BEST OF MADAGASCAR: 14-DAY BIRDING AND WILDLIFE TOUR

18–31 OCTOBER 2027



*The **Pitta-like Ground Roller** belongs to one of Madagascar's four endemic bird families, all four of which we will be looking for during this tour.*

Overview

Madagascar, the world's fourth-largest island is, quite simply, unique. Madagascar is home to four endemic bird families, eight endemic mammal families (including five lemur families), around half the world's chameleon species, and a remarkable diversity of endemic plants and other wildlife. More than 100 bird species are endemic – including such exotic groups as vangas**,** ground rollers, couas, asities, mesites, and the extraordinary **Cuckoo-roller**. Lemurs vie for attention, from the tiny mouse lemurs to the marvelous sifakas and the amazing **Indri** with its deafening 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 (*Didierea madagascariensis)* and elephant's foot trees (*Pachypodium rosulatum*), lush eastern rainforest, as well as lagoons and mudflats. Some of the special 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 **Madagascar Ibis**, to name just a handful. We invite you to join us on this special tour to a fascinating island!



***Indri**, Madagascar's largest lemur species.*

This Madagascar birding tour can be combined with our Western Madagascar Rare Birds and Mammals tour and/or our Namibia, Okavango, and Victoria Falls birding tour. We also offer a Northwestern Madagascar extension (by request) which includes Ankarafantsika National Park and the Betsiboka Delta for such specials as **Madagascar Fish Eagle**, **White-breasted Mesite**, **Schlegel's Asity**, and **Malagasy Sacred Ibis**. Furthermore, we offer a Masoala Peninsula extension (by request) where we target the highly prized **Helmet Vanga**.

Detailed Itinerary (14 days/13 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Antananarivo

Your international flight arrives in Antananarivo (usually shortened to "Tana") today, or you may have arrived the previous day on a domestic flight after joining one of our pre-tour extensions. After arrival, you will be transferred to your hotel, where we can already start looking for some of Madagascar's common endemic and near-endemic species including **Madagascar Wagtail**, **Madagascar Mannikin**, and even **Madagascar Nightjar**.

Overnight: Relais des Plateaux (or similar), Antananarivo

Day 2. Transfer to Andasibe, afternoon birding at Analamazaotra Special Reserve

Early today, we embark on a roughly five-hour drive to Andasibe, one of Madagascar's premier rainforest destinations. Here, the unforgettable calls of the **Indri** resound through the beautiful Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. In the afternoon, we will visit the Analamazaotra section of the park. We should find the **Indri** with ease, along with other spectacular lemur species such as **Common Brown** and **Grey Bamboo Lemurs**. Birding is excellent, with possibilities including **Madagascar Forest Rail**, **Madagascar Flufftail**, **Red-breasted** and **Red-fronted Couas**, **Nuthatch Vanga**, **Ward's Flycatcher**, **Velvet Asity**, and the incredibly well-camouflaged **Collared Nightjar** at its daytime roost. **Madagascar Owl** can also be seen at its day roost in the area.

Overnight: Hotel/lodge near Andasibe



*We hope to find the beautifully patterned **Collared Nightjar** around Andasibe.*

Days 3–4. Andasibe-Mantadia National Park

We spend two more nights in the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park area, exploring its beautiful primary and secondary forests. We will likely spend one day in Mantadia National Park and another in the Analamazaotra section. In these forests, we hope to find **Pitta-like**, **Rufous-headed**, **Scaly**, and **Short-legged Ground Rollers**, **Red-breasted** and **Blue Couas**, **Velvet Asity**, **Madagascar Flufftail**, many vanga species including **Madagascar Blue**, **Crossley's**, **Tylas**, and **Nuthatch Vangas**, **Madagascar Blue Pigeon**, **Madagascar Cuckooshrike**, **White-throated Oxylabes**, **Long-billed Bernieria**, **Spectacled Tetraka**, **Rand's Warbler**, and many more. We also have stakeouts for **Madagascar Rail** and will likely visit a nearby marsh for **Grey Emutail** and **Madagascar Snipe**.

We also keep an eye out for other wildlife and often encounter **Common Brown Lemur**, **Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur**, **Diademed Sifaka**, **Red-bellied Lemur**, **Giraffe-necked Weevil**, **Madagascar Tree Boa**, and several chameleon and gecko species.

Overnight: Hotel/lodge near Andasibe



Giraffe-necked Weevil *– Madagascar is renowned for its unusual wildlife.*

Day 5. Transfer to Antsirabe, birding on the way

We embark on a long and scenic road journey towards Ranomafana National Park in the southeast of the island, breaking the journey with an overnight stay in Madagascar's third-largest city, Antsirabe.

Overnight: Couleur Café (or similar), Antsirabe

Day 6. Transfer to Ranomafana National Park

We hope to encounter several widespread species found in Madagascar and neighboring islands en route to the national park, including species such as **Malagasy Kingfisher**, **Mascarene Martin**, **Malagasy Kestrel**, **Malagasy Bulbul**, and many others. This evening, or on another evening during our stay in Ranomafana, we will enjoy a night walk in search of **Rufous Mouse Lemur** and an assortment of chameleon species.

Overnight: Hotel/lodge just outside of Ranomafana National Park

Days 7–8. Birding Ranomafana National Park

The magnificent Ranomafana National Park promises some particularly exciting birding. The rainforest here is similar to that at Andasibe, but Ranomafana offers better opportunities for several species we may not yet have encountered, such as **Common Sunbird-Asity**, **Cryptic Warbler**, **Madagascar Yellowbrow**, **Grey-crowned Tetraka**, **Wedge-tailed Jery**, **Pollen's Vanga**, **Brown Emutail**, **Forest Rock Thrush**, and numerous others. We may explore some wetlands and rice paddies in the area where we hope to find **Madagascar Snipe** and **Grey Emutail**. As we explore another part of the island, we can also expect to encounter additional lemur species, including **Milne-Edwards' Sifaka**, **Red-fronted Brown Lemur**, and **Golden Bamboo Lemur**. Reptiles here may include the bizarre-looking **Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko**.

Overnight: Hotel/lodge just outside of Ranomafana National Park



Crossley's Vanga *is one of the many vanga species we are likely to see on this tour.*

Day 9. Transfer to Isalo National Park area

This morning, we begin another long and scenic road trip across the island, with a short stop at Anja Community Reserve, where we hope to find the approachable **Ring-tailed Lemur**, as well as perhaps our first **Madagascar Buttonquails** and **Grey-headed Lovebirds** of the trip. As we continue westward into much drier habitats, the composition of the bird community changes, with **Madagascar Lark** and **Namaqua Dove** among the possibilities. We spend one night on the edge of the picturesque Isalo National Park, with our lodge nestled among its spectacular sandstone formations. Here we'll search for some more star birds, such as the Benson's subspecies of **Forest Rock Thrush** and the attractively patterned **Madagascar Partridge**. In the evening, we can look for **Madagascar Scops Owl** and **White-browed Owl** around our hotel grounds.

Overnight: Relais de la Reine (or similar), Isalo



Ring-tailed Lemur *may be seen at the Anja Community Reserve.*

Day 10. Transfer to Ifaty, birding Zombitse National Park en route

Before reaching the spiny forests of the southwest, we have another fascinating, albeit long, drive during which we hope to find some of Madagascar's most localized bird species. On our drive westwards we stop at a unique dry deciduous forest at Zombitse National Park, inhabited by the Vulnerable (IUCN) **Appert's Tetraka**, **Coquerel's** and **Giant Couas**, **Sickle-billed** and **Hook-billed Vangas**, the incomparable Cuckoo-roller, which we often see displaying, as well as several other sought-after species. In the dry woodlands of Zombitse, we will also look out for **Verreaux's Sifaka** and **Zombitse Sportive Lemur**. If we still need them, local guides generally know the whereabouts of day roosts for **Madagascar Scops** and **White-browed Owls**.

We then continue southwest, stopping in agricultural areas where local people will help us search

for the rare and elusive **Madagascar Sandgrouse**. After searching for the sandgrouse, we continue to our beachside accommodation in Ifaty, where **Greater Vasa Parrots** and **Subdesert Brush Warblers** can often be seen in the grounds.

Overnight: Les Dunes d'Ifaty (or similar), Ifaty



*The range-restricted **Appert's Tetraka** can be seen in Zombitse National Park.*

Day 11. Birding the spiny forests near Ifaty

A world away from the eastern rainforests, the spiny forests near Ifaty offer an entirely different birding experience. Here baobabs and octopus trees provide a unique habitat for a host of sought-after Madagascar endemics. Exploring this remarkable landscape is like entering another world. Although Madagascar lies relatively close to mainland Africa, its wildlife is remarkably different. Some of our prime targets here include such incredible birds as **Long-tailed Ground Roller**, **Subdesert Mesite**, **Sickle-billed** and **Lafresnaye's Vangas**, **Archbold's Newtonia**, **Thamnornis**, **Olive-capped** and **Running Couas**, and the rare **Banded Kestrel**.

We will visit a nearby coastal site in search of Madagascar Plover and migrant shorebirds such as **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Common Greenshank**, and **Little Stint**. Some nearby wetlands will also be visited where we might find an assortment of widespread waterbird species.

Overnight: Les Dunes d'Ifaty (or similar), Ifaty

Day 12. Nosy Ve boat trip and transfer to Toliara area

This morning, we take an exciting boat trip to the small island of Nosy Ve, where we can observe breeding **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** and, with luck, a flock of **Crab-plovers**. We will also visit the

nearby village of Anakao in search of **Littoral Rock Thrush**, the only location on this tour where we have a chance of seeing this range-restricted species.

After our boat trip we will head south of Toliara to a small area of scrubby forest, where we will search for the now-famous **Red-shouldered Vanga**, famously the last new bird species Phoebe Snetsinger saw before she was killed in a car accident while birding, as well as the localized **Verreaux's Coua**. We hope to locate both, as well as possibly **Lafresnaye's Vanga**.

Overnight: Arboretum d'Antsokay (or similar), near Toliara



Long-tailed Ground Roller *occurs in the spiny forest near Ifaty.*

Day 13. Flight to Tana, birding the city

Depending on our flight time, we will either spend the morning birding around our lodge grounds or return to Tana earlier in the day, allowing us to spend the afternoon birding around the city. We can visit Lake Alarobia, on the outskirts of the city, in search of **Meller's Duck**, **Malagasy Pond Heron**, **White-throated Rail**, and various other waterbirds.

Overnight: Relais des Plateaux (or similar), Antananarivo

Day 14. Departure

After some final birding around the city (see Lake Alarobia above), you will either depart Tana on your international flight home or continue on one of our Madagascar extensions.

Overnight: Not included



*The huge **Greater Vasa Parrot** can be seen at several sites on this tour.*

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 guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling or other factors.

ADDITIONAL EXTENSIONS:

Madagascar is a huge island, and we offer remote extensions targeting some of its most challenging endemics, including **Madagascar Serpent Eagle**, **Red Owl**, **Madagascar Pochard**, and **Sakalava Rail**.

Tour Details

Duration:	14 days
Group size:	4–8
Dates:	18–31 October 2027
Start:	Antananarivo (Tana)
End:	Antananarivo (Tana)
Prices:	€ 7,000 per person sharing, assuming 4-8 participants, plus about € 500 for the domestic flight, which we will book for you (2027)
Single supplements:	€ 997 (2027)

Price includes:

Meals
Accommodation
Guiding fees
Entrance fees
All transport while on tour
Bottled water throughout the tour
Boat trip to Nosy Ve

Price excludes:

International flights
Flight back to Tana from Toliara 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)