

TANZANIA & MADAGASCAR

16 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Arusha, Tanzania

Arrival in Arusha in northern Tanzania

Arusha is the starting point for the northern safari routes of Tanzania, and is one of the country's most attractive towns. You may catch a glimpse of Mount Meru that looms over the town, or even Mount Kilimanjaro in the distance.

Overnight in/near Arusha.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Arusha - Tarangire National Park

This morning, after breakfast and a pre-safari briefing, we travel by road to Tarangire National Park.

Tarangire National Park is the most Southern of the accessible parks of northern Tanzania. Named after River Tarangire, the park covers an area of 2600 km². Much of the park is open grassy savannah, dotted with splendid specimens of Baobab trees, but there are also areas of swamp in the south. Is known for its river valley, wetlands, gently rolling hills, rocky outcrops, acacia woodlands, and numerous baobab trees.

This afternoon we have a game drive through the park. This is the only park in Tanzania's northern circuit where one can easily view a large concentration of elephant all year round.

Overnight in Tarangire National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3 Tarangire National Park

Morning and afternoon game drives in the park.

The park is located south of the large, open grass plains that make up southern Maasailand and contains large stretches of acacia woodland, and grassy savannah, accompanied by large baobab trees that shelter the wildlife and characterize the park. Animals that can be spotted in the park include the eland, lesser kudu, Kongoni, impala, zebra, gazelle, buffalo, wildebeest, leopard, elephant, rhino, fringe eared oryx and the lion. The park is an ornithologist's paradise at the best time of year--over 300 recorded species.

Overnight in Tarangire National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Tarangire - Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Early this morning, with picnic lunches with us, we travel to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a beautiful rolling landscape with periodic views over the Ngorongoro Crater.

Called the 'eighth wonder of the world' and stretching across some 8300 sq km, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area boasts a blend of landscapes, wildlife, people and archaeology that is unsurpassed in Africa. The volcanoes, grasslands, waterfalls and mountain forests are home to an abundance of animals and to the Maasai. Ngorongoro Crater is one of the world's greatest natural spectacles and its magical setting and abundant wildlife never fail to enthrall visitors.

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Upon arrival at the crater we immediately descend for a full day of exploration and wildlife viewing with lunch on the crater floor in this incredible setting, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We explore the crater, 20 km (13 miles) wide and 700 m (2,300 feet) high, where we may see the "Big Five" as well as many herbivores like wildebeest, gazelle, zebra and hippopotamus, as well as thousands of flamingos on Lake Magadi.

We then ascend the crater wall to our overnight lodge on the crater rim.

Overnight in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 Ngorongoro - Serengeti National Park

Today we depart by road for the Serengeti; before descending onto the Serengeti Plain, we'll stop at a viewpoint overlooking the crater. The name "Serengeti" derives from a Maasai word meaning "Land-without-end." This is a land of superlatives, both in the vast landscape that surrounds you and the incredible biodiversity it supports. It is here that you have a chance to witness one of the most compelling natural dramas on earth -- the annual migration, a sight unparalleled anywhere in the natural world. Our afternoon game drive provides an excellent introduction to this fantastic landscape and the biodiversity it supports.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Serengeti National Park

Today we have a full day of game viewing on the Serengeti. We will visit the "kopjes," a series of low, incongruous hills dotting the open landscape that often provide a vantage point for hungry predators contemplating the endless stream of hooved animals parading past them. Depending on the season and the timing of the rains, up to 1.5 million wildebeest and a half a million zebra embark on a single-minded and perilous quest for water and grazing land. Following this spectacle, of course, are the meat-eating opportunists, hoping to capitalize on the physical toll this journey exacts on the desperate grazers. Even outside of "migration" time, large herds are still seen as they bear their young and feed, gaining strength for their annual return to the park's northern reaches. Resident species that do not migrate make for rewarding animal viewing in any season.

It may be possible to take an optional hot-air balloon safari over the plains at daybreak; today is the best day to participate in this activity -- details will be sent upon booking.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 Serengeti - Olduvai Gorge - Gibb's Farm - Lake Manyara

Today we retrace our with a stop at Olduvai Gorge, site of the Leakey excavations in the 1960s and 70s that established this region as the prehistoric habitat of some of the earliest species of hominids with some finds dating back 1.8 million years. Experts in the life sciences have argued that the Olduvai contribution to the story of human origins remains unsurpassed by any other prehistoric site in the world. A small museum on site outlines the unique geological and human history of the area.

Our lunch stop is Gibb's Farm. Founded during German colonial times and still privately owned, Gibb's Farm is now a small hotel perched on the outer slopes of the Ngorongoro Highlands, surrounded by coffee plantations with long views over lush and beautiful agricultural country.

We continue to our lodge on a ridge overlooking Lake Manyara, the smallest of the northern parks in Tanzania (330 sq km, of which two thirds is the actual lake). The park hosts a wide variety of vegetation, ranging from savannah to ground water forest to riparian habitats. The park is host to thousands of pelicans, ibis and flamingo that can be heard from afar. Other common visitors to this beautiful lake are hippos

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and the majestic African fish eagle, which can be seen swooping down from its perch to snatch a fish from the still waters of the lake.

Overnight at Lake Manyara.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Lake Manyara - Arusha, Tanzania - Nairobi, Kenya

This morning we descend back down the escarpment and into Lake Manyara, the smallest of the northern parks in Tanzania (330 sq km, of which two thirds is the actual lake) hosting a wide variety of vegetation, ranging from savannah to ground water forest to riparian habitats. The park is host to thousands of pelicans, ibis, and flamingo that can be heard from afar. Other common visitors to this beautiful lake are hippos and the majestic African fish eagle, which can be seen swooping down from its perch to snatch a fish from the still waters of the lake. Wildlife interest at Lake Manyara is not confined to bird life only; animals such as buffalo, elephant, giraffe, impala, hippo and a great variety of smaller animals also inhabit the park.

Leaving the park, we make a stop at the village of Mto Wa Mbu ('Mosquito Creek'), famous for its lively cosmopolitan atmosphere and red bananas, which taste the same as regular bananas but their skins are a startling bright red.

Our destination today in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya (entry visa fees apply), and major regional air hub on which we rely for our connection to Madagascar (if flight connectivity improves in future, we may elect to fly from Arusha instead). Have your passports ready and prepare to say farewell to our Tanzanian drivers, as we will transfer to Kenya vehicles for the last dash to our Nairobi Airport area hotel.

Overnight in Nairobi (airport area hotel).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Nairobi, Kenya - Antananarivo, Madagascar

Mid-morning we fly to Madagascar.

Unlike most capital cities in southern Africa, Antananarivo was already a major city before the colonial era. The city was founded circa 1625 by King Andrianjaka and takes its name ('the City of the Thousand') from the number of soldiers assigned to guard it.

After our hotel arrival, we should have time to accomplish some sightseeing in the capital today.

Overnight in Antananarivo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Antananarivo - Andasibe

Today we travel by road to the popular rainforest reserve of Andasibe-Mantadia. The drive over the highlands and escarpment is pleasant and the scenery is stunning. Since this is in the eastern escarpment, the climate is cooler and the rain falls mostly at night. The mist-enshrouded rainforest creates an awesome spectacle in the early morning.

At some point during our visit, we will likely be able to go for a walk in the vicinity of the reserve. There are at least nine species of lemur here (including the recent discovery of the aye-aye). Our most likely encounter will be with a troop of grey bamboo lemurs, which are diurnal and sometimes feed on the bamboo near the warden's house. On a nocturnal lemur hunt one should also look for mouse lemurs and the greater dwarf lemur, which hibernates during the cold season.

Overnight in Andasibe.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

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Day 11 Andasibe: Mantadia/Analamzaotra

Today we visit Analamzaotra Special Reserve (walks/hikes in the reserve). * This reserve protects the largest of the lemur family, the indri. It stands about three feet high, with a barely visible tail, and black and white markings. You will be an observer: most people see indris in Analamzaotra Special Reserve, and if they don't see them they hear them. It is their voice that makes this lemur extra special: while other lemurs grunt, the indri "sings." It is an eerie, wailing sound somewhere between the song of a whale and a police-siren, and it carries for up to two miles as they call to each other across the forest.

In Malagasy the indri is called Babakoto. There are various legends connected with the indri, which reveals the esteem in which the local people hold them. A popular legend tells of a man who climbed a forest tree to gather wild honey and was severely stung by the bees. Losing his hold, he fell, but was caught by a huge indri which carried him on its back to safety.

This is also a good place for bird watching. There are flowering trees of a species much favoured by the Madagascar green sunbird, which has an iridescent green head and throat. There are also plenty of the cuckoo-like blue couas, blue pigeons, paradise flycatchers, two species of falcon (Newton falcon and Madagascar falcon), two species of black vasa parrot, and many others.

* NOTE: There are some moderately strenuous walks on this tour that, though optional, are an integral part of experiencing the highlights of the country. Reasonable level of physical fitness and steadiness on one's feet is important for the participant to fully and comfortably enjoy such tour activities.

Overnight in Andasibe-Mantadia.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Réserve de Maromizaha - Antananarivo

We have a second full day in the area, this time at the nearby Réserve de Maromizaha, a 100-sq-km reserve, about 8km southeast of the Parc National Andasibe Mantadia. The area is home to 11 somewhat elusive lemur species, including diademed sifakas and black-and-white ruffed lemurs. The landscape is very attractive and our route today will be somewhat free-form depending on what we see and local conditions.

Later this afternoon we'll make the drive back to the capital.

Overnight in Antananarivo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Antananarivo - Berenty

Today we fly to Fort Dauphin (Taolagnaro). On arrival we drive (on a rather poor road) to Berenty through beautiful landscape (mountains, endemic plants, baobab, cactus, sisal). The reserve lies some 80 km to the west of Tolagnaro, amid a vast sisal plantation, and the drive there is part of the experience. For the first half of the journey the skyline is composed of rugged green mountains, and "travellers' trees" (ravenala) dot the landscape. Near Ranopiso is a grove of the very rare three-cornered palm, Neodypsis decaryi.

Before reaching the spiny forest we will stop at an Antanosy 'tomb' (actually the dead are buried elsewhere) known as the tomb of Ranonda. It was carved by the renowned sculptor Fiasia. The artistry of this unpainted wooden memorial is of a very high standard although the carvings are deteriorating in the frequently wet weather.

The following species of lemur are often seen: brown lemur, ring-tailed lemur and sifaka. The lemurs here are well-used to people. There are approximately 350 ring-tailed lemurs in Berenty, and the population has stayed remarkably stable considering that only about a quarter of the babies survive to adulthood. The young are born in September and at first cling to their mother's belly, later climbing on to her back and riding jockey-style.

Overnight at Berenty Private Reserve.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Berenty Private Reserve

We have a full day to experience Berenty.

□

Berenty is famous for its population of ring-tailed lemurs and sifakas. Henri de Heaulme, and now his son Jean, have made this one of the best-studied 260 hectares of forest in Madagascar. Although in the arid south, its location along the river Mandrare ensures a well-watered habitat for the large variety of animals that live there. In previous years the forest itself was threatened by the rampant spread of the cactus-like 'rubber vine', *Cissus quadrangularis*, but this is being vigorously tackled.

Overnight at Berenty Private Reserve.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 15 Berenty - Antananarivo

Today we drive back to Taolagnaro (Fort Dauphin) to connect with our flight back to Antananarivo.

Flight schedules usually permit some time today to take a panoramic look at Antananarivo. If we are unable to, we will attempt to see some of the city earlier in our program.

Tana will surprise you with its rice paddies, pollution, Asian looks, numerous stairs up steep hills, palaces, cobbled streets and churches. This is not Africa or Asia, Madagascar is totally unique. This is a bustling place with lots of churches, a mosque, a zoo and plenty of markets. The capital is basically built on 12 hills and steep steps lead to the main Independence Square in the town center. The architecture is a mixture of old wooden houses, modern offices and French colonial style buildings.

Tana does not have much in the way of "tourist attractions" per se, but we will take in the highlights, including the Rova, the shell of the Royal Palace built in 1864 for Queen Ranavalona II by the Scotsman, James Cameron. Everything that was wooden burned in 1996, but the imposing stone fortress of a shell still stands.

Overnight in Antananarivo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Departure from Antananarivo

Departure from Antananarivo.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast