Tour Code
TZ2

ADVENTURESABROAD

TANZANIA & MADAGASCAR

with Zanzibar

28 days

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Day 1 Arrive in Nairobi

Today we arrive in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya.

Part of Maasai land when the British arrived, this modern capital grew with the development of the railway. Derived from a Maasai word meaning "Cold Water," Nairobi is a pleasant mix of colonial British with modern and traditional African influences.

Overnight in Nairobi.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Nairobi - Amboseli National Park

Our adventure continues today as we journey south from the bustling city of Nairobi to the breathtaking Amboseli National Park. The drive is estimated to take around four hours, though this can vary slightly depending on the specific location of our lodge within the park and, of course, the wildlife we encounter along the way. Keep your eyes peeled – you never know what surprises the African bush might have in store!

Amboseli National Park boasts a truly spectacular setting. Straddling the border with Tanzania, it lies on the vast African plain, offering unparalleled views of the majestic Mount Kilimanjaro. Towering above the landscape at a staggering 5894 meters (19,300 feet), Kilimanjaro is the highest peak on the entire African continent. Its iconic, snow-capped cone often appears to float ethereally above the shimmering plains, creating a truly awe-inspiring vista.

Amboseli is renowned worldwide for its thriving populations of elephants. These magnificent creatures roam freely across the park's open grasslands, often dusting themselves with the distinctive red soil, which gives their skin a particularly dramatic, almost ochre hue. This afternoon, we'll embark on a game drive within Amboseli. Picture this: herds of elephants grazing peacefully on the open plains, with the colossal Mount Kilimanjaro providing a picture-perfect backdrop. We'll be on the lookout for other incredible wildlife as well, but the chance to witness these gentle giants in their natural habitat, with such an iconic mountain as a witness, is an experience you won't soon forget (weather permitting, of course – Kilimanjaro can sometimes be shy behind the clouds!).

Overnight in the Amboseli National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3 Amboseli, Kenya - Lake Manyara National Park, Tanzania

Our Tanzanian adventure begins this morning as we cross the border from Kenya into Tanzania at Namanga. From there, we'll journey onwards to Lake Manyara National Park, passing through the vibrant town of Arusha. Arusha serves as the gateway to Tanzania's renowned northern safari circuit, and it's a bustling hub of activity. Our total travel time today is expected to be around five hours, though the border crossing itself can also sometimes take a little time.

Lake Manyara National Park, though the smallest of the northern Tanzanian parks at 330 square kilometers (two-thirds of which is the lake itself), packs a big punch in terms of biodiversity. Its diverse vegetation ranges from open savannah grasslands to lush groundwater forests and vital riparian habitats, creating a rich tapestry of ecosystems. The lake is a haven for birdlife, most notably thousands of pelicans, ibis, and flamingos. Their calls and vibrant colours create a spectacle that can be experienced even from a distance.

After lunch at our lodge, we'll embark on an e afternoon game drive within Lake Manyara National Park. The park's location at the base of the dramatic Great Rift Valley escarpment adds to its scenic beauty. Its diverse landscape, encompassing forests, woodlands, grasslands, and swamps, provides habitat for a wide array of wildlife. While the birdlife is undoubtedly a major draw, the park also boasts a healthy population of other animals. We'll be on the lookout for buffalo, elephants, graceful giraffes, impalas, hippos, and a fascinating variety of smaller creatures.

Overnight at Lake Manyara.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Lake Manyara - Serengeti National Park

This morning we embark on a scenic journey into the renowned Ngorongoro Conservation Area. This protected area boasts a stunning, rolling landscape, offering periodic, breathtaking glimpses of the Ngorongoro Crater itself. Before we make our descent onto the seemingly endless Serengeti Plain, we'll pause at a designated viewpoint to fully appreciate the sheer scale and beauty of the crater.

The very name "Serengeti" is derived from the Maasai language, meaning "Land-without-end," and it's a fitting description. This is a place of superlatives, where the vastness of the landscape is matched only by the incredible biodiversity it sustains.

Our journey today, including our game drive, will take approximately five hours, though this can vary depending on the wildlife we encounter along the way and the location of our lodge within the Serengeti. This afternoon's game drive will serve as a wonderful introduction to this remarkable landscape and the diverse array of animals that call it home. Our guides will help us spot and identify the various species, sharing their knowledge of the Serengeti ecosystem and the intricate relationships between its inhabitants.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 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 hoofed 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 sent upon booking.

Overnight in the Serengeti National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 Serengeti - Olduvai Gorge - Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Travelling back to Ngorongoro today we make 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.

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 enthral visitors. Depending on road conditions, gorge stop, animal sightings, and lodge placement, this journey can be 5-6 hours.

Overnight in the vicinity of Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Today promises an unforgettable experience as we embark on a half-day tour within the magnificent Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. After an early breakfast to maximize our time, we'll descend into the heart of the Ngorongoro Crater, a truly breathtaking natural wonder. This massive caldera, spanning 20 kilometers (13 miles) in diameter and boasting walls reaching 700 meters (2,300 feet) high, is a microcosm of African wildlife.

The crater floor is a diverse ecosystem teeming with life, and our game drive will take us through this incredible setting. We'll be on the lookout for the famed "Big Five" – lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, and buffalo – any sighting of which is always a thrill. But the crater is also home to a plethora of other fascinating creatures. eep your eyes peeled for herds of wildebeest, graceful gazelles, zebras with their distinctive stripes, and lumbering hippopotamuses. Adding to the spectacle, thousands of vibrant flamingos often gather on Lake Magadi, creating a stunning display of colour against the backdrop of the crater walls.

* In order to reduce congestion and stress on wildlife, the Tanzanian government limits visitors to half-day visits of the crater. Depending on what time "window" we are assigned, our excursion may take place first thing in the morning, or later in the afternoon (both of which are equally advantageous for game viewing, given the relatively mild climate at this altitude).

Overnight in the vicinity of Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 Ngorongoro - Gibb's Farm - Arusha

This morning we begin our descent from the Ngorongoro Highlands, retracing our route back towards Arusha. Our journey includes a delightful lunch stop at the charming Gibb's Farm. This unique establishment has a fascinating history, having been founded during the German colonial era. Still privately owned today, Gibb's Farm operates as a small, boutique hotel nestled on the outer slopes of the Ngorongoro Highlands. Surrounded by verdant coffee plantations, the farm offers breathtaking, sweeping views of the lush and beautiful agricultural landscape that stretches out before it. It's a perfect spot to relax, enjoy a delicious meal, and soak in the tranquility of the surroundings.

As we continue our drive, we'll once again pass through the bustling town of Mto Wa Mbu, which translates to "Mosquito Creek." This vibrant town is known for its lively and cosmopolitan atmosphere, a melting pot of cultures and traditions. It's also famous for its distinctive red bananas. These intriguing fruits, while tasting very similar to regular bananas, are a visual treat with their startlingly bright red skins.

We arrive back in Arusha later this afternoon.

Overnight in Arusha.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Arusha - Fly to Zanzibar: Town Tour

This morning we fly to Zanzibar and transfer to our hotel in Stone Town.

Zanzibar is an archipelago made up of Zanzibar and Pemba Islands, and several islets. Zanzibar Island is 96 km (60 miles) long and 32 km (20 miles) wide, occupying a total area of approximately 1040 km sq (650 sq miles). It is characterised by beautiful sandy beaches with fringing coral reefs, and the magic of historic Stone Town -- said to be the only functioning ancient town in East Africa.

Zanzibar's local people are an incredible mixture of ethnic backgrounds, indicative of her colourful history. Islam is the dominant religion, and practiced by most Zanzibaris, although there are also followers of Christianity and Hinduism. Population is estimated at 800,000, with the largest concentration being Zanzibar City, which has approximately 100,000 inhabitants. Zanzibaris speak Swahili (known locally as

Kiswahili), a language spoken extensively in East Africa. Many believe that the purest form is spoken in Zanzibar as it is the birthplace of the language.

This afternoon we have a walking tour of Stone Town, the old city and cultural heart of Zanzibar, little changed in the last 200 years. It is a place of winding alleys, bustling bazaars, mosques and grand Arab houses whose original owners vied with each other over the extravagance of their dwellings. This one-upmanship is particularly reflected in the brass-studded, carved, wooden doors -- there are more than 500 different examples of this handiwork. Our tour takes us to the House of Wonders, the Palace Museum (People's Palace), the old slave market, the Arab Fort, and the Hamamni Persian Baths. Stone Town has some excellent gifts shops with plenty of souvenirs and handicrafts to choose from.

NOTE: The exact order of our Zanzibar sightseeing may vary depending on variables such as weather and other logistical considerations.

Overnight on Zanzibar (Stone Town).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Jozani Forest & Stone Town

This morning we visit the Jozani Natural Forest Reserve located in the central east region of Zanzibar Island, home to the rare red colobus monkey, endemic to Zanzibar. These monkeys are full of character and roam freely. They can also be seen at very close quarters just outside the reserve's perimeter and are incredibly photogenic. Jozani is home to other species including Syke's monkeys, small buck and bushpigs.

This afternoon is free to enjoy Stone Town. Most of the houses that can be seen today were built in the 19th Century when Zanzibar was one of the most important trading centres in the Indian Ocean region. The coraline rock of Zanzibar was a good building material, but it is also easily eroded. This is evident by the large number of houses that are in a bad state of repair. Several buildings have already been renovated and the Stone Town Conservation Authority has been established to coordinate the restoration of the town to its original magnificence.

Overnight on Zanzibar (Stone Town).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Spice Tour - East Coast

Today we check-out of our town-based hotel and travel to the island's east coast.*

En route we enjoy some touring along the way. The history of Zanzibar would be incomplete without a 'spice tour' -- cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper and many other spices were as important to the Sultans of Oman as the infamous slave trade. They can be seen in the plantations just outside Zanzibar town, and our morning tour includes opportunities to dazzle the senses with fresh spices. A detailed description is given about a variety of spices and their uses in cooking and cosmetics. It is fascinating the sheer number of spices produced and their incredible value for many ailments and culinary applications.

We then travel to our resort-style hotel located on a beach outside of Stone Town.

* PLEASE NOTE that local government on Zanzibar has levied a tax of US$1.00 per person for every night spent on the island. This amount is payable, in cash, directly to each hotel upon check-out. We regret that we are unable to pay this in advance on your behalf.

Overnight on Zanzibar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Zanzibar: East Coast Resort

A day at leisure to enjoy the beach and to rest up after our journey…

Overnight on Zanzibar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Zanzibar: Beach to Stone Town

Today we transfer back to Stone Town in order to better place ourselves for our flight to Antananarivo tomorrow, likely via Nairobi.

Due to ever-changing flight schedules to Madagascar, we may have to leave Zanzibar a day earlier or later in order to make the connection; the routing may also go through Johannesburg or Dar es Salaam instead of Nairobi. Final arrangements will be advised closer to departure. Due to a lack of air connections in the region, we regret in advance if this journey is somewhat convoluted.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Arrival in Antananarivo, Madagascar

Today we fly to Antananarivo, the Malagasy capital city.

Antananarivo means 'City of the Thousand', supposedly because a thousand warriors protected it. Until the French conquest in 1895 Madagascar's history centred around the royal palace or rova, and the rock cliffs near the palace became known as Ampamarinana, 'the place of the hurling', as Christian martyrs met their fate at the command of the Queen. There was no reason for the French to move the capital elsewhere: its pleasant climate made it an agreeable place to live, and plenty of French money and planning went into the city we see today.

Overnight in Antananarivo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Antananarivo - Fly to Taolagnaro - Berenty

Today we fly to Fort Dauphin (Taolagnaro).* On arrival we drive (on a very poor road, approx 4 hours) 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 decary.

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.

* Due to frequent changes to air schedules, lodge availability, and seasonal variations, the final order of our overnight points often change from one departure to another. Overall content will remain the same, but there may be some adjustments prior to your chosen date.

Overnight at Berenty Private Reserve.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 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.

NOTE: There are some moderate to 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 at Berenty Private Reserve.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Berenty - Taolagnaro - Fly to Antananarivo

Today we drive back to Taolagnaro (Fort Dauphin), on the same bad road, to connect with our flight back to Antananarivo where we spend the night prior to our onward road journey to Andasibe tomorrow.

Overnight in Antananarivo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Antananarivo - Andasibe: Mantadia/Analamzaotra

Today we travel by road to Andasibe and 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. Please note that this is a full day of travel.

This area is home to at least nine species of lemur (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. After dinner we'll have a night walk in order to experience the sights and sounds of the forest after dark.

Overnight in Andasibe.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Andasibe: Mantadia/Analamzaotra

Today we have a full-day visiting Analamazaotra 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. Most visitors see Indris in Analamazaotra Special Reserve, and if they don't see them they definitely 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. There are various legends connected with the Indri, which reveals the esteem in which the local people hold them. A popular tale 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.

This afternoon we have a leisurely nature walk in the area.

Overnight in Andasibe.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 20 Andasibe - Antsirabe

We depart by road for Antsirabe, founded in 1872 by Norwegian missionaries attracted by the cool climate (1500m / 4,700 ft) and the healing properties of the thermal springs. Along the crest of the island lie the central highlands, a plateau region of red soil giving the country the nickname, "the Red Island."

Antsirabe means "place of much salt," and is the agricultural and industrial centre of Madagascar. This is the centre of a rich agricultural area lying on the slopes of the island's second highest peak. During our time in Antsirabe, we should be able to take a ponsee ponsee (rickshaw) ride.

Overnight in Antsirabe.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 21 Antsirabe - Ranomafana

This morning we depart for Ranomafana.

The village of Ranomafana is situated by a river in the lush greenness of the eastern rainforest. The name Ranomafana means "hot water" and it was the waters, not the lemurs, which drew visitors in the colonial days to this place. Today the draw is the Ranomafana National Park, a fragment of high altitude rainforest that first came to world attention with the discovery of the golden bamboo lemur in 1986.

Overnight in Ranomafana.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 22 Ranomafana National Park

Today we enjoy morning and evening walks/hikes.

Hidden in these trees are at least 12 species of lemur: diademed (Milne-Edwards) sifaka, red-bellied lemur, red-fronted lemur, ruffed lemur and three species of bamboo lemur. At night you can add mouse lemur, avahi, lepilemur, fat-tailed dwarf lemur, and even aye-aye. Then there are more than 110 species of birds with 36 endemic; reptiles, butterflies and other insects. There is also much variety in the vegetation and scenery, all of which can be observed from well-constructed trails.

During our walks we are most likely to see red-fronted brown lemurs and perhaps the rarer red-bellied lemur. The golden bamboo lemur is less easily seen. The most memorable of the easily found lemurs is a subspecies of the diademed sifaka, Milne-Edward's sifaka. Unlike the more familiar Verreaux's sifaka which is largely white, this is dark brown with cream-coloured sides.

This evening we experience the park after dark with a night walk.

Overnight in Ranomafana.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 23 Ranomafana - Fianarantsoa

This morning we journey by road onward to Fianarantsoa. On our way we pass forest, open country, rice paddies modest country homes.

Fianarantsoa means 'Place of good learning'. It was founded in 1830 as the administrative capital of Betsileo and is one of the more attractive Malagasy towns. The Upper Town, with its narrow winding streets and plethora of churches, is one of our stops today. Fianarantsoa also has a wonderful market, which features a great variety of herbal medicines and dried fish brought up by train from Manakara.

On arrival we'll have an informal panoramic tour of the town including a walk up to a viewpoint overlooking the city. We'll have a walk though the old town and hope that the colourful market is on.

Overniht in Fianarantsoa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 24 Fianarantsoa - Ranohira & Isalo National Park

Today we travel by road to the vicinity of Isalo National Park. En route we stop at Ambalavao to visit the traditional weaving atelier, Antemoro. We also visit Anjaha Park hoping to spot the ring-tailed lemur.

In Isalo, we encounter the the warm weather of the south amidst a different kind of scenery -- the savanna of the vast plateau of Ihorombe, near the Massif of Isalo. The Isalo National Park was created in 1962 to preserve the ancestral beauty of the site. Archaeological relics and funeral sanctuaries create a magical atmosphere made of strong contrasts. Lemur calls and bird chirps are heard in this green oasis along rivers filled with lush plants. While the sandy cliffs with rare riparian vegetation complete the picture.

Overnight Ranohira.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 25 Isalo National Park

Today we spend exploring the Isalo National Park on foot.*

Established in 1962, the Isalo National Park protects 815 sq km of sandstone massif wildly eroded by wind and rain into bizarre ridge featuring wild forms, impressive gorges and canyons, and tiny stalagmite pinnacles. The climate is dry tropical with warm temperatures all year around. One of our options today is a walk to the Piscine Naturelle where a natural stone cave overlooks a crystal-clear waterfall flowing into a deep green pool surrounded by leafy pandanus trees. This tranquil pool is a virtual oasis in the heat, and offers a welcome relief after the long hike to get there.

* NOTE: Due to the nature of the terrain and the heat in this area, the walks here are more difficult on average than others on our program. By now your Tour Leader will have a good sense of overall group abilities and individual limitations and can provide advice on your suitability for today's excursions.

Overnight in Ranohira.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 26 Ranohira - Tulear

Today we travel by road to Tulear (Toliara) to better place us for tomorrow's flight back to 'Tana.

Overnight in Tulear.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 27 Tulear - Fly to Antananarivo

Today we fly back to the capital. Ever-changing flight times-permitting, we may be able to accomplish some sightseeing upon arrival.

Tana will surprise you with its rice paddies, pollution, Asian influences, lots of 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 hope to 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 28 Departure

Departure from Antananarivo.

BON VOYAGE!