

EXPLORE!

NEW

Cycle Madagascar
14 days

Madagascar - Trip code CMG



Cycle Madagascar

Highland plains, verdant rainforests and tea plantations are the setting for this cycling adventure in Madagascar. We travel from the Malagasy capital to the inviting waters of the Indian Ocean, cycling the most rewarding sections on largely quiet roads to bring you closer to the sights, sounds and smells. Along the way we explore Ranomafana and Isalo National Parks on foot, hoping to see some species of lemur as well as endemic reptiles, birds and plants. Finally, we reward ourselves with time on the golden beaches of Ifaty before returning to the capital by plane.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Highland Scenery** - Rice paddies, villages and colourful markets
- ★ **Ranomafana** - Walk in the rainforest and observe various species of lemurs, chameleons, amphibians and countless species of birds
- ★ **Isalo National Park** - Explore the 'Grand Canyon' of Madagascar and meet troops of Ring-tailed lemurs
- ★ **Villages and people** - Meet friendly and hospitable local people
- ★ **Ifaty beach** - time at the end to relax and swim in the Indian Ocean

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

CYCLING GRADE:

Moderate

Medium length rides suitable for cyclists who are used to undulating routes with occasional energetic climbs. Mainly on trails and quiet roads and you should have a reasonable level of fitness.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour Antananarivo

Our tour starts at the hotel in Antananarivo. Madagascar's capital, known locally as 'Tana', enjoys a mild climate (1350m) and is a blend of the old and new with French colonial buildings, old wooden houses and modern offices and apartments. Our hotel is situated in the northern outskirts of town.



Accommodation: Hotel Au Bois Vert (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Drive to colonial Antsirabe. Afternoon warm up ride

We start the day with a drive (4hrs) to the spa town of Antsirabe, located in the central highlands. Founded by Norwegian missionaries in the late 19th century, Madagascar's second-largest city has an elegant feel with wide boulevards and some interesting French colonial architecture. This afternoon we are introduced to our bikes, spending some time ensuring everybody is happy with the fit and making any necessary adjustments before taking off for our first ride, exploring different neighbourhoods of Antsirabe. A gentle introduction to local life and people, the ride covers some 16 kilometres before we head back to the hotel. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 16 kilometres (total 80 metres accumulated ascent and descent).



Accommodation: Residence Sociale (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 3 - Cycle to Ambositra. Artesan wood carving demonstration

We leave Antsirabe this morning and avoid the city traffic with a transfer to the start of today's ride about an hour away. From here we start our first proper ride on the undulating road southwards, past many rice terraces and small family farms to Ambositra where we spend the night. Ambositra is the centre of Madagascar's wood carving industry, listed as one of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage and this afternoon we plan a visit to a local workshop to learn more about the Zafimaniry carpenters and their art. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 60 kilometres (total 740 metres accumulated ascent and 800 metres descent).



Accommodation: Motel Violette (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 4 - Cycle to Ranomafana National Park

After breakfast we drive around one and a half hours to the start of today's ride. Our route takes us past rice paddies and villages and passes through pine and eucalyptus forests. The winding road passes varied landscapes with rugged ridges and giant boulders before we finally descend through primary tropical rain forest to our accommodation for the next two nights, situated amid lush nature near Ranomafana. Entrance to the park lies around 12km from the hotel and it was here in 1987 that a new species of lemur - the Golden Bamboo lemur - was discovered. Around 21km of today's ride is on dirt roads. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 59 kilometres (total 770 metres accumulated ascent and 1460 metres descent).



Accommodation: Cristo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 5 - Rainforest trek in Ranomafana National Park, searching for lemurs and birdlife

Taking a break from the bikes today we explore one of Madagascar's natural highlights on foot. After an early start and short drive to the park entrance the morning will be spent in the park learning about the abundant flora and fauna (approx. 4hrs, 4km). Most lemur species are endangered, the last survivors of a once abundant family of primates, now confined to pockets of forest and bush throughout Madagascar. Deforestation has taken a heavy toll on Madagascar and these arboreal creatures - only about 80 species remain. With luck we may see some of the species found in the park including Red-Bellied lemur, Grey Bamboo lemur, Milne-Edwards' sifaka and perhaps the Black and White Ruffed lemur and the extremely rare Golden Bamboo lemur. We may also spot the Malagasy boa constrictor, chameleons, the black parrot, cuckoo roller and many other birds. We return to Ranomafana village in time for lunch and there is the option to visit some hot springs. In the afternoon you can relax in the hotel garden or there will be an additional optional walk within the park with a chance to spot the species not already seen during the morning. In the evening an optional night walk can be organised to learn about nocturnal wildlife in the area. No cycling today.



Accommodation: Cristo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Picturesque cycling amid tea plantations to Sahambavy; visit tea factory

Leaving Ranomafana behind us, we have a short transfer this morning to the start of today's ride. Back on the bikes our route takes us to Sahambavy passing through more hamlets and fields and eventually the beautiful scenery of Madagascar's only tea plantations. Part of today's ride is on a gravel road as we reach the Sahambavy Tea Plantation. We allow time to visit the tea factory and along the way we will have the chance to observe local life and hopefully meet some pickers. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 44 kilometres (total 780 metres accumulated ascent and 830 metres descent).



Accommodation: Lac Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 7 - Cycle to Ambalavao via Fianarantsoa; visit photo studio and artisan paper manufacturer

This morning we cycle straight from the hotel to Fianarantsoa; regarded as the cultural and intellectual capital of Madagascar. The road north of town is flanked by vines as the early religious settlers of Fianarantsoa started Madagascar's only wine industry. We will stop to explore the impressive architecture of the historic centre and plan to visit the photo studio of one of the most famous photographers in the country. Known locally as Fianar this point in our journey marks the end of the central highlands and the beginning of the dry country to the south. We drive a short distance out of town before starting the second leg of today's ride following a windy road to the lively market town of Ambalavao where we spend the night. We plan to visit a local artisan 'Anteimoro' paper manufacturer. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 67 kilometres (total 940 metres accumulated ascent and 1290 metres descent).



Accommodation: Hotel Tropic (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 8 - Cycle to Anja Reserve conservation project, home to ring-tailed lemurs

Cycling from our hotel this morning we ride through grasslands dotted with granite mountains to Anja Reserve - a local community project - where we have a chance to watch troupes of ring-tailed lemur among the boulders. A walk of around 1.5hrs takes us into the forest to spot lemurs and other animals. Continuing south by bus (2.5hrs) the pine trees thin out and the fertile soil of the highlands gives way to drier savannah, cactus and termite mounds. We finally reach Ranohira late in the afternoon, situated on the edge of Isalo National Park and our home for the next two nights. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 70 kilometres (total 800 metres accumulated ascent and 1020 metres descent).



Accommodation: L'Orchidee d'Isalo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 9 - Isalo National Park on foot, admire Madagascar's 'Grand Canyon'

Best explored on foot we explore the stunning landscapes of Isalo National Park today. Dervla Murphy, in her book 'Muddling through Madagascar' describes Isalo NP thus - 'Landscapes that are literally incredible. You don't believe it. You think you're hallucinating. How can wind and water have done all this?' Natural erosion has produced fantastic canyons and bizarre outcrops of wind-blasted sandstone. There are patches of deciduous forest throughout the reserve which are home to lemur groups although they are shy and rarely seen. The temperatures are much hotter and plant life reflects this with moisture retaining species such as succulents, aloes and the extraordinary dwarf baobabs. Rivers and rock pools feed the rich jungle found in the valley bottoms. Our walk (approx. 8km) will take us to natural rock pools where you can cool off. We return to the hotel this afternoon. No cycling today.



Accommodation: L'Orchidee d'Isalo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Cycle to sapphire mining Ilakaka. Drive to coastal resort Ifaty. Baobabs

Today is our final day on the bikes and we ride directly from the hotel along the edge of Isalo NP; taking in some more of this incredible scenery in the early morning. The ride ends in Ilakaka where we learn about the local sapphire mining operation - the largest in the world! This afternoon we drive for about 5 hours to Ifaty Beach, a small resort on the west coast, our base for the next two nights. We plan to make a stop en route, at lunchtime, at Toliara. The final one hour drive has some good Baobab photo opportunities. The afternoon is free to relax. Optional excursions for your time here include snorkelling, whale watching, diving and a jeep trip to see more Baobabs and some villages. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 27 kilometres (total 260 metres accumulated ascent and 350 metres descent).



Accommodation: Belle Vue (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast


DAY 11 - Free time by the inviting turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean

Today has been left free to relax or explore the area. Ifaty Beach is a huge bay protected by a barrier reef up to seven kilometres from the shore. Traditional fishing villages are scattered along the bay and the Vezo people still use sail-powered outrigger canoes. There is an option to visit the reef for snorkelling. There is also an excellent optional forest walk in the Reniala Reserve just inland


from the beach area, where strange spiny forest can be found and some of the most attractive of the endemic bird species, such as the long-tailed ground roller, sub-desert mesite and sickle-billed vanga. No cycling today.



Accommodation: Belle Vue (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available




Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Fly back to 'Tana


This morning we depart Ifaty and drive (1.5hrs) to Toliara for our flight back to Tana, where we will spend our final two nights. In case the flight is delayed and time permits there will be the option to visit the arboretum in Toliara. No cycling today.




Accommodation: Hotel Au Bois Vert (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available




Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Highlands and villages walk


This morning we drive into the outskirts of Antananarivo and take a walk through local highland villages and rice paddies, learning about local silk weaving along the way before returning to Antananarivo in the afternoon. No cycling today.




Accommodation: Hotel Au Bois Vert (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Tour ends Antananarivo

Our tour ends in Antananarivo, after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information

General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 343 km over seven days (an average of 49 km per day). The terrain is mainly undulating and on tarmac in decent condition with little car traffic, except some small sections in Antsirabe and Fianarantsoa. About 20% of the entire route is on poor quality pot-holed roads or dirt roads. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as moderate.

Bike included

27 or 30 gear Cube or Rock Machine mountain bikes with front suspension

Bike information

Your included bike is a 27 or 30 gear Rock Machine Torrent 70 or Cube mountain bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. A water bottle holder is included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

Moderate

Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13
Lunch: 5



Transport

Bus
Bicycle



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Cycle
guide
Driver(s)



Accommodation

13 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Madagascar Holidays & Tours

Climate

The climate is tropical, but cooler in the highlands (dropping as low as 5°C at night in July/August in Antananarivo and Andasibe). The dry season is March to October continuing into November in most areas. The east coast is best March-May and September-November, January-March is cyclone season. The south west area is hot, dry and semi-arid. March-April is the best time for flowers and reptiles. November (spring) is generally the best time for wildlife and birds, but lemurs can be viewed all year round. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. Up-to-date information on the weather worldwide can be found by following the BBC weather link on this page.

Time difference to GMT

+3

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Christian

Language

Malagasy, French

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Ifaty - snorkelling 10 Euros, whale watching 40 Euros, diving 40 Euros, jeep excursion villages and Baobabs 10 Euros (min number required) Ranomafana National Park - additional guided walk 10 euros (min number required) Toliara - Arboreteum 12 Euros, Spiney Forest Walk 18 Euros (depending on numbers)

Clothing

Prepare for a variety of weather but generally hot. We recommend you bring padded cycle shorts, cycle gloves and quick drying cycle shirts. In case of rain, waterproofs are essential. We operate this trip in the dry season from April to October at which time it can be cold on the central plateau (including Antananarivo) at night. Isalo on the other hand will be hot in the day and cool at night. Isalo should be dry, while Ranomafana can get very wet. Bring swimwear for the hot springs, rock pools and sea. Culturally it is acceptable to wear shorts.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

18Kg

Luggage: On tour

One baguitcase and a daybag.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect

against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approx. £35 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

International Departure Taxes

Ivato (Antananarivo) Airport: International airport departure tax is approximately 38Euros Domestic airport departure tax is approximately 20Euros There is an additional country departure tax of US\$15.00 per person. Flight tickets issued after 04 November 2016 will include the departure taxes as part of the ticket. If you have booked your flight ticket independently please check with your travel agent/airline if these taxes are included in your ticket. If any are not you will need to pay for the above taxes locally at the airport in cash.

Country Information

Madagascar Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£7.00

Dinner price

£12.00

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£0.50

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Malagasy Ariary.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

We recommend taking most of your money in GBP, US Dollars or Euro cash. GBP can be changed at Tana airport and then after that Euro or US\$ will be the preferred cash for exchange outside the capital. Please note that US\$100 bills are not accepted and credit cards are rarely accepted.

Where To Exchange

Limited to Antananarivo, Antsirabe and Fianarantsoa. Your tour leader will advise on arrival.

ATM Availability

Antananarivo only, but ATMs cannot be relied upon.

Credit Card Acceptance

Very limited in Antananarivo and not to be relied upon.

Travellers Cheques

Take some travellers cheques in case of emergencies, though note that they are extremely difficult to exchange. Up-to-date information re: global exchange rates can be obtained at <https://www.currencyexpress.com/explore/>

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Bicycle

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Standard - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Madagascar: An entry visa is required by UK, New Zealand, Australian, US & Canadian citizens and can be obtained on arrival. The visa is chargeable at 80.000AR (approximately 30Euros) and issued for 30 days. The visa fee is payable in Euros and we advise to take small denominations and a little extra as the Euro amount is calculated daily by the applicable rate of exchange. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate. Travel via South Africa (including transits): From 1st June 2015 South Africa will enforce new immigration regulations effecting all children aged under 18 years that are travelling to, from or via the country. The new laws state that parents and/or guardian maybe requested by the airline and/or South Africa immigration officers to provide additional documentation for each child they are travelling with. Please refer to the FOC website (for UK passport holders) and/or your local South African High Commission or Embassy for full requirements. The following link, is a leaflet produced by the South African government explaining the requirements: <http://www.dha.gov.za/files/Brochures/Immigrationleaflet.pdf>

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

[Booking a land only package with Explore](#)

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

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Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend protection against malaria, tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A plus Polio and diptheria. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Following the advice given by the Government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, we strongly recommend the wearing long sleeved shirts and the liberal application of insect repellent as a precautionary measure to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. These precautions should be taken at all times as the mosquitoes are also active during daylight hours. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.