
GEEO ITINERARY

Madagascar

Day 1: Antananarivo Arrive in Antananarivo at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

Arrive in Antananarivo at any time. Due to the potential for flight delays or cancellations, we recommend that you plan to arrive in Africa at least a day in advance. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference and overcome any jetlag. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Antananarivo before and/or after the trip. Please note that check-in at the hotel is usually around 2:00-3:00 p.m. There are no planned activities until an intro meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m., usually in the hotel lobby. Check for a sign or ask at the reception desk about the exact time and location of the group meeting. Please make every effort to arrive in time for this meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up tomorrow. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another. Antananarivo, the capital city of Madagascar, is located in the island's Central Highlands. Overlooking the city is the Rova of Antananarivo palace complex, the center of the Merina kingdom from the 17th century. It features wooden houses and royal tombs. The pink baroque Andafiavaratra Palace sits in the nearby Haute Ville neighborhood. In the city center, heart-shaped Lake Anosy is ringed by jacaranda trees.

Day 2: Antananarivo/Andasibe Travel to Andasibe-Perinet National Park. Stay in a quiet area near Andasibe and explore the Indri Special Reserve.

This morning, we depart the capital and head east to the world-renowned Andasibe-Perinet National Park. During your free time over the next two days, you might opt to visit other small private or community reserves around Andasibe or go on guided night walks in those reserves or along the main road. You might also choose to walk to the little town of Andasibe, or simply enjoy the relaxing tranquility of the surrounding forest. Please note: Our accommodation here is simple bungalows. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle

Day 3: Andasibe Spend the day exploring the national park.

Today, we explore the Indri Special Reserve and Andasibe National Park. One of the park's primary purposes is to protect the natural habitat of the indri, a large black and white diurnal lemur species that feeds on leaves and fruit. In addition to the indri, the park has ten other diurnal and nocturnal lemur species, large chameleons, and the rarely-seen blue boa. The flora is just as spectacular, with numerous species of trees, palms, and orchids.

Day 4: Andasibe/Antsirabe Travel to the colonial city of Antsirabe, stopping along the way to see rice paddies and artisan workshops.

Today, we travel to the ancient colonial town of Antsirabe. During the drive, you will see Merina tombs and the labor-intensive cultivation of rice paddies. We will stop in Ambatolampy to visit a traditional family-run aluminum cookware factory. Antsirabe is known for its thermal springs and baths, as well as its precious and semi-precious stones and handicrafts. You will have the opportunity to explore this quaint little city upon arrival. Approximate travel time: 7-8 hrs by private vehicle

Day 5: Antsirabe/Fiadanana (L, D) Visit Lake Andraikiba before continuing to the small village of Fiadanana. Opt to explore this beautiful village by foot, bicycle, or in a famous "pousse-pousse."

After a short visit to Lake Andraikiba, we will have a tough three-hour hike over rocky and hilly terrain to the small village of Fiadanana. (If you cannot handle the hike, you will stay in Antsirabe for the night and

then be picked up by the group the next day.) This beautiful village is surrounded by breathtaking landscapes of rice fields and panoramic views of the nearby mountains. See how the villagers live by interacting with them, and enjoy the chance to learn their rituals during an authentic community experience. You can explore this small, beautiful village on foot. We will also have the opportunity to listen to a ghost talker, enjoy a stay at a community guesthouse, and share dinner with a local family. Please note: Accommodation is in a traditional-style house that has been purpose-built to meet the needs of guests. There is a kitchen and a dining/lounge area to enjoy lunch or a drink, and a beautiful veranda overlooking the rice terraces. It is equipped with shared, basic shower facilities and outdoor toilets (a squat toilet and a Western-style toilet). The accommodations are basic, but the experience of living like a local and staying somewhere unique and remote for one night will be worth it. Approximate travel time: 1 hr by private vehicle, 3 hrs by foot

Day 6: Fiadanana/Ranomafana (B) Hike back to the bus and take in the stunning views. Continue on to Ranomafana. Learn traditional rituals from the local villagers.

This morning, we enjoy a local breakfast before hiking back out to the bus (about 2-2.5 miles). After picking up non-hikers, continue on a long drive to Ranomafana, a little village named after the hot springs in the valley. The nearby national park is one of the most significant wildlife observation sites in Madagascar. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by foot, 7 hrs by private vehicle

Day 7: Ranomafana/Ambalavao Opt for an early morning forest walk to get a feel for the incredible wildlife of the area, or explore on your own. In the afternoon, enjoy a scenic journey south through Madagascar's wine-producing region.

In the morning, enjoy an optional walk in the forest to see golden bamboo lemurs, greater bamboo lemurs, and other lemur species. You may also see reptiles such as the Madagascar boa, chameleons (the largest rainforest species being the Parson's chameleon), or the well-camouflaged leaf-tailed gecko. We then depart Ranomafana and enjoy the fascinating changes in the landscape as we travel to the rural town of Ambalavao. Ambalavao is famous for its "Papier Antemoro," a papyrus-type paper impregnated with dried flowers and sold throughout the island. We will visit a little paper factory, where the locals will tell us about the traditional methods used to produce this unique handmade paper. You can even buy some and use it to write letters to your friends and family back home. We will then take a group trip into town to wander through the open market and perhaps shop for a locally-made handicraft. If time allows, we will also visit a silk factory and learn about the local way of making fabric from silk and dyeing it using natural dyes. Approximate travel time: 3.5 hrs by private vehicle

Day 8: Ambalavao/Ranohira Continue on through the changing landscape to Ranohira and Isalo National Park. Stop along the way at Anja Community Reserve.

Today, we journey from Ambalavao to the Anja Community Reserve, which is known for having some of the most accessible groups of ring-tailed lemurs in the country. Enjoy watching and learning about these fascinating creatures. We then travel through the savannah until the massif of Isalo becomes clearly visible at our destination, Isalo National Park. Approximate travel time: 4 hrs by private vehicle

Day 9: Ranohira Spend a full day exploring the park on foot, stopping at a natural swimming pool and waterfalls.

Spend the day exploring Isalo. Start with a short trek within a small canyon, before taking a break from the sun and stopping at a fresh natural swimming pool. We then continue on to the cascades, considered to be one of the best waterfalls in Madagascar, with a large natural swimming pool. With a little luck, you may see sifaka, brown, or ring-tailed lemurs. Later, we'll participate in a tree planting activity and learn about why deforestation is such a big problem in Madagascar. Get hands-on as you plant indigenous

trees alongside the rest of the group as part of a project initiated by local organization Soa Zara, who are working to protect the environment around the town of Ranohira through tree planting, conservation education, sanitation projects, and other initiatives.

Day 10: Ranohira/Ifaty Drive through the desert landscape, viewing Mahafaly tombs and giant baobab trees en route. Continue to the beautiful Mozambican Channel beaches of Ifaty.

En route to Toliara, we drive through the wide-open and vast desert landscape, passing through several unique frontier-style sapphire mining towns. We'll also spot some beautiful baobab trees and pass by the tombs of the Mahafaly, a local tribe in Madagascar known predominantly for its large tombs. They were built for chiefs and kings and are covered in stones, sculptures, and horns. The more important the deceased, the more horns and statues with which the tomb is adorned. One of the largest tombs has over 700 zebu horns! As this is a sacred site, we will just be passing by, and photography is not permitted. Continue on to Ifaty to relax and enjoy the beautiful beaches on the Mozambican Channel. Approximate travel time: 6 hrs by private vehicle

Day 11: Ifaty Spend two full days enjoying this gorgeous area. Opt to do some hiking or hit the beach.

The next two days are free days for you to enjoy the Ifaty area. There is plenty to see and do in Ifaty, and we want to make sure that you have some time to take it all in. Feel free to relax or try optional activities like a visit to the Spiny Forest Reserve, a dugout canoe ride, snorkeling, or simply relaxing on the beach. See our optional activities list further below for ideas on how to spend your free time. Your tour leader has more ideas if you need them. Just ask!

Day 12: Ifaty Second day of free time in Ifaty

Spend another free day enjoying Ifaty.

Day 13: Ifaty/Antananarivo Travel to Toliara for a flight to Antananarivo. Opt for one final night out on the town.

This morning, we travel to Toliara for a flight back to Antananarivo. Once back in Tana, your group might choose to head out for one last night out on the town. Due to the unpredictability of local flights, if we are unable to secure your domestic flight, we will instead transport you in 4x4 vehicles. This journey can take approximately 10 hours. Approximate travel time: 1 hr by plane or 10 hrs by 4x4

Day 14: Antananarivo Depart Antananarivo at any time.

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart Antananarivo at any time. If you wish to extend your stay in Antananarivo, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEEO program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book.