Patrick, who was invariably on time while in the bush, had slept in but fortunately we were able to rouse him. The flight to Antsiranana (Diego Suarez) arrived on time at 9 o'clock and, after stops at the bank and grocery store, we drove on to Domaine de Fontenay in Joffreville. The hotel is in a beautiful old French colonial building with enormous rooms. I have lived in apartments smaller than the room we were assigned. A quick walk around the grounds revealed a Warty Chameleon and several Radiated Tortoises, as well as a giant tortoise from Aldabra in a pen. We left mid-afternoon for Amber Mountain National Park and soon had a good look at a group of five Crowned Lemurs. After dusk we found the three nocturnal targets, Amber Mountain Dwarf Lemur, Amber Mountain Fork-marked Lemur and Amber Mountain Mouse Lemur. Nowhere else in the world can one find so many range-restricted endemic mammals as expeditiously as in Madagascar. After an extremely time efficient walk we were back at the hotel about 8:30 pm for yet another lovely dinner and an early night.





The following day we headed back into the park, stopping to look at a Madagascar Tree Boa on the ground beside the road. We walked a longer circuit than the previous day and came upon a troop of Sanford's Brown Lemurs. We then headed back to the campsite in the hopes of seeing a Ring-tailed Vontsira. Despite canvassing the area thoroughly we had no luck and reluctantly got in the vehicle only to be called that a vontsira had been spotted over by the entrance hut. Encumbered with cameras, binoculars and thermal scopes we lumbered as fast as we could and were rewarded with the sight of a Ring-tailed Vontsira, its spectacular rufous fur glowing in the sunlight. Absolutely elated, we drove back to the Domaine, packed up, ate a lunch of coconut curry chicken and left mid-afternoon. During the 4 ½ hour drive to the next spot the only mammal seen was a mouse crossing the road, likely a House Mouse. Black Lemur Lodge, where we were hoping to stay, was fully booked, which surprised me given its isolated location down a truly horrendous dirt road. We had chicken and ratatouille and then left for a night walk at perhaps 10:00 pm. We saw a rat which was most likely *Rattus rattus*, which always seem to look surprisingly clean and groomed in a forest environment. Eventually we gave up the search and decided to walk back to the spot where we were staying in the village of Anjahankely. On the way back we managed to see the night's prime target, a Northern Brown (or Rufous) Mouse Lemur. The cabins were extremely basic with beds and rattan floors that sloped fairly dramatically but I think we all had a good night's sleep.

We awoke with the sun and headed back to Black Lemur Lodge. After banana fritters and coffee we headed out for a walk in Andrafiarana Reserve where we saw Ankarana Sportive Lemur and some Sanford's Brown Lemurs. Happily we also found a group of Perrier's (Black) Sifakas which allowed for close observation. We had lunch back at the lodge. The manager offered us showers in the rooms, which was a mixed blessing - the showers were glorious but the rooms were so beautiful that we regretted not



having been able to stay there the previous night. After a short drive we stopped at a cave network with extremely tight tunnels. At a couple of points I didn't think I was going to be able to get through but eventually succeeded. Thanks to Jean Michel's acrobatics we were able to capture several *Miniopterus* specimens and a Malagasy Mouse-eared Bat. These were measured, photographed and released. We were back in the car about 4:30 and drove to Ankarana National Park. Two mice ran in front of the car, which again were most likely House Mice. We did a brief walk around the lodge, seeing no mammals, but then heard calls from outside our room and discovered two Crowned Lemurs and a Sanford's Brown Lemur in a large fruiting fig tree behind our bungalow.





We awoke about 5:30 am to a lovely light breeze. After breakfast we drove to the Mahamasina entrance and then continued on foot to the main cave system. The walk was enlivened by Blue Vangas, chameleons, geckos, Vasa Parrots and further Crowned and Sanford's Brown Lemurs. We entered a large cave which contained Madagascar Straw-coloured Fruit Bats and Madagascar Rousettes. There was also at least one *Miniopterus* species present. After investigating the main cavern we then went into the left-hand set of more narrow cave passages. Again Jean-Michel displayed his acrobatics and caught at least two species of *Miniopterus* which were measured and photographed. Back at Ankarana Lodge we had a swim followed by a delicious lunch of tomato and onion salads, smoked fish, chicken and beef brochettes, aubergine and pineapple. We left just after 4:00 pm and entered the park through a different route. From here we hiked into Tsingy Kary. Tsingy, from the Malagasy word for "tiptoes" consists of sharp and serrated limestone karst. Although I had seen photos of it in the past I'd never actually visited an area of Tsingy and was stunned by the otherworldliness of it. We waited on a viewing platform overlooking the Tsingy until sunset and then started hiking back, initially seeing only lemur species we'd seen previously. What we were really seeking was an Ankarana Dwarf Lemur. The guide stated that he had last seen one more than four years previously, in 2018, which didn't seem to hold much promise for success. We did however mark with a stick the tree where he had seen it. On our way out, within 40 feet of the spot where the guide had last seen the lemur, what should appear but an Ankarana Dwarf Lemur posing on a branch directly above the road. I don't know if particular plants or insects at that spot were the attractant but, whatever the case may be, it was a surprising and most welcomed sighting. We also learned that during the wet season, Common Tenrecs are abundant in this



area, even in the village, as there is a fady so most local people don't eat them. Unfortunately we were a bit early in the season and didn't see any. After yet another delicious meal of the lodge we had a quick dip in the pool and then retired to our cabins to enjoy the luxury of fast Internet until 10:00 in the evening.



The next morning we drove to Tattersall's camp near Daraina, arriving just after noon. While eating lunch the guides noticed some Golden-crowned Sifakas a distance away, which of course caused us to jump up from lunch to get a view. Just after lunch we got an opportunity to see them at much closer range and then left on a hike to see a large snake in a tree, which turned out to be another Madagascar Tree Boa. We also found a Daraina Sportive Lemur, sitting as usual immobile in a tree. Why this group of lemurs are named sportive remains an enduring mystery to me. On the way back we saw a Giant Hog-nosed Snake and some Crowned Lemurs. Before dusk, we hiked into the forest to an occupied Aye-aye nest and, in a replay of the evening in Kianjavato, climbed up the steep slope to hopefully see the Aye-aye emerge from its nest. As if on cue, the Aye-aye appeared and performed a similar grooming spectacle to the previous sighting. There was a village nearby with kids crying loudly but the Aye-aye was undisturbed both by the noise and by the shine of our lights. We saw another mammal, possibly an arboreal rat, but had only brief glimpses and were unable to identify it. Back at Camp Tattersall we went for a brief night hike seeing Northern Red Mouse Lemur, Ankarana Dwarf Lemur and also what seems likely to be an undescribed species of fork-marked lemur. The canvas tents had sizable holes in them but despite that there were no bugs and an enveloping sense of tranquility.







The next day, November 4, was Jon's birthday. The staff at Tattersall's camp presented him with a kanga and we all sang "Happy Birthday", some admittedly more tunefully than others. After leaving the camp we drove a few kilometres to a long bridge, under which we found several bats. Jean Michel, employing his acrobatics skills yet again, caught several, which turned out to consist of at least one species of *Miniopterus* and also a sheath-tailed bat. After a leisurely lunch stop we reached Sambava at about 4:30 pm and met our guide to discuss plans for the next few days, followed by a celebratory birthday dinner for Jon.

After a breakfast of pastries and coffee we left about 9:00 am, stopping at the fanciest supermarket I'd yet seen in Madagascar to pick up supplies. We arrived at Marojejy National Park about 11:00 and waited as the porters had a lengthy discussion amongst themselves regarding the loads. The hike into Marojejy starts from a school followed by a walk of about two kilometres to the park boundary. Once entering the park the walk becomes noticeably shadier and cooler. We saw a Lowland Red Forest Rat and, to my mind at least, an honorary mammal, Helmet Vanga. We also came across a small group of White-fronted Brown Lemurs and arrived at Camp Mantella shortly after 4:00 pm. The camp is built in the vicinity of a sizable grove of bamboo and we were able to find some Northern Bamboo Lemurs nearby. A night walk revealed Mittermeier's Mouse Lemur as well as a number of chameleons.



The following morning dawned sunny and warm. We had further views of the Northern Bamboo Lemurs before a breakfast of crêpes, omelettes, bread and a strawberry jam from Saudi Arabia which interestingly contained absolutely no fruit. After breakfast we hiked the hour and a half up to Marojejia Camp, seeing two additional forest rats as well as both blue and green pigeons. After a brief rest we continued hiking up the trail. When I asked about the hike I was told it was 300 meters but wasn't sure whether this was distance or elevation. It turned out there was no need to differentiate as it was essentially the same number for both distance and elevation. One of the trackers led us contouring around the hill to a group of five Silky Sifakas, including an infant. We watched them for about an hour during which time Patrick caught a *Thamnosophis* snake. Muscles I never knew existed were starting to burn following the steep hike back down the hill. At lunch a Ring-tailed Vontsira wandered past providing brief views. Lunch consisted of pasta and veggies. I was disappointed by the lack of hot sauce. Tracey pointed out, with reference to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that, having had our mammal watching needs satiated, we were now ascending to a higher and perhaps ridiculous level of esoteric human need. She probably had a point. Slight rain continued throughout the afternoon which was more conducive to napping than to wildlife observation, although the Ring-tailed Vontsira did return to the camp garbage several times. The rain continued during and after supper so our night walk was greatly curtailed. We saw a Greater Dwarf Lemur and Desi had a brief look at another Mittermeier's Mouse Lemur.





We left Marojejy camp early and saw only previously-observed mammals on the way down, including White-fronted Brown Lemurs and Northern Bamboo Lemurs. Perhaps the most spectacular sighting was a *Langaha* snake. The male and females have dramatically different nose projections, allowing us to determine that this specimen was a female. We arrived back in the village about 10:30, tipped the porters and left shortly thereafter, stopping to pick up some food for a picnic on the way. After a seven hour drive we arrived at the Mouna Hotel in Ambilobe. The reception area was slightly disconcerting due to the picture of a stern-looking sheik behind the reception but the hotel was extremely comfortable. After dinner and ice cream we all took the opportunity to catch up on news and enjoy the fast Internet.

The next morning we had time to tour the market before leaving. Jon announced that he was going to get his beard shaved, but then returned with his entire head shaved – the barber had started with his beard, then just kept going. We left about 11:00 for the three hour drive to Ambanja. Our destination, the Hotel Palma Nova, was so nova that it was still under construction but, after dodging the bricklayers at the front of the bar/restaurant, we discovered plain but clean and comfortable rooms. We had a lunch of samosas and pizza slices at the local patisserie and then left in the late afternoon for a cacao plantation. The night hike was extremely productive for new mammals, including several Gray's Sportive

Lemurs, a quick look at a Sambirano Mouse Lemur, Greater Mouse Lemur, a Dwarf Lemur recently split from *C. medius*, and a Sambirano Fork-marked Lemur which Jean-Michel was able to track down after hearing its call. We also got a look at a rodent feeding on a jackfruit which might have been a Long-tailed Big-footed Mouse.



The most memorable part of the night was perhaps not the lemurs, however. Tracey recounts her memory of the experience, below.

“We were excited to visit a village where a biologist, acting upon stories from local people, had identified several new species of lemurs a few years earlier. Ian and Jon had Patrick, our talented guide, contact the village. They agreed to take us on a night walk through the forest adjacent to the village and along the edge of the plantation where these lemurs had been seen.

The village was interesting because the cattle lived right in amongst the houses, so there were ducks, geese, chickens, cows, and cow manure and kids everywhere. The village headman met us and we walked through the edge of the plantation as the sun was setting. We stopped at the edge of a wild patch of forest where he and Patrick had a discussion. The sun had fully set and it was pitch dark. It turned out we had to take our shoes off to go in this forest as it was a spiritual place and taboo to wear shoes. Patrick was not keen but it is the community’s forest and so we shed our footwear.

We walked on thick forest debris, soft leaves and dead branches. It was a really interesting sensation, throwing our protective soles away. Keep in mind this group of rabid mammal watchers will run or sprint to any sign of a new mammal species. We all had to adopt a careful walking style to make it safely through the inky dark forest with powerful spotting flashlights. We stumbled across a blanket-covered



tree stump with booze bottles scattered around it, which, we were informed, was where people would come to talk and drink with their ancestors. We managed to see two lemur species. We bumbled around in the dark looking for more. Amber managed to find some fire ants which were painful and yet she never swore. I got one or two bites and I let fly. When my patience was running a bit thin after a couple of hours, we stopped and there were our shoes by the tree.

Happily, we put on our shoes and the hunt continued for the lemurs. The trick with mammal spotting at night is to look up high into trees with powerful flashlights and look on the ground for uneven lumps, (and fire ants). In a pool of flashlight, we stumbled across a weird pile of medical waste in the form of 30 or 40 used needles and syringes along with vials of antibiotics. We fell silent thinking of our feet safe in our shoes. I felt a flash of anger at this completely avoidable accident waiting to happen. The villagers and children don't wear shoes and we were less than five hundred feet to the village and the little clinic. We did snag a number of new lemurs but I will never forget the pile of used syringes."

We returned to Hotel Palma Nova shortly after nine for dinner, and, after a lengthy discussion regarding the next day's breakfast, went to bed. The following day, November 9, was a long day of driving. We left Ambanja about a quarter after eight, stopped to pick up pastries for lunch and then drove 100 km south to Maropapango, a small reserve just beside the RN 6. The road was one of the worst we'd seen in Madagascar requiring at least three hours each way. After arrival we hiked up the steep hill where trackers had been looking for lemurs. Without much delay we found a group of Blue-eyed Black Lemurs. We left the reserve at about 2:30 heading back to Ambanja where we had a drink, packed up and drove to the Hotel Panoramique in Ankify, an old colonial building overlooking the bay. Hearing some interesting noises in the trees we investigated and found our first Black Lemurs. The dinner buffet of shrimp, beef, rice and veggies afterwards was particularly satisfying.



After breakfast the next morning we were ready to leave about 6:30 am with the bags packed in the vehicle for the short drive down the hill to the beach. Unfortunately, the vehicle wouldn't start so the bags were unloaded and carried down the hill to the boat to head over to Nosy Be. After a lovely boat ride over, we arrived in the appropriately named town of Hell-ville to a chaotic scene at the docks reminiscent of Madagascar meeting Egypt, with porters jostling for bags, lots of yelling and so on. Luqman took off with a guide to try and catch a boat for an 8:00 am drive trip. We arrived at the Moya Beach Hotel about 8:30 to find Luqman awaiting us - he had missed his dive boat by three minutes. Moya Beach was absolutely lovely- little bungalows and a small pool. We relaxed until about 11:00 and then headed-out in a chartered boat. Our first sighting was of Bottlenose Dolphins and then behind them, we saw a blow. Heading in that direction we got our first of several views of Omura's Whale. We were also hoping to go snorkelling with Whale Sharks but of these there was no sign. After a lunch on the beach of calamari, grilled fish, shrimp and beef brochettes we went back to the water for snorkelling with some habituated Green Turtles. About 3:30 pm we left the boat and jumped in a van for the one hour ride to Ambatozavary where we got into a couple of outrigger canoes pulled by a motorized dugout canoe for the 20 to 30 minute ride to Lokobe Reserve. Here we were treated to views of Black Lemurs and several cooperative Hawk's Sportive Lemurs as well as the attentions of the worst mosquitoes we had encountered to date. Eventually we came upon our final target, Nosy Be Mouse Lemur. We left the reserve about 8:00 pm for a boat ride back in the darkness with a magnificent star-spangled sky overhead. After a dinner of excellent zebu with peppercorn sauce and crème caramel we had a relaxing evening. We had been planning to go snorkelling with Whale Sharks the next day but I think all of us were feeling tired and just looking forward to some relaxation. The next day, instead of chasing after wildlife, we lounged around the pool until the time came for the drive to the airport and the flight back to Antananarivo.





As I write this report, sitting in my office in Victoria looking out on wind-whipped whitecaps in the Haro Strait, I'm reflecting on what a wondrous place Madagascar is. I think of walking down a path in the middle of the day and seeing a green lizard scuttle into the undergrowth. This could be a scene from any tropical country, except here the lizard is a gecko, which, after tens of millions of years of evolution, has become a green diurnal lizard rather than a brown or grey nocturnal one. Magical moments occur repeatedly in Madagascar, a product of stunning landscapes, unique wildlife, and genuinely kind and friendly people. It is a country with more than its share of challenges, but also one of the most compelling places I know. To have experienced it with wonderful companions and a great guide is truly a gift. It's hard not to be thinking of plans for a return.

Mammal species seen listed below. A couple of dwarf lemurs and a bat or two are still awaiting definitive identification.

1. Greater Hedgehog Tenrec – *Setifer setosus*
2. Lesser Hedgehog Tenrec – *Echinops telfairi*
3. Lowland Streaked Tenrec – *Hemicentetes semispinosus*
4. Madagascan Fruit Bat – *Eidolon dupreanum*
5. Madagascan Rousette – *Rousettus madagascariensis*
6. Peters' Sheath-tailed Bat – *Paremballonura atrata*
7. Western Sheath-tailed Bat – *Paremballonura tiavato*
8. Eastern Sucker-footed Bat – *Myzopoda aurita*
9. Malagasy Mouse-eared Bat – *Myotis goudoti*
10. Major's Long-fingered Bat - *Miniopterus majori*
11. Glen's Long-fingered Bat - *Miniopterus gleni*
12. Aellen's Long-fingered Bat - *Miniopterus aelleni*
13. Griveaud's Long-fingered Bat – *Miniopterus griveaudi*
14. Grey Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus murinus*
15. Brown (Rufous) Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus rufus*
16. Jolly's Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus jollyae*
17. Amber Mountain (Arnhold's) Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus arnholdi*

18. Northern Rufous (Tavaratra) Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus tavaratra*
19. Mittermeier's Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus mittermeieri*
20. Sambirano Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus sambiranensis*
21. Claire's (Nosy Be) Mouse Lemur – *Microcebus mampiratra*
22. Geoffroy's Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus major*
23. Ankarana Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus shethi*
24. Amber Mountain Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus andysabini*
25. Groves' Dwarf Lemur – *Cheirogaleus grovesi*
26. Western Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur - *Cheirogaleus medius*
27. Northern Giant Mouse Lemur – *Mirza zaza*
28. Amber Mountain Fork-marked Lemur – *Phaner electromontisi*
28. Daraina Fork-marked Lemur – *Phaner electromontisi* (potentially awaiting new name if split)
29. Pariente's (Sambirano) Fork-marked Lemur – *Phaner parienti*
30. White-footed Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur leucopus*
31. Hubbard's (Zombitse) Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur hubbardi*
32. Ankarana Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur ankaranensis*
33. Daraina Sportive Lemur - *Lepilemur milanoii*
34. Gray's Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur dorsalis*
35. Hawk's (Nosy Be) Sportive Lemur – *Lepilemur tymerlachsoni*
36. Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur – *Hapalemur griseus*
37. Northern Grey Bamboo Lemur - *Hapalemur occidentalis*
38. Golden Bamboo Lemur – *Hapalemur aureus*
39. Greater Bamboo Lemur – *Prolemur simus*
40. Ring-tailed Lemur – *Lemur catta*
41. Crowned Lemur – *Eulemur coronatus*



42. Red-bellied Lemur – *Eulemur rubriventer*
  43. Sanford's Brown Lemur – *Eulemur sanfordi*
  44. White-fronted Brown Lemur – *Eulemur albifrons*
  45. Red-fronted Brown Lemur – *Eulemur rufifrons*
  46. Black Lemur – *Eulemur macaco*
  47. Blue-eyed Black Lemur – *Eulemur flavifrons*
  48. Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur – *Varecia variegata*
  49. Silky Sifaka – *Propithecus candidus*
  50. Perrier's Sifaka – *Propithecus perrieri*
  51. Verreaux's Sifaka – *Propithecus verreauxi*
  52. Golden-crowned Sifaka – *Propithecus tattersalli*
  53. Aye-aye – *Daubentonia madagascariensis*
  54. Ring-tailed Vontsira – *Galidia elegans*
  55. Bottlenose Dolphin – *Tursiops aduncus*
  56. Omura's Whale – *Balaenoptera omurai*
  57. Lowland Red Forest Rat – *Nesomys audeberti*
  58. Western Big-footed Mouse – *Macrotarsomys bastardi*
  59. Long-tailed Big-footed Mouse? – *Macrotarsomys ingens?*
  60. Black Rat – *Rattus rattus*
  61. Brown Rat – *Rattus norvegicus*
  62. House Mouse – *Mus musculus*
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