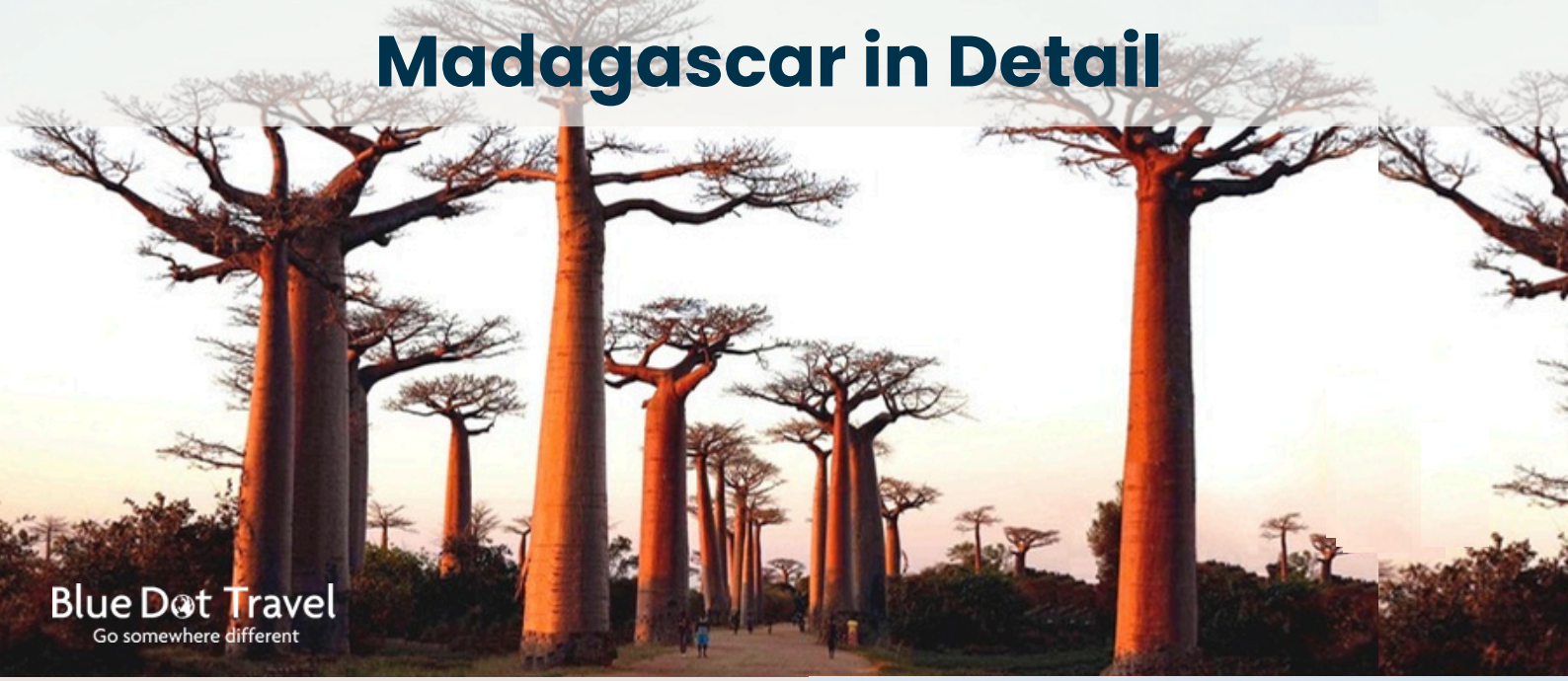
Madagascar in Detail



August 2027 | 24 Days

$16,890 per person, twin share
Solo Supplement: $2,900



Tour Highlights

- The Avenue of the Baobabs at sunset, Madagascar's most famous postcard image
- A plethora of exotic animals in the wild, including the fascinating lemur
- Walk the extraordinary needle-like limestone forest at Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site
- Visit Ile Sainte Marie, where migratory whales can be seen offshore
- Uncover the pirate cemetery on Île Sainte-Marie
- The Jurassic scenery and wildlife of Isalo National Park, home to the fossa, a mysterious mammalian carnivore
- A trip to the bustling Zoma Market in Antananarivo
- Andasibe National Park, Madagascar's unique rainforest reserve, teeming with endemic wildlife
- Marvel at the Royal Rova and the Lost Palace



Madagascar in Detail







Tour overview

Madagascar, 400 km off the East coast of Africa, is the world's fourth largest island (excluding Australia), a fragment of Gondwanaland left behind when the ancient landmass split to form the continents of Africa, India and Australia; it stretches 1600 km from north to south and is 650 km across at its widest point.

The most astonishing thing about the island is its flora and fauna, found nowhere else in the world. The island has been called "nature's design laboratory" because of its many unique creatures and vegetation, some of which are quite primitive. The terrain ranges from tropical rainforest to desert, from high, stony plateaus to lush green islands, with many unique geological and geographical formations.

Madagascar has a range of unique animals and plants that have evolved here, separated from the rest of the world. The most notable are the lemurs, of which nearly 30 are described. We will visit a number of their known habitats and search both day and night so that, with just a little luck, we will see a fair number of these prosimian primates. For the bird watcher, there are over 250 species, of which 106 are endemic, whilst for lovers of reptiles, most of the world's chameleons are found here; in fact, the country is nearly as well known for its chameleon population as for its lemurs.

The flora has its own peculiarities, the vegetation varying wildly by climatic region - thorny scrub in the southwest, tropical rainforest along the east coast, heathland and moss forests on the central plateau and savannahs in the western lowlands. The two best-known examples of these unusual plants are the fan-shaped Ravinala, known as the Traveller's Palm, and the Baobab, of which there are 10 different species. We will see many examples of these throughout, while in the tropical forests we will see trees lush with ferns, fungi, mosses and orchids. Most of this unique flora and fauna, along with some now-extinct species, were here when the first humans arrived 1,500 to 2,000 years ago. The first inhabitants were Malay Polynesians who crossed the Indian Ocean in large canoes from Indonesia and South East Asia. These early settlers mixed with later arrivals, including African, Arab, Indian, and Portuguese traders and French colonials, forming the current 18 official tribes, collectively termed the Malagasy. French is the official language and is spoken in all but the remotest areas.

The country has recovered from its recent political problems, and everywhere things are improving – new roads, airports, and other infrastructure are being built. The country is in great need of foreign currency, as part of this income can be used to help preserve what remains of the Island's natural wonders.

For those looking for something different, this is it!

Activity rating: Active

ACTIVE

This tour requires a good level of fitness. You should be able to walk for up to an hour at a steady pace, manage stairs, varied terrain and inclines, and board and disembark transport independently



Monday 2nd August DEPARTURE
Fly from Australia to Johannesburg, with a 2 night stay near the airport. Overnight: Johannesburg

Day 1, Tuesday 3rd August JOHANNESBURG TRANSIT
For those who are interested, we will arrange a sightseeing program for your transit in Johannesburg. More details to be provide. Overnight: Johannesburg **B**

Day 2, Wednesday 4th August JOHANNESBURG - ANTANANARIVO
After breakfast, we'll fly from Johannesburg to Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, known as "Tana". Upon arrival late in the afternoon, we'll obtain our short-stay visa (we'll provide more details on this) and meet our guide. Our guide can assist with exchanging money to local currency, the Ariary. The hour-long drive through town to the hotel is an experience in itself; watch with fascination as the locals go about their daily business. Our Welcome Dinner is at our hotel tonight. Overnight: Antananarivo **B/D**



Day 3, Thursday 5th August ANTANANARIVO – MORONDAVA
This morning we'll take a 1-hour flight to Morondava on Madagascar's western coast, with a lunchbox provided. In the afternoon, take advantage of the hotel's pool, and beach or visit the local marketplace and mix with the locals. It's about a 30-minute enjoyable walk, or order a pousse-pousse, the local name for a rickshaw, for a few ariary. Return to the hotel for a drink at the bar and dinner. Overnight: Morondava **B/L/D**



Day 4, Friday 6th August MORONDAVA – BEKOPAKA
Today we have a long drive along dirt and sand roads as we head towards the village of Bekopaka. Our first stop is the famous Avenue of the Baobabs, where we'll take photos of these giant trees in the morning light. We'll stop for lunch at Belo, about halfway along the route. From there, we'll transfer onto local barges (with vehicles on board) to cross the river and continue to the small village of Bekopaka, arriving late in the afternoon. This is a long and bumpy drive in 4WD vehicles, but it's well worth the effort. The river barge trip with the locals is a great experience, and our hotel, the Soleil Du Tsingy, is beautiful. Overnight: Bekopaka **B/L/D**

Day 5, Saturday 7th August BIG TSINGY N.P - ACTIVITY RATING: **CHALLENGING**
Today's expedition to the Big Tsingy is challenging in some sections. Your guide will discuss the options suitable for your level of fitness. This spectacular nature reserve is UNESCO-listed and offers some of the trip's best landscapes. We'll trek into the limestone forest, crossing a swing bridge to move from one side to the other, arriving at panoramic views of the surrounding limestone pinnacles. For the full walk, you'll need to be comfortable with heights and able to climb a series of steep ladders (a harness is supplied at some sections). If this is too challenging, consider taking a walk in another section of the forest or staying back to enjoy the hotel's facilities. A certain fitness level and flexibility is required for this day. Overnight: Bekopaka **B/L/D**



Day 6, Sunday 8th August BEMARAHA N.P
We'll return to Bemaraha National Park to explore the Small Tsingy, with its striking limestone formations and unique landscapes. For those interested, there's also the option to take a canoe ride along the Manambolo River, offering a different perspective of this incredible region. Overnight: Bekopaka **B/L/D**

Day 7, Monday 9th August BEOPAKA – MORONDAVA
Now it's time for the long, bumpy drive back to Morondava. This time, we'll reach the famous Avenue of the Baobabs as the sun goes down behind the enormous trees. This makes for an iconic photo – one of the great sights of Madagascar – so have your cameras ready. We'll be back at the hotel in time for dinner. Overnight: Morondava **B/L/D**



Day 8, Tuesday 10th August MORONDAVA – ANTANANARIVO – ANDASIBE
This morning we'll take the 1-hour flight back to Antananarivo, then drive to Andasibe (also known as Perinet). This is a roughly 4-hour drive east through a winding, picturesque landscape. The area is in a rainforest, so expect some precipitation. After dinner at the lodge, those interested can take an evening walk with the guide (take your torch) to spot the active wildlife. We stay at the basic Cyperus Lodge. Overnight: Andasibe **B/L/D**

Day 9, Wednesday 11th August ANDASIBE & MANTADIA NATIONAL PARK
This morning we'll visit Mantadia National Park for wildlife spotting and a guided nature walk. Covering 155 sq km, it's one of the region's finest rainforest reserves and offers the chance to hear and see Indri and Sifaka lemurs. With a bit of luck, we may also spot other lemur species, along with reptiles and a variety of birdlife. The vegetation is equally fascinating—lower elevations are dominated by tree ferns, while higher areas are rich in moss and lichen. Mantadia is a superb example of lowland and mid-altitude rainforest (a certain level of fitness is required for this 3-4 hour slow-paced walk). After a picnic lunch and a visit to the natural pools, we'll return to Andasibe for a stroll through the town. Overnight: Andasibe **B/L/D**



Day 10, Thursday 12th August ANDASIBE & ANALAMAZAOTRA RESERVE
Today, we head to Analamazaotra for more wildlife spotting on foot, set in beautiful rainforest surroundings. After lunch back at the lodge, we'll visit nearby Lemur Island for the chance to get up close with friendly, free-roaming lemurs. Later, you can join your guide for a relaxed walk through the town of Andasibe (highly recommended). After dinner, there's the option to head out again on a night walk to spot nocturnal wildlife. After dinner, take another night walk to spot wildlife. Overnight: Andasibe **B/L/D**

Day 11, Friday 13th August ANDASIBE - ANTANANARIVO
It's time to head back to Tana this morning, and in the afternoon we'll visit the Queen's Palace and the Photo museum to learn more about Madagascar's history and everyday life. Overnight: Antananarivo **B/L/D**

Day 12, Saturday 14th August ANTANANARIVO – ISLE SAINTE MARIE
We'll take another 1-hour flight this morning, to eastern Madagascar and the island of Isle Sainte Marie. This gorgeous island is just 45km long and dotted with small villages. Its strategic location once attracted pirates in the early 1700s, but today it's known for its lush greenery, relaxed, coconut-palm-lined beaches, and coral-protected coves. After visiting the main town, we'll have a briefing on tomorrow's whale-watching. The island is especially famous for humpback whales, which migrate close to shore from July to September. This is one of the main reasons we visit. Overnight: Isle Sainte Marie **B/L/D**



Day 13, Sunday 15th August ISLE SAINTE MARIE & WHALE SAFARI
Every year, hundreds of giant mammals come to the warm waters of the Sainte-Marie lagoon to give birth. We'll have the opportunity to witness their graceful ballets and jumps out of the water, truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Our whale-watching excursion will be about 3 hours on a smallish boat (for those who experience seasickness, take your medication!). We'll then take a boat ride south of the island for lunch and a stroll around one of the local villages. We'll arrive back at the lodge in the late afternoon – just in time for drinks at the bar overlooking the deep blue sea. Overnight: Isle Sainte Marie **B/L/D**

Day 14, Monday 16th August ISLE SAINTE MARIE
In the early 1700s, Île Sainte-Marie became a notorious pirate hideout, where legendary outlaws like Captain Kidd are said to have anchored their ships and buried treasure along its shores. This morning, we'll visit the island museum and the pirates' cemetery to learn more about this fascinating part of the island's history. After lunch, we'll take a short visit to Ambodifotatra, the main town of Île Sainte-Marie, then your afternoon is at leisure. Overnight: Isle Sainte Marie **B/L/D**

Day 15, Tuesday 17th August ISLE SAINTE MARIE – ANTANANARIVO
Our morning is at leisure, then after lunch we'll take a 1-hour flight back to Tana (which will now start to feel like home). For those who are interested, our guide can arrange a visit to the Artisan market, a great place to see traditional Malagasy craftsmanship up close. Some of the local crafts include hand-carved wooden sculptures and masks, woven raffia bags, embroidered textiles and jewellery. Overnight: Antananarivo **B/L/D**

Day 16, Wednesday 18th August ANTANANARIVO – TULEAR - IFATY
Today we'll take an early morning flight to Tulear (approx 3 hours). On arrival, we'll take a canoe excursion to learn about the local fishermen and their daily activities. We'll check in to our hotel in Ifaty and in the afternoon, visit of the Reniala spiny forest, an otherworldly landscape of ancient baobabs, thorny vegetation and rare endemic wildlife. Overnight: Ifaty **B/L/D**

Day 17, Thursday 19th August IFATY - ISALO
Our drive today takes us inland towards Isalo. We'll pass through dry, open terrain dotted with spiny forest, baobabs, and scrubby vegetation, before the scenery becomes gradually more dramatic. You'll see herds of zebu cattle, colourful markets, and kids waving as you pass through towns, before the landscape shifts again to rugged hills and canyons. Arriving late afternoon, you can enjoy the pool and grounds of the lovely Jardin du Roy before dinner. Overnight: Isalo **B/L/D**

Day 18, Friday 20th August ISALO NATIONAL PARK
Walking shoes on… today is physical, with an expedition inside Isalo National Park. Our walk begins at the Maki Canyon, where the impressive gorge opens into the surrounding forest. We'll pass waterfalls and visit the blue and black waterholes. If lucky, we'll see different lemurs, birds and reptiles. We'll have a picnic lunch inside the park, and return to the hotel in the afternoon. The trek may not be for everyone, as it could be considered strenuous. Your guide and tour leader will explain the physicality and the time required. Overnight: Isalo **B/L/D**

Day 19, Saturday 21st August ISALO – TULEAR
Enjoy a leisurely morning at the hotel with its lovely spa, before we make the drive back to Tulear. On arrival, we'll take a short walking tour of the local township before dinner. Overnight: Tulear **B/L/D**

Day 20, Sunday 22nd August TULEAR – ANAKAO
This morning, we'll travel from Tulear to Anakao by speedboat. (If lucky, we'll see whales on their journey through the Mozambique Channel). The 40-minute speedboat ride can be bumpy, but it's far preferable to the full-day journey by road. Our beach hotel, Anakao Ocean Lodge, is simple but comfortable, with all bungalows set right on the sand. The food here is mainly fresh seafood, and you'll have everything you need, including a comfortable bed and hot water powered by solar. The rawness and simplicity are all part of the experience! Your afternoon is free to enjoy the hotel or chat with locals from the village next door. Overnight: Anakao **B/L/D**

Day 21, Monday 23rd August DAYTRIP TO TSIMANAMPETSOTSA
Tsimanampetsotsa Nature Reserve is one of the most interesting parks on the island. We'll travel for approx 1.5 hours in 4WD vehicles over dirt and sand roads to reach the park. Then we'll trek for about 1.5 hours on a slightly steep trail until we reach the plateau. From the viewpoint of the salt lake, you can see flamingos that have migrated from Africa - a special experience! After a picnic lunch inside the park, we'll take another walk to see a species of blind fish that lives in the underground caves here, locally nicknamed "Grandmother". We'll also see the island's oldest Baobab tree and a huge Banyan tree with its mega root system. Overnight: Anakao **B/L/D**

Day 22, Tuesday 24th August DAYTRIP TO NOSY VE
This morning we'll take a boat to Nosy Ve, an uninhabited coral island 3km off Anakao. Known for its pristine beaches and protected wetlands, it's a great spot to see nesting seabirds—particularly the red-tailed tropicbird—along with clear waters and untouched coastal scenery. Our afternoon is at leisure. Overnight: Anakao **B/L/D**

Day 23, Wednesday 25th August ANAKAO – TULEAR – ANTANANARIVO
This morning we'll travel back to Tulear by speedboat, with a break for lunch, before flying back to Tana. Overnight: Antananarivo **B/L/D**

Day 24, Thursday 26th August ANTANANARIVO
Today, we'll see some sites of the capital city, affectionately known as Tana. We begin with a visit to the Ambohimanja Royal Palace. Learn about this fascinating part of the region's history before taking a short walk to get a panoramic view of Tana. We will then drive back towards town for lunch and head to the city lookout for views of Antananarivo. Overnight: Antananarivo **B/L/D**

Day 25, Friday 27th August ANTANANARIVO - JOHANNESBURG
Today we'll fly to Johannesburg, where we'll overnight near the airport. Overnight: Johannesburg **B**

Day 26 Saturday 28th August DEPARTURE Depart Johannesburg for Australia **B**















Accommodation

Our hotels are carefully chosen to capture the local atmosphere and set you up in an ideal location. You can expect accommodation that comprises a mix of standard hotels, boutique-style hotels, and smaller, independently owned establishments. Below are some of the hotels on this tour. Final hotels may change, and a complete list will be shared with you.

Royal Palissandre, Antananarivo
www.leshotelspalissandre.com

Jardin du Roy, Isalo
www.lejardinduroy.com

Soleil du Tsingy, Bekopaka
www.soleildestsingy.mg

Vakona Lodge, Andasibe
www.vakonahotel.com

Why Blue Dot?

Travel is more than just moving from one place to another; it is an opportunity to explore this vast planet, connect with its people and marvel at its beauty. We have established a group of loyal, like-minded travellers who share this feeling and have taken multiple tours with us. With Blue Dot, you'll experience

- Thoughtfully designed itineraries with unique experiences
- Small, inclusive groups with a maximum of 16 travellers
- The support of both an Australian tour leader* and experienced local guides
- Programs designed to meet the needs of mature-age travellers
- Hands on, personalised service including customised flight bookings
- Tipping included in your tour cost

*Australian leaders accompany groups with more than 10 travellers.

Blue Dot welcomes solo travellers

In fact, over half of our clients are solo travellers. We understand it can be daunting to travel on your own, and we'll ensure your travel is safe, inclusive and enjoyable. You can confidently join our groups, knowing that we bring solo travellers together to share the camaraderie of an unforgettable adventure.

Enquiries and bookings

A $500 deposit is required to secure your booking.

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