

MADAGASCAR
***OCTOBER 29 - NOVEMBER 18, 2009**
NORTHERN MADAGASCAR
AND THE FABULOUS HELMET VANGA!
NOVEMBER 17-27, 2009

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Unique is the adjective most often used to describe Madagascar. Madagascar hosts an exceptionally high degree of endemism not only among its birds, but also with its plants, trees, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects. Much of this wildlife is remarkably tame, approachable and visible and as consequence this tour represents a truly superb VENT natural history tour. Of the birds, six entire families are endemic to the Madagascar region: the mesites, ground-rollers, cuckoo-roller, asities, Madagascar warblers and vangas. An endemic subfamily of large cuckoos, the couas also form an important part of the avifauna.

November is the very best season for seeing Madagascar's wildlife, as breeding activity begins immediately prior to the rains which begin in the latter part of the month. Birding here at times can be delightful and at other times it is not easy, for the diversity is not high, the habitats are often dense, and bird populations are low (40% of the endemic species are considered endangered or at risk)--but the rewards are very high. Just imagine seeing a tenrec, a Giant Coua or ground-roller in the wild!

This huge island first began to split away from the African continent during the age of the dinosaurs and has since followed an independent evolutionary course, allowing an amazing variety of different life forms to evolve from a few colonizing ancestors. Ranging from the bizarre to the sublime, this is island evolution gone wild and there is no other destination quite like it. Unfortunately few places in the world are as threatened as the native environments of Madagascar and its nearby islands. Fortunately international conservation agencies have come to the aid of Madagascar and more and more areas are being set aside as reserves and national parks. Each year new species are discovered and described and species previously thought extinct or nearly so are rediscovered. In addition there is a growing realization that foreign tourists are interested in the wildlife of Madagascar and as a result the infrastructure is improving and more and more attractive lodges are built on the site of some of the very best birding areas. It is indeed an exciting time to be visiting this fascinating island. VENT's tour is designed to visit a wide range of Madagascar's habitats, with enough time in each to seek out the special endemic birds, lemurs, tenrecs, chameleons and other weird and wonderful creatures.

The lemurs are undoubtedly the most famous of Madagascar's wildlife. These "primitive primates" range in size from the tiny mouse lemurs (at 7 inches in length, the smallest) to the child-sized and very vocal Indri. These attractive and appealing animals are found throughout Madagascar's forests. Of the 90+ surviving species some are colorful, social, and diurnal while others are drab, solitary, and nocturnal. Other larger mammals are few on the island, but include primitive insectivores like the tenrecs and several carnivorous relatives of the mongoose.

* Please note: the dates for this tour have changed since the publication of the 2009 VENT catalog.

Among the highly endemic reptile fauna is an incredible array of weird and colorful chameleons (over 60% of the world's species), cryptic leaf-tailed geckos and florescent day geckos, skinks and other lizards. The flora is surprisingly rich, including over 1000 species of orchids and many spectacular flowers that have become popular in tropical gardens the world over. In the desert south-west we will find some of the world's strangest plants. Madagascar is truly one our planet's greatest natural store-houses.

October 29-31, Day 1-3: To Madagascar. You should plan your flights so that you will arrive Antananarivo (airport code TNR) on October 31 where we will meet in the hotel lobby at 19.00 hrs (7:00 PM) for a get acquainted session and dinner. Depending on your route to Antananarivo, either through Europe or South Africa, flights generally will depart the USA on the 29th. When you arrive into this bustling city, one cannot help being struck by the distinctness of the Malagasy culture, a strange mixture of African and Asian influences which are reflected in the landscape and architecture.

NIGHT (Day 3): Hotel Palissandre, Antananarivo

November 1, Day 4: Fly Antananarivo (Tana) to Fort Dauphin, Madagascar. Today we will fly from Antananarivo direct to the south coast of Madagascar and the city of Fort Dauphin (also known as Toliagnaro). If time permits we will do some preliminary birding. The small but picturesque town of Fort Dauphin was originally named to honor Louis XIV and is perhaps the most attractive Malagasy town. Surrounded by rugged hills, with cliff-top views of immense ocean rollers that come crashing in over the protecting reef whilst Humpback Whales patrol close inshore and Wedge-tailed Shearwater, terns and gulls test our skills with the 'scope.

NIGHT: Miramar Hotel, Fort Dauphin

November 2, Day 5: Drive Fort Dauphin to Mandrare River Camp. After morning birding and lunch we will drive to the newly established Mandrare River Camp, superbly located on the Mandrare River. In mainland Africa the mobile tented safari has long been accepted as one of the best ways to travel in remote regions and until recently, this hasn't been available in Madagascar. In 2007, the enterprising Englishman Ed Tucker-Brown, drawing on his extensive experience in East Africa, started mobile tented safaris in the Ifotaka region and created the small and personal Mandrare River Camp, the ultimate way to enjoy Madagascar's deep-south.

Operated by Ed Tucker-Brown who has many years of experience in the East African safari business, Mandrare River Camp is a luxury tented camp with *en suite* tents and gourmet three-course meals AND access to some superb birding. Unfortunately the road to the camp is undoubtedly the worst road in Madagascar so we will drive gently looking for anything of interest along the way – last year we were very pleasantly surprised by the number of neat birds, chameleons and snakes (none are poisonous in Madagascar) along the way. If time permits we will commence our exploration of the area later in the afternoon. In the mornings, the sun will rise directly in front of the tents over the Mandrare River giving breathtaking morning views. At night, far from civilization, the stars are the best you'll see anywhere in Africa.

The tents are set up under tamarind trees and have *en suite* bathrooms with hot bucket showers. You can spend days hiking in the forest with some of Madagascar's top wildlife guides, visit local villages where you'll often be the first western visitor and return each evening to Ed's specialties such as seafood kebabs grilled on vanilla pods. With some of Madagascar's top guides, a strong community involvement in tented comforts that exceed most Malagasy hotels, this is the ultimate way to explore.

In previous years, VENT had stayed at Berenty, the private sanctuary famous for its Ring-tailed Lemurs and Verreaux's Sifakas. Sadly the accommodations at Berenty are no longer acceptable and the Ring-tailed Lemurs are noticeably unattractive as they all appear to have contracted a type of mange resulting from tourists constantly feeding them scraps. The advent of the new and luxury Mandrare River Camp permits us to see all

the same birds, mammals and reptiles BUT in considerably more comfort with the animals exhibiting much more natural behaviors. In addition we will have the entire camp to ourselves; we will visit some superb habitat with excellent, motivated local guides as well as some very some nice opportunities for good quality cultural experiences.

NIGHT: Mandrare River Camp

November 3-4, Days 6-7: Mandrare/Ifotaka area. This area is justly famous for its lemurs, not only because its deciduous woodland is home to six species of these primitive primates but also for the general ease with which they may be seen and appreciated in the wild. White-footed Sportive, Grey-brown and Grey Mouse lemurs are regularly encountered on night walks and a fourth as yet un-described Mouse-Lemur occur through the area, though the undoubted favorites are the Ring-tailed Lemurs and Verreaux's Sifakas. Whilst the bands of cat-like, quizzical Ringtails are often the first to steal visitors' hearts, their appeal is easily matched by the strikingly patterned sifakas, with their soulful expressions and bizarre, bipedal dancing locomotion. To spend time with groups of these gentle creatures will certainly be one of the highlights of our Madagascar adventure. A further mammalian highlight of the area is visiting a Madagascar Flying Fox roost, where about 300 of these impressive animals sporting 1.4 meter wingspans spend their day squabbling and presumably sleeping.

We will be on the look-out for the impressive Giant Couas that wander through the woodland in addition to several other woodland and riverine species including Long-tailed Cormorant, Peregrine Falcon, Madagascar and France's sparrowhawks, Helmeted Guineafowl, Madagascar Sandgrouse – Andohahela is a superb site for this increasingly difficult to find endemic; Bat Hawk (a very rare bird in Madagascar), possibly Barn Owl, Alpine Swift and Madagascar Paradise-Flycatcher – often on the nest at this time of the year. If we are very lucky we may find the very local and recently described Red-shouldered Vanga and rather elusive Verreaux's Coua.

During the afternoon we will explore some very attractive Spiny Forest. Here with a bit of luck we may find Green-crowned Coua as well as several roosting nocturnal lemurs as well chameleons and a variety of other wildlife.

NIGHTS: Mandrare River Camp

November 5, Day 8: Mandrare to Fort Dauphin and fly to Tulear and drive to Ifaty. We will have the entire morning to enjoy and photograph the approachable wildlife in this lovely area. After an early lunch we will drive back to Fort Dauphin in time to catch our flight to the city of Tulear. Here we will climb aboard our four-wheel-drive vehicles and head north up the coast to our lovely accommodations near Ifaty.

NIGHT: Les Dunes d'Ifaty, Ifaty

November 6, Day 9: Ifaty. Much has been written about the strange *Didierea* woodland, or "Spiny Forest", around Ifaty but this in no way lessens the feeling of awe that overcomes one as one sets foot in this botanical wonderland. Venturing out at dawn, before the day's heat, we will stroll amongst the myriad multi-stemmed succulents, squat baobab trees and thorny scrub in search of such spectacular endemics as Banded Kestrel, Running and Green-capped couas, Archbold's Newtonia, Thamnornis, Sub-desert Brush-Warbler and Lafresnaye's Vanga. Two very special birds here are the near mythical Sub-desert Mesite, which we may find adopting its strange, cryptic posture on a thorny branch, and the Long-tailed Ground-Roller, an elusive ground dweller best located by its low, hooting call. Flocks of noisy Sickle-billed Vangas are another feature of this bizarre, Tolkienesque landscape. As the day warms up, so too does reptile activity increase and with a bit of luck we should see the numerous Three-eyed Lizards and may be lucky enough to find a beautiful Spider Tortoise or rare Dumeril's Boa.

The tropical ocean off Ifaty is alive with marine life and we will have some time to don masks and snorkels and appreciate the myriad colours of a coral reef or relax in the warm shallows in front of our hotel. During an afternoon excursion we will bird some wetlands to the south of Ifaty in search of the increasingly uncommon

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Madagascar Plover in addition to such species as Greater Painted-Snipe, Little Bittern, White-throated Rail and Baillon's Crake as well as several ducks, waders and terns.

NIGHT: Les Dunes d'Ifaty, Ifaty

November 7, Day 10: Ifaty to Tulear and Nosy Ve. This morning, we will depart early for Tulear where we will board a speedboat for our excursion to the small, uninhabited, coralline islet of Nosy Ve. *En route* we will search for the increasingly rare and localized Humblot's Heron. Located to the south of Tulear, Nosy Ve supports a notably accessible colony of Red-tailed Tropicbirds, which permit close approach as they have been left unmolested by local people due to a taboo or *fady*.

With a bit of luck we may also find Crab Plovers roosting on the sandbars here, as well as good numbers of other migrant shorebirds and a large tern roost. We will also have another chance to snorkel on a coral reef which encircles the island. We will then take our speedboat across to the mainland where we will search for Littoral Rock-Thrush and enjoy a superb seafood luncheon before returning to Tulear. During the afternoon we will explore some nearby wetlands where we may encounter: Greater Flamingo, Red-billed and Hottentot teal, Kitlitz's Plover, Red-knobbed Coot, possibly African Swamphen and Baillon's Crake.

NIGHT: Hotel Capricorn, Tulear

November 8, Day 11: Zombitse and Isalo National Parks. This morning we will make a very early morning departure in order to arrive at the attractive and most interesting Zombitse Forest before it becomes too hot. Here we will search for one of the world's most endangered birds; the delicate, near-ground-inhabiting Appert's Tetraka (Greenbul). A variety of other interesting species are resident here in this notably active dry, deciduous forest including Madagascar Crested Ibis, Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, Giant and Crested couas, distinctively raucous Cuckoo-Rollers displaying high overhead, Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Long-billed Tetraka (Greenbul), Madagascar Paradise-Flycatcher, Rufous, Blue and Red-tailed vangas, and Madagascar Starling. If we are very fortunate we may find the highly elusive Fossa here, Madagascar's largest predator. It gets hot here very quickly hence the early start; once the day heats up we will continue on to Isalo and our very attractive hotel.

An afternoon nap and then we will explore nearby watercourses which wind their way through the bizarre limestone formations of the Isalo National Park. This important resource acts as a magnet to the birds of this dry area and here we may find Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, White-throated Rail, small flocks of Grey-headed Lovebirds, Stripe-throated Jery and the region's special bird, Benson's Rock-Thrush.

NIGHT: Le Relais de la Reine, Isalo

November 9, Day 12: Drive from Isalo to Ranomafana. From Isalo we will wend our way across the Central Plateau before turning eastwards before descending into the lush rainforest of the eastern escarpment. The arid grasslands *en route* are generally fairly unproductive for birds but we will stop for anything of interest (NOT just birds!). Possible birds include Madagascar Partridge, Madagascar Buttonquail, Madagascar Sandgrouse, the elegant Namaqua Dove, Madagascar Lark and the attractive Madagascar Harrier, now generally split from the Reunion population.

NIGHT: Domaine Nature

November 10-11, Days 13-14: Ranomafana National Park. Ranomafana was originally proclaimed to protect its population of Golden Bamboo Lemurs, an animal first described to science as recently as 1987. In addition to this we may find Greater and Eastern Grey Bamboo lemurs, Red-fronted Brown, Red-bellied and Small-toothed Sportive lemurs, the impressive but uncommon Milne-Edwards' Diademed Sifaka and other mammals such as Common Tenrec and the handsome Ring-tailed Mongoose.

Night walks in this area can be especially rewarding and possibilities include Greater Dwarf and Brown Mouse lemurs and if we are very lucky Fanaloka (a peculiar sort of striped civet-like mammal). Ranomafana supports a high concentration of “herps” and chameleons are particularly well represented most notable of which are the cryptically colored and armored dwarf chameleons.

In the lower elevation forests above our lodging, we hope to find Madagascar Crested Ibis, Henst’s Goshawk (seen at the nest on our 2008 tour); the very elusive Brown Mesite with its strange duetting call; Common Sunbird-Asity (not really at all), possibly Grey-crowned Tetraka (Greenbul), the scarce and frustratingly elusive Yellow-browed Oxylabes, Forest Rock-Thrush, Wedge-tailed Jery, and Rufous and Pollen’s vangas and the delightful Pitta-like Ground-Roller.

The higher elevation forests and swamps around the village of Vohiparara are home to some birds that we will almost certainly not yet have encountered on our trip. Foremost amongst these is the highly localized Yellow-bellied Sunbird-Asity and this is one the most accessible places to see this endangered and very elusive species. We shall concentrate our searches in some stunted ridge-top forest where we may also locate Red-fronted Coua, the elegant Rufous-headed Ground-Roller, the sneaky Brown Emutail, Rand’s and the recently discovered Cryptic Warblers, Pollen’s Vanga and, if we are lucky, Madagascar Cuckoo-Hawk. A marsh several kilometers from Vohiparara may produce the very rare Meller’s Duck, Madagascar Harrier, Madagascar Rail, the highly endangered Slender-billed Flufftail, Madagascar Snipe and Grey Emutail.

NIGHT: Domaine Nature Lodge, Ranomafana

November 12, Day 15: Drive to Tana. Today we will make the long, all day drive to Tana, the capital of Madagascar. We will spend the early morning birding our way upwards to the edge of the eastern escarpment and the central plateau before turning northwards. Here we will make our way across the open landscape of the Horombe Plateau, offering insight into the traditional lifestyle of the Malagasy people. Steeply terraced rice paddies, tall earthen houses with thatched roofs and roadside markets displaying a wide variety of very attractive handicrafts form part of the passing pageant, all against the backdrop of golden-yellow grasslands and bare granite inselbergs. We will break our journey for lunch at the quaint, highland town of Antsirabe, famous for its locally manufactured handicrafts before continuing on to Tana. You can expect to arrive in time for dinner.

NIGHT: Palissandre Hotel, Tana

November 13, Day 16: Tana to Perinet. This morning we will drive eastwards across the Highland Plateau to the famous reserve of Perinet (otherwise known as Analamazaotra) and the superb forest of Mantadia National Park. Along the way we should encounter several open country species such as the peculiar Hamerkop, Yellow-billed Kite, Plain Martin and Madagascar Cisticola. With a bit of luck we may also find the attractive Madagascar Pratincole.

Our accommodation for the next three nights is the delightful Vakona Lodge, ideally located overlooking a lake at the edge of the forest. Being so close to the reserve means that wildlife is often right on our doorstep: fluorescent green day geckos scuttle on the outside walls of our chalets, Madagascar Wagtails flit along the paved walkways and we may well encounter such gems as Ward’s Flycatcher or if we are very lucky Ring-tailed Mongoose right around our cabins.

NIGHT: Vakona Lodge, Mantadia National Park

November 14-15, Days 17-18: Mantadia National Park and Perinet Special Reserve. Amongst the most sought-after of Madagascar’s birds are those of the six families endemic to the Malagasy region: the peculiar mesites, exquisite ground-rollers, the Cuckoo-Roller, asities, and Madagascar warblers and the vangas. Some of these, such as the ubiquitous Madagascar Cuckoo-Roller, Pitta-like Ground-Roller, and a number of the vangas are reasonably common and regularly encountered, whilst many of the others remain rare, local or elusive. We

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will of course make a special effort to locate as many representatives of these charismatic families as possible, as well as those of the endemic sub-family, the couas. In order to be successful we will need at times to focus on certain local specialties and this is especially so in Madagascar's eastern forests.

The moist rainforest cloaking Madagascar's eastern escarpment protects the richest assemblage of birds and other wildlife on the island, including many that are rare or poorly known. The superb Mantadia National Park protects a large expanse of some of Madagascar's most gorgeous primary forest. Though it has only recently been opened to the public, Mantadia is now an essential destination on any birding trip to Madagascar, having rapidly gained a reputation as an excellent site for a handful of highly sought-after forest birds. Not least amongst these are a number of species formerly considered to be restricted to the poorly accessible rainforests of the far north-east, such as Red-breasted Coua and Scaly Ground-Roller. We will have at least one likely two full mornings exploring Mantadia where there is a good chance of several highly desirable forest birds such as Madagascar Blue-Pigeon, Scaly, Pitta-like and Short-legged Ground-roller, Crossley's Babbler (recent DNA-analysis suggests this species is an aberrant terrestrial vanga!), Common and Dark newtonias, Wedge-tailed, Green, Stripe-throated and Common jerys, the newly described Cryptic Warbler and Forest Fody. We also hope to find Red-fronted and Blue couas, Velvet Asity, and flocks of vangas that may include White-headed, Chabert's, Blue, Red-tailed, Hook-billed or the bizarre Nuthatch Vanga (the last aberrant species is also known as Coral-billed Nuthatch). Other attractions in this scenically beautiful park include the vocal Black-and-White Ruffed Lemur, the elusive Diademed Sifaka (considered by many to be the world's most beautiful lemur) and Painted Mantella, a spectacularly colored forest frog. Much of the birding in Mantadia National Park can be enjoyed from the wide road that runs up into the reserve, although seeing the skulkers of the forest understorey will require that we take to the steep and occasionally slippery trails.

On our second day we will explore the Perinet Special Reserve. Over 100 species have been recorded from within this small reserve and here we will search for such specials as Madagascar Flufftail, the elusive Madagascar Wood-Rail, Madagascar Blue-Pigeon, Greater Vasa Parrot, Madagascar Cuckoo, Madagascar Spinetail, the sensational Madagascar Pygmy-Kingfisher, Madagascar Paradise-Flycatcher, Ashy Cuckoo-shrike, Ward's Flycatcher, Tylas Vanga, Madagascar Starling, Long-billed and Spectacled tetrakas (Greenbuls), White-throated Oxylobes, Nelicourvi Weaver and Souimanga Sunbird. If we are lucky, we may locate one of Perinet's forest rarities such as Madagascar Serpent Eagle or Dusky Tetraka (Greenbul).

Whilst in the Perinet area, we will also make a special effort to see the reserve's most famous residents: the huge, singing lemurs known as Indri the world's largest extant species of lemur. If we are fortunate we will be treated to a close encounter with a family group, their eerie, whale-like cries echoing through the forest. Other lemurs we hope to see include Common Brown and Grey Bamboo lemurs, and we will also search known roosting sites for the nocturnal but inquisitive Small-toothed Sportive Lemur. Another "must see" member of the island's fauna is the Giraffe-necked Weevil, a tiny red and black insect named for its unusually proportioned neck!

Nocturnal outings are thrilling and indeed an essential part of any trip to Madagascar and Perinet is undoubtedly one of the best sites to search for the island's night birds, lemurs and chameleons. Specialties here include Madagascar Long-eared Owl, Rainforest Scops-Owl and both Madagascar and the rare and little known Collared Nightjar. Whilst seeing these birds will be the focus of our walks, we will not neglect the immense variety of non-avian life that emerges after dark. Although Madagascar is famous for the spectacular lemurs that have adapted to a daytime existence, a number of species of these primitive primates remain, like their African cousins the galagos, denizens of the night. We will search for and should find Eastern Woolly, Greater Dwarf and the diminutive Brown Mouse lemurs, and may also encounter some of Madagascar's other evolutionary masterpieces such as the bizarre Lowland Streaked Tenrec.

The island's reptile and amphibian ("herp") fauna is equally fascinating and even the most hardened birder would not fail to be impressed by the plethora of colorful and bizarre frogs, chameleons and geckos to be seen on an evening's stroll through the rainforest. In particular, we will search for the giant Parson's Chameleon and

two species of eccentric leaf-tailed geckos: the huge *Uroplatus fimbriatus* and the aptly named *Uroplatus phantasticus*.

NIGHT: Vakona Lodge, Mantadia National Park

November 16, Day 19: Perinet to Tana. After a final morning's birding we will depart after lunch for the bustling capital of Antananarivo, or "Tana" as it is more commonly known and our hotel in the very heart of this intriguing city. Here one cannot help being struck by the uniqueness of the Malagasy culture, a strange mixture of African, French and Asian influences reflected in the landscape and architecture. We should arrive during the late afternoon.

NIGHT: Palissandre Hotel, Tana

November 17-18, Day 20-21: Lac Alarobia; PM shopping. This morning for those not continuing on the extension there will be an opportunity to visit the rather birdy Lac Alarobia. This private sanctuary set within the city protects large numbers of ducks and egrets from persecution including large numbers of White-faced Duck and Red-billed Teal usually accompanied by smaller numbers of Hottentot Teal, Knob-billed (Comb) and very occasionally Fulvous Ducks. A fantastic assortment of egrets roost or breed in the sanctuary, including a few splendidly adorned Madagascar Pond-Herons as well as Squacco Heron, Black and Dimorphic egrets. Mascarene Martins are common overhead and in surrounding areas we may encounter Madagascar Kestrel, Madagascar Coucal, Madagascar Black Swift, Madagascar Wagtail, Madagascar White-eye, Madagascar Munia (Mannikin) and Madagascar Red Fody.

You will be transferred to the Tana airport on the evening of November 17 for departing flights. Depending on your routing, either through Europe or South Africa, you will arrive in the US the following day.

Northern Madagascar and the Fabulous Helmet Vanga!

Our Northern Extension kicks off with a flight up to the little known deciduous woodlands of the north-west. Here we will search for such specials as White-breasted Mesite, the stunning Schlegel's Asity and Van Dam's Vanga. Endangered waterbirds we may encounter include Madagascar Fish-Eagle, Bernier's Teal and Bernier's Ibis. From the north-west we will fly to the north-east of the island and the mysterious Masoala Peninsula. This remote and remarkable region, protecting Madagascar's last remaining extensive area of lowland rainforest, offers visitors the chance to observe some of Madagascar's most exotic bird and animal species. The experience of being able to search for gems such as Madagascar Serpent Eagle and Madagascar Red Owl, which were thought to have been extinct for years before their rediscoveries, is simply exhilarating. Chances of finding the fabulous Helmet Vanga or Helmetbird and inexplicably scarce Bernier's Vanga will be a highlight, as well as searching for the dazzling Ground-Rollers amongst the many other specialties that we may encounter. Red Ruffed Lemur, considered by many to be the most beautiful of all lemurs occurs on the peninsula, as well as a wealth of other exciting mammals, reptiles and amphibians. These forests have recently been given National Park status and visiting the area will be a real treat to any enthusiastic birders who desire the opportunity of seeing the megas of the region.

November 17, Day 20: Antananarivo to Maroantsetra. For those participants taking the post tour extension our adventure to the Masoala Peninsula begins this morning with a flight to Maroantsetra, a small fishing village in the remote north-east of the island. Upon our arrival in Maroantsetra we will transfer to our accommodation where we will spend the night before making the boat trip to Masoala Peninsula National Park.

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During the afternoon we will explore an area of coastline and mudflats where several interesting species could be seen, including the extraordinary Crab Plover, Greater Sand and Mongolian plovers, and Bar-tailed Godwit. Around our accommodations we should encounter Madagascar (Long-billed Green) Sunbird, White-throated Rail and Mascarene Martin. Interesting herps abound and may include the huge Tomato Frogs and brilliant Panther Chameleons. The bizarre Lowland Streaked Tenrec also occurs in the vicinity of our hotel.

NIGHT: Relais du Masoala, Maroantsetra

November 18-19, Days 21-22: Maroantsetra to Masoala. Today we depart for the fabled Masoala Peninsula National Park. This huge National Park is reached by boat and as we make our way across the vast inlet to our lodge we will pass by the uninhabited and well-forested island of Nosy Mangabe. This island is probably most famous for the fact that it has the largest concentration of Aye-Aye in the world albeit almost impossible to see. During the boat journey we should be especially alert to seabirds such as Lesser Crested, Roseate, Greater Crested and Common terns and possibly Common or Brown Noddy. After lunch at our attractive lodge we will take a nap and then as the heat of the day dissipates we will explore an area of lowland forest. Bring your torches (flash-lights) as we will stay into early evening to look for several really nifty lemurs and chameleons.

Masoala Peninsula National Park provides a sanctuary for some of Madagascar's most endangered species and also protects the largest area of lowland and sub-montane rainforest remaining on Madagascar. We will spend two days in this remote area searching the narrow trails that lead through the forest for some of the regions rarest and most seldom sighted wildlife. The lowland rain forest will give us a chance at finding two gorgeous species of vanga, namely Helmet and Bernier's and these will form the basis of our explorations. The Helmet Vanga is a classy bird that is unmistakable in appearance and is often first located by its call. The Bernier's Vanga is much trickier to locate with the males looking somewhat similar to large crestless Drongos; the females however are diagnostic in their mostly ginger, banded plumage. We will be searching mixed feeding flocks carefully for this species in amongst other vangas which include Blue, Hook-billed, Rufous, Tylas, Nuthatch and White-headed. Red-breasted Coua is fairly easily found along forest paths, a species that is tough to find on the elsewhere on tour. The secretive Brown Mesite is another uncommon species that we will look for in dark areas of the forest as it walks quietly across the leaf litter. Four members of the ground-roller family are also present in this area with the shy Scaly Ground Roller being more reliable here than anywhere else on the island.

Two other species occur here that are highly endangered and extremely difficult to observe, namely Madagascar Serpent-Eagle and Madagascar Red Owl. The Serpent-Eagle was recently rediscovered in this area of Madagascar and ranks as one of the rarest raptors in the world. It appears to inhabit pristine rainforest and often perches motionless for long periods within the forest. Be alert! Madagascar Red Owl occurs in low numbers and is largely nocturnal and the chances of observing this species are unfortunately very slim nevertheless we will do our best. The little known and very rarely recorded Dusky Tetraka (Greenbul) and Red-tailed Newtonia have also been reported from these lush forests but again our chances are slim. As far as mammals are concerned, the highly secretive and endangered Aye-Aye is a possibility however we will need to be exceptionally lucky to obtain a view of this almost mythical creature. Other remarkable mammals that we are more likely to encounter include the spectacular Red Ruffed and White-fronted Brown lemurs, neither of which can be seen on the main tour.

NIGHTS: Masoala Forest Lodge, Masoala Peninsula

November 20, Day 23: Masoala to Antananarivo via Maroantsetra. After some final birding we will take our boat back to Maroantsetra in time to catch our flight to Antananarivo where we will overnight.

NIGHT: Hotel Palissandre, Tana

November 21, Day 24: Antananarivo to Mahajunga and Ampijoroa Forest Station. This morning we will fly to Mahajunga on the north-west coast of Madagascar, for the final leg of our Madagascar adventure. After arriving in this sleepy town, we will drive to Ampijoroa, a forest station situated in the extensive deciduous forests of the Ankarafantsika Reserve. Ampijoroa is famous as the home of World Wildlife Fund's Ploughshear Tortoise captive breeding program and is an ideal base from which to search for the numerous endemic birds of the region. *En route* to the reserve we will scan roadside water bodies for Yellow-billed Stork, Purple, Little, Squacco and Malagasy Pond- herons, and flocks of Dimorphic and Black egrets, the latter we will watch as they perform their bizarre "umbrella-feeding" routine. Striking Madagascar Jacanas strut through lily-covered wetlands and we will stop near Lac Amboromalandy to search for other waterbirds including Humblot's Heron, Madagascar Little Grebe, African Pygmy-Goose and Allen's Gallinule. If time permits we will commence our exploration of the reserve during the late afternoon.

NIGHT: Gite Ampijoroa, Ampijoroa

November 22-23, Days 25-26: Ampijoroa Forest Station. As we sip a cup of tea or coffee at dawn we are likely to be treated to a wonderful cacophony of sound and activity in the grounds of the forestry station. Here numerous "campsite residents" such as Broad-billed Roller, screeching Lesser Vasa Parrots, Crested Drongo, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Sakalava Weaver, Madagascar Hoopoe, Madagascar Paradise-Flycatcher, Madagascar Green-Pigeon and Madagascar Turtle-Dove and Sickle-billed Vanga abound.

We have a full day to explore the network of trails through the dry forest around Ampijoroa, in search of the many birds restricted to this region. Foremost amongst these is the secretive White-breasted Mesite, and the jewel-like Schlegel's Asity, which recalls a miniature Bird-of-paradise! We will also concentrate on finding the highly localized Van Dam's Vanga and the two species of coua that are restricted to these deciduous forests Red-capped and Coquerel's. Other birds we hope to see whilst searching for these specials include Madagascar Crested Ibis, Madagascar Buttonquail, France's Sparrowhawk, Madagascar Pygmy-Kingfisher, and Rufous, Hook-billed, White-headed, Chabert and Red-tailed Vangas and Long-billed Tetraka (Greenbul).

No less than eight species of lemur occur in the near vicinity of the camp and we will search for the comical Coquerel's Sifaka, Common Brown Lemur and the rare Mongoose Lemur during the day, and Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur), Milne-Edward's Sportive, Fat-tailed Dwarf and Grey Mouse lemurs after dark. If we are lucky, we may also find the recently described (1998) Golden-brown Mouse Lemur, one of the world's smallest primates and only known from around Lac Ravelobe (hence its scientific name *Microcebus ravelobensis*).

Reptiles are also plentiful along the trails and we hope to see the impressive Giant Hog-nosed Snake, as well as several smaller species of snake (all harmless- amazingly, there are no venomous snakes in Madagascar!), Oustalet's Chameleon (the world's largest species) and the aptly named Rhinoceros Chameleon, with its enlarged nasal protuberance. Impressively spiky Cuvier's Iguanids scurry around the campsite.

We will spend the afternoon birding along the edge of the adjacent Lac Ravelobe, where we hope to find the critically endangered Madagascar Fish-Eagle, a pair of which is usually resident here. Wintering Sooty and Eleonora's falcons are sometimes seen hunting overhead, White-throated Rails favor the waterside vegetation and we may find noisy groups of Sickle-billed and Blue Vangas moving along the forest fringe. This place despite the humidity is paradisaical.

NIGHT: Gite Ampijoroa, Ampijoroa

November 24, Day 27: Ampijoroa to Mahajunga. After a final day birding, lemur watching and photographing around Ampijoroa, we will return by bus to Mahajunga for an overnight stay in a comfortable, beachside hotel. We will again search for waterbirds *en route* to our hotel.

NIGHT: Zaha Motel, Mahajunga

November 25, Day 28: Mahajunga to Tana with excursion to Betsiboka Delta. Today we fly back to “Tana” for an overnight stay. Our flight in the early afternoon provides us with enough time to take a motorized boat ride up the Betsiboka Delta. This seldom-visited region is home to two of Madagascar’s rarest and most endangered birds, Bernier’s Teal and Bernier’s (Madagascar White) Ibis. Other birds we may record on this journey are Humblot’s Heron, African Open-billed Stork, Greater Flamingo, African Spoonbill, a very rare bird in Madagascar, Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, Terek Sandpiper, Crab Plover and Lesser Crested and Saunder’s terns. Upon returning to our hotel there will be an opportunity to quickly clean up and change before heading out to the airport for our flight to Tana.

NIGHT: Hotel Palissandre, Tana

November 26-27, Day 29-30: Lac Alarobia and final shopping. This morning for those not continuing on the extension there will be an opportunity to visit the rather birdy Lac Alarobia. This private sanctuary set within the city protects large numbers of ducks and egrets from persecution including large numbers of White-faced Duck and Red-billed Teal usually accompanied by smaller numbers of Hottentot Teal, Knob-billed (Comb) and very occasionally Fulvous Ducks. A fantastic assortment of egrets roost or breed in the sanctuary, including a few splendidly adorned Madagascar Pond-Herons as well as Squacco Heron, Black and Dimorphic egrets. Mascarene Martins are common overhead and in surrounding areas we may encounter Madagascar Kestrel, Madagascar Coucal, Madagascar Black Swift, Madagascar Wagtail, Madagascar White-eye, Madagascar Munia (Mannikin) and Madagascar Red Fody. This evening you will be transferred to the airport for departing flights.

You will be transferred to the Tana airport on the evening of November 26 for departing flights. Depending on your routing, either through Europe or South Africa, you will arrive in the US the following day.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Your tour fee includes hotel reservations in Tana beginning the night of October 31 and ending with day rooms on November 17 for participants only doing the main tour; or day rooms for November 26 for those on the Northern Extension. We’ll be glad to make hotel reservations should your international flights cause you to need extra nights, or if you would elect to arrive early or extend your stay in Madagascar. We can very easily make hotel arrangements if we receive your request with enough advance time. Please contact the VENT office at least two months prior to your departure date.

Special Notes:

- The Madagascar tour itinerary depends closely on Air Madagascar internal flights, which may change from the itinerary listed. If so, the itinerary will be altered, with all of the special regions still being visited.
- In some areas, it can be very hot. Field activity is best restricted to early and late in the day. Consequently on most mornings, we will be up and out very early and we will have extended *siestas* in the middle of the day.
- At times in Mantadia, Perinet, Ranomafana and Ifaty, we may be walking on narrow and/or steep forest trails to find a few special birds. Virtually all birding will be done on foot which does require substantial time spent walking these trails. Anyone considering this tour should be able to spend several hours at a time on their feet (with regular breaks in between). Our pace will, however, be genteel as we explore these wonderful forests.
- Madagascar is a very poor nation and tourism is a fairly new concept, so please do not expect first-class facilities everywhere, some of the hotels are surprisingly excellent but in the more remote southern areas, we will be using simpler lodgings albeit the best available.

TOUR SIZE: Both the Madagascar main tour and the Northern extension will be limited to 12 tour participants.

TOUR LEADER: David Bishop plus a Local Guide

David Bishop loves his vocation and cannot imagine anything better than exploring wild and beautiful places anywhere in the world, but especially somewhere as biologically spectacular as Madagascar. Although David has spent much of the past 33 years studying in-depth the birds and natural history of the Oriental region, in addition to New Guinea and the Southwest Pacific, he has spent a considerable amount of time exploring parts of Africa and this will be his third major trip to Madagascar. In fact, David was one of the first of the new wave of birders to explore Madagascar back in the early 1980s. David was once a police officer amid the streets of London's West End, but has emerged as an acknowledged authority on the birds of the Asia and Pacific regions with a good working knowledge of the birds of Africa and Madagascar. His enthusiasm for these places and their birds and other wildlife is contagious. This, along with his skills in locating wildlife, sharing what he sees with others, and conversing with local people in their native language (yes, he can even get by in French!), ensures you the very finest quality tour. Elsewhere, David has undertaken a number of expeditions to survey the birds and other wildlife of previously unexplored regions throughout New Guinea (largely together with Jared Diamond) and the Oriental Region. This has resulted in a number of exciting discoveries and rediscoveries including the incomparable Wallace's Standardwing, a bizarre bird-of-paradise. Some of the results of this work, together with observations gained during the VENT tours he leads, have been published in the scientific and semi-popular literature to which David is a regular contributor. In July 1997, David, together with Brian Coates, published *A Guide to the Birds of Wallacea (Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and Lesser Sundas)*, and David is currently working on other book projects. David lives with his wife and daughter (his son currently resides in England) in the attractive university town of Armidale, NSW, Australia.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for the main tour is **\$10,695** per person based on double occupancy from Antananarivo (Tana), Madagascar and includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 3 and ending with dinner on Day 20. The fee for the Northern Extension is **\$6115** per person based on double occupancy from Tana and includes all meals beginning with breakfast on Day 20 and ending with dinner on Day 29. Both fees include internal flights within Madagascar (economy class), lodging as stated in the itinerary, ground transportation, gratuities, and guide services provided by the tour leader/local guides. Tour fees do not include airfare from your home to Antananarivo and return, Medical Evacuation Insurance (required); transfers or accommodation other than those mentioned in the itinerary; alcoholic beverages; special gratuities; departure taxes; phone calls; laundry; or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the group does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement may have to be charged.

The single supplement for the main tour is **\$1695**; and the single supplement for the Northern Extension is **\$620**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you. Single accommodations are limited at many facilities. At times, even if a single room has been confirmed, single accommodations may not be available. If this occurs, an appropriate refund of the single supplement will be made upon the group's return.

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit is **\$500** per person for the main tour plus **\$500** deposit per person for the Northern Madagascar extension. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Cancellation Penalties and Refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$300 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy and fee schedule also applies to pre-trip and post-trip extensions, as well as any transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

<u>If you cancel:</u>	<u>Your refund will be:</u>
120 days or more before departure date	Your deposit minus \$300.
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE: A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. **We strongly recommend that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. VENT recommends Travel Insured International as our preferred insurance provider.** Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering.** Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as work-related cancellation, medical upgrade, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” clause among others. **Contact Travel Insured International prior to registration for details.** Not all insurance providers provide the same levels of coverage. If you purchase insurance through a company other than Travel Insured International, please be advised that rules and stipulations may be different.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation/repatriation during this tour is MANDATORY. This coverage is included in the Worldwide Trip Protector plan offered by Travel Insured International. If you do not choose to purchase the insurance through Travel Insured International, you will need to do so through another insurance provider. A good website for information and acquisition of Emergency Evacuation/repatriation insurance is: www.insuremytrip.com.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

ACCOMMODATIONS: A few are fairly simple, although pleasant and comfortable and all rooms have private bathrooms. Elsewhere and for most of the places at which we stay the rooms are good to very good and often set in charming locations.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. Travel to Antananarivo can be taken from Paris’ Charles de Gaulle Airport on Air France or Air Madagascar; or from Johannesburg on South African Airways or Air Madagascar.

BAGGAGE: To ensure your comfort and that of your companions, please limit yourself to one medium-sized suitcase or duffel bag and one carry-on bag. The small duffel bag should also be brought for use on short excursions from Tana; your larger suitcase may be safely left at our hotel there.

CLIMATE: The temperatures will typically be warm to hot during the day and pleasantly warm at night in the lowlands. At Mantadia, Perinet, Ranomafana and especially Masoala, it can be cloudy, rainy and very humid during the days and distinctly cool at night. At Ifaty, Berenty and Ampijoroa it can become extremely hot during the mid-day when we invariably will take an extended siesta. Although this is the dry season, rain is often possible.

CLOTHING: Light-weight, neutral (dull)-colored clothing that can be easily rinsed out and dried quickly (cottons or cotton blends) is recommended for the field. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants will help protect you from insects, thorny plants and sunburn. Shorts will be appropriate for some occasions. A sweater or jacket is useful for cooler nights and early mornings. Bring a bathing suit as there will be opportunities to swim and snorkel. Dress is casual throughout. For protection from the sun a good wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen is highly recommended. You should also bring raingear including an umbrella. Strong-soled shoes or hiking boots are essential as we will spend a good amount of time on our feet. Some of the trails we may be on will be steep and possibly slippery in parts. Generally an inexpensive laundry service will be available throughout the tour which should help you in deciding what to pack. Making use of laundry service means you will not need to bring as many items of clothing as you would otherwise.

CURRENCY: **It is only possible to cash US dollars, Euros and Pounds Sterling in Madagascar** and the best place to do it is at the airport upon arrival. Figure on US \$100-200 per person depending if you wish to purchase an alcoholic drink or some artifacts along the way. The local currency known as Ariary-Ariary is the only acceptable or usable form of cash – you cannot get away with using US dollars! And don't even dream of trying to cash Australian dollars as I did. Visa, American Express, MasterCard and Diners Club credit cards are accepted at just a very few locations in Tana but have limited use elsewhere in the country.

DOCUMENTS: A passport valid for at least six months after your departure is required for United States and Canadian citizens to enter South Africa and Madagascar. United States and Canadian citizens are required to have tourist visa to enter Madagascar, however you are NOT required to obtain them prior to your departure as they can be obtained upon arrival in Tana. **Currently such a visa costs US \$95.00 per person.** To avoid delays when you arrive in Madagascar, you may obtain your visa early. Citizens of other countries should check with their consulate/embassy for instructions.

If you have been to mainland Africa or Asia or had a stop-over for one night *en route*, Madagascar health authorities may check to see that your cholera and yellow fever inoculations are up to date and shown on your International Health Card. **It is very important that your passport and traveler's checks be on your body at all times. We caution against carrying these items in your backpack or purse.**

EQUIPMENT: You should pack a pair of binoculars in good repair along with a belt pack or backpack (for carrying books, sunscreen, extra film, etc.). As a precaution, it is a good idea to pack your binoculars, a change of clothing, toiletry items, medication, and travel documents in your airline carry-on bag. Your leader will have a Leica spotting scope, however, if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so although there is limited use for scopes on this tour. You will want to pack an alarm clock, a water bottle or canteen, a strong flashlight, a washcloth, film or flash cards and batteries for your camera (**Madagascar is a very photogenic place and offers lots of opportunity for photography**), and between-meal snacks such as trail mix. Insects are few and generally not a problem, but the best way to avoid any chance of disease is to not get bitten, so bring a small amount of repellent such as Cutter's or OFF. Rarely, small terrestrial leeches can be a minor nuisance at some sites, but fortunately they also are discouraged by standard insect repellents.

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HEALTH: It is important to note that modern medical facilities and prescription drugs are not common in Madagascar, so you should be in reasonable health to consider this tour. If you are taking prescription medication or over-the-counter medicine, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the tour safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

Yellow fever vaccinations are required for entry into Madagascar if you will arrive from an infected area. Malaria is present including the chloroquine-resistant strain; all areas are at risk with the coastal regions more so than others. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with tetanus shots, and strongly consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 877-FYI-TRIP (394-8747) or you can check their website at www.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html (click on travel health).

MISC: Departure Tax: none

Electricity - 220/240 volts

Language - Madagascar: Malagasy, French; very little English is spoken.

Time - Madagascar is 8 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (South Africa is 7 hours)

SUGGESTED READING: Our website, www.ventbird.com offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers, including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from this store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You may also visit such other online stores such as www.amazon.com, and for those out-of-print or hard-to-find titles, www.abebooks.com or www.buteobooks.com which specializes in ornithology books. Three recently published books are highly recommended and offer complete and up to date information on all the birds and mammals of Madagascar:

Garbutt, Nick. *Mammals of Madagascar; a Complete Guider*. 2007. A&C Black Publishers. A superb, detailed account of all Madagascar's mammals. **This is a MUST for this tour.**

Morris, Peter and Frank Hawkins. *Birds of Madagascar, a photographic guide*. 1998. New Haven: Yale University Press. A very attractive, useful and informative photographic guide to the birds of Madagascar.

Sinclair, Ian and Olivier Langrand. *Birds of the Indian Ocean Islands (including Madagascar)*. 2004. Struik Press. A complete and pocket-sized account of all birds in Madagascar, Mauritius, Reunion, Rodrigues, Seychelles, and the Comoros. **This is THE field guide to have on tour.**

Other books worth considering are:

Birds

Langrand, Olivier. *Guide to the Birds of Madagascar*. 1990. New Haven: Yale University Press. This expensive, yet informative, guide is now somewhat outdated but worth reading for additional life history information about the birds of Madagascar.

Mammals

Harcourt, Caroline. *Lemurs of Madagascar and the Comoros: The IUCN Red Data Book*. 1990. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. (available from Island Press: 1-800-828-1302). Not intended to be a field guide, but has black-and-white photographs of each species, and information on ecology and distribution. A new edition is expected in 2006.

Mittermeier, R. A., I. Tattersall, W. R. Konstant, D. M. Myers and R. B. Mast. *Lemurs of Madagascar*. 1994. Conservation International. ISBN 1-881173-08-9. A durable paperback field guide to all species, with range maps and photos, and discussions of lemur biology. Probably the book on lemurs for most visitors to Madagascar.

Tattershall, Ian. *The Primates of Madagascar*. 1982. New York: Columbia University Press. A more comprehensive and technical work; also contains chapters on the extinct, giant lemurs and the early history of western exploration of Madagascar.

Reptiles & Amphibians

Glaw, Frank and Miguel Vences. *A Fieldguide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*. 3rd ed. 2007. M. Vences & F. Glaw Verlags GbR. ISBN 3-929449-01-3. This is the recommended fieldguide to the diverse reptiles and amphibians of Madagascar. Other chapters briefly cover the mammals and freshwater fishes of Madagascar.

General Natural History

Garbutt, Nick, Hillary Bradt, and Derek Schuurman. *Bradt Wildlife Guides : Madagascar Wildlife, a Visitor's Guide 2nd ed.* 2001. Bradt Publications. A useful and compact guide to general wildlife and ecotourism destinations in Madagascar, with superb photographs.

Burney, David A. and Ross D.E. MacPhee. *Mysterious Island: What Killed Madagascar's Large Native Animals?* 1988. Natural History: 47-55.

Durrell, Gerald. *The Aye-aye and I: A rescue mission in Madagascar*. 1993. Harper Collins. An enjoyable book on Durrell's adventures in and anecdotes about Madagascar.

Goodman, Steven and Jonathan Benstead (editors). *The Natural History of Madagascar*. 2004. Chicago University Press. This huge volume is the ultimate guide to Madagascar's natural history with sections written by the leading experts covering every environmental aspect. Much new research is presented here in a comprehensive form, however, this book is only recommended for those with a serious interest in the subject.

Jolly, Alison. *A World Like Our Own: Man and Nature in Madagascar*. 1980. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Jolly, Alison. *Lords and Lemur: Mad Scientists, Kings with Spears and the survival of diversity in Madagascar*. 2004. A highly recommended book about Berenty in particular and Madagascar wildlife in general. Houghton Mifflin.

Jolly, Alison and Frans Lanting. *Madagascar's Lemurs: On the Edge of Survival*. 1988. National Geographic. 174(2):132-161.

Lanting, Frans. *Madagascar: A World Out of Time*. 1990. Aperture Press.

Preston-Mafham, Ken. *Madagascar, A Natural History*. 1991. Facts On File, Inc. (460 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016). ISBN 0-8160-2403-0. Foreword by Sir David Attenborough. Includes 300 superb color photographs. An excellent coffee-table book on Madagascar.

Shoumatoff, Alex. *Look at That*. New Yorker, March 7, 1988: pp 62-83.

Tyson, Peter. *The Eighth Continent: Life, Death and Discovery in the Lost World of Madagascar*. 2000. Avon Books. A highly recommended and informative book with recent coverage of a wide range of Malagasy natural history and cultural topics.

Wilson, Jane. *Lemurs of the Lost World: Exploring the Forests and Crocodile Caves of Madagascar*. 1995. Impact Books. An enjoyable read about two expeditions and further wildlife explorations in Madagascar.

Wright, P.C. *Lemurs Lost and Found*. Natural History, July 1988: pp 56-60.

Fish

Lieske, E. and R. Myers. *Collins Pocket Guide to the Coral Reef Fishes of the Indo-Pacific and Caribbean*. 1996. Harper Collins. This comprehensive book illustrates over 2000 species of coral reef fishes and most of the species likely to be seen in Madagascar are covered.

General Travel

Bradt, Hilary. *Bradt Country Guides: Madagascar 8th ed.* 2005. Bradt Publications. **The recommended travel guide.** Others are the Lonely Planet Madagascar and Comoros guide and Marco Turco's "Visitor's Guide to Madagascar".

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Dodwell, Christina. *Madagascar Travels*. 1995. Hodder & Stoughton. A story of the author's travels through Madagascar, with particular emphasis on the cultural and social aspects of traditional Malagasy life.

TIPPING: Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, local guides) is included on VENT tours. However, if you feel one or both of your VENT leaders or any local guides have given you exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

RESPONSIBILITY: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect March 3, 2009 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.