

Madagascar Trek 2025

10 – 21 May 2025



Trip overview

Madagascar

The Republic of Madagascar is an island in the Indian Ocean, off the east coast of Africa. Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world, with a landmass of 587,041 sq. km. Due to its isolation from other countries for several millions of years, this vast country is home to a diverse variety of wildlife and plant life, around 95% of which is not found anywhere else in the world, making it a very special destination.

Some of the most well-known animals found on the island include lemurs, fossa, aye-ayes, tomato frogs and panther chameleons. The famous lemurs of Madagascar are primates which are one of the most threatened species on the planet.

The population of Madagascar is over 25 million, many of whom live in the country's capital Antananarivo. This former French colony has great ethnic diversity and many Europeans, particularly French nationals, make the island their home. The official languages are Malagasy and French but there are also many local dialects spoken. Attempts by visitors to speak Malagasy are well-liked and encouraged by the Malagasy people so keep reading to discover some helpful phrases.

The trek

Explore the towering mountains, verdant grasslands and exotic rainforests of the incredible island of Madagascar.

This 12-day trip will give you ample opportunity to discover the delights of this island nation as you spend 5 days trekking through the Andringitra National Park.

Join us as we attempt to summit the island's second highest peak Pic Boby and neighbouring Chameleon Peak for some spectacular views over the Tsaranoro Valley.

Don't forget to keep your eyes peeled for the endangered lemurs, reptiles and a host of other creatures endemic to the region along the way.

You will spend the final day visiting Andasibe National Park, which is home to a variety of species of lemur. You will meet with Maromizaha Project and hear from their team about the work being taken to protect the endangered lemurs, and other animals, in the area. You will enjoy a nocturnal visit to the park, with a chance to try and spot the rare indri.



What is the experience like?

Who accompanies us?

You will be accompanied by first aid trained English-speaking guides who have an excellent knowledge of hiking, culture and nature in the region. You will also be accompanied by a team of local support staff, a Different Travel Company UK tour manager and a Cats Protection representative.

How tough is it?

This trip is rated as moderate to challenging for someone of good fitness levels. You will be trekking for 5 consecutive days, over varying and sometimes challenging terrain. You will cover approximately 15-20km per day but this will take around 6 – 8 hours.

Altitude

The altitude you experience on this trek is up to 2,658m which is slightly under the threshold that is considered high altitude (3000m). However there is a possibility that some people may notice altitude related symptoms.

The local guides are very experienced in spotting signs of altitude sickness but it is important that you also research the effects so you can be aware of how your body is adjusting.

A great source of information can be found at <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Altitude-sickness/Pages/Introduction.aspx> or <http://www.traveldoctor.co.uk/altitude.htm>.

What is the terrain like?

The undulating terrain you will be walking across will be a mixture from grassy bush paths to rocky, dry mountain tracks.

What is the climate like?

The maximum expected daytime temperature in May is around 24°C, dropping down to 13°C at night. The climate is very humid and intermittent downpours are possible so you are advised to bring good waterproofs and warm layers for evenings.

Please note: the temperatures and conditions above are historically accurate for this time of year; climate change can impact the seasons so you may experience conditions during the trip which are uncharacteristic and out of our control. If unexpected climate conditions occur the guides will make decisions to ensure the best enjoyment and safety of the group.

Where will we stay?

You will be staying in 2/3 star hotels in Antananarivo, Antsirabe and Ambalavao. During the trek you will be staying in three man tents (two to a tent). You will need to bring your own sleeping bag. You will also be spending 2 nights at the basic lodge at Tsara Camp and one night at Andasibe Lemurs Lodge.

Practical information

Is there an age limit?

You must be aged at least 18 to participate unaccompanied. It may be possible for you to participate if you are aged 16 or 17 years old if you are accompanied by a parent or guardian—please contact us for advice. There is no upper age limit.

Who can take part?

An ideal candidate for the trek would be someone who enjoys being out of their comfort zone and trying something new.

How fit do I need to be?

You are strongly advised to train to a good fitness level before departure to ensure fast recovery from each day's walk. The distances covered may not be great but you must be prepared for, and be capable of, trekking for many hours a day on steep, rough terrain while carrying a daypack of around 6-8kg in weight. If you attempt to complete the trek without training, it will be unnecessarily challenging and will hinder your experience, and the experience of your teammates.

How should I prepare?

You must engage in training (including plenty of walking up and down hills) before departure to ensure your best chance of enjoyment of the trip. This could include hill walking, running, cycling, gym workouts, bootcamps, etc. Increasing your cardiovascular endurance, core strength and leg strength will also benefit you greatly so resistance workouts should be added to your training regime in addition to plenty of hill walking. You can download a number of free apps which will help you train and track your progress. E.g. MapMyWalk, couch to 5k, MyFitnessPal etc. If you attempt to complete the challenge without training it will make the trek unnecessarily difficult and may be detrimental to your experience, and the experience of your team mates.

Health declaration

We require a medical form to be completed by everyone upon registering, and any pre-existing conditions, medications used and other medical issues must be specified. All your medical details are treated in the strictest confidence.

The information will be securely screened by a qualified medical professional, and details provided to your tour manager and local guides so our staff are adequately informed and prepared to support you during the trip. By completing this booking form you are giving consent for us to contact you confidentially with any follow up questions regarding your health.

If you declare any medical conditions you may be asked to provide more information, or we may request to contact your GP.

In the event that your medical issues at the time of booking represent a concern for your safety and wellbeing, or the safety and wellbeing of others in the group, you may be recommended not to take part. If this happens your booking will not be confirmed and the deposit will be refunded.

We must be informed if any conditions or medication change, or if new conditions develop. If necessary confirmation of fitness to travel from your GP or specialist may be required.

Please note that we will never unreasonably deny participation on a trip nor contravene the Equality Act 2010.

Covid-19

Your health and safety is our top priority so rest assured that we are taking steps to ensure you not only have a memorable experience, but a safe one too.

We constantly monitor and follow the advice of the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) who provide recommendations and advice to British travellers about travel to a certain destination.

Health and safety is our top priority so we will **NEVER** operate a trip in an area where there is clear and present risk to our team members, whether that is due to a health outbreak, political instability, natural disasters or anything else.

If travel restrictions either in the UK or Madagascar prevent safe travel we will look to either postpone or cancel your trip at no cost to you.

Please note that at the time of travel there may be enhanced safety and security measures in airports, bag drop may take longer, and you may need to provide a certificate of health or proof of vaccination.

We will inform you about any information pertinent to your travel arrangements.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us on info@different-travel.com.



Trip cost

There is a £399 registration fee to pay at the time of booking to secure your place. (This is payable in three instalments upon request by emailing accounts@different-travel.com – 50% payable immediately. Please contact The Different Travel Company for details).

You are then required to fundraise a minimum of £4,700 for Cats Protection.

A total of £3,760 (80%) must be raised by 15 February 2025. The remaining £940 must be raised by 12 January 2025.

A flexi funding option is also available. £399 registration fee as above and then pay trip costs of £1,175 to Cats Protection by 15 February 2025 and then fundraise a reduced commitment of £2,351 for Cats Protection.

80% (£1,880) of the fundraising must be raised by 15 February 2025. The remaining £529 must be raised by 12 January 2025.

*costs may change depending on the final number of participants.

Trip Includes:

- ✓ Return flights from London (inc. airport taxes)
- ✓ All transfers and transport in Madagascar
- ✓ All accommodation (2/3 star hotel in Antananarivo, Antsirabe and Ambalavao; tents on the trek, basic lodge at Tsara Camp and lodge at Andasibe)
- ✓ All meals as specified
- ✓ Drinking water
- ✓ Local trekking guides and support crew
- ✓ Trekking permits and entrance fees
- ✓ Different Travel tour manager

Trip Does Not Include:

- ✗ Visa (current cost €35 on arrival)
- ✗ Personal expenses (e.g. drinks, snacks, showers, souvenirs, etc.)
- ✗ Vaccinations
- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Tips (approx. £50-60 per person)
- ✗ Trek kit and equipment

Itinerary

Day 1 (Saturday 10 May 2025):

London – Antananarivo

Fly from London to Antananarivo and transfer to your centrally located hotel for an overnight stay. This evening we will enjoy a welcome dinner together.

Meals: Dinner (subject to arrival time)

Overnight: Hotel



Day 2 (Sunday 11 May 2025):

Antananarivo – Antsirabe

We will set off on a five hour drive to Antsirabe today. We will stop for lunch in the charming small city of Ambatolampy enroute. We will enjoy a short city tour on arrival.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Overnight: Hotel

Day 3 (Monday 12 May 2025):

Antsirabe – Ambalayo

Our journey continues as we head to Ambalaya – the gateway to the South. The drive will be approximately 7 hours but we will be stopping at Ambositra, famed for its handicrafts, on the way. Tonight you will meet your trek guides for a briefing about the days ahead.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Overnight: Hotel

Day 4 (Tuesday 13 May 2025):

Ambalayo – Namoly - Antantsoa

It's an early start as we head to Namoly (approx. 3 hours' drive) and the starting point of our trek. Keep your eyes peeled for our first lemurs as we walk to our first campsite at Antantsoa. The route will also take us past some stunning natural rock pools.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Trekking: Approx. 4 hours

Overnight: Camping

Day 5 (Wednesday 14 May 2025):

Antantsoa – Andriampotsy

Expect a tough day today as we head uphill to our next camp at around 2,100m above sea level. We will stop to visit some caves on the way and may even get the chance for a relaxing dip in a natural pool.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Trekking: Approx. 6 hours

Overnight: Camping



Day 6 (Thursday 15 May 2025):

Andriampotsy – Pic Boby – Iantaranomby

Another early start this morning as we attempt to summit Boby Peak (2,658m). The climb will take around 2.5 hours but you'll be rewarded with incredible views of the valley below. The descent back to camp will be around 2 hours where you will be welcomed with a hearty lunch. This afternoon we will continue trekking for another 4 hours to reach our final campsite.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Trekking: Approx. 8 hours

Overnight: Camping

Day 7 (Friday 16 May 2025):

Iantaranomby – Tsaranoro - Tsara

We continue downhill for around 4 hours this morning to reach Tsaranono in the 'Dream Valley'.

This afternoon we head into the forest, hoping to see more lemurs and other creatures endemic to the region. Tonight we will be staying in a basic lodge at Tsara.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Trekking: Approx. 6 hours

Overnight: Basic lodge

Day 8 (Saturday 17 May 2025):

Tsara – Chameleon Peak

We will summit another mountain today Chameleon Peak.

The climb will take around 4 hours to the top where you will be treated to spectacular views over the Tsaranoro Valey. We will stop for a picnic lunch before heading back down to the lodge at Tsara.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Trekking: Approx. 6 hours

Overnight: Basic lodge



Day 9 (Sunday 18 May 2025): Tsaranoro - Fianrantsoa

After breakfast we will rejoin our vehicle to drive approx. 4 hours to the old royal city with a colonial past of Fianrantsoa. We will spend some time this afternoon exploring both the ancient and modern sides of the city.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Overnight: hotel

Day 10 (Monday 19 May 2025):

Fianrantsoa – Antananarivo

It's a long day on the road today as we head back north to the capital Antananarivo.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Overnight: hotel

Day 11 (Tuesday 20 May 2025):

Antananarivo - Andasibe

Our final day in Madagascar is spent visiting Andasibe National Park, home to a variety of species of lemur. Here we will meet with Maromizaha Project and hear from their team about the work being taken to protect the endangered lemurs, and other animals, in the area. We will enjoy a nocturnal visit to the park, a chance to try and spot the rare indri, and stay overnight in the park where we will also have our celebratory meal.

Meals: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Overnight: lodge



Day 12 (Wednesday 21 May 2025):

Andasibe - Antananarivo – London

Depending on flight times there may be a chance for a further foray into the National Park before transferring to the airport for the return flight to the UK.

Meals: Breakfast

N.B. We will do our best to keep to this itinerary however we cannot be held responsible for changes that might occur outside of our control. In all such circumstances your guide and tour leader will have the final say in the interest of the health and safety of the group.

Before You Go!

Important information to help you prepare for your trip

Travel practicalities and country information
Trek knowledge
Food and drink
Kit tips
Luggage

Responsible travel and culture
Fitness, health and safety
Altitude
Kit list

Travel practicalities and country information

Visas

Your passport must have at least 6 months remaining validity on it from the date you intend to depart Madagascar at the end of your trip. Please check your passport expiry date carefully. You will be asked for evidence of onward or return travel at check-in and on arrival in Madagascar. Make sure an entry stamp is recorded in your passport.

Citizens of most nationalities on this trip require a 30-day tourist visa valid which can be obtained on arrival at the airport in Madagascar for 80,000 Malagasy ariary payable in euros or US dollars. Simply complete the arrival form giving the purpose of your trip as tourism (avoid using the words 'work' or 'volunteering' as officials may assume you need an employment permit). **You will need to bring 4 passport photos.**

Citizens of some countries may be able to apply for a visa in advance through their local embassy or consulate. A useful resource of worldwide embassies and consulates can be found here: <http://www.madagascar-consulate.org/embassies-world.html>.

Please note: You are responsible for checking with your local embassy or consulate for visa details specific to your nationality. The information is correct at the time of writing (*October 2023*).

Travel insurance

The Different Travel Company will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip however unexpected things can occur such as delays, medical problems, baggage loss, cancellation by you etc. The purchase of travel insurance is mandatory; you are advised to organise it at the time of booking to ensure you are covered immediately. Different Travel is an Unregulated Introducer of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

You can find out more here: <https://microsite.campbellirvinedirect.com/differenttravel>

Please note: most travel insurance policies protect you before departure too so it is advised to buy insurance as close to booking as possible as it may protect you against the loss of your non-refundable, non-transferable registration fee if you cancel due to injury, illness etc.

Phone and Wi-Fi access

Madagascar is a developing country and mobile reception and internet connections are patchy. We advise that you tell family that 'no news is good news' then if you are able to contact them it will be a nice surprise for them.

Wi-Fi may be available at the hotels in Antananarivo, Antsirabe and Ambalavao and you may get mobile signal (subject to your mobile handset, your contract roaming capabilities and other factors) but this must not be relied upon. Please contact your mobile provider for details of charges. You must turn off mobile data roaming to avoid high and unexpected data charges.



Religion

Around 55% of the population of Madagascar follow tribal or ancestral religions. Approximately 40% are Christian and around 5% are Muslim.

Tipping

While tipping is not mandatory it is greatly appreciated by your trek team and the local transfer driver. We would recommend allowing around £50-£60 in total for tips per trekker.

Electricity

Mains electricity in Madagascar is 220v/50Hz and the sockets are two round pins (European style). It is advised that you take an adaptor which also has a USB charging port.

During the trek you may have access to solar power but if guaranteed access to power is of great importance to you, you are recommended to bring a portable power pack (also known as a power bank or battery pack) which, when fully charged before departure, allows you multiple recharges of USB-powered devices such as phones. You should buy a power pack with a minimum capacity of 12,000mAh and these are widely available and inexpensive to purchase online on Amazon.

Money

The currency in Madagascar is the Malagasy ariary (MGA). It is a closed currency which means that you can only exchange it in the country. Please ensure you change back any unused currency before you leave Madagascar.

At the time of writing the exchange rate is 5,478 ariary to the pound.

Please note you will need to pay for your visa on arrival in US dollars or Euros. The amount will depend on the exchange rate so you will be advised closer to the time of departure.

You are advised to budget approximately £200 for expenses while in Madagascar (e.g. drinks, souvenirs, extra snacks, etc.)

Accessing cash

Major currencies such as US dollars, euros and British pounds can be exchanged to ariary upon arrival at the airport in Antananarivo. Scottish and Channel Islands notes will not be accepted for exchange.

ATMs are available at Antananarivo airport but generally ATMS are less reliable than those you use at home so you are advised to bring enough cash as back up.

Please notify your bank if you intend to use your card abroad to avoid it being cancelled or consider a pre-loaded currency card. You are also recommended to confirm with your bank about transaction and withdrawal fees which may be expensive.

Photocopies

Remember to photocopy of all your documents (insurance details, passport, credit/debit cards etc.) and take a copy with you during the trip, stored separately from the original copies. You should also scan and email these documents to yourself and leave a copy with a trusted family member or friend. If you lose any of your documents you will then have access to a copy with you and online. You may also wish to upload your documents to cloud storage such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

Photography

When taking photographs of the local people, it is polite to ask their permission first. Taking a photograph of someone without their permission, especially in rural areas, can cause offence. In contrast, taking photographs of someone you have become friendly with is usually very welcome.

Language

Malagasy official language is spoken in Antananarivo, and many people here also speak good French. On the trek you may hear people speak in the Betsileo dialect. Here are some helpful phrases you may like to use:

English	Malagasy
Hello	Salama (Shalama)
Thank you	Misaotra
Thank you very much	Misaotra betsaka
You're welcome	Tsy misy fisaorana
How are you?	Manao ahoana
Good, thank you	Tsara fa misaotra
Yes	Eny
No	Tsia
Goodbye	Veloma
Goodnight	Soava mandry
Until tomorrow	Rahampitso e!
Until we meet again	Mandra pihaona
Bon Voyage	Soava Dia
I don't understand	Tsy Azoko
I don't know	Tsy fantantro
Excuse me/please	Azafady
How much is this?	Hoatrinona ity?
What is your name?	Iza no anaranao?
My name is? no anarako
It's too expensive!	Lafo!

Books

There are several excellent guide books about Madagascar, these include but aren't limited to: Lonely Planet Madagascar (2020) ISBN:1786576023; Madagascar (Bradt Travel Guides) ISBN: 1784776653; Madagascar Travel Guide: Africa Tourism (2019) ISBN: 978-1709554285. For tips on learning the local language, why not pick up Malagasy for Everyone and Everywhere by Boky Gasy (2021) ISBN: 979-8735217107.

Souvenirs

Madagascar provides some splendid opportunities to pick up some unusual gifts and souvenirs including handicrafts made from wicker, wood and Antemoro paper as well as seeds of the famous Baobab tree.

Trek Knowledge

Accommodation

The hotels in Antananarivo, Antsirabe and Ambalavao are basic but comfortable.

During the trek you will be staying in three-man tents (two to a tent). You will need to bring your own sleeping bag. You will also be spending 2 nights at a lodge at Tsara Camp and one night at a lodge in Andasibe.

The camping facilities and lodge at Tsara Camp are very basic with simple facilities.

Hygiene and bathroom facilities

The hotels and lodge at Andasibe will have en-suite facilities with western style flushing toilets and hot showers. At camp there is a private toilet in a privacy tent. Toilet paper is not provided so you will need to bring your own.

If you need to use the toilet during the trek day you must find a private area off the trail. You must never leave used toilet paper on the ground; this must be packed up into a nappy bag or sanitary disposal bag, pop it in your daypack and dispose of it properly at camp.

There will be basic washing facilities at camp including a shower in a privacy tent. Please bring a pack of baby wipes to keep as clean as possible.

Food and Drink

Water

Tap water is not safe to drink in Madagascar, even at the hotel. You must not brush your teeth or rinse your mouth with the tap water, only use bottled or purified water. Drinking water is provided throughout the trip.

At breakfast and in the evenings a flask of hot water is provided for you to make hot drinks. A small selection of Lipton black tea and instant coffee will be supplied but if you have any preferences (e.g. hot chocolate, decaff coffee, herbal tea etc.) you should bring your own supply.

Keep hydrated

Electrolyte tablets (for example Nuun, High5, PowerBar etc.) are flavoured effervescent tablets which contain salts, sugars and minerals which are naturally lost from your body when you sweat. By adding these tablets to your water it not only offers flavour to your water but it can help prevent dehydration before it begins. Electrolyte tablets are widely available in outdoors stores and online for around £8 for 12 tablets. You may also wish to bring a small supply of rehydration salts (for example Dioralyte) which treat dehydration.

Water Bottle

You will need to bring your own bottles to carry at least three litres of water per day. Some people will bring a 2-3 litre CamelBak hydration system (for effortless access to water while you trek) plus one 1-litre water bottles (for example plastic Nalgene or metal Sigg bottle). Some people prefer to bring three 1-litre bottles. The choice is yours. If you're bringing a CamelBak hydration system, a separate 1-litre bottle is essential as it can be used as a backup if your hydration system fails.

Please write your name on all your bottles in marker pen. Please note that 'own brand' and cheap hydration systems are notorious for splitting, leaking or valves not functioning properly. CamelBak and Platypus are the leader in this market because their products are significantly better quality and more reliable.

Dietary requirements

The majority of special diets, such as vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, etc., can be catered for if we are notified in advance. Please ensure that you notify us of any dietary requirements at the time of booking or as soon as possible. Please note that we cannot guarantee that food preparation will have taken place in a contamination free environment.

Food

The staple ingredient of Malagasy cuisine is rice which is served at most meals. The cuisine reflects the African, Arab, French and Indonesian settlers in the country and is known for being very flavourful despite the simplicity of the dishes, without much chilli. Typical meals will include vary amin'anana – rice with bread, kitoza – dried, smoked beef, sandwiches, native fruit and vegetables.

Meals are provided throughout and are freshly prepared by the trek chef. A mess tent with tables, chairs, plates, mugs and cutlery is provided.

Snacks

You may wish to bring a selection of snacks for energy, a pick-me-up or a little taste of home. Please bring snacks you have tried before (and enjoy!) so they are appetising to you. Items such as sweets, individually wrapped cake bars, protein bars and dried fruit are ideal but don't forget to bring savoury treats also such as salted nuts, Cheddar biscuits or salted crackers.

Kit tips

Discount

When you book you will receive a discount and vouchers booklet which can be found in your account portal.

Footwear

You need to wear hiking boots during the trek; walking trainers are unsuitable. It is important that your boots are waterproof (for example Gore-Tex or eVent), have good ankle support and a good quality sole (for example Vibram). You are recommended to try on lots of pairs at a specialist outdoors store such as Cotswold where the staff can advise you on the correct boot and fit for you. Do not leave it to the last minute to purchase hiking boots as you need time to break them in. You should wear your boots on the plane, or carry them in hand baggage, in case there are baggage problems or delays.

Socks

It is important that the socks you choose are high quality, non-cotton and will not slip down in your boots which causes blisters. Never wear cotton socks which absorb sweat making them damp and more likely to rub against your feet, causing blisters. Socks containing Coolmax (a brand of polyester), or nylon have wicking properties which means that it pulls sweat away from the skin for it to evaporate. Good brands to consider include Bridgedale, Smartwool and Brasher.

Trek clothing

You are recommended to invest in good quality trekking gear which can be worn in layers (base layer, warm layer, shell layer) which can be added and removed easily to manage your temperature and the climate. Your clothes should be made of technical fabrics designed to wick sweat away from your body which keep clothes dry and smelling fresh. Merino wool, nylon, polyester, polypropylene and bamboo fabrics are all effective technical fabrics. Never bring cotton clothing to trek in. Cotton clothing can be hazardous to wear in cool conditions because when sweat is absorbed by cotton fibres (rather than forced to evaporate as with technical fabrics), it leaves clothes damp. Damp clothes make you cold and uncomfortable and could even leave you vulnerable to hypothermia on a cold day. You can find good quality technical clothing in all reputable outdoors stores. Check the garment label to ensure your garments contain 0% cotton. Good quality Gore-Tex waterproofs are very important in case there are showers or

high winds. Most people will trek in the same outfit for the duration of the trip and have one or two spares in their kit bag.

Other clothing

You should bring smart casual clothing and comfortable footwear for your time in Antananarivo, including something nice for your farewell dinner on the last night. The dress code in Antananarivo is quite casual although you should avoid showing too much flesh to avoid unwanted attention, and remember that night time temperatures can drop to a chilly 10°C.

Swimwear

There may be the opportunity to swim in natural pools. Bikinis are acceptable to wear in Madagascar.

Towel

You are recommended to bring a non-cotton travel towel which is highly absorbent but lightweight and fast drying. These can be found in outdoor gear stores and online.

Waterproofs

You are recommended to bring a lightweight waterproof jacket and trousers which are suitable for tropical downpours.

Gloves

You should also bring some warm gloves to wear during the trek as it can sometimes get chilly.

Sunglasses

These are important even on overcast days. They must offer a minimum of 100% UV protection, and polarised sunglasses are ideal. Taking a spare pair is recommended.

Hiking poles

Hiking poles can be very useful on steep ascents and descents, particularly when carrying a heavy pack on uneven terrain. Poles are also very useful for stability. They are not mandatory but are recommended. You should use them on your training walks to familiarise yourself on how to use them. If you bring hiking poles they must fit inside your suitcase/kitbag for the purposes of the international flight.

Headtorch

This is a vital piece of kit. Petzl is one brand which makes good quality headlamps but there are many head torches available from other companies. Please ensure you take an LED torch as ones with bulbs are not bright enough. Bring your head torch with fresh batteries inside it and take a full set of spare batteries. Do not bring a wind-up head torch as these are unreliable.

Luggage

You will need the following luggage items:

1. A daypack

You are responsible for carrying your own daypack containing essentials for each day. We recommend you bring a 25-30 litre rucksack which **must** have a hip belt and a chest strap. High quality brands to consider when looking for a suitable pack include Osprey, Berghaus and Lowe Alpine (amongst others) and you are strongly advised to visit a reputable store like Cotswold to

have your backpack fitted, as they come in a variety of sizes, and some brands offer male and female specific fits. You can expect to carry your personal first aid kit, warm layer, sun cream, packed lunch, three litres of water, snacks, waterproofs, toilet paper, wet wipes and camera. It could weigh 6-8kg when packed, so you should make your backpack selection carefully and ensure it fits correctly and is comfortable. You will not have access to your main luggage while trekking.

2. A dry bag/rucksack liner

You are advised to use a lightweight waterproof rucksack liner or dry bag (for example Exped dry bag) inside your daypack to keep your belongings dry in rainy conditions. It should be large enough to fit inside your entire backpack. Rucksack covers alone are ineffective at keeping your kit dry in wet conditions and can often blow away in the wind.

3. A soft-sided kit bag or large rucksack

This is to hold your trek luggage which will be carried by vehicle between camps. It will contain the items you need for the evenings and mornings (for example toiletries, change of clothes, sleeping bag etc.). The weight limit is strictly **10kg**. The kit bag must be strong, light and waterproof. Some *examples* of kit bags include Mountain Equipment wet and dry bag or the North Face Base Camp duffle bag but there are many brands and models available in outdoors stores for various prices. A large rucksack with your gear packed inside a lightweight waterproof rucksack liner is suitable too. The capacity of your kitbag should be around 65-75 litres but as long as all your gear fits and is within the weight limit it doesn't matter if the size differs. Please do not bring a solid suitcase or holdall with wheels as this is not suitable for the trek.

4. A small holdall or bag for items not required for the trek. Any items not required for the trek, e.g. travel clothes, books, make-up, hairdryers etc. should be packed into a small holdall or bag separate from your trek gear. These items will be stored securely in Antananarivo for you while trekking.

5. Combination padlocks which should be used to secure your bag during your flights and also to keep zips secure on your kitbag during the trek.

Sleeping bag

You will need to bring your own sleeping bag. Sleeping mats are provided but you may wish to bring your own for comfort. A Thermarest or similar inflatable mat would be ideal.

You will be staying in campsites during the trek and it can get cold at night. The expected lowest nighttime temperature will drop to approx. 10°C so you need to bring a '2-season' sleeping bag with a 'comfort rating' of 5°C or lower, not an 'extreme rating' of 5°C. There is a critical difference between the two ratings, as outlined here:

- Comfort — the temperature at which you can expect to sleep comfortably in a relaxed position.
- Extreme — the minimum temperature at you can remain for six hours without risk of death from hypothermia.

Some examples of suitable sleeping bags include (but are not limited to):

Mountain Hardwear HyperLamina Spark
Ayacucho Sirius 200
Snugpak Nautilus SQ
Vango Venom 200
Vaude Sioux 400
Fjallraven Move in Bag
Mountain Equipment Starlight I Extra Long
Snugpak Travepak 2

Snugpak Jungle Bag

...but there are many more available. Please shop around.

Sleeping bags may be available for hire upon request.

Please note: that the temperature guidance is based on historical averages at this time of year and we cannot be held responsible if the weather conditions are different than expected.

Sleeping bag liner

A silk sleeping bag liner is recommended to complement your sleeping bag as it adds an extra layer of insulation to keep you warm if it's cool. If it's too warm you can sleep under your sleeping bag liner with your sleeping bag unzipped. A sleeping bag liner also protects your sleeping bag from dirt, sweat and damage. Silk sleeping bag liners are quite expensive if purchased on the high street, so consider eBay where you can purchase directly from the manufacturers (usually Vietnam or China) at a fraction of the price. Make sure you look out for 'pure silk' sleeping bag liners, not 'satin' (which is usually low quality and synthetic).

Responsible Travel and Culture

Culture shock

Poverty in Madagascar can be distressing; it is important not to underestimate the psychological impact of viewing poverty and a sense of helplessness and guilt that often comes from it. The secret is to recognise the signs (raised levels of stress, feeling emotional, guilty, frustrated and angry) and to set realistic goals about what you can and cannot do.

Begging and poverty

Madagascar is one of the poorest countries in the world. As part of our responsible tourism policy, we strongly advise against giving directly to beggars or offering gifts to children. This can lead to a reliance on tourists for an easy income and can lead to children purposely missing school to beg. In particular, giving sweets is not advised because many children have no access to dental care and rotting teeth can cause long-term health problems. If you would like to find out more about how to help the communities of Madagascar, please speak to your local team leader for advice.

Haggling

When shopping for gifts in marketplaces where there are no price tags on items it is expected that you will haggle. The first price is sometimes multiple times the true value of the item but remember that you should pay what you think is a good price for the item, not try to get the price as low as possible. Haggle in good humour with a smile and you will enjoy the experience.

Environment

We are environmentally conscious and aim to minimise our impact as much as possible. Key points:

- Never leave toilet paper or litter on the trail.
- Don't dispose of fruit peel, cores or seeds on the ground; although they decompose eventually they are unsightly and may attract animals.
- Turn off lights when not in rooms.
- Minimise your water usage by having short showers.
- Be considerate of other trekkers.

Etiquette

- Dress codes in Madagascar are relaxed however you are advised to avoid very revealing clothing to prevent unwanted attention.
- Pointing without bending the index finger is considered rude.
- Traditional culture has long-entrenched restrictions known as fady, which are traditional 'rules' upheld by some local people that are believed to originate from the wishes of the razana (ancestors). Local people believe they bring bad luck if the fady is not upheld. Your local team will provide information about this.
- Always endeavour to be polite and respectful. If you show respect then it will be reciprocated.
- At accommodation keep noise to a minimum, especially early in the morning and late at night.
- Be respectful to your guides and hosts; don't forget to say please and thank you.
- Be considerate of the feelings of other group members.
- When taking photographs of the local people, it would be wisest to ask their permission. Taking a photograph of someone without their permission, especially in rural areas, can cause offence. Older people, particularly ladies prefer not to be photographed but in contrast young children are often very keen to be photographed.

Fitness, health and safety

Vaccinations and travel health

Different Travel regrets that we cannot provide medical advice or recommendations. You are advised to seek medical advice at least 8 weeks before travelling to ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up to date. For general information visit www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk or www.travelhealthpro.org.uk but your GP or travel health professional should be the first stop for a consultation tailored to your medical history. Please note that failure to be adequately vaccinated or take necessary prophylactic medication can invalidate travel insurance policies as it is considered that you have not taken necessary precautions.

First Aid kit

You should bring a small first aid kit of essential items which is for your own personal use and keep it in your backpack. Suggested items to include: personal prescription medicine, painkillers, blister plasters, insect repellent (50% DEET), throat lozenges for Khumbu cough, decongestant for the dust, antihistamine tablets, Loperamide (e.g. Imodium), lip balm with SPF, indigestion remedy for unfamiliar food, muscle rub, zinc oxide tape etc. Please keep the contents to a minimum as you must carry it yourself. Please note that there are pharmacies in Namche however you may not find your preferred brand of medication available to buy, or it could be very expensive.

Malaria

Malaria is mosquito-borne disease which infects humans when they are bitten by the anopheles mosquito which passes parasites into the human blood stream. Malaria is prevalent all over Madagascar so you must discuss malaria prophylaxis with a travel health specialist.

Whichever anti-malaria tablets are prescribed it is critical that you follow the course instructions carefully, including finishing the course after your return home.

No anti-malaria medication offers complete protection from malaria so it is essential that you practise bite-prevention methods such as using 50% DEET repellent, wearing long sleeve shirts, loose trousers and socks especially during the evenings, and using mosquito nets.

Most hotels in Madagascar do provide mosquito nets but we would advise you to bring your own, especially when you are camping.

Upon your return you should mention to your doctor that you have been to a malarial area if you develop any symptoms (fever, fatigue).

Insect repellent

You must bring insect repellent with you to use during the day and evening. Please follow the usage directions on the bottle. 50% DEET is the most effective repellent available. Do not bring 100% DEET as this is not suitable for use on your skin. Be careful when using any DEET product as it can stain clothes, melt plastic and remove dye from fabrics.

Fitness training

You should start training **as soon as you book onto this trip**. The best form of training for a trek is get outside and start walking. If you're not a regular walker, start slowly with short distances then as you get more comfortable, increase your mileage and add in more challenging terrain until you can comfortably walk for several consecutive days, for around 8 hours at a time, on hilly terrain while maintaining a comfortable pace without needing to stop more than frequently than once an hour for a 5-minute rest.

Hill walking while carrying a fully packed backpack while wearing your hiking boots should feature predominantly in your training as this will help prepare your body for the terrain and baggage load you will experience during the trek.

Other activities which can complement hill walking include running, cycling, gym workouts and boot camps etc. Developing your core and leg muscle strength is also important so exercises such as squats, lunges, push-ups, planks and crunches will really enhance your training. These exercises can be done at home; no gym needed.

You can download a number of free apps, which will help you train and track your progress, for example MapMyWalk, C25K (couch to 5k run), MyFitnessPal.

Please note that attempting to complete the trek without any training may make the experience unnecessarily difficult and hinder your experience, and also the experience of your teammates.

The trek does not require technical climbing skills but it is still a tough trek so it is important to **take your training seriously and arrive in Madagascar as fit as you can be**. The local guides, in consultation with your Different travel tour manager, may advise that if you are not fit enough to continue that you leave the trek.

Zinc-oxide tape

This tape is really useful to prevent blisters. When you feel your boots start to rub against your feet, you should stop and remove any debris from your boots and check your feet. If a hot spot is developing (a red, sore area without broken skin) you can apply zinc oxide tape to the area and it will stop (or slow down) a blister developing. If you are too late to prevent the blister, you should clean the area and apply a Compeed blister plaster instead.

Safety

In Madagascar you are required to have identification with you at all times by law. Police can demand to see passports at any time and the penalty for not carrying it, payable in cash to the officer, is usually steep.

Please take common-sense precautions while travelling to ensure your safety and the protection of your belongings. For example: leave expensive and valuable jewellery, watches and accessories at home; keep wallets out of sight stowed in a handbag or backpack rather than sticking out of a pocket; don't leave bags unattended at any time; carry cameras in their cases rather than carrying them openly with the camera strap; split cash into different pockets rather than carrying all your money in one place, especially immediately after you have used the ATM; and so on.



Madagascar Trek

Reg Charity
203644 (England and Wales)
SC037711 (Scotland)

Emergency and evacuations

In the unlikely event of a serious illness or accident, the local team will ensure you are transferred as swiftly as possible to the nearest hospital. Please ensure your travel insurance covers you for airlifting/emergency evacuations as this can be required to reach casualties on more remote trails in an emergency. You are recommended to bring a credit card during the trip if you need to pay for medical treatment upfront in the event of an emergency.

Last updated October 2023

Kit List – Madagascar Trek and Project

The kit you take on your trek can make the difference between being 'just a trek' or a 'memorable trek'.

Our kit lists are put together with feedback from our own experiences and that of participants who have taken part in our previous trips.

The items on this list do not take into account your personal preferences based on your previous trekking experiences, or individual requirements.

PLEASE NOTE: This list is just a guideline and is not exhaustive or take into account personal preferences.

For information about items on this list please refer to the trip dossier or contact The Different Travel Company on info@different-travel.com

*Please consider eco-friendly or biodegradable

ESSENTIAL	SUGGESTED	OPTIONAL
DOCUMENTS & FLIGHT ESSENTIALS		
		✓
Passport and Copy		
E-Tickets + pre departure info		
Visa		
Travel insurance policy details		
ATM and credit card (s)		
Cash (£ Sterling)		
Pen for immigration forms		
Sunglasses (preferably polarized)		
Mobile phone + charger		
Camera + spare batteries		
LUGGAGE		
		✓
Suitcase/large holdall kitbag		
Daypack (25 – 30 litres)		
Hand Luggage (take note of dimensions from airline)		
Combination padlocks		
CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR		
		✓
Trekking boots: either worn on flight or carried in hand luggage		
Trainers/slippers for evenings		
Lightweight Trek trousers (zip off trousers ideal)		
Non-cotton, technical t-shirts		
Non-cotton long sleeved top/shirt		
Trek Socks and underwear		
Warm fleece layer		
Warm jacket (e.g. down or Primaloft)		
Light waterproof jacket and trousers		
Casual attire for sightseeing		
Thermal base layer top and trousers		
Sun hat with brim		
Warm hat		
Flip-flops for showers		
Gloves		
Pyjamas		
Neck cooling 'Cobber'/cooling towel and Buff		
Health and Hygiene*		
		✓
Hygiene kit to include: toothbrush and toothpaste, antiperspirant deodorant, wet wipes, shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, nail brush and nail care kit		
Personal first aid kit to include: prescription medicine, insect repellent, ibuprofen, paracetamol, plasters, blister plasters (e.g. Compeed), Imodium, rehydration salts (Dioralyte), antiseptic cream (e.g. Savlon), Anti-histamine cream/tablets, lip balm with SPF protection, zinc oxide tape, nail scissors/tweezers, muscle rub (e.g. Deep Heat), throat lozenges, decongestant, Vaseline		
Mosquito net		
Hairbrush/comb		
Travel towel		
Lateral flow tests (min x2)		
Disposable masks		
Feminine care products		
OTHER KIT		
		✓
Sleeping bag (comfort -5°C)		
Sleeping bag liner (silk/thermal)		
Sun block (high SPF)		
Toilet bag: toilet paper (2 rolls), wipes, hand sanitiser, nappy sacks		
2 ltr water hydration system (e.g. Camelbak)		
1 ltr water bottle		
LED head torch + spare batteries		
Adaptor (multi option)		
Ear plugs		
Hiking poles – to be stowed in hold luggage for flight		
Energy food/snack bars		
Electrolyte (e.g. NUUN)		
Water purification tablets (e.g. Biox Aqua)		
Swimwear		
Travel pillow		
Portable power bank		
Spare glasses/contact lenses		
Video camera + charger		
MP3 player/ipod		
Books/pack of cards		



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