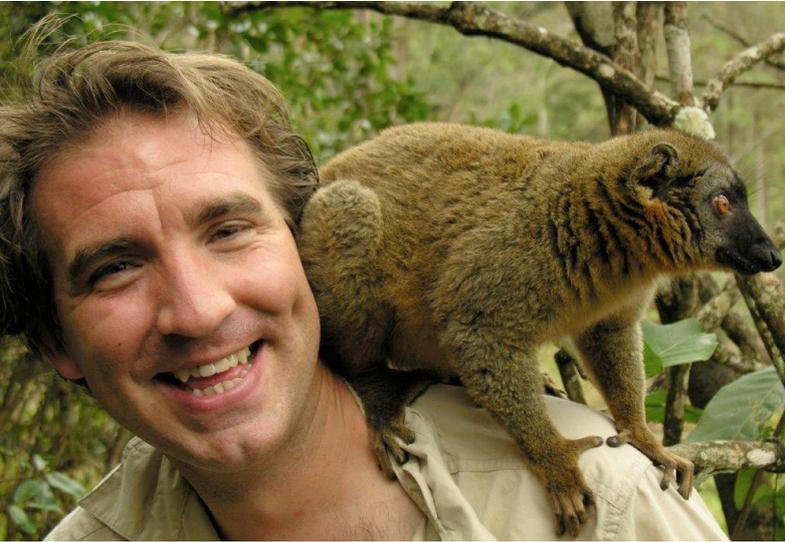




**Stewart
McPherson**



Natural History Tours



WILDLIFE OF MADAGASCAR EXPEDITION

The vast island of Madagascar has some of the highest concentrations of unique plant and animal species found anywhere on Earth. The island's varied topography ranges from soaring highlands to spectacular coastlines, supporting distinct climatic zones that range from steaming tropical rainforest habitats, unique spiny forest and arid desert plains. Up to 90 % of the wildlife of these habitats can be seen nowhere else.

This expedition offers you the chance to explore Madagascar's best nature reserves. Doing so supports conservation efforts, and allows you to come face to face with Madagascar's most emblematic wildlife.

This trip will leave you completely spellbound! Typically, we see 18 species of lemur, 12 species of chameleon (including the world's smallest, the Brookesia chameleon), 4 species of leaf tailed gecko, tenrecs, many amazing snakes, numerous mantids, hissing cockroaches, several owls and nightjars, crocodiles, day geckos, tortoises and giraffe beetles. The plant life was no less mind-blowing; from carnivorous pitcher plants (*Nepenthes madagascariensis*), four species of ancient baobabs, *Alluaudia* (Octopus trees) to *Pachypodium*, *Euphorbia*, and many orchids. We explore rainforest, dry spiny forest, gallery forest and semi-desert, with adventures to the incredible Tsingy, rock tower pinnacles carved in sandstone or limestone).

START POINT:	Antananarivo International Airport, Madagascar.
END POINT:	Antananarivo International Airport, Madagascar.
EXPEDITION LEADER:	Stewart McPherson (experienced naturalist)
DATES:	November 2017
IDEAL GROUP SIZE:	8 to 10 tourists, plus Stewart McPherson as expedition leader. Groups can be bigger.
PROMO VIDEO	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z37IUYDlvjM&t=57s4

Cost per person: \$4711.00 per person Twin share – Land only
Single Supplement on request



ITINERARY

Day 1: Meet in Antananarivo and drive to Peyreiras Reptile Reserve (approx 3 hours) to see up close captive panther chameleons, island chameleons, stump-tail chameleons, Brookesia chameleons, golden mantela frogs, tomato frogs, Madagascar tree boas, leaf-nose snakes, cat-eyed snakes, tenrecs, numerous species of leaf tail geckos. The curators of the reserve usually take the animals out of their enclosures to allow close photographs. Overnight and dinner at the luxurious Vakona lodge.

Day 2: Visit the Andasibe-Mantadia National Park and trek along trails to see wild diademed sifakas, wooly sifakas, common brown lemur and the famous indri indri (the biggest lemur of all!). Sightings are usually close up (a few metres above in the trees). Explore the trails for orchids and birdlife. Visit the Vakona lodge's reserve to see semi-wild/semi-tame common brown sifaka, grey bamboo lemurs and the black and white ruffed lemurs (the rangers feed these species as points along the trail allowing close encounters and excellent photograph opportunities). Overnight and dinner at Vakona lodge.

Day 3: Early start at 6.00 am for breakfast, then drive from Vakona to Ansirabe, and then to Ambositra. The 4 hour drive to Ansirabe passes through a landscape of mountains and rice fields. Ansirabe is a pretty town that is a blend of Malagasy culture and European architecture. We can tour local gemstone and crafts workshops to watch the cutting and polishing of gemstone, and artifacts made of zebu horns. After lunch, we continue for another 1.5 hours to reach Ambositra. Overnight and dinner at Artisan Hotel.

Day 4: Early start to visit Zafimaniry woodcarving shops (this art is classified as 'world heritage' by UNESCO). We then visit Ranomafana national park - home of twelve lemur species. Many are easy to spot, including the golden bamboo lemur, eastern woolly lemur, red bellied lemur, eastern grey bamboo lemur, greater bamboo lemur, red-fronted brown lemur, black-and-white ruffed lemur, Milne-Edward's sifaka and the small-toothed sportive lemur. We can spent time to see the greater dwarf lemur, the brown mouse lemur and (with luck) the very rare aye-aye (known for its uniquely thin fore-fingers). Other mammals include 7 species of tenrecs, 8 bats, the Malagasy striped civet and several mongooses. Many species of chameleons are often seen, as well as diverse birdlife,





including the huge Henst's Goshawk, the timid Brown Mesite, Madagascar wood rail, the stunning blue coua, the secretive yellow-brow coua. Visitors often see mixed flocks containing spectacled and gray-crowned greenbuls, pitta-like ground-roller, green Jery, and Rand's warbler). Overnight and dinner at Setam Hotel.

Day 5: After breakfast, we depart the highlands and drive South towards the semi-dry plains, stopping in Ambalavao, one of Madagascar's cultural hubs, boasting architectural treasures such as its Gothic cathedral and quaint, veranda-lined houses, all surrounded by boulder like mountains. We visit the Anja Reserve where ring-tailed lemurs abound, along with Barbour's day geckos, girdled lizards and the bizarre Malagasy lantern bug *Zanna madagascariensis*. Overnight at the Orchidee Hotel in Ranohira.

Day 6: Today we drive to Isalo National Park, home to some of Madagascar's most stunning scenery, with barren landscapes, twisted rock formations and extraordinary plant life, including Bismarck palms, elephant's feet (*Pachypodium*), endemic Aloe and other xerophytes. During our full day visit, we encounter lemurs, including sifakas and red-fronted lemurs, as well as waterfalls, canyons and natural swimming pools. If we are very lucky, mouse lemurs may also be seen. We overnight at the beautifully situated La Mira Hotel on the beach front in Toliara.

Day 7: Early morning visit to Ifaty spiny forest to see the plants that make up this unique Madagascan ecoregion, including baobabs (*Adansonia za*) and Madagascan ocotillo (*Alluaudia procera*), both adapted to extreme drought. We then head back to Toliara and drive to the airport for our flight to Fort Dauphin. The flight is scheduled to arrive at Fort Dauphin in the early afternoon, after which we check into our accommodation and drive for a short distance to the north to see vast populations of the endemic pitcher plant *Nepenthes madagascariensis* in a preserved wetland, as well as (with luck) ring tailed lemurs. We return to Fort Dauphin before sunset. Dinner and overnight in Talinjoo Hotel, a truly charming and characterful cliff-top hotel surrounded by incredible beaches.

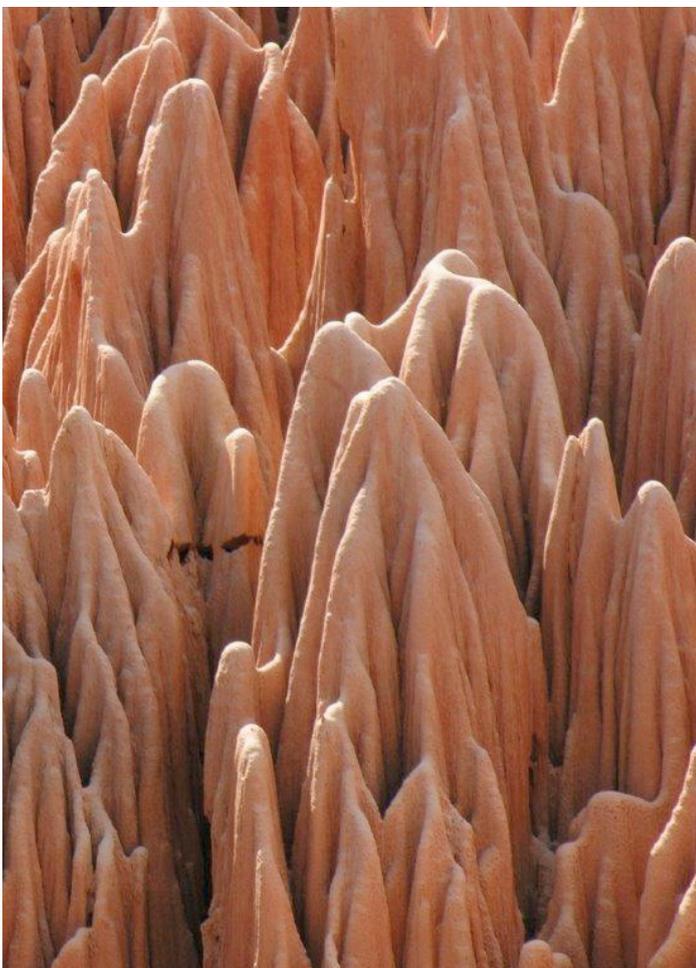
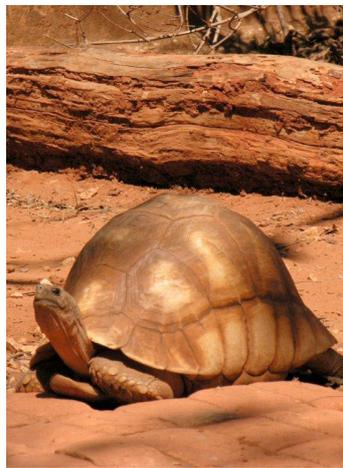
Day 8: An early breakfast is followed by a 2 hour drive inland to the Berenty private reserve. The drive is fascinating, passing through spiny forest, home



to baobabs, several species of *Alluaudia* (ocotillo or octopus trees), *Pachypodium*, and *Euphorbia*. Berenty is home to six species of lemur and the south's largest colony of Madagascar fruit bats. The ease with which one can observe sauntering ring-tailed lemurs and 'dancing' Verreaux sifakas has turned this small protected area into one of the Madagascar's prime destinations. We can explore several trails and visit an arboretum and spiny forest preserve that is full of life: tortoises, sportive lemurs, Scop's owls, hissing cockroaches, aloes and bats. The spiny forest is truly fascinating. We can also visit an excellent ethnological museum that depicts the life of the local tribe, the Antandroy, and features a reconstructed Antandroy village. We drive back to Fort Dauphin and overnight and dine in the Talinjoo Hotel.

Day 9: Depending upon the time of the outbound flight, we can visit the Nahampoana Reserve, close to Fort Dauphin. This park-like preserve harbours four species of lemur that are semi-tame; ring-tailed, red-fronted brown and bamboo lemurs jostle alongside sifakas, which are the stars of the park. Their small, white, fuzzy heads with black faces and snouts are gracefully balanced as they move over the ground in their famous "dance" as they run across the ground, between the trees. The well-kept gardens show a good sample of Madagascar's dry plants with their three-cornered palms, spiny *Desiderata* trees and stands of bamboo. Our flight takes us back to Antananarivo. Here we can undertake a city tour in the late afternoon, or visit Lake Tsarasaotra, a 27 hectare site renowned for its birds, including the night heron, endangered pond heron, Meller's duck and Madagascar little grebe. Overnight and dine in the A&C Hotel.

Day 10: Fly to Antsiranana (Diego Suarez) then drive to Ankarana national park. This reserve contains one of the highest density of primates of any forest in the world. Its forests support one of the largest and least disturbed populations of crowned lemurs. Sanford's brown lemur, perrier's black lemur, northern sportive lemur and dwarf lemurs, ringtailed mongoose, fossa, tenrecs and Madagascar striped civet are also a common sight. Almost 100 bird species, 50 reptiles (including some endemic and threatened snakes and geckos) and 10 frogs cohabit inside the park. Inside the spectacular and huge labyrinth of caves are 14 bat species, local endemic blind shrimps and the world's only known cave-living crocodiles. At night swarms of bats and flying foxes swoop in the



darkness. Overnight and dine at Relais de L'Ankarana Hotel.

Day 11: Full day exploring Ankarana National Park, including a hike through bizarre landscapes of limestone mixed with patches of dense tropical jungle, deciduous forest, deep caves and canyons (actually the largest underground network in Africa) and rushing rivers. With an annual rainfall of almost 2000 mm, the underlying rocks undergo heavy erosion producing an amazing karst topography, including the famous limestone spires, known as "tsingy". The Park is one of the most visited in Madagascar for its terrific landscapes and large animal populations. Overnight and dine at Relais de L'Ankarana hotel.

Day 12: Drive to Joffreville, close to Montagne d'Ambre national park (Ambout Mountain). Along the way, we visit the famous Tsingy Rouge. An almost alien landscape of red sandstone carved into intricate spires and towers. We can explore a trail amongst the spectacular formations, before returning to the vehicles and arriving at Joffreville. Overnight and dine at Nature Lodge Hotel.

Day 13: Morning visit to the Montagne d'Ambre national park. The park offers a great biodiversity: a large tropical forest with endemic fauna and flora, luxuriant vegetation and many waterfalls and volcanic lakes. With a guide, we search for *Brookesia minima*, one of the smallest chameleons in the world (less than 25 mm in length), and several species of leaf tail geckos. We also look for the ring-tailed mongoose, the fossa, and as many as 8 different lemurs (Sanford's brown lemur, crowned lemur, lesser bamboo lemur and are five species of nocturnal lemurs)! The forests are home to 75 different bird species (35 of which are endemic to Amber Mountain, such as the Amber Mountain rock-thrush). With luck, we find the stump-tailed chameleon, spot snakes, and study some of the 35 frogs and more than 40 butterflies known. We then fly back to Antananarivo. Visiting the Anjozorobe forest, we have the opportunity of a night walk to spot mouse lemurs and chameleons. Overnight and dine in the A&C Hotel.

Day 14: Morning visit to Anjozorobe reserve to see the day active Indri indri and golden sifaka before returning to Antananarivo where we dine and overnight at the A&C Hotel.

Day 15: Transfers to the airport for departing flights. Those with additional time to spare can walk around Antananarivo city to take in some of the local sights and sounds, including the local markets and historic buildings.



WILDLIFE OF MADAGASCAR EXPEDITION

EASY: anyone with a normal level of health and stamina, capable of walking two or three kilometres across flat terrain will be able to complete this expedition. This trip does not involve any difficult trekking or walking, and most activities involve following well laid out, marked trails within national parks with guides.

ACCOMMODATION: a mixture of hotels and resorts – many of which are very luxurious. Most accommodation during this trip is the equivalent of 3 to 4 STAR accommodation by international ratings standards. When in the lowlands, all hotels used have air conditioning. Single supplement is available on request.