

# MADAGASCAR Highlights Tour



*Helmet Vanga*

Oct. 15 – Nov. 1,  
2024

**\$TBA**

Single supplement

**\$TBA**

**\*Small group surcharge will apply  
for groups smaller than 8**

Masoala Extension

November 1 - 4

**\$TBA\***

***\*Includes flights***

***Single supplement \$TBA***

## **Overview**

This wonderful country is home to some of the world's most unusual wildlife. Madagascar is the world's fourth largest island, often referred to as the "Eighth Continent", and it is here that we will enjoy an epic journey in search of many endemic birds and mammals. Madagascar offers unparalleled endemism with over 100 true endemic birds and five endemic families (Ground-rollers, Cuckoo-Rollers, Mesites, Asities, and Vangas). Lemurs are one of the star attractions and we will find many, both diurnal and nocturnal. Two thirds of the world's Chameleons are found here and we should see many species, from the smallest to the largest. Human expansion has impacted heavily on Madagascar and many species are in real danger of extinction.

Our new Highlights of Madagascar Tour offers those who enjoy less strenuous tours an opportunity to enjoy the splendour of Madagascar at a more leisurely pace. This trip is ideal for participants with a moderate level of fitness. On this trip we'll have a very good chance of finding all of the endemic bird families as well as a whole host of Lemurs and a great variety of reptiles, all at a more relaxed pace with time to rest built in to the schedule.

## **ITINERARY IN BRIEF**

- Day 1 - Arrive Antananarivo
- Day 2 – Flight to Mahajanga, transfer to Ankarafantsika National Park
- Day 3 – Full day of birding Ankarafantsika NP
- Day 4 - Full day of birding Ankarafantsika NP
- Day 5 - Birding Ankarafantsika NP morning, drive to Mahajanga in the afternoon
- Day 6 – Boating outing AM, flight to Antananarivo PM
- Day 7 – Drive to Andasibe, check in at hotel, afternoon of birding in Perinet
- Day 8 – Full day of birding Perinet and environs
- Day 9 - Full day of birding Perinet and environs
- Day 10 – Birding Perinet AM, transfer to Antananarivo PM
- Day 11 – Morning flight to Tulear, transfer to Isalo Rock Lodge, afternoon of leisure
- Day 12 – Birding Isalo National Park
- Day 13 – Drive to Zombitse for morning of birding and then continue to Famata Lodge
- Day 14 – Boat trip to Nose Ve
- Day 15 – Drive to Ifaty, birding en route, afternoon birding at salt pans and wetlands
- Day 16 – Full day of birding the Spiny Forest with midday break
- Day 17 – Morning birding Coral Rag Scrub and la Table, drive to Tulear for afternoon flights to Antananarivo (flights could be the next morning)
- Day 18 – Transfer to Antananarivo Airport for flights home or continue to extension

## MASOALA EXTENSION

- Day 18 – Flight to Masoala, check in at Masoala Forest Lodge, afternoon of birding
- Day 19 – Full day of birding near Masoala Forest Lodge
- Day 20 - Full day of birding near Masoala Forest Lodge
- Day 21 – Early morning birding, dependent on flight schedule; Transfer to Maroantsetra airport for charter flight to the Antananarivo; from Antananarivo, flight back to Johannesburg, with either flights home tonight or overnight (hotel not included in tour cost if you need this option) in Johannesburg to stage for flights tomorrow morning, either to your home or to Maputo to begin the Mozambique tour.
- Extra day – Transfer to the airport for flights home (for those who could not fly home on Day 21).



*Thick-billed Roller*



*Coquerel's Sifaka*



*Chameleon sp.*

## DETAILED ITINERARY

### **Day 00, October 13 DEPART UNITED STATES (SOME PEOPLE)**

For those who do not plan to fly directly to Antananarivo for arrival on October 17, you should arrive in Johannesburg on October 16, which would require that you leave the US today.

### **Day 0, October 14 ARRIVE JOHANNESBURG (SOME PEOPLE)**

For those who do not plan to fly directly to Antananarivo for arrival on October 17, you should arrive in Johannesburg today. We will arrange for your Johannesburg hotel room for the night of October 16 (not included in tour price).

### **Day 1, October 15 ARRIVAL IN ANTANANARIVO (ALL PARTICIPANTS)**

You should arrive in Antananarivo today, either directly from your US departure city via Europe, or from Johannesburg, having arrived there yesterday. Depending on arrival times of the participants, we may have time to visit Lac Alarobia (Parc de Tsarasoatra) a 66- acre bird oasis near the center of the capital, where we will have our first encounters with some of the Malagasy birdlife. **Dimorphic Egret**, **Madagascar Kingfisher** and various duck species are common. **Squacco Heron** and **Madagascar Pond Heron** occur side by side and makes for easy comparison. We have even recorded **Eleanora's Falcon** here in the past.

**O/N Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo (D)**

<http://www.auboisvert.com/en/>

## Day 2, October 16 FLIGHT TO MAHAJANGA – ANKARAFANTSIKA

We plan to take an early morning flight from Antananarivo to Mahajanga, but our plans are dependent on Madagascar Air, the only internal airline in Madagascar and one that is known for erratic schedules and frequent last-minute changes. From Mahajanga we have a drive of approximately 2 hours to Ankarafantsika National Park. The camp offers comfortable chalets and the restaurant serves traditional Malagasy fare. Shortly after our arrival, we should encounter our first “campsite residents” such as **Lesser Vasa Parrots**, **Crested Drongo**, **Madagascar Magpie Robin**, **Sakalava Weaver**, **Madagascar Hoopoe** and **Madagascar Green Pigeon**, as well as the ever-present **Coquerel’s Sifaka**. At Lac Ravelobe, only a stone’s throw from the camp, we will look for the critically endangered **Madagascar Fish-Eagle** that is known to breed here. **White-throated Rails** are also commonly found here.

**O/N Ankarafantsika Lodge or similar (BLD)**

[http://www.madacamp.com/Ankarafantsika National Park](http://www.madacamp.com/Ankarafantsika_National_Park)

## Day 3 - 4, October 17 - 18 ANKARAFANTSIKA NATIONAL PARK

We will have two full days to explore this remarkable area, and we will allow for some relaxation time near the cabins during the hottest part of each day. Within the camp we might find **White-breasted Mesites** and **Grey-headed Lovebirds**, as well as eight species of lemurs, including the **Common Brown Lemur** and the rare **Mongoose Lemur**. We will make good work of exploring the splendid network of trails through the park, where the jewel-like **Schlegel’s Asity** will be high on our list of priorities. Vangas are well represented, and we should find **Van Dam’s**, **Rufous**, **Hook-billed**, **White-headed**, **Chabert’s** and **Red-tailed Vangas**. Two species of Coua are found here, **Red-capped** and **Coquerel’s Couas**. Reptiles are plentiful but pose no threat as there are no venomous snakes on the Island.



*Schlegel's Asity*

**Oustalet’s Chameleon** (the world’s largest) and **Rhinoceros Chameleon** are common in the forest. After dinner we will go on night walks for some of the nocturnal birds, chameleons, and lemurs. **Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher** is often easier found at night than during the day.

**O/N Ankarafantsika Lodge or similar (BLD)**

[http://www.madacamp.com/Ankarafantsika National Park](http://www.madacamp.com/Ankarafantsika_National_Park)





*Coquerel's Sifaka*

**Day 5, October 19     ANKARANFANTSIKA - MAHAJANGA**

We will enjoy one last morning of birding in Ankarafantsika NP, attempting to sweep up any species we might have missed. After lunch we will drive to Mahajanga and check in at our lovely seaside hotel in time for some rest and relaxation before dinner.

**O/N Hotel La Piscine or similar, Mahajanga (BLD)**

**Day 6, October 20     MAHAJANGA - ANTANANARIVO**

We will venture out by boat this morning in search of Bernier's Teal and Madagascar Sacred Ibis. We will catch a flight to Antananarivo in the afternoon. Of course, Madagascar Air schedule changes could impact our plans for this day, so we will need to be flexible.

**O/N Au Bois Vert (BLD)**

<http://www.auboisvert.com/en/>

**Day 7, October 21     ANTANANARIVO - ANDISABE**

This morning after breakfast we will waste no time in departing for Analamazoatra Special Reserve, better known as Perinet. After checking in at our lodge, we will spend the afternoon looking for **Red-fronted** and **Blue Coua**, **Velvet Asity**, **Madagascar Blue Vanga**, **Nuthatch Vanga** and **Red-tailed Vanga**. The thrill of birding in Perinet would not be complete without hearing and seeing the world's largest living Lemur, the Indri, so we will make some effort to locate this amazing mammal. The spine-chilling howl of this creature is something you will not soon forget. Other birds to be on the lookout for include **Madagascar Wood Rail**, **Madagascar Cuckoo**, **Madagascar Spinetail**, **Tylas**, **Nelicourvi Weaver**, **Souimanga Sunbird**, **Common Sunbird-Asity** and **Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller**.

**O/N Vakona Lodge (BLD)**

<http://hotelvakona.com/en/accomodation/>

## Day 8, October 22 MANTADIA NATIONAL PARK AND PERINET

We will bird Mantadia National Park, which is undoubtedly the finest place to find Ground-Rollers in Madagascar. Four of the five Ground-Rollers are found here, the only exclusion being the Long-tailed Ground-Roller. Some of the lesser-seen specialties at Mantadia include **Red-breasted Coua**, **Madagascar Serpent Eagle** (very rare here and better seen at Masoala), and the incredibly scarce **Madagascar Red Owl**. More common birds include **Greater** and **Lesser Vasa Parrots**, **Madagascar Starling**, **Madagascar Blue-Pigeon**, **Madagascar Flufftail**, **Madagascar Little Grebe**, **Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher**, **Forest Fody**, **Ward's Flycatcher**, **Crossley's Babbler**, **White-throated Oxylabes** and many more. The elusive **Diademed Sifaka** and **Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur** are present here. One of the highlights of a visit to Perinet is a nocturnal outing, so we will embark on an unforgettable evening in the forest, watching for nocturnal Lemurs and birds. Possibilities during the night walk include **Long-eared Owl**, **Rainforest Scops-Owl** and both **Madagascar Nightjar** and the rare and little known **Collared Nightjar**.



*Velvet Asity*

On the Lemur front, we hope to find **Eastern Woolly Lemur**, **Greater Dwarf Lemur** and the diminutive **Brown Mouse Lemur**.

**O/N Vakona Lodge (BLD)** <http://hotelvakona.com/en/accommodation/>

## Day 9, October 23 PERINET AND ENVIRONS

We will enjoy another full day of birding in Perinet and the surrounding area, enjoying a midday break and lunch at our lodge.

**O/N Vakona Lodge (BLD)**

<http://hotelvakona.com/en/accommodation/>

## Day 10, October 24 PERINET TO ANTANANARIVO

We will spend a full morning in Perinet Reserve or other nearby birding hotspots, depending on our target list. We'll stop for lunch on the way back to Tana, where we should comfortably arrive in the late afternoon for a well-deserved night's rest. There is a possibility of finding **France's Sparrowhawk** and **Madagascar Lark** en route.

**O/N Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo (BLD)**

<http://www.auboisvert.com/en/>

## Day 11, October 25 FLIGHT TO TULEAR, ISALO ROCK LODGE

Our plan is to take a morning flight to Tulear and then transfer to the beautiful Isalo Rock Lodge, where we will enjoy an afternoon of leisure. For those who do not wish to rest, our birding guide will be available for a short birding walk.

**O/N Isalo Rock Lodge (BLD)**

<https://www.isalorocklodge.com/>





### Day 12, October 26 ISALO ROCK NATIONAL PARK

We will spend a full day birding the Isalo Rock NP and environs. Our main target here is **Benson's Rock Thrush**; other important birds en-route include **Madagascar Sandgrouse**, **Madagascar Partridge** and **Madagascar Harrier**.

**O/N Isalo Rock Lodge (BLD)**

<https://www.isalorocklodge.com/>

### Day 13, October 27 ISALO ROCK – ZOMBITSE – TULEAR

We will leave early to drive to Zombitse Forest where we will search for one of the world's most localized birds, **Appert's Greenbul**. A variety of other dry deciduous forest species are present, including **Giant Coua**, **Crested Coua**, **Madagascar Harrier-Hawk**, **Ashy Cuckoo-Shrike**, **Long-billed Greenbul** and **Madagascar Buzzard**. The extremely rare and elusive **Fosa**, Madagascar's largest predator, was seen here on one of our previous trips. From Zombitse, we will continue to our next accommodation near Tulear.

**O/N Famata Lodge (BLD)**

<http://www.famatalodge-tulear.com/index.php/en/bungalows.html>



*Crested Coua*



**Day 14, October 28 NOSY VE**  
 We have a very early start to our day; we will head for the “coral rag scrub” at La Table, where we’ll look for the localized **Verreaux’s Coua** and the recently discovered **Red-shouldered Vanga** before returning to Famata Lodge for breakfast. After breakfast, we head for the island of Nosy Ve via the Onilahy Delta, where we might find **Humboldt’s Heron** and **Greater Flamingo**. Nosy Ve is an uninhabited islet with a breeding colony of **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** that are very confiding. Other attractions include **Crab Plover** and numerous waders. Snorkelling is another favorite pastime here and we might opt for this if the group desires. Back on the mainland we will stop at Anakoa for **Littoral Rock Thrush** and lunch. Please note that today’s program will be dictated by the

prevailing tides as we are dependent on high tide to get to and from the island.

**O/N Famata Lodge (BLD)**

<http://www.famatalodge-tulear.com/index.php/en/bungalows.html>

#### **Day 15, October 29 FAMATA LODGE - IFATY**

We will leave Famata Lodge after some early morning birding and breakfast and drive toward Ifaty, birding en route. We will bird the mudflats around Tulear, where we hope to find species such as **Saunders’s Tern**, **Lesser Crested Tern**, **Lesser Sand Plover**, **Bar-tailed Godwit**, and both **Greater** and **Lesser Frigatebirds**. On the way back to Ifaty, we will stop to bird the salt works where **Greater Painted Snipe**, **Baillon’s Crake** and **Little Bittern** have been reported. Our focus, however, will be on finding the endemic **Madagascar Plover**, reasonably reliable here at one of the few accessible sites for it. We should arrive at our comfortable hotel in Ifaty by late afternoon, allowing some time to settle in and rest before dinner.

**O/N Ifaty, Les Dunes Hotel or La Paradisier (BLD)**

[http://www.lesdunesdifaty.com/index\\_en.php](http://www.lesdunesdifaty.com/index_en.php)<https://www.paradisier.net/>



## Day 16, October 30 SPINY FOREST



We'll depart after an early breakfast for morning birding in the Spiny Desert, an area with such unique vegetation that it can be difficult to focus on birds rather than plants. This habitat harbors specialties that include **Sub-desert Mesite**, **Lafresnaye's Vanga**, **Archbold's Newtonia**, **Thamnornis Warbler**, **Banded Kestrel**, **Sub-desert Brush Warbler**, **Running** and **Green-capped Couas**. The Spiny desert is also home to numerous reptiles and we should see the ever-present **Three-eyed Lizards** and may even be lucky enough to find the rare and beautiful **Spider Tortoise** or the equally rare **Dumeril's Boa**. We will return to our hotel for lunch and a short rest and then return to the Spiny Desert for some late afternoon birding once it has cooled off a bit.

**O/N Ifaty, Les Dunes Hotel or La Paradisier (BLD)**

[http://www.lesdunesdifaty.com/index\\_en.php](http://www.lesdunesdifaty.com/index_en.php)

<https://www.paradisier.net/>

## Day 17, October 31

We have planned a morning of birding the Coral Rag Scrub and la Table, where we might find **Red-shouldered Vanga**, but these plans will depend on Madagascar Air

schedules, which can be erratic and often involve last-minute changes. After lunch, we will drive to Tulear for afternoon flights to Antananarivo (our flights could be the next morning, again dependent on Madagascar Air).

**O/N Au Bois Vert, Antananarivo (BLD)**

<http://www.auboisvert.com/en/>

## Day 18, November 1 TRANSFER TO ANTANANARIVO AIRPORT

You will be transferred to the Antananarivo Airport for flights home. For those who are continuing on the Masoala Extension, you will take a flight to Masoala.

**END OF MAIN TOUR (B)**

# MASOALA EXTENSION

*Welcome to Paradise!*

**\$TBA\***

*\*Includes flights*

**Single supplement  
\$TBA**

When comparing tours, please note that our tour uses superior accommodation at the ocean's edge, at a lodge that has by far the best vessel for crossing the bay, making for a quicker (and dryer) arrival. We include the required round-trip flight in our price, and we do not depend on an unreliable Madagascar Air but instead use dependable charter flights.

## **Day 1 (Day 18 of main tour), November 1 CHARTER FLIGHT TO MASOALA**

Depending on flight schedules, we will try for some early morning birding around the hotel, where we should find **Madagascar Wagtail**, a common bird in the city. After breakfast we will transfer to the Antananarivo Airport for our flight to Maroantsetra, gateway to the famous Masoala National Park. This park is famous as the home of one of Madagascar's most enigmatic birds the **Helmet Vanga**. Upon arrival in Maroantsetra we will head down to the docks for our boat ride to Masoala, about an hour away by sea. We will watch for coastal birds during our transfer. Time permitting, we will do our first bit of birding around the Lodge after we check in to our luxury elevated safari tented rooms overlooking the crystal-clear waters of the Indian Ocean. You will awaken each morning to the sound of the water lapping the shore and open your eyes to an unobstructed view of the ocean from your comfortable bed.

**O/N Masoala Forest Lodge or similar (BLD)**

<http://www.masoalaforestlodge.com/>



**Days 2 - 3, November 2 - 3****MASOALA NATIONAL PARK**

We have two full days to indulge ourselves in the avian riches of Masoala. Seeing the **Helmet Vanga** will be high on our list of priorities, and is usually the easiest of the Masoala specialties to see. Another target bird here is the **Madagascar Red Owl** and hopefully the local guides will have a stakeout for this beautiful owl. **Red-breasted Coua** is more common here than at Perinet, but other birds such as the rare **Bernier's Vanga** will require a bit of luck to find.

**O/N Masoala Forest Lodge or similar (BLD)**

<http://www.masoalaforestlodge.com/>

**Day 4 November 4 MASOALA NATIONAL PARK – MAROANTSETRA – ANTANANARIVO - HOME**

Early morning birding in the forest before transferring back to Maroantsetra by boat. If time permits, we might stop at the nearby Tampolo Marine Reserve where **Madagascar Pratincole** and **Mascarene Martin** breed annually. We have an afternoon flight out of Maroantsetra to the capital Antananarivo, from where participants will connect with their international flights out that evening OR their flights to Maputo to begin the Mozambique tour. If your flight schedule does not allow you to fly out today, we will arrange for your lodging in Antananarivo or Johannesburg tonight (cost not included in tour price) so that you can catch your international flight tomorrow.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** We may be forced to change or alter the itinerary at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.

**Main Tour Price includes:**

- All lodging
- All meals from dinner on day 1 through breakfast on day 18
- Bottled water
- All ground transportation, including airport transfers
- Internal airfare (Antananarivo – Mahajanga; Antananarivo – Tulear; Tulear – Antananarivo)
- All park entry fees
- Expert local birding guide(s) at a ratio of no more than 8 birders per guide

**Main Tour Price does not include:**

- International airfare
- Airport transfers if you arrive on a day other than the scheduled start date or the day before
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra snacks and/or beverages, etc.
- Gratuities

**Masoala Extension Price includes:**

- Charter flight from Antananarivo to Maroantsetra and return (\$1150 value)
- All lodging
- All meals
- Bottled water
- All ground transportation, including airport transfers
- All park entry fees
- Expert local birding guide(s) at a ratio of no more than 8 birders per guide

**Masoala Extension Price does not include:**

- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, phone calls, extra snacks and/or beverages, etc.
- Gratuities



## Terms and Conditions:

Deposit of \$TBA for main tour and \$TBA for extension with registration. Balance is due 4 months prior to the start date of your tour.

Checks should be made payable to ***Cheepers! Birding on a Budget*** and mailed with the registration form to:

**Cheepers! Birding on a Budget**  
**Post Office Box 385**  
**Spring Valley, OH 45370**

### CANCELLATION POLICY

**Cancellation should be made in writing (email or snail mail)**

More than 6 months prior to departure – full refund of deposit

Between 4 and 6 months prior to departure – 50% refund of deposit

Less than 4 months prior to departure – No refund of deposit

**If cancellation occurs after full payment is made, a refund will be given only if the vacant spot is filled.**

## Trip insurance is recommended.

You can compare prices offered by various trip insurance companies at these websites:

[http://www.quotewright.com/?sub\\_id=6056](http://www.quotewright.com/?sub_id=6056)

[www.insuremytrip.com](http://www.insuremytrip.com)

*Cheepers! Birding on a Budget LLC reserves the right to make changes in the itinerary if the need should arise due to unforeseeable circumstances such as weather, landslides, and other natural phenomena, as well as suggestions by local guides in order to take advantage of an unusual birding opportunity; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible if the need to make changes arises. Lodging is subject to change based on availability.*

### Contact us:

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