

# 55th AGA – Post-AGA Tour

**23 September–2 October 2024**  
**Southern Madagascar**

## **ITINERARY**

### **Day 1 — 23 September: Arrival in Antananarivo (Dinner)**

A member of the ASISTEN Travel team, an award winning Madagascar tour operator and Destination Management Company, will welcome you and participants taking the Nosy Be tour in the international arrivals hall at Ivato International Airport, Antananarivo. Look out for a sign with your name after you exit the restricted area with your luggage. You will then be led to your vehicle for your private transfer to the Radisson Blu Antananarivo Waterfront Hotel where you can relax or explore the nearby attractions.

Dinner and overnight at the Radisson Blu Antananarivo Waterfront Hotel.



## **Day 2 — 24 September: Antananarivo and Andasibe (Breakfast and Dinner)**

Breakfast at the hotel and then meet your guide at 08:00 in the lobby.

The day will start with a visit to Antananarivo's central business district (CBD) and downtown. You will visit the city's main CBD and administrative neighbourhoods, which spread out from the city's railroad station at Soarano, the Avenue of Independence and the place of the "Zoma" (Friday market), the largest open air market in the world. You will have the opportunity to climb one of the many stairways called 'totobato' which will lead you to the CBD, the street of jewellers and the presidential palace.

We then commence our journey towards the eastern part of the island and Anasibe. After exiting the busy and colourful city of Antananarivo, we reach Route Nationale 2, the main commercial road of the country which leads to the east coast of Madagascar and its main harbour. During our 150 km, 3½ hour drive, we will see various landscapes of the highlands such as small traditional villages perched on hill sides and rice fields.

We will make a stop at the Peyrieras Butterfly Farm, Madagascar Exotic. It is a small privately run reserve at Marozevo, between the towns of Manjakandriana and Moramanga. It was founded and owned by the French entomologist and naturalist André Peyriéras, which is why it is also known as the Reserve Peyrieras. The reserve includes many reptiles (chameleons, iguanas, geckos, frogs), bats, crocodiles and butterflies. The adjacent forest area supports families of relocated and habituated Verreaux's Sifaka and the common brown lemur which provide opportunities to photograph them close up at feeding times.

Continuing on the tour, a twisty, steep and lush portion of the road will announce that we are entering another region of Madagascar. Soon you will arrive in Andasibe, known for its Andasibe-Mantadia National Park, home of a primary and secondary forest.

Adjoining the National Park is the Vakona reserve on an island surrounded by fresh water that is home to various species of lemurs: common brown lemurs, bamboo lemurs, ruffed lemurs, diademed sifakas. Numerous crocodiles that once belonged to a former farm can also be found in one of the Vakona lakes. Visiting the reserve will give you a rare opportunity to get up close and interact with these primates. Amazing photo opportunities and souvenirs will be the result of that visit.



*(continued)*

## **Day 2 — (continued)**

At nightfall, pick up your headlamps and flashlights for a nocturnal walk in the VOIMMA reserve run by the local community. For reptiles and amphibian lovers, the reserve offers countless frogs along its crystal clear river (among them *Boophis pyrrhus*, *Boophis viridis* and *madagascariensis*) and several amazing chameleons (*Furcifer wilsii*, *Calumma parsonii cristifer*, *Calumma nasuta* and *brevicornis*) in the forest. This is also a place to find the unique satanic leaf-tailed gecko (*Uroplatus phantasticus*) as well as bizarre insects like the famous giraffe necked weevil (*Trachelophorus giraffae*).

Dinner and overnight at the Mantadia Lodge.

## **Day 3 — 25 September: Analamazaotra and Andasibe (Breakfast and Dinner)**

Breakfast at the lodge.

In order to have the best observation conditions in the Analamazaotra special reserve, we will leave the lodge early this morning. In the reserve we will be looking for the biggest lemur of Madagascar: the famous Indri Indri which is endemic to the reserve. After an easy 2 to 3 hours hike, we will search for groups of Indri Indri and other species of lemurs, birds, chameleons, etc. as well as endemic flora such as orchids and medicinal plants.



At the next stop you will witness the daily life of a calm and colourful Andasibe village. With your guide, you will walk in the narrow and unpaved cobbled streets along the small stalls. You will have several chances to interact with local villagers and see how they make a living and occupy their free time. The walk starts at the old colonial train station with its alpine architecture which was home to the once very fashionable restaurant "Buffet de la Gare" in the 1930s.

Dinner and overnight at the Mantadia Lodge.

## Day 4 — 26 September: Antsirabe (Breakfast and Dinner)

Breakfast at the lodge.

At the beginning of drive from Andasibe, on the famous scenic National Road 7, you will have the first taste of the Malagasy highlands scenery: rice fields, mountains and typical villages. The numerous fruit and vegetable stalls show that it's a very fertile region and you will have the opportunity to witness locals working in their fields. We will climb to about 1,500 m by the time we arrive in Antsirabe. Due to the altitude, the climate of the region is very cool and temperatures can drop to 0 C during the winter. The city was founded by a Norwegian missionary, T.G. Rosaas, in 1872 as a hill station to serve as a retreat centre. This is also the city where Moroccan King Mohamed V was exiled in 1955 at the palace which is now the Hotel des Thermes. Today, the city is a major industrial centre producing beer and cotton fabrics.



Antsirabe has numerous workshops with quality handicrafts: recycled metal is used to make miniature bikes and cars, zebu horns are used as a material for decorative objects or cooking accessories, precious and semi-precious gemstones are polished to become jewels. You will have the opportunity to see how these local products are transformed thanks to the ingenuity of these craftsmen.

Visiting a Silk Landy you will be given a short demonstration of the local silk producing process. Madagascar is home to an endemic species of silkworm which feeds on tapia trees in the wild and whose cocoons are threaded and woven like “conventional” silk. The labour intensive production process of this “wild silk” is evident in this workshop.

At any given hour of the day, there are more than 6,000 men pulling the “pousse-pousse” across the city. Antsirabe would not be Antsirabe without the rickshaws. Take a pousse-pousse on a short tour of downtown in the mostly used means of transportation in the city.

Dinner and overnight at the Couleur Café hotel.

## **Day 5 — 27 September: Ambositra and Ranomafana (Breakfast and Dinner)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Our journey continues heading south across the highlands to reach Ambositra, the Malagasy handicrafts capital. In this city known for its Zafimaniry art, we will visit different handcrafters workshops: wood carvers who make beautiful statues, furniture and souvenirs. The wood crafting knowledge of the Zafimaniry is inscribed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Today, approximately 25,000 Zafimaniry live in some one hundred villages and hamlets scattered in the highlands of this region.

The Zafimaniry community is the sole remaining repository of a unique woodcraft culture previously widespread on the island. For generations, Zafimaniry foresters, carpenters and craftworkers have developed a body of practical knowledge and skills revolving around wood. This craft tradition bears witness to the central role of this material in all aspects of life and death. Practically all wooden surfaces: walls, window frames, posts, beams, stools, chests and tools display elaborate ornamentation.

The geometric patterns are highly codified and reflect not only the community's Austronesian origins but also the Arab influences in Malagasy culture. Although the number of motifs is limited, the creativity of the craftworkers means that no two pieces are identical. These motifs carry rich symbolic significance related to Zafimaniry beliefs and values. For example, the tanamparoratra (spider's web) symbolizes family ties, while the papintantely (honeycomb) represents community life. The ornamentation also informs about roles and social standing within the community.

After lunch we will hit the road in the afternoon to reach the rainforest in Ranomafana where we will enter at night to find animals such as the fossa (small puma), chameleons, frogs and the *Microcebus griseorufus* which is the smallest lemur in the world measuring only 12 cm long. We may also be lucky and spot the small and shy brown lemur attracted by the smell of bananas.

Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Thermal Ranomafana.



## **Day 6 — 28 September: Ranomafana National Park (Breakfast and Dinner)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

Today we will explore the Ranomafana National Park which is located in the southeastern part of Madagascar in Haute Matsiatra and Vatovavy-Fitovinany. With more than 41,600 hectares of tropical rainforest, the park is home to several rare species of flora and fauna including the golden bamboo lemur, the greater bamboo lemur, black and white ruffed lemur and the Milne Edwards's sifaka as well as over 120 species of frogs. Pitta like ground rollers, blue vangas, short-legged ground rollers and brown mesites can be seen.



The Ranomafana National Park was established in 1991 with the purpose of conserving the unique biodiversity of the local ecosystem and reducing the human pressures on the protected area. It is part of the World Heritage Site Rainforests of the Atsinanana. The flora and fauna of Ranomafana have been subject to extensive scientific research and various scientific publications have been published about this protected area.

We will enter the wet and dense park forest where new species of plants and animals have recently been discovered and it is assumed there is still flora and fauna yet to be discovered. It is in the park's forest that we will also see lemurs in their natural habitat.

Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Thermal Ranomafana.

## **Day 7 — 29 September: Fianarantsoa and Ambalavao (Breakfast and Dinner)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

The day commences with a visit to the city of Fianarantsoa which means "good education" in Malagasy. It is a cultural and intellectual centre for the whole island and is home to some of the oldest Protestant and Lutheran cathedrals on the island and the oldest theological seminary. The city is considered to be the capital of wine in Madagascar because of the presence of many wine industries in the city.

Fianarantsoa was placed by the World Monuments Fund on its 2008 Watch List of the 100 Most Endangered Sites. The Fianarantsoa old city occupies a dramatic hilltop setting once topped with a palace used by the Merina royal family during state visits. While the palace is no longer there, some 500 homes built between 1870 and 1900 by those affiliated with the royal retinue still line the city's picturesque cobblestone streets. Buildings dating from this period survived because a royal edict forbidding commoners from using durable building materials. Moreover, the old city is the only place in Madagascar where 19th century buildings form a coherent architectural ensemble.

We continue our road trip with the majestic Andringitra Massif in the background as we leave the highlands of Madagascar and enter a new microclimate: the dry bush and semi-desert of southern Madagascar. The first stop is in the small town of Ambalavao, one of the cultural treasures with its architectural houses with verandas. There we will visit the Antemoro paper mill which produces Antemoro paper to see first-hand the process of making the inlaid paper made from plants and flowers that is exported worldwide to make beautiful greeting cards.

The Antemoro (or Antaimoro) are an ethnic group of Madagascar. This ethnic group traces its origins back to Arab settlers who arrived from Mecca in the 15th or 16th century. Upon settling in Madagascar, the Arab settlers converted the Antemoro to Islam; the religion was soon abandoned in favour of traditional beliefs and practices associated with respect for their ancestors. The Antemoro soon developed a reputation as powerful sorcerers and astrologers, in large part owing to their monopoly on knowledge of writing, termed sorabe, which uses the Arabic script to transcribe the Malagasy language.

After leaving Ambalavao we will spend sometime at the Anja Community Reserve which is a unique environmental and cultural preservation site in the south of Madagascar. As both a nature reserve and a growing Malagasy town, Anja is an example of how humans and nature can co-exist and flourish.

*(continued)*

## **Day 7 — (continued)**

The forest in Anja was designated a protected area reserve by the Government of Madagascar in 1999. Management of the forest was officially transferred to the local association Anja Miray and the reserve extends over 30 hectares. The space is enriched with an ecological wealth of flora and fauna species, most notable for its dense population of semi-tame ring-tailed lemurs.

From Anja we head for Ranohira enjoying a very unique landscape as you are transported to the Isalo Rock Lodge which is set in the rock formations of Isalo.

Dinner and overnight at the Isalo Rock Lodge.

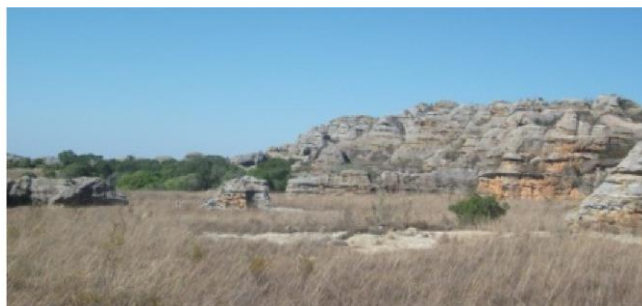
## **Day 8 — 30 September: Ranohira (Isalo) (Breakfast and Dinner)**

Breakfast at the lodge.

Accompanied by your park ranger, we will hike through the canyons and oases of Isalo National Park and its lunar landscape to reach some waterfalls. This environment was formed during the Jurassic age and now unique flora has evolved adapting to the current climate. There are 77 species of birds that live in the park among which is the rare and famous Benson rock-thrush (*Pseudocossyphus bensoni*). During our hike we will see different species of lemurs including the world famous ring-tailed lemur. After the canyons we continue to a place where we can see a panoramic view of the landscape and then there will be an opportunity to relax in this environment and swim in the natural pools.

A 30-minute drive from the park brings us to the village of the Bara tribe, a semi-nomadic, zebu-herding clan. The chief of the village will host our group and describe their daily life and challenges then answer any questions through an interpreter.

At the end of the day in this luna landscape you will enjoy a specialty prepared cocktail on a small hill called "Giorgio's window" before returning to the lodge.



Dinner and overnight at the Isalo Rock Lodge.



## **Day 9 — 1 October: Ilakaka and Antsokay (Breakfast and Dinner)**

Breakfast at the lodge.

On our way to Ilakaka we will pass numerous villages created in the sapphire rush and cross a dry deciduous forest and see the first baobabs on the National Road 7.

Since the discovery of sapphires in 1998 in Ilakaka, the population of has swelled. The locals quickly found a thriving market with Thai and Malagasy merchants. Within months, miners from around the island settled near the bridge on the Ilakaka River and a boomtown was born. Ilakaka is a much quieter place today but Sri Lankan, Thai, and Malagasy gem traders still conduct business. Ilakaka-Sakaraha probably still surpasses Sri Lanka as the world's main source for blue and pink sapphires.

In association with the company Color Line led by a Swiss gemologist, we visit a spectacular open pit sapphire mine. You will be able to witness the harsh and archaic conditions in which the miners accomplish their work. After the mine visit, if you wish, we can stop at the Color Line showroom which is located in the heart of Ilakaka. This showroom displays a broad range of gemstones extracted in the region and locally designed jewellery.

Next stop will be the Antsokay Arboretum a botanical garden located near the city of Toliara which is 2 km north of the Tropic of Capricorn and 3 km from the Mozambique Canal waters. The guided tour on the botanical trail will open your eyes to the ingenuity of a diverse flora that has adapted, sometimes in extraordinary ways, to the heat and drought of this region. You will also discover the relationship that has developed between mankind and the plant kingdom through the use of medicinal plants.

The Arboretum has a collection of over 900 plant species from the southwest of Madagascar, 90% are endemic to the region and 80% have medicinal properties. Among these many succulent species are recognised as endangered. More than 25 species of reptiles and mammals are also found there. Among the most common are the *Furcifer verrucosus*, *Oplurus cyclurus* and *Phelsuma mutabilis*. It will also be an opportunity to see once again the smallest lemur of Madagascar, the *Microcebus griseorufus*.

Dinner and overnight at the MorInga Hotel, Toliara.

## **Day 10 — 2 October: Toliara to Antananarivo and Departure (Breakfast)**

Breakfast at the hotel.

You will be transferred to the domestic terminal of Toliara Airport for a Tsaradia flight to Ivato International Airport, Antananarivo, to connect with your departure flight at the end of the tour.

If, however, your time permits, and if you are looking for souvenirs to take home, you will be taken to an appropriate Antananarivo market. Among them, The Marche artisanal Digue is considered as the biggest market for local handicrafts. This bustling market sells everything from embroidery items to wood carvings and creations made of smooth leather. Apart from the handicrafts, the Digue also offers semi-precious coloured stones and home decor creations made from rare silks. From the market you will be transferred to Ivato International Airport for your departure flight at the end of your tour.

## 55th WACA — Post-AGA Tour (Southern Madagascar) Package Details

**Date:** 23 September–2 October 2024.

**Cost:** USD 2,200.00 per person based on double occupancy. Single occupancy supplement USD 575.00.

**Registration Deadline:** 30 March 2024.

**Registration Form:** can be downloaded from the Events section of the WACA website [www.waca.org](http://www.waca.org) or requested by e-mail from Mr. Keith Miller, WACA Administration Manager at [wacaworld@outlook.com](mailto:wacaworld@outlook.com).

**Payments:** a deposit of USD 800.00 per participant is required to be confirmed on the package. It can be made by cheque, money order or bank draft in United States dollars made payable to the World Airlines Clubs Association and sent with the duly completed Registration Form to: World Airlines Clubs Association, c/o Mr Keith Miller, 644 Westwood Avenue, Dorval, Quebec, Canada H9P 2M5.

The balance of payment can be made in the same manner as above and must be sent by 15 June 2024 at the latest.

Payment can also be made by bank transfer to WACA's bank account as follows:

Bank of Montreal, 2005 Peel Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 1T7.

Account name: World Airlines Clubs Association.

Account number: 4600-790.

Transit number: 01581-001.

Swift code: bofmcam2.

*It is most important to note that bank transfer charges **for both** the issuing and receiving banks must be borne by the participant. WACA's Bank of Montreal charges USD 16.00 for each transfer received.*

Regretfully, WACA does not have the capability to accept payments by credit card. Payment by PayPal is also not an option due to the high service charge incurred.

*Note: deposits are subject to a USD 50.00 cancellation fee up to 1 April 2024. No deposit will be refunded after that date.*

### Package Includes

- Nine night's accommodation based on double occupancy at the hotels and lodges as indicated in the programme.
- Nine breakfasts and nine dinners.
- Transportation in air-conditioned coaches with an English speaking guide and site entrance fees included.
- Domestic flight from Toliara to Antananarivo with Tsaradia in economy class (*one checked bag allowance of 20 kg maximum and one piece of hand luggage of 5 kg maximum*).
- Transfer on arrival/departure: airport/hotel/airport.
- WACA fee of USD 20.00 per participant.

**Package Excludes**

- International airfares.
- Personal expenses, e.g. laundry, telephone calls, Internet connection, etc.
- Meals, drinks, optional tours, etc. unless specified in the programme.
- Gratuities for guides and drivers.
- Travel and personal insurance.
- Visa fee.
- Any other miscellaneous items as applicable.

*Should you have any questions about this post-AGA tour, or require any further details, please send an e-mail to [maga@intnet.mu](mailto:maga@intnet.mu) or [jpierrot@hotmail.com](mailto:jpierrot@hotmail.com).*