



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

19 OCTOBER – 01 NOVEMBER 2024  
18–31 OCTOBER 2025



*Pitta-like Ground Roller* is a member of one of the four endemic avian families of Madagascar which we will be looking for on this tour.

Madagascar, our world's fourth-largest island is, quite simply, unique. Four bird families and five mammal families (including the lemurs) are endemic to this massive island, and half the world's chameleons, along with weird and wonderful endemic plant families, and tons of other wildlife can all 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 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 (*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 **Madagascar Ibis**, to name just a handful. We invite you to join us on a special tour to an amazing island!



*Indri, Madagascar's largest lemur species.*

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

### **8-day Northwest (Ankarafantsika/Betsiboka Delta) Pre-pre-tour**

One hundred and twenty-nine species of birds have been recorded in the northwestern Ankarafantsika National Park, more than half of them endemic to Madagascar. They include **Van Dam's Vanga**, **Schlegel's Asity**, **White-breasted Mesite**, **Bernier's Teal**, **Madagascar Sacred**

**Ibis**, the elusive **Banded Kestrel**, and the more easily observed **Madagascar Fish Eagle**, which can often be seen at Ravelobe Lake, along with the Endangered **Humblot's Heron**.

### **6-day Masoala Peninsula Pre-tour**

The Masoala Peninsula pre-tour can generate the unbelievable **Helmet** and **Bernier's Vangas**, **Brown Mesite**, and **Scaly** and **Short-legged Ground Rollers**, and if we're very lucky, the largest – and most bizarre – nocturnal lemur, the **Aye-aye**, and a stack more.

### **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 ongoing 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 **Madagascar Sandgrouse**, **Madagascar Green Pigeon**, **Torotoroka Scops Owl**, and perhaps even **Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk**.



*The cute **Torotoroka Scops Owl** is likely on the Berenty Reserve extension.*

This 14-day Madagascar birding tour can also be combined with our **Namibia, Okavango, and Victoria Falls** birding tour.



## Itinerary (14 days/13 nights)

### Day 1. Arrival in Antananarivo

Your international flight arrives in Antananarivo (shortened to “Tana” by most people) today, or the previous day on your domestic flight from Maroantsetra, if you have joined our Masoala pre-tour. After arrival you will be transferred to your hotel where we can already get started with some of Madagascar’s common endemics and near-endemics including **Madagascar Wagtail**, **Madagascar Mannikin**, **Madagascar Stonechat**, and even **Madagascar Nightjar**.

Overnight: Relais des Plateaux, Antananarivo

### Day 2. Drive to Andasibe, afternoon birding Analamazotra 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 Analamazotra section. We should find the **Indri** with ease, along with other spectacular lemur species such as **Eastern Woolly**, (Common) **Brown**, and **Black-and-white Ruffed Lemurs**. Birding is unbelievable, with **Madagascar Wood Rail**, **Madagascar Flufftail**, **Nuthatch Vanga**, **Ward’s Flycatcher**, **Velvet Asity**, **Pitta-like**, **Rufous-headed**, **Scaly**, and **Short-legged Ground Rollers**, along with two nightjars, including the bizarre **Collared Nightjar** at its daytime roost, all possible here. **Madagascar 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 strange Velvet Asity can be incredibly confiding at times.*

### 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**, **Forest Rock Thrush**, **Madagascar Flufftail**, many vangas including **Madagascar Blue**, **Crossley's** and **Nuthatch Vangas**, **Madagascar Blue Pigeon**, **Madagascar Cuckooshrike**, several endemic warblers such as **Rand's Warbler**, and many more. We also have stakeouts for **Madagascar Grebe**, the rare **Meller's Duck**, and **Madagascar Rail**. We can also expect our first couas, **Red-fronted Coua** being a likely candidate. We certainly don't ignore other non-avian wildlife and often see **Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur**, **Giraffe Weevil**, **Madagascar Tree Boa**, and many chameleons.

During our time around Andasibe we will also likely visit Maromizaha Forest where we will do a long hike to further target **Pollen's**, **Madagascar Blue**, **Tylas** and **Nuthatch Vangas**, **Dark Newtonia**, and **Rufous-headed Ground Roller**.

Overnight: Andasibe Hotel, Andasibe



*Giraffe-necked Weevil - Madagascar is well-known for its bizarre-looking wildlife.*

### Day 5. Drive to Antsirabe, birding on the way

We embark on a long and scenic road trip (looking for **Hamerkop** and **Madagascar Snipe** en route), breaking the journey to amazing Ranomafana National Park in the southeast of the island, with one night in Madagascar's second largest city, Antsirabe.

Overnight: Couleur Café, Antsirabe

### 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 **Malagasy Kingfisher**, **Mascarene Martin**, **Malagasy Kestrel**, **Malagasy Bulbul**, and many others. This evening we might have time for a night walk where we can look for **Rufous Mouse Lemur** and an array of exciting chameleon species.

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** (with **Common Sunbird-Asity** more likely to be encountered), the recently described **Cryptic Warbler**, **Madagascar Yellowbrow**, **Grey-crowned Tetraka**, **Pollen's Vanga**, **Brown Emutail**, **Wedge-tailed Jery**, the rare **Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk**, and numerous others. We will explore some wetlands and rice paddies in the area where we hope to find **Madagascar Snipe** and **Grey Emutail**. As always, in a new part of the island, we expect new lemurs, such as **Milne-Edward's Sifaka**, **Red-bellied**, **Eastern Lesser Bamboo**, and **Golden Bamboo Lemurs**. The reptiles here might include **Satanic Leaf-tailed Gecko**.

Overnight: Setam Lodge, Ranomafana



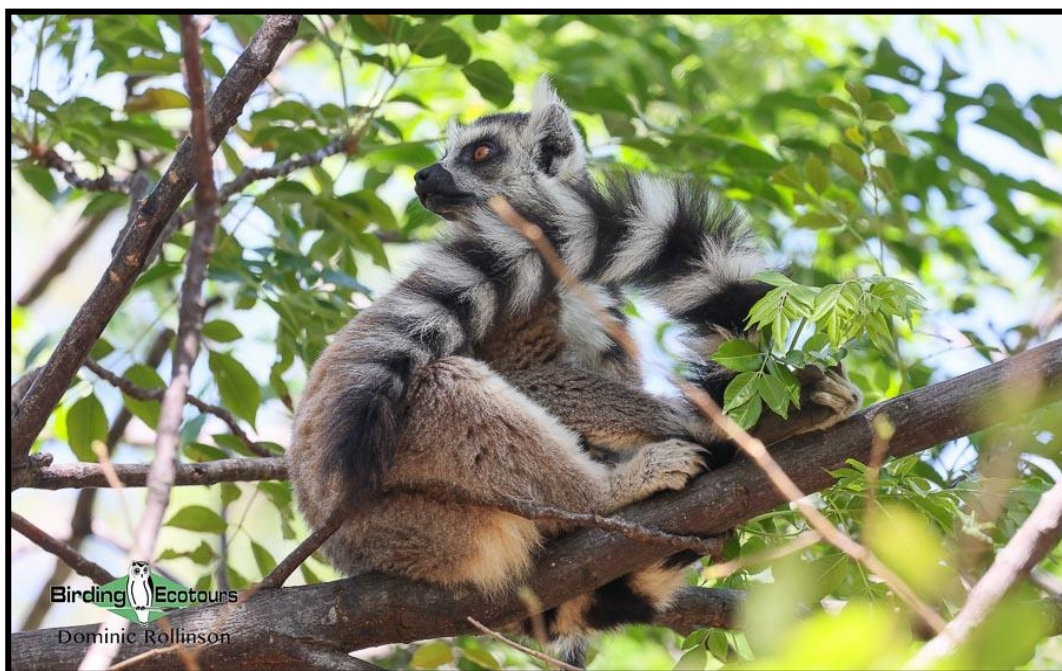
*Crossley's Vanga is one of the many vanga species we are likely to see on this tour.*



### Day 9. Isalo National Park

After some final birding at Ranomafana, we begin another scenic road trip across the island, with the possibility to stop shortly at Anja Community Reserve to find the friendly **Ring-tailed Lemur** as well as perhaps our first **Madagascar Buttonquails** and **Grey-headed Lovebirds** of the trip. Today we start heading westward, to much drier parts and the change in habitat will bring about a change in the suite of birds too with **Madagascar Lark** and **Namaqua Dove** possible today too. We'll spend one night in the beautifully picturesque Isalo National Park, with our lodge set in amongst the beautiful 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 **Torotoroka Scops** and **White-browed Owls**, around our hotel grounds.

Overnight: Relais de la Reine, Isalo



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

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

Today 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 its 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 Vulnerable (IUCN) **Appert's Tetraka**, **Coquerel's** and **Giant Couas**, the incomparable **Cuckoo-Roller**, which we often see displaying, and various other goodies. In the dry woodlands of Zombitse we will also look out for **Verreaux's Sifaka**, and **Hubbard's Sportive Lemur**. If we still need them, local

guides generally know the whereabouts of day roosts for **Torotoroka Scops** and **White-browed Owls**.

We then keep heading southwest and will stop off in some farming areas where we use the help of locals to try to find the rare and elusive **Madagascar Sandgrouse**. After searching for the sandgrouse, we continue the drive to our lovely beachside accommodation in Ifaty where **Greater Vasa Parrots** and **Subdesert Brush Warblers** can be enjoyed in the hotel grounds.

Overnight: Les Dunes d’Ifaty, 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, after much anticipation, we now bird the spiny forests near Ifaty, where baobabs and octopus 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** and **Lafresnaye's Vangas**, **Archbold's Newtonia**, the uncommon **Banded Kestrel**, **Thamnornis**, **Red-capped** (the local *olivaceus* subspecies, "Green-capped Coua") and **Running Couas**, and others. We also visit a nearby coastal site for **Madagascar Plover** and other Palearctic shorebirds (waders) such as **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, **Common Greenshank**, and **Little Stint**.

Overnight: Les Dunes d’Ifaty, Ifaty

### Day 12. Nosy Ve boat trip and transfer from Ifaty to La Table, near Toliara

This morning we take an exciting boat trip out to the small island of Nosy Ve where we can see



the breeding colony of **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** as well as perhaps a flock of **Crab-plovers**. The nearby village of Anakao will be birded for **Littoral Rock Thrush**, the only site we can see this range-restricted species on this tour.

After our boat trip we will head south and then inland of Toliara, to 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: Arboretum d'Antsokay, near Toliara



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

### Day 13. Flight to Tana, birding the city

Depending on flight times, we will either spend the morning birding around our lodge grounds or fly back to Tana earlier and spend the afternoon birding around the city. We can bird Lake Alorobia on the edge of the city for **Meller's Duck**, **Humblot's Heron**, **Malagasy Pond Heron**, **White-throated Rail**, and many other water birds. We can also keep a lookout for **Sooty Falcon** which are often seen perched on poles and towers near Tana's airport.

Overnight: Relais des Plateaux, Antananarivo

### Day 14. Departure

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



*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 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 **Madagascar Serpent Eagle**, **Red Owl**, **Madagascar Pochard**, and **Sakalava Rail**.

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Duration:</b>           | 14 days  |
| <b>Limit:</b>              | 4–8  |
| <b>Dates:</b>              | 19 October–01 November 2024<br>18–31 October 2025  |
| <b>Start:</b>              | Antananarivo (Tana)  |
| <b>End:</b>                | Antananarivo (Tana)  |
| <b>Prices:</b>             | €5,484 per person sharing, assuming 4-8 participants, plus about €375 for the domestic flight, which we will book for you (2024)<br>€6,087 per person sharing, assuming 4-8 participants, plus about €400 for the domestic flight, which we will book for you (2025) |
| <b>Single supplements:</b> | €752 (2024)<br>€835 (2025)   |

**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 Tulear 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](#))