



## MADAGASCAR: 6-DAY MASOALA PENINSULA PRE-TOUR

14 - 19 OCTOBER 2024

13 - 18 OCTOBER 2025



*Helmet Vanga is a member of one of the four endemic avian families of Madagascar.*

This Masoala Peninsula birding tour visits the largest intact lowland rainforest in all of Madagascar. Due to its geographical separation, and deforestation in areas surrounding the peninsula, it means several species of rare and exotic wildlife are now restricted to Masoala Peninsula. The area is surely one of the continent island's least disturbed and beautiful areas, with untouched rainforest sweeping right down to clean, white-sand beaches. The lodge that we stay in on Masoala Peninsula is right on the edge of the rainforest and we often wake up to the calls of **Greater Vasa** and **Lesser Vasa Parrots** and fall asleep to the sounds of **Rainforest Scops** and **White-browed Owls**. Of course the highlight of any Masoala Peninsula birding tour will likely be the unbelievable **Helmet Vanga** (of which we have an excellent chance of seeing) as well as the even more range-restricted and rare **Bernier's Vanga**. Further tricky species, which are easier here than anywhere else on the main Madagascar birding circuit, include **Brown Mesite**, **Scaly** and **Short-legged Ground Rollers** and **Madagascar Pratincole**.



*The range-restricted **Bernier's Vanga** will be searched for in the lowland forests of Masoala Peninsula.*

Masoala Peninsula supports several rare and range-restricted lemur species such as **Red Ruffed**, **White-fronted**, **Seal's Sportive**, **Masoala Fork-marked** and **Moore's Woolly Lemur**. The lowland rainforests of Masoala are also home to good numbers of the largest, and most bizarre nocturnal lemur, the **Aye-aye**, although sightings of this most-wanted lemur are far from guaranteed.

This Masoala Peninsula birding tour is a pre-tour to our **Best of Madagascar: 14-day Birding and Wildlife Tour** and can also be booked as a stand-alone tour. It can also be combined with our preceding, **Madagascar: 8-day Northwest (Ankarafantsika/Betsiboka Delta) Pre-tour**, and, following the main tour, with our **6-day Berenty Reserve Extension**.

## Itinerary (6 days/5 nights)

### Day 1. Flight to Maroantsetra

We fly to Maroantsetra and transfer to our hotel. Birding around the hotel grounds is unfortunately very limited and besides **Crested Drongo**, **Malagasy Coucal**, and **Malagasy Palm Swift**, we're unlikely to see too much else. A short walk to the nearby estuary may however produce some water birds such as **Purple** and **Striated Herons**, **White-fronted Plover**, **Greater Crested** and **Lesser Crested Terns**, **Eurasian Whimbrel**, and **Common Sandpiper**. In the evening we will however look for the striking and cute **Lowland Streaked Tenrec** which is fairly reliable around the lodge grounds at night.

Overnight: Masoala Resort, Maroantsetra



*Lowland Streaked Tenrec can be seen in our lodge grounds in Maroantsetra.*

### Day 2. Boat transfer to Masoala National Park

Today we will take a boat trip across Antongil Bay, Madagascar's largest bay. We travel past the island of Nosy Mangabe and eventually reach the Masoala Peninsula, which contains Madagascar's largest tract of lowland rainforest and its largest national park, in the form of Masoala National Park. The boat crossing is normally quiet bird wise however we may see **Greater Crested** and **Roseate Terns**.

On arrival, we will quickly unpack and head out onto the trails behind our ecolodge heading into the nearby rainforest where we can get started on our long list of targets. Some of the birds we will target in this section of the rainforest might include **Brown Mesite**, **Blue Coua**, **Madagascar**

**Spinetail, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Velvet Asity, Red-tailed and Chabert Vangas, White-throated Oxylobes, Long-billed Bernieria,** and many others. During our time in Masoala's rainforests we will be on the lookout for **Madagascar Ibis** which quietly feed on the forest floor and are easily overlooked. In the early evening we might see **Madagascar Pratincoles** hawking insects overhead while the night sounds often include **Rainforest Scops** and **White-browed Owls**.

The best time for birding in the tropical lowland rainforests of Masoala Peninsula is during the mornings, with bird activity dropping off markedly in the afternoons. As such, our routine generally involves spending the entire morning out hiking and birding, then coming back for lunch and mostly taking the afternoons easy to bird around the lodge grounds (where **Greater Vasa** and **Lesser Vasa Parrots** may be seen, or perhaps the resident group of **Eastern Lesser Bamboo Lemurs**) or just enjoy the serene setting and perhaps a dip in the ocean.

In the evenings we can do a night walk or two where we may encounter various chameleon species and **Seal's Sportive** and **Moore's Woolly Lemurs** while the *crème de la crème* would be the rare and almost alien-looking **Aye-aye**.

Overnight: Ec lodge Chez Arol, Masoala



*White-browed Owl is often seen from our camp on the edge of the forest.*

### Days 3 – 4. Birding Masoala National Park

We bird the incredible forests and remote tropical beaches of Masoala National Park for some of Madagascar's most awesome birds, including **Helmet** (top of our list of target birds), **White-headed** and **Nuthatch Vangas, Red-breasted** and **Red-fronted Couas, Short-legged** and **Scaly Ground Rollers, Brown Mesite, Cuckoo-roller,** and many other sought-after birds.

On one of these days we will visit another nearby section of Masoala National Park which protects a different type of forest habitat, this being the littoral forest which is less dense, has a much lower canopy and is dominated by pandanus palms. Here our primary target is the range-restricted and highly sexually dimorphic **Bernier's Vanga** which is regular here. Other species which are often easier to find (and get better views of) in this forest include **Blue Vanga**, **Common Newtonia**, **Stripe-throated Jery**, and **Malagasy Green Sunbird**. The coastal rock formations here often hold the tricky **Madagascar Pratincole** too.

Of course, we will be on the lookout for some incredible lemurs during our daytime birding hikes too and hope to find **Red Ruffed** and **White-fronted Lemurs**.

Overnight: [Ecolodge Chez Arol](#), Masoala



*Madagascar Pratincole can be seen along Masoala Peninsula's coastline.*

### **Day 5. Boat Transfer to Maroantsetra, flight to Antananarivo**

Today our time on the beautiful Masoala Peninsula ends and we return via our boat trip to Maroantsetra and from there fly to Antananarivo. Once back in Tana we will transfer to our hotel.

Overnight: [Relais des Plateaux](#), Antananarivo

### **Day 6. Departure, or day 1 of main trip**

Today either your international flight will leave for home or you will start on our Best of Madagascar main 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.*

<b>Duration:</b>	6 days
<b>Limit:</b>	4 – 8
<b>Dates:</b>	14 – 19 October 2024 13 – 18 October 2025
<b>Start:</b>	Antananarivo (Tana)
<b>End:</b>	Antananarivo (Tana)
<b>Price:</b>	€4,927 per person sharing, assuming 4-8 participants, <u>includes</u> the expensive one-way <u>charter flight</u> but excludes one-way domestic flight for about €350, which we will book for you (2024) €5,469 per person sharing, assuming 4-8 participants, <u>includes</u> the expensive one-way <u>charter flight</u> but excludes one-way domestic flight for about €350, which we will book for you (2025)
<b>Single supplement:</b>	€449 (2024) €498 (2025)

At request clients can upgrade to the new lodge in Masoala, given a significant surcharge.

#### **Price includes:**

Expensive one-way charter flight to Maroantsetra  
Meals  
Accommodation  
Guiding fees  
Entrance fees  
All transport while on tour  
Bottled water throughout the tour

#### **Price excludes:**

International flights  
1-way domestic flight to Tana  
Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts  
Drinks  
Laundry  
Personal insurance  
Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))