



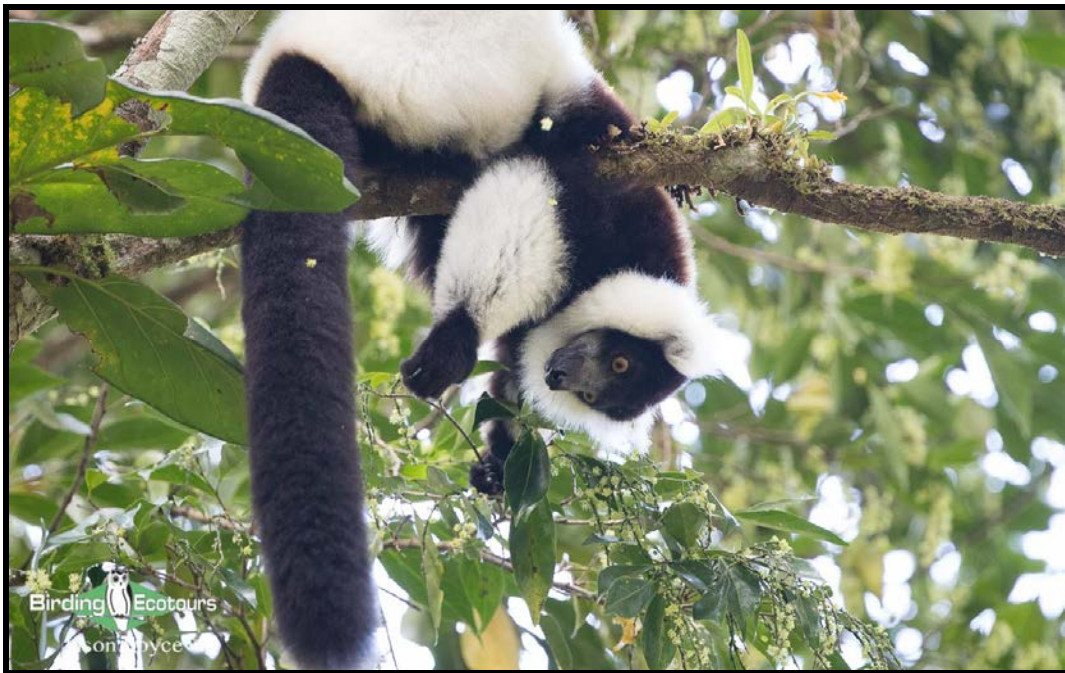
**BEST OF MADAGASCAR: 14-DAY BIRDING AND
WILDLIFE TOUR**

17 – 30 OCTOBER 2023



Rufous-breasted Ground Roller is a member of one of the five endemic avian families of Madagascar. We will be looking for it on this tour.

Madagascar! Our world's fourth-largest island is, quite simply, unique. Five bird families and five mammal families (including the lemurs) are endemic to this massive island, and half the world's chameleons, weird and wonderful endemic plant families, and tons of other wildlife can be found here. An astonishing 120 bird species are endemic – including such exotic groups as vangas, ground rollers, **Cuckoo Roller**, couas, asities, and mesites. Lemurs vie for attention, from the tiny mouse-lemurs to the marvelous sifakas and the amazing **Indri** with its calls that resound through the forest. Our tour visits a range of habitats: grasslands, dry deciduous woodland, the bizarre spiny forest with its odd octopus trees (*Didiera madagascariensis*) and elephant's foot trees (*Pachypodium rosulatum*), lush eastern rainforest, as well as lagoons and mudflats. The birds that we'll look for include the roadrunner-like **Long-tailed Ground Roller** and the stunning **Pitta-like, Scaly**, and **Rufous-headed Ground Rollers** as well as the highly prized **Subdesert Mesite**, the unforgettable **Giant Coua**, the astounding **Velvet Asity**, and **Madagascan Ibis**, to name just a handful. We invite you to join us on a special tour to an amazing island!



Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur just hanging around

We offer the following pre-tours and extension to this tour, which all can also be booked as a stand-alone tour:

7-day Northwest (Ankarafantsika/Betsiboka Delta) Pre-pre-tour

One hundred and twenty-nine species of birds have been recorded in the north-western Ankarafantsika National Park, more than half of them endemic to Madagascar. They include **Van Dam's Vanga**, **Rufous Vanga**, the elusive **Banded Kestrel**, and the more easily observed

Madagascan Fish Eagle, which can often be seen at Ravelobe Lake. The endangered **Humblot's Heron** can also be seen at Lake Ravelobe.

6-day Masoala Peninsula Pre-tour

The Masoala Peninsula pre-tour can generate the unbelievable **Helmet Vanga**, **Brown Mesite**, and **Short-legged Ground Roller**, as well as the largest – and most bizarre – nocturnal lemur, the **Aye-aye**, and a stack more.



*We hope to find **Short-legged Ground Roller** on our Masoala Peninsula pre-tour.*

6-day Berenty Reserve Extension

Although most famous for its dense lemur population, with hundreds of individuals per square kilometer (research on lemurs has been continuing here for more than three decades), Berenty Reserve is also a haven for birdwatchers, boasting a high number of endemic species. With luck we might be able to find **Madagascan Sandgrouse**, **Madagascan Green Pigeon**, **Torotoroka Scops Owl**, and perhaps even **Madagascan Cuckoo-Hawk** here.

This tour can also be combined with our **Namibia, Okavango, and Victoria Falls** tour.

Itinerary (14 days/13 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Antananarivo

Your international flight, or domestic flight if you have joined our Masoala extension, arrives in Antananarivo (shortened to “Tana” by most people). After arrival you will be transferred to your hotel.

Overnight: Relais des Plateaux, Antananarivo

Day 2. Drive to Andasibe, afternoon birding Analamazoatra Special Reserve

Early today we embark on a three-to-four-hour drive to Andasibe, one of Madagascar’s premier rainforest sites. Here the unforgettable call of the Indri resounds through the beautiful Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. In the afternoon we will visit its Analamazoatra section. We’ll find the **Indri** with ease, along with other spectacularly beautiful species such as **Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur**. Birding is unbelievable, with four different ground rollers possible, along with two nightjars, including the bizarre **Collared Nightjar** at its daytime roosts. **Madagascan Owl**, **Rainforest Scops Owl**, and a suite of nocturnal lemurs and chameleons await us on a night walk in the area.

Overnight: Andasibe Hotel, Andasibe



The incredible Pitta-like Ground Roller.

Days 3 – 4. Andasibe-Mantadia National Park

We spend two more nights in Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, birding the beautiful primary and secondary forests of the area. We spend the whole day on day 2 and the morning of day 3 in the Mantadia National Park section, while returning to the Analamazoatra section in the afternoon of day 3. We should find **Velvet Asity**, **Common Sunbird-Asity**, **Benson's Rock Thrush** (Forest Rock Thrush), **Madagascan Flufftail**, many vangas including **Blue Vanga** and **Nuthatch Vanga**, **Madagascan Blue Pigeon**, **Madagascan Cuckooshrike**, several endemic warblers such as **Rand's Warbler**, and more. We have stakeouts for **Madagascan Grebe**, the rare **Meller's Duck**, and **Madagascan Rail**. We expect our first couas, **Red-fronted Coua** being a likely candidate. We should also see a few lemurs such as **Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur**. We certainly don't ignore other non-avian wildlife and often see **Giraffe Weevil**, **Madagascar Tree Boa**, and many chameleons.

Overnight: Andasibe Hotel, Andasibe

Day 5. Drive to Antsirabe, birding on the way

We embark on a long and scenic road trip, breaking the journey to amazing Ranomafana National Park in the south-east of the island with one night in Madagascar's second largest city, Antsirabe.

Overnight: Couleur Café, Antsirabe



*An inquisitive **Blue Vanga**.*

Day 6. Transfer to Ranomafana National Park

We hope to see many of Madagascar and its neighboring islands' common endemics en route to the national park, including species such as **Madagascan Wagtail**, **Malagasy Kingfisher**, **Mascarene Martin**, **Malagasy Kestrel**, **Malagasy Bulbul**, and many others.

Overnight: Setam Lodge, Ranomafana

Days 7 – 8. Birding Ranomafana National Park

At the magnificent Ranomafana National Park we are in for a real treat. The rainforest here is similar to that at Andasibe, but it is a better place for several species we won't yet have seen, such as the rare **Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity**, the recently described **Cryptic Warbler**, **Madagascan Yellowbrow**, **Grey-crowned Tetraka**, **Pollen's Vanga**, **Grey Emutail**, **Wedge-tailed Jery**, **Madagascan Snipe**, and numerous others. As always in a new part of the island we expect new lemurs, such as **Golden Bamboo Lemur**. The reptiles here include **Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko**.

Overnight: Setam Lodge, Ranomafana



The incomparable Cuckoo Roller.

Day 9. Isalo National Park

After some final birding at Ranomafana while hoping to clean up there, we begin another scenic road trip across the island, with the possibility to stop shortly at Anja Community Reserve. Today we start heading westward, to much drier parts. We'll spend one night in the beautifully

picturesque Isalo National Park. Here we'll search for some more star birds, such as **Benson's Rock Thrush** (Forest Rock Thrush) and the attractively patterned **Madagascan Partridge**.

Overnight: Relais de la Reine, Isalo

Day 10. Transfer westwards to Ifaty, birding en route

We head towards the spiny forests of the southwest. This will be like entering a completely new world, and there is nothing else like this weird landscape anywhere in the world – Africa, although geographically close by, is nothing like Madagascar in landscape or wildlife. However, before reaching these spiny forests we first have another fascinating drive that should generate some of Madagascar's most localized birds. On our drive westwards towards the spiny forests we stop at a unique dry deciduous forest at Zombitse National Park, inhabited by the Critically Endangered (IUCN) **Appert's Tetraka**, **Coquerel's Coua**, the incomparable **Cuckoo Roller**, which we often see displaying, and various other goodies. Then we bird a coastal site further west for two incredibly localized species endemic to "coral rag scrub", **Verreaux's Coua** and **Red-shouldered Vanga**. We should also start finding our first of more widespread dry-area birds, including **Subdesert Brush Warbler** and others.

Overnight: Les Dunes d'Ifaty, Ifaty



Sickle-billed Vanga is a target near Ifaty.

Day 11. Birding the spiny forests near Ifaty

A world away from the eastern rainforests, after much anticipation, we now bird the spiny forests near Ifaty, where baobabs and *Didiera* trees provide an absolutely unique habitat for a host of sought-after Madagascar endemics, among them such incredible birds as **Long-tailed Ground**

Roller, Subdesert Mesite, Sickle-billed Vanga, Archbold's Newtonia, Banded Kestrel, Thamnornis, Lafresnaye's Vanga, Red-capped Coua (the local *olivaceus* subspecies, "Green-capped Coua"), **Running Coua**, and others. We also visit a site for **Madagascan Plover**.

Overnight: Les Dunes d'Ifaty, Ifaty

Day 12. Drive from Ifaty to La Table near Toliara

Today we will explore, on our drive to Toliara, a small hill reminiscent of Table Mountain in Cape Town, here called La Table. Behind it is a small area of scrubby forest, where we will search for the now famous **Red-shouldered Vanga**, the last lifer Phoebe Snetsinger saw before she was killed in a car accident (while birding!), and the localized **Verreaux's Coua**. We hope to locate both, as well as possibly **Lafresnaye's Vanga**.

Overnight: Hotel Victory, Toliara

Day 13. Flight to Tana, birding the city

We fly back to Tana and bird sites around this fascinating capital city for **Sooty Falcon, Eleonora's Falcon, Malagasy Pond Heron**, and many other birds.

Overnight: Relais des Plateaux, Antananarivo

Day 14. Departure

After some final birding in the city either your international flight leaves Tana for home, or we will fly to Fort Dauphin for the Berenty extension.

Please note that the itinerary cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

ADDITIONAL EXTENSIONS:

Please note that Madagascar is a huge island, and we offer remote extensions for some of Madagascar's toughest endemics, including **Madagascan Serpent Eagle, Red Owl, Madagascan Pochard**, and **Sakalava Rail**.

Duration:	14 days
Limit:	6 – 8
Dates:	17 – 30 October 2023
Start:	Antananarivo (Tana)
End:	Antananarivo (Tana)
Prices:	€5,955 per person sharing, assuming 6-8 participants, plus about €460 for the domestic flight, which we will book for you (2023)
Single supplements:	€765 (2023)

Price includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Guiding fees
Entrance fees
All transport while on tour
Bottled water throughout the tour

Price excludes:

International flights
Flight back to Tana at the end of the tour
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts
Drinks
Laundry
Personal insurance
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))