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2022 Marine Adventure - Where the forest meets the sea

EUR 4,105.- per person

This small international group trip will be guided by An Bollen - a specialist in Tropical Ecology since 2003 with a lot of experience in Marine biology and diving.

This itinerary will take you to the north-western corner of Madagascar between Nosy Be and Diego Suarez. Especially designed for ocean-lovers, we focus on colourful tropical coral reefs, seagrass beds, vast sandy beaches as well as rocky islets, lagoons, mangroves and the open sea to look for marine megafauna and to enjoy the beauty and diversity of the underwater world. Since it would be a shame to miss out on the unique and endemic Malagasy wildlife and flora on land, we also include visits to several national parks and community reserves along the way to look for lemurs, chameleons, frogs and birds in a lush vegetation. This adventurous trip truly allows for a great exploration of the unique Malagasy biodiversity. Along our journey, we will get insight into different conservation approaches and how ecotourism supports conservation, be it in traditionally government-managed national parks, through conservation tourism as well as in community-run reserves that contribute not just to safeguarding the amazing natural heritage but also to providing additional income for communities. Come and join us on this marine and terrestrial biodiversity journey to experience it first-hand!

Day 1 - October 27th



Arrival in Antananarivo

You will land on your self-booked flight at Ivato airport in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. Welcome, or 'tonga soa'! In the terminal you will be issued a visa, the costs are around \$50 (depending on the currency exchange rates). Your driver will wait for you at the exit near the custom hall to help you in the unlikely event of you needing assistance with formalities. We recommend exchanging money there as well, as it may take longer elsewhere and costs are more expensive. The driver will then take you to the hotel, where you can enjoy the rest of the day and relax after the long flight.



TNR

Antananarivo, ANTANANARIVO, MADAGASCAR



Chez Jeanne

Chez Jeanne is a small accommodation run by a passionate lady Jeanne, located 12 minutes from Ivato international airport and 10 Km from the center of Antananarivo, in a green and relaxing rice field. The guesthouse has 33 rooms divided by double, single, twin and family occupancy. The hotel also offers various services such as catering and transfers.

Day 2 - October 28th



Airport transfer

You will be brought to the airport this morning for your inland flight to Nosy Be.



TNR - NOS

Your inland flight from Ivato International airport to Fascene airport, lasting around 1 hour.



Nosy Be - Nosy Sakatia

Upon arrival in Nosy Be, you will continue to the intimate islet of Nosy Sakatia, just off the west coast of Nosy Be - this will be around a 20-minute long boat crossing.



Sakatia Lodge

Sakatia Lodge is located in a truly beautiful and unique location in the north-west of Madagascar on the island of Sakatia. The hotel has 9 comfort bungalows, as well as offers various activities to its customers including diving, snorkeling, visiting the island, fishing, excursions to Nosy Iranja and Nosy Antsoha, Nosy Tanikely. Sakatia Lodge is committed to sustainable tourism and is part of the island community to make the island a better and more environmentally friendly place and works closely with local villages, supporting and consulting on transportation, responsible disposal of waste and other activities that affect the island. The hotel also collects batteries from the Lodge and from the local community to ensure they are recycled in the appropriate facilities, and participates in the Reef in a Bottle project, which is a way to recycle our wine bottles while providing space to encourage the growth of new hard corals.

Days 3 & 4 - October 29th & 30th



Exploring the Orchid island

You will have two days to spend walking the magical sandy beaches, discovering the local flora and fauna, as well as participating in active relaxation on and around the so-called Orchid island, Nosy Sakatia.

Your hotel organizes excursions on the island, the neighbouring islands, as well as offers diving and snorkeling experiences for participants of various levels.



Spotting whale sharks

Depending on the weather and condition of the sea, on Day 4, researcher and conservationist Stella Diamant from the Madagascar Whale Shark Research and Conservation Project will guide us on a boat trip with Rand'eau, to look for whale sharks out in the big blue and join them in the water for a swim. These harmless and beautiful giants come close to the surface to feed on plankton in Nosy Be waters, an area that is recently discovered as an important feeding hotspot for the species. If you get lucky, we may see some dolphins or other marine wildlife during the boat trip.

Spotting the whale sharks in Madagascar's waters is possible between September and December, however you are most likely to succeed in meeting these giants during October and November.



Sakatia Lodge

You will stay in the same accommodation.

Day 5 - October 31st



Nosy Sakatia - Nosy Be

You will take the 20-minute boat transfer back to the bigger island of Nosy Be this morning, leave your luggage in the hotel and start today's exploration.



Lokobe Community Reserve

You will visit the Lokobe Community Reserve - home to Nosy Be's last remaining lowland rainforest. You will travel by car to the village of Ambatozavavy, where we step into a local dugout canoe in the mangrove area and paddle for one hour to reach the Reserve. Lokobe is home to the black lemur and the locally endemic Hawks' sportive lemur. Chameleons and boa constrictors are a common sight, and for plant lovers the lush vegetation and palm *Dypsis ampasindavae* will be a real treat. We will follow a hike trail in this beautiful forest for around 2,5 hours, and enjoy a local traditional lunch together on the beach before paddling back and returning to our hotel to pack for the next adventure.



L'heure Bleue

L'heure Bleue is a 4-star Green Globe certified hotel, a label of excellence recognized worldwide. Chic rustic bungalows and chalets in a tropical beachfront hotel with a restaurant and 2 swimming pools. The hotel has a large terrace on the ocean, providing an extraordinary view over the Ambatoloaka bay. There are only 8 luxury lodges and 10 bungalows with a sea or Madirokely bay view, nestled in a lush garden and offering a 'feet in the water' experience. Spacious and tastefully decorated with local materials and Malagasy artwork, this hotel is the ideal place to discover Nosy Be. It features 2 swimming pools, a large terrace, a bar and a restaurant. Offering a view of the sea and a tropical setting, the bungalows have an en suite bathroom with shower. Some of them have a private terrace. Wi-Fi internet access is available free of charge at the bar-restaurant and reception. Madirokely city center is just a 5 minute drive away, and the crater bay is 20 minutes away.

Days 6, 7 & 8 - November 1st, 2nd & 3rd



Alefa Sailing adventure

After breakfast we will embark on a traditional *Sakalava boutre* for a sailing trip that will take us southwards along the coast, islets and bays for 3 days, getting to remote places and traditional fishing villages only accessible by sea.

This experience will give us insight into the daily life of remote coastal communities which are close to unreachable by road. We will be sailing, swimming and snorkelling on reefs, enjoying the marine life, passing by many fishing boats along an amazing scenery of long desolate beaches, inlets, azure water, lush vegetation, mangroves, coconut plantations and charming fisher's villages. Our day stretches from sunrise to sunset and we will enjoy fresh seafood and local fruits along the way, while sleeping in simple tents under the stars. This is the perfect time to go off-grid and spend quality time with your loved ones among idillic nature.

For those who want to, there is the opportunity to go on walks to look for wildlife inland or to climb up the hills to enjoy the spectacular views even more.



On Days 6 & 7 you will camp in simple tents on the way, creating the perfect sailing experience!

Upon your return to Nosy Be on Day 8, you will check into the same accommodation you stayed in before - L'Heure Bleue Hotel.

Day 9 - November 4th



A day to slow down

Today, you have the whole day to relax from the intense sailing trip, get some washing of clothes done, stroll around in town, enjoy a book, the beach, and some down time before we head to the mainland to enjoy some of Madagascar's terrestrial biodiversity.



L'heure Bleue

You will stay in the same accommodation today.

Day 10 - November 5th



Nosy Be - Ankify

Following our adventures at sea, we will now be focusing more on the biodiversity inland.

A private motor boat will take you to Ankify in the morning hours, in order to avoid sailing through rough waters when the currents pick up in the afternoon.



Ankify - Ankarana

Upon your arrival, a driver will be waiting to take you on a 3,5 hour drive further north to Ankarana, also known as Tsingy of the North - the world famous incredible karstic rock formations that can only be found in the North and South-West of Madagascar.

You will be brought to your hotel and start the exploration in the afternoon.



Afternoon in Ankarana NP

After lunch, we will go on a short afternoon hike to explore the impressive bat cave, the surrounding dry deciduous forest and the big gulf called 'lost river'.



Chez Laurent

Perfectly located in front of the eastern park entrance, in the village of Mahamasina, this simple accommodation is the ideal starting point for your adventures in Ankarana. The ten bungalows feature rooms that are large and clean, equipped with private bathroom facilities and supplied with power during the day.

The hotel restaurant serves simple family-style traditional Malagasy meals - think: zebu steak and fish, in a quiet natural setting.

Day 11 - November 6th



Ankarana National Park

We suggest to start by exploring the east side of the Ankarana reserve - this area will offer you the opportunity to observe the 'Grey Tsingy of Ankarana'. After a few kilometers, a formidable massif of peaks and sharp-edged rocks doom up, with impenetrable limestone. Because of the difficult accessibility, the canyons are sufficiently isolated to provide a home to many unknown, even to scientists, species waiting to be discovered. We will do a 5-hour hike to get to the most spectacular sites while looking for crowned and sanford's brown lemurs as well as numerous birds, reptiles and insects along the way. The vegetation that has adapted to survive the dry conditions of the tsingy are a true attraction. Besides the giant baobabs, there is also a wide diversity of weird looking Euphorbia species and the even more peculiar Pachypodium, also called the elephant foot. We will stop for a picnic lunch and in the afternoon continue our journey northwards to the national park Montagne d'Ambre, where we stay in a beautiful lodge.



Ankarana Reserve

Antsiranana, Madagascar



Ankarana - Red Tsingy

You will be driven by 4x4 car in the northern direction to Joffreville. On the way you have the opportunity to visit the Red Tsingy, worth the effort. Should you wish to make the total walk, it requires 2/2,5 hours.

The Red Tsingy are peak-shaped formations offering a magnificent view. In the course of the years wind and rain have shaped the Tsingy and they are unique in Madagascar. Unlike the ordinary Tsingy (with pointed rocks) the Red Tsingy has round rock points. Various kinds of rocks produce various color schemes, resulting in a true spectacle. A difficult passable path for a 4x4 in the middle of this savannah-like area with wild palm trees leads to the special Red Tsingy, yet definitely worth the trouble.

Indeed, this place is of stunning beauty, and we undoubtedly have to make a detour to visit this area. However, the miracle of nature may disappear quickly if not respected - which is why we encourage responsible tourism and support preservation initiatives.



Red Tsingy - Joffreville

After this visit, you will head for Joffreville (Ambohitra) - a town known for the Amber Mountain National Park, a drive of around 1,5 hours. Here you will check in to your accommodation and have the evening to settle in.



Nature Lodge

The nature lodge is located in Northern Madagascar, 30 km from Diego Suarez and 7 km from Amber Mountain National Park. The hotel has 12 bungalows and offers a catering service. Nature Lodge is a luxury hotel committed to an environmentally responsible approach by promoting the local economy, and the hotel is also equipped with solar energy: 30 solar panels, 24 professional batteries and 5 water heaters. All lighting and electrical appliances in the kitchen and restaurant, including fridges and freezers, are solar powered. 100% of the lamps have been replaced by LEDs and they do their best not to use the backup generator. The team is entirely Malagasy with the majority coming from the village of Joffreville.



Nature Lodge

Antsiranana, Antsiranana Province, Madagascar

Day 12 - November 7th



Drive to the park

Another day and another visit to a National park! You will be picked up by your driver from the accommodation and brought to the entrance.



Amber Mountain National Park

Today we go into the Amber Mountain National Park, a splendid example of a montane rainforest - massive, with its own microclimate, cooler and more humid than the surrounding areas. The national reserve covers a Volcanic area of 300.000 hectares with varying heights from 800 to 1475 meters.

The local conditions have enabled lush forests with amazing waterfalls and lakes to develop. You can choose between a half-day easy hike and a full day hike in the forest. The park is exciting for both flora and fauna: large tree ferns, epiphytic bird nest ferns, pandanus and endemic cycad palms are a rare find even for an amateur plant lover. As always, you can continue to look for local wildlife as well, particularly the avifauna, which will fascinate even non-bird lovers, there are some lemur species as well, and the smallest chameleons of Madagascar – the 'Brookesia minima'.



Montagne d'Ambre

Antsiranana Province, Madagascar



Nature Lodge

You will stay in the same accommodation.

Day 13 - November 8th



Joffreville - Diego Suarez

After breakfast we travel to the port city Diego Suarez - Madagascar's northernmost large city, rich in history and culture. We will stop at the main viewpoints of the second largest bay in the world, a natural shelter for generations of pirates and slave traders and then check into our hotel.



Jardin Exotique

Jardin Exotique Hotel is located in the city center of Diego Suarez, a few steps away from the Colbert street, in a quiet and flowery place, and has 10 rooms with all comforts as different and charming as each other with sea view, terrace and private garden. The hotel's restaurant "Le Balafo manga" is located 30m from the property. The hotel organizes excursions for the guests with a choice of 4 wheel drive car, bicycle or motocross. Excursions on quad bikes are also possible.

Days 14 & 15 - November 9th & 10th



After four days of dry feet, it is time to go back out at sea for an overnight camping trip to the magnificent Nosy Hara archipelago.



Nosy Hara

This marine national park consists of one larger island and several small islets - made of tsingy, the same spiky limestone as in Ankarana, but this time surrounded by the sea. Nosy Hara is the only location where world's tiniest chameleon, *Brookesia micra*, lives. During our short stay here, we will hike up the hills to an amazing viewpoint, look out for wildlife in the dry deciduous forest and enjoy a beautiful underwater landscape of corals vibrant of marine life, while camping on a local beach in very basic, submerged in nature, conditions.

On day 15, after more exploration and an early lunch we return by boat before the winds and the currents pick up, back to the village Ampasindava. Afterwards, we drive eastwards and have a few short stops at the salt fields, viewpoint of the Sugar Loaf island and some magnificent baobabs before arriving in the Sakalava Bay, our final destination.



Le Royal Sakalava

Hotel Royal Sakalava offers 14 double bungalows and 3 family bungalows which can accommodate up to 4 people. All the bungalows face the sea and offer the delicious sensation of feeling the water with your feet. The Royal Sakalava is, along with the Sakalava Lodge, one of the few establishments with such a good location. Entirely self-sufficient, the Royal Sakalava produces its own electricity. The water is drawn from different and heated by solar panels. A restaurant is available to guests with varied cuisines and can accommodate up to 200 people. The hotel offers various activities, including kitesurfing and windsurfing, of course, but also exploring the Diego Suarez region by 4x4, quad or mini buggy. Royal Sakalava Hotel also puts at your disposal a Kitesurfing camp with an instructor qualified by the IKO and the most recent equipment for hire.

Days 16 & 17 - November 11th & 12th



Days in Sakalava Bay

All good things come to an end - and so does this adventure, with our final two days spent in the Sakalava Bay - a beautiful long white sandy beach and heaven for water sports. During our stay here, you have plenty of time to take a break and relax, go for a swim, read a book, take a snooze, enhance your photography skills - the possibilities are endless! Another interesting option would be to try out kite- or wind-surfing - the hotel has its own Kitesurfing school with certified professionals, ready to help you with the first steps or simply give some tips for the best experience.



Three Bays Circuit & Ramena

On Day 17, we will follow the Three Bays Circuit - a half-day walk along 3 gorgeous sandy bays (Sakalava, Pigeons and Dune Bays), leading all the way to the fishermen village Ramena, where we will have lunch.

This circuit is set in a wild, harsh, windy but starkly beautiful environment with white beaches and azure blue waters - just like it came off a postcard.



Plage de Ramena

Antsiranana Province, Madagascar



Le Royal Sakalava

You will stay in the same accommodation.

Day 18 - November 13th



Airport transfer

Today, you will be brought to the airport for your inland flight to the capital, from where your intercontinental flight will depart.



DIE - TNR

Your inland flight from Arrachart Airport (Diego Suarez) to Ivato International Airport (Antananarivo), lasting around 1 hour.



Day use Chez Jeanne

Upon arrival in the capital, you will be transferred to the same hotel near the airport you stayed in on Day 1, this time a room is booked for you for a day use here.



Departure from Antananarivo

Depending on the time of your intercontinental flight back home, you will be brought to the airport. We hope you enjoyed your trip and will bring a piece of Madagascar back home in your heart!

Information & Documents



Who should join this trip & what should you know before signing up?

This tour is for nature- and sea-lovers who like the outdoors, beautiful landscapes and amazing biodiversity and who do not mind roughing it a bit in terms of camping or basic accommodation for part of the journey and who have a genuine interest or curiosity in biodiversity. For this trip, there is a strong focus on marine wildlife and ecosystems, so all participants should be good swimmers and feel comfortable spending time out at sea on a wooden sailing boat or small power boat. If you are a scuba diver there is one location for diving, but the coral reefs can also be explored and enjoyed by snorkelling. Having basic snorkelling skills or getting them prior to departure, will allow you to get the most out of this trip. On land, we will do several non-technical hikes, mostly of 3-4 hours. Travel time to and from places is overall not too long. The accommodation types vary from camping in tents under the stars, to basic clean bungalows with shared facilities and nice comfortable en suite rooms. While this is not a luxurious tour, it does get us to some unique places off the beaten track, closer to local communities, while supporting local initiatives that benefit both biodiversity and communities and allowing you to experience Malagasy biodiversity on land and in sea first hand.



Reality check

Madagascar is a beautiful, yet rough diamond. This means that as a traveler, the best way to fully enjoy a unique trip and destination like this one, is to remain flexible and keep an open mindset. This will allow you to take it all in, enjoy its true beauty, rich culture and warm hospitality of the Malagasy, while embracing the unexpected and sometimes basic conditions. Sadly, Madagascar is one of the poorest countries worldwide, meaning that daily life scenes can be unsettling for some, road conditions are highly variable, the Malagasy time concept is rather different from ours, logistics can be challenging, it can be very hot and sweaty during this season and insects and stomach bugs are never far away. Be that as it may, Mora-Travel has extensive experience on the island to ensure you will get an unforgettable travel experience and we will always have a Plan B ready when we need to improvise!



Expedition guide

An Bollen is a Belgian national who completed her PhD in Tropical Ecology in 2003. She has lived and worked in Madagascar for a total of 6 years; conducting her PhD research in the south-eastern littoral rainforest of Sainte-Luce, coordinating the Study Abroad programme in the Ranomafana National Park and managing the Madagascar Fauna Group in the Tamatave region for 4 years. She is a dedicated ecologist, with over 15 years of experience in biodiversity conservation and protected area management in the tropics, both in rainforests as on coral reefs. Madagascar is as a second home to her and she has a good insight into the local conservation dynamics. An is fascinated by the underwater world and is an experienced PADI Dive Master. She has been involved in marine and coastal research and conservation projects on other islands. An has extensive experience in organising and leading research and conservation expeditions and is keen to share her enthusiasm and knowledge with nature-loving ecotourists. An is fluent in English, French, Dutch, Portuguese and speaks some basic Malagasy. For more details on her profile and a detailed CV, see www.azuria.be



Quotes from our travelers who went on the Marine adventure edition 2019

"Discovering a new underwater coral world! The local experience on the traditional 'boutre'.. Be inspired by the beauty of Madagascar nature and wildlife! Have a personal 'chat' with the lemurs! ;)" - Annemie

"Tour leader An did so excellent. She was very well organized. Overall the trip was great and diverse!" - Wouter

"It was an adventurous trip crossing a small, but very colorful, diverse and spectacular region. You really have the feeling you see a lot of the biodiversity. Especially the underwater world was for me top! Swimming with the whale sharks I will never forget again!" - Mieke

"The team leader An was amazing. Every wish was considered and, if possible, fulfilled. She was incredibly well organized and never forgot anything. Thanks to her this trip went so smoothly. The mixture of hiking and sailing worked particularly well. The snorkeling and diving part was amazing." - Anne

"Without our guides we would never have seen so many wonderful creatures!" - Kitty

Pricing PER PERSON in EUR

price based on 8 pax group:

Pricing per person: € 4 105.-

Single Supplement: € 440.-

Included Services

- ◆ All airport/hotel transfers
- ◆ Domestic flights
- ◆ Except in the capital, transport with driver and fuel included the whole trip
- ◆ Bed and Breakfast the whole trip
- ◆ 18 dinners and 14 lunches included
- ◆ Whale shark excursion with specialised guide and lunch included
- ◆ Excursion to the Lokobe reserve on Nosy-Be with local guide and lunch included
- ◆ Full board Alefa sailing trip with 2 bivouac nights
- ◆ Visit of Ankarana and Amber Mountain National parks including picnic, entrance fee and local guide
- ◆ Visit of Nosy Hara with one bivouac night, local guide, entrance fee included
- ◆ Three bay circuit excursion
- ◆ Tips included

Excluded Services

- ◆ Visa
- ◆ Drinks
- ◆ 4 lunches (arrival day, day 9, day 13 and departure day)
- ◆ Health insurances
- ◆ Personal expenses
- ◆ Intercontinental Flights
- ◆ All other services unlisted in the inclusive

How to prepare & What to pack

Language

The group language will be English

International flight schedule

Please allow for enough time when booking your international flight before the start of this trip as well as at the end of the trip as domestic flights can be delayed or even cancelled. As a general rule you should arrive latest during daytime on the first evening the tour starts and we suggest to not book a flight before midnight on the last day of the trip.

Luggage

While your international flight might allow for more kilos or more bags, please note that domestic flights have a strict maximum of one bag of 20 kilos check-in luggage per person and 5 kg of hand luggage. When sailing and camping we recommend having a soft bag of maximum 15 kg which is easier for storage on board and moving around. You will have the option of leaving behind some of the luggage in the hotel. Some people prefer to bring an extra foldable bag in their luggage for this reason.

Health

We will have a small first-aid kit at hand but please bring personal prescription medications and daily toiletries, including seasickness tablets, high factor sunscreen and insect repellent. Given the destination and our way of traveling we do recommend you visit a tropical institute or travel clinic nearby before traveling to check if your vaccinations are in order. Most important is malaria prophylaxis and vaccinations against tetanus, diphtheria and measles. Travelers diarrhea is quite common, so you do want to come prepared also for this.

Passport

Please bring two paper copies of your passport

Camping

A tent, mattress and sheets will be provided for camping during our sailing trip, so no need to bring these. Do bring a (head) torch, a water bottle, one small towel, sarong and an (inflatable) pillow if you like.

Clothing & Footwear

One water- and windproof cape or jacket, T-shirts and shorts, long-sleeved shirts and light long trousers (zip pants are ideal!), one sweatshirt for cooler evenings. Bring sandals, flipflops or reef shoes that can get wet and one pair of closed hiking shoes. Bring also a backpack for the day hikes.

Marine conditions

Given considerable time spent at sea and on the coast, we recommend you bring your swim gear and own snorkeling kit (mask, snorkel and fins) to maximize underwater exploration. A rash vest comes in handy for protection against sun, cold and itchy zooplankton. If you have a water-proof bag (large or small), this is useful to protect valuables. Don't forget a protective wind-proof hat! Binoculars and camera come in very handy to spot wildlife and record what you see. This is of course optional and we will also provide you with a 'best of' series of photographs at the end of the trip.

Wi-Fi

This is not available everywhere, especially when we are camping, but you should be able to get in touch with the home front every 3 days at the very least

Food

If you are vegetarian or have food allergies, kindly inform us in sufficient detail upfront of the trip. Please note that vegetables can be quite repetitive on this trip, so feel free to bring some food with you to diversify if needed.

Pocket money

This is mainly for souvenirs, massage, soft drinks, alcohol and food for the days when not included or for sightseeing before or after your trip. While this is highly variable, we recommend you have the equivalent of 200-300 € with you during the trip. For scuba diving, payment by Visa or Mastercard is available. You can change euros at the Ivato Airport at a standard rate or take out Ariary out of the ATM machine with your credit card. Visa cards are generally more accepted than Mastercard in Madagascar.