

Madagascar – October 2019

Summary

Madagascar has been at the top of my "dream" trips for years but I have always put it off because it was "too expensive" or "too far away" or "too hard to coordinate". However, I read some trip reports from other people that went recently and I found what appeared to be a very reliable tour operator. That, coupled with the fact that we feared every year we waited to visit would mean more extinct species, gave me the kick in the butt I needed to start planning.

The trip turned out to be good not great and over all there was an undeniable feeling of disappointment.

It only took a year of planning and countless emails back and forth with our tour operator Cactus Tours (<https://www.cactus-madagascar.com/>) to make it all happen. We settled on the following itinerary since it would be impossible to see all the prime areas in one 3 week trip:

Day	Activity	Lodging
1	Depart Home for Tana	N/A
2	Paris	Paris Hilton
3	Arrive TNR late evening	Relais Des Plateaux
4	Flight to Diego Suarez	Relais de l'Ankarana
5	Ankarana	Relais de l'Ankarana
6	Ankarana to Amber Mt	Nature Lodge
7	Amber Mountain	Nature Lodge
8	Flight to Tana	Tamboho Boutik Hotel
9	Andasibe/Mantadia	Vakona Forest Lodge
10	Andasibe/Mantadia	Vakona Forest Lodge
11	Andasibe/Mantadia	Vakona Forest Lodge
12	Andasibe to Antsirabe	Maison Tanimanga
13	Ranomafana	Thermal Hotel
14	Ranomafana	Thermal Hotel
15	Ranomafana	Thermal Hotel
16	Ranomafana to Isalo	Jardin du Roy
17	Isalo	Jardin du Roy
18	Isalo to Zombitse to Efaty	Dunes d'Ifaty
19	Fly to Tana	Relais Des Plateaux
20	Fly to Masoala	Masoala Forest Lodge
21	Masoala	Masoala Forest Lodge
22	Masoala	Masoala Forest Lodge
23	Masoala	Masoala Forest Lodge
24	Charter flight to Tana	Relais Des Plateaux
25	Depart Tana (1:55 AM)	

I have written daily trip reports which provide details about accommodations, food, and what we did each day. They are available here: <http://focusedonnature.blogspot.com/search/label/Madagascar>

A gallery of all photos is available here: <https://www.focusedonnature.com/Trips/Madagascar-2019>



Travel in Madagascar is tough and there is no way to avoid it. In fact, on the way back I figured out how much time we spent traveling and it was hard to believe. We were away from home 25 days and here is how we spent those days:

- Wildlife watching = 10.5
- Traveling = 13.5
- Rain out = 1

As you can see, we spent over half our time traveling and that traveling was never enjoyable.

Another thing that made the trip disappointing was that there just wasn't as much wildlife around as we expected. Sure, the target species were there most of the time but otherwise the forests were really sparse especially when it came to birds. I think we saw one mixed flock of birds the whole trip.

Finally, we have very little hope for the future of Madagascar. Between the burning of forests and treatment of the wildlife in a few places it was just depressing. So, if you ever plan on going, do it sooner rather than later.

Overall, we are glad that we went to Madagascar. We saw lots of amazing wildlife that can't be found anywhere else on Earth. Hearing and seeing the indris in Andasibe, watching sifakas take huge leaps from tree to tree, watching the ring-tailed lemurs in Anja, and all the incredible geckos and chameleons were certainly things we will never forget.





While we love mammals, it was the reptiles that we saw which really made the trip. The chameleons and geckos were all amazing.



Common Name	Scientific Name	Amber Mountain	Andasibe	Ankarana	Ifaty	Isalo	Masoala	Nosy Mangabe	Ranomafana	Zombitse
Bats										
Madagascar Fruit Bat	Eidolon dupreanum			X						
Malagasy Mouse-eared Bat	Myotis goudoti			X						
Tenrecs, Shrews, and Rats										
Webb's Tufted-tailed Rat	Eliurus webbi						X			
Lowland Streaked Tenrec	Hemicentetes semispinosus			X						
Shrew Tenrec	Microgale ?		X							
Lowland Red Forest Rat	Nesomys audeberti						X			
Eastern Red Forest Rat	Nesomys rufus								X	
Madagascar Pygmy Shrew	Suncus madagascariensis		X							
Totals		2	8	5	2	2	9	2	8	2

Common Name	Scientific Name	Amber Mountain	Andasibe	Ankarana	Ifaty	Isalo	Masoala	Nosy Mangabe	Ranomafana	Zombitse
Reptiles – 50 Species										
Chameleons										
Antakarana Leaf Chameleon	Brookesia antakarana	X								
Peyrieras's pygmy chameleon	Brookesia Peyrierasi							X		
Montagne d'Ambre Leaf Chameleon	Brookesia tuberculata	X								
Amber Mountain Chameleon	Calumma amber	X								
Arthur's Chameleon	Calumma ambreense	X								
Deceptive Chameleon	Calumma fallax						X		X	
Perinet Chameleon	Calumma gastrotenia		X							
Glaw's Chameleon	Calumma Glawi								X	
Northern Blue-nosed Chameleon	Calumma linotum	X								
Big Nose Chameleon	Calumma nasutum		X						X	
O'Shaughnessy's Chameleon	Calumma oshaughnessyi								X	
Parson's Chameleon	Calumma parsonii		X						X	
Antimena Chameleon	Furcifer antimena				X					
Oustalet's Chameleon	Furcifer oustaleti	X		X		X				X
Panther Chameleon	Furcifer pardalis	X		X			X			
Petter's Chameleon	Furcifer petteri	X								

Common Name	Scientific Name	Amber Mountain	Andasibe	Ankarana	Ifaty	Isalo	Masoala	Nosy Mangabe	Ranomafana	Zombitse
Warty Chameleon	Furcifer verrucosus				X					
Geckos and Lizards										
Antongil Velvet Gecko	Blaesodactylus antongilensis						X			
Three-eyed Lizard	Chalarodon madagascariensis									X
Madagascar Dwarf Gecko	Lygodactylus madagascariensis	X								
Grandidier's Dwarf Gecko	Lygodactylus tolampyae									X
Merriam’s Madagascar Swift	Oplurus cyclurus					X				
Dumeril's Madagascar Swift	Oplurus quadrimaculatus					X				
Grandidier's Madagascar Swift	Oplurus grandidieri					X				
Aldabra Day Gecko	Phelsuma abbotti			X						
Amber Mountain Lined Day Gecko	Phelsuma dorsivittata	X								
Giant Day Gecko	Phelsuma grandis	X								X
Speckled Day Gecko	Phelsuma guttata							X		
Lined Day Gecko	Phelsuma lineata		X							
Madagascar Day Gecko	Phelsuma madagascariensis			X						
Small Lined Day Gecko	Phelsuma pusilla		X				X			
Peacock Day Gecko	Phelsuma quadriocellata								X	
Standing’s Day Gecko	Phelsuma standingi									X
Madagascar Keeled Plated Lizard	Tracheloptychus madagascariensis				X					
Gravenhorst's Skink	Trachylepis gravenhorstii					X				
Common Leaf-tailed Gecko	Uroplatus fimbriatus							X		
Leaf-tailed Gecko	Uroplatus finiavana	X								
Satanic Leaf Gecko	Uroplatus phantasticus								X	
Mossy Leaf-tailed Gecko	Uroplatus sikorae	X								
Brygoo’s Girdled Lizard	Zonosaurus brygooi						X			
Western Girdled Lizard	Zonosaurus laticaudatus					X				
Madagascar Plated Lizard	Zonosaurus madagascariensis		X			X	X			
Ornate Plated Lizard	Zonosaurus ornatus					X			X	
Snakes										

Common Name	Scientific Name	Amber Mountain	Andasibe	Ankarana	Ifaty	Isalo	Masoala	Nosy Mangabe	Ranomafana	Zombitse
Bernier's Striped Snake	Dromicodryas bernieri				X					
Southwestern Night Snake	Ithycyphus oursi					X				X
Gold-collared Snake	Liophidium rhodogaster						X			
Madagascar Cat-eyed Snake	Madagascarophis ?					X				
?	Mimophis mahfalensis			X						
Madagascar Tree Boa	Sanzinia madagascariensis		X						X	
Trail Madagascar Garter Snake	Thamnosophis epistibes		X							
Totals		13	8	5	4	9	7	3	8	6

Common Name	Scientific Name	Amber Mountain	Andasibe	Ankarana	Ifaty	Isalo	Masoala	Nosy Mangabe	Ranomafana	Zombitse
Amphibians – 12 Species										
Frogs and Toads										
Madagascar Bright-eyed Frog	Boophis madagascariensis		X						X	
?	Boophis Masoala						X			
Dumeril's Bright-eyed Frog	Boophis tephraeomystax						X			
Green Bright-eyed Frog	Boophis viridis		X							
White Folohy Madagascar Frog	Gephyromantis luteus								X	
Pandanus Frog	Guibemantis pulcher						X			
Baron's Mantella	Mantella baroni								X	
Climbing Mantella	Mantella laevigata							X		
Charlotte's Madagascar Frog	Mantidactylus charlotte							X		
?	Mantidactylus femoralis		X							
Central Madagascar Frog	Mantidactylus opiparis							X		
?	Platypelis barbouri		X							
Totals			5				3	3	2	