

16 Days

Madagascar

Biology, Rainforest & PADI

This expedition to the world's fourth largest island explores the rich ecology and landscape of this unique country. Marvel at the diverse landscapes, from lush tropical rainforest to the semi-arid and to the jagged limestone pinnacles. The people here are unlike anywhere else in the world. Descendants of seafarers from the Indian Ocean; they are proudly distinct from the peoples of continental Africa and are unfailingly polite and hospitable. You'll meet with Malagasy people of all backgrounds and learn about day to day life in traditional villages. An amazing experience!



Recommended expedition itinerary

Day
1-2

Arrive Antananarivo

Upon our arrival on the beautiful island of Madagascar, we will be met by our local Expedition Leader, who will be our guide and friend throughout our journey. Together we will transfer to our hotel in Antananarivo, also known as 'Tana', where we will have the chance to freshen up and relax after our journey.

Day
3

City to Rainforest

This morning we will drive for about 3.5 hours passing forestry and traditional palm tree houses to Andasibe. This is a small town of Andasibe surrounded by several national and private parks, each abundant with wildlife. After checking in to our hostel, we will have the afternoon to explore the local attractions and markets of Andasibe and learn more about rural life in Madagascar. This evening we will venture in to one of the nearby national parks for a night walk to discover the nightlife of nocturnal species.

Day
4

Trekking & tree planting

After breakfast, we will venture in to Andasibe National Park, a protected rainforest and home to many species of monkey, birds, large chameleons and the 'Indri' – the largest of the lemur species. With luck, we might get a very close encounter! A four-hour trek of the park will give us plenty of opportunity to spot the park's rich biodiversity and endemic flora such as orchids, rosewood trees and liana.

Then we will visit the Mitsinjo private park which is known for its diversity of amphibian species, especially coloured frogs, chameleons, geckos and snakes. Here we will make a direct contribution to the preservation and reforestation of Mitsinjo by assisting with a tree planting project. Planting our own seedlings will help to produce 40,000 seedlings from 125 different endemic Malagasy trees per year.

Day
5

Travel to Mahambo

This morning we catch a 6-7hr bus towards the east coast and overnight in the town of Mahambo. This thriving town is home to the Betsimisaraka ethnic group and we will spend the afternoon learning more about their lifestyle, culture and crafts.

Day
6-9

Sainte Marie & PADI Diving

An early start this morning to take our 3-hour voyage across the Indian Ocean to Sainte Marie, a small island located east of Madagascar. This is a tropical paradise of white sand beaches, palm trees and fishing villages. It is now time to move our focus from the biology and ecology of the rainforest to that of the marine environment, no doubt it will seem like an alien world given our surroundings for the last few days!

For those already PADI Qualified, we spend the next four days enjoying 2 dives per day, or, for those not yet PADI Qualified, we complete our PADI Open Water SCUBA Course—the best recognised diving qualification and your ticket to the underwater world.





Day
6-9

Sainte Marie & PADI Diving cont'd

Sainte Marie is renowned as a popular migratory route for whales from July to mid-September. Large groups of humpback whales make their annual migration from their feeding grounds in Antarctica to the sheltered waters around Sainte Marie where they calve, nurse their young and engage in spectacular courtship rituals. Whilst on the island, we can also enjoy a whale watching tour to try and spot them! We can also enjoy a cooking class and take part in an Environmental Clean Up project by clearing rubbish along the coastline. At the end of each day, we'll return to our eco-lodge on the coast.

ENVIRONMENT
CLEAN UP

Day
10

Fly to Antananarivo, drive to Antsirabe

Transfer to the airport and fly to Antananarivo. Depending on the day of the week, we will either take a city tour of Antananarivo and overnight in a hotel outside of the city or drive approx. 4hrs to Antsirabe and overnight.

Day
11

Antsirabe to Valbio

Today we complete our journey from Antsirabe with a 5hr drive to Ranomafana National Park – one of the most picturesque national parks in Madagascar. Upon arrival we visit the park which covers a mountainous area of 415km and comprised mostly of dense rainforest. The rare golden bamboo lemur was first discovered here in 1986 which led the area to gain National Park status. Explore the park and try to spot some of the 12 species of lemur, 115 species of bird or 62 reptiles! Afterwards, continue to the edge of the park and arrive at Valbio, where we check in to our dormitory style rooms at the research centre.

Day
12-13

Valbio Research Project

The next two days are spent at a world-class (and Africa's most premier) research station – Valbio. The centre works to protect Madagascar's unique and biologically diverse ecosystems through conservation science and projects that directly benefit the local people. Dr Patricia Wright, world-renowned primatologist, established the centre with an aim to safeguard biodiversity for future generations.

The exact focus of our work here will be determined by the current priorities at Valbio. We will work alongside scientists, researchers and conservationists and have an opportunity to conduct our own data collection projects and field studies. There are several projects ongoing such as Tropical Ecology Assessment and Monitoring, investigation of climate data and data collection for a digital amphibian database. Long term projects focus on the world's smallest primate – the mouse lemur – as a model organism as well as research into the demography, diet and social behavior of three lemur species. During our time here we will have educational talks, time in the lab, as well as venturing on foot into the park to spot wildlife in the day and at night to discover the nocturnal wildlife within the reserve such as the striped civet and mouse lemur.

Day
14-16

Depart Antananarivo

We make our journey north today with a 9hr drive back to Antananarivo. We will have plenty of stops along the way including a lunch break. On arrival back in Tana, we freshen up before heading off for a celebratory feast for our final evening in Madagascar! Departing on day 15, we arrive back to the UK on day 16.

Further information

Look what's included!

- International flights
- All accommodation
- All food
- All transportation and activities
- Bi-lingual, first-aid qualified local expedition leader
- Parent and student expedition launch evening
- Comprehensive pre-expedition training programme
- 1-day offsite safety INSET day for staff
- ATOL financial protection

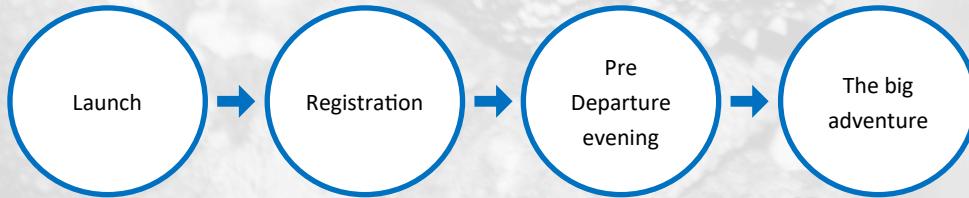
- Medical Emergency / Repatriation Travel Insurance
- Group first aid kit and prescription meds pack
- BS8848 safety management and risk assessments
- Detailed pre-departure information and kit lists
- Comprehensive teacher travel packs
- Permanent operations team in your destination
- 24-hour UK operational support whilst overseas
- Carbon offsetting of all flights
- Free t-shirt for every participant and teacher

What's excluded?

- Transport to airport in UK
- Drinks (advice will be given on purification of water)
- Visas or tourist cards if required
- Any required inoculations

- Personal spending money
- Tips for guides, drivers and porters
- Airport departure taxes paid locally
- Cancellation and personal effects insurance

Your educational journey timeline



Physical expedition rating:



Moderate physical activities are included in Grade 3 trips. Good health and reasonable fitness are important to get the most out of the trip. Trips of this grading are likely to include some walking at moderate altitude (up to 2,500m) and occasional longer/harder days may be involved, with between five and seven hours of walking on certain days. The trip may contain other activities such as cycling or rafting which also require physical effort and a reasonable level of fitness. Some steady preparation and an increase if your underlying fitness levels would help you get the most from this grade trip.

Culture shock rating:



Students joining trips at this level will find the comforts of home are more of a rarity – or viewed another way, a welcome luxury. English is unlikely to be widely spoken and the food will be quite different to home, perhaps for extended sections of the trip. You should observe local customs so not to cause offence. You'll be exposed to signs of poverty and accommodation in some locations is likely to be basic. Whilst a challenge, destinations and trips at cultural level 4 are also a fantastic opportunity to see a very different part of the world.



A journey of 1,000 miles...

Starts with a single step... Contact us now to start your expedition journey

1 Get your tailor-made proposal and further information

If this itinerary doesn't quite scratch your expedition itch then let us tailor-make one for you. Our wealth of experience and expert in-country contacts means we can design an itinerary just for you. Contact us for more information and a detailed quote.

2 Ask for risk assessments and marketing materials

We can provide initial risk assessments and destination threat assessments to help you with your expedition approval process. Ask for posters and your pre-booking information pack too.

3 Arrange an expedition launch evening at your school

This is a chance for students and parents to hear more about the expedition with a comprehensive information evening with opportunity for questions.



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