

MADAGASCAR
***October 31 - NOVEMBER 19, 2010**
NORTHERN MADAGASCAR PRE TOUR
AND THE FABULOUS HELMET VANGA!
OCTOBER 21 - NOVEMBER 2, 2010

© 2009

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 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.

October/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 colourful, 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. Among the highly endemic reptile fauna is an incredible array of weird and colourful 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,

* Please note: the dates for this tour have changed since the publication of the 2010 VENT catalog.

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.

Our Northern Madagascar pre-tour 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.

NORTHERN MADAGASCAR AND THE FABULOUS HELMET VANGA!

October 21-23, Days 1-3: To Madagascar. You should plan your flights so that you will arrive at Antananarivo, Madagascar (airport code TNR) on or before October 23. The group will meet in the lobby of our very attractive hotel 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 October 21. 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. This is a delightfully friendly and safe city despite the sometimes seeming chaos and undoubted poverty.

NIGHT (Day 3): Hotel Palissandre, Antananarivo

October 24, Day 4: Antananarivo to Majunga and Ampijoroa Forest Station. This morning we will fly to Majunga on the north-west coast of Madagascar, for the first leg of our Madagascar Pre-tour 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

October 25, Day 5: 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 localised 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 favour 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

October 26, Day 6: Ampijoroa to Majunga. After a final day of birding, lemur watching and photographing around Ampijoroa, we will return by bus to Majunga for an overnight stay in a comfortable, beachside hotel. We will again search for waterbirds *en route* to our hotel.

NIGHT: Zaha Motel, Mahajunga

October 27, Day 7: Betsiboka Delta; Afternoon flight to Tana. This morning we will 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 Humblodt’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, arriving in time for dinner.

NIGHT: Hotel Palissandre, Tana

October 28, Day 8: Fly Antananarivo to Maroansetra. This morning our adventure to the Masoala Peninsula will begin with a flight that sees us departing Antananarivo for Maroansetra, a small fishing village in the remote north-east of the island. Upon our arrival we will make our way to our accommodation where we will be spending a single night before making our way to the Masoala Peninsula National Park. The afternoon will be spent birding the coastline and mudflats in the area where some interesting species could be seen including Long-tailed Cormorant, the extraordinary Crab Plover, Greater Sand-Plover, possibly the endemic Madagascan

Madagascar, Page 4

Pratincole in addition to large numbers of terns. 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, Maroansetra

October 29, Day 9: Maroansetra 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 commence our exploration of the lowland forest. Bring your torches (flash-lights) as we will stay on into the early evening to look for several really nifty lemurs and chameleons.

NIGHT: Masoala Forest Lodge, Masoala Peninsula

October 30-31, Days 10-11: Masoala Peninsula. 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 rainforest 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, either of which cannot be seen on the main tour.

NIGHTS: Masoala Forest Lodge, Masoala Peninsula

November 1, Day 12: Masoala to Antananarivo via Maroansetra. After some final birding we will take our boat back to Maroansetra in time to catch our flight to Antananarivo where we will overnight.

NIGHT: Hotel Palissandre, Tana

MADAGASCAR

October 31- November 2, Days 1-3: To Madagascar. You should plan your flights so that you will arrive Antananarivo, Madagascar (airport code TNR) on or before November 2 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 October 31. 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 3, Day 4: Drive to Perinet. This morning, as we make our way out of Tana and head towards Perinet we will make a brief stop at the small, private sanctuary of Lac Alarobia. Set within the city this reserve protects large numbers of ducks and egrets from persecution including good 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 the more common 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. We will then continue our drive eastwards across the Highland Plateau to the famous reserve of Perinet 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 4-5, Days 5-6: 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 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-

Madagascar, Page 6

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 coloured 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 occasionally take to the steep and sometimes 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 Oxylabes, 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. Specialities 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 colourful 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*.

NIGHTS: Vakona Lodge, Mantadia National Park

November 6, Day 7: Perinet to Anjozorobe. After another full morning's birding, lunch and time to pack up we will head back towards Tana but about two-thirds of the way along our route we will turn off northwards and make our way to the small but very attractive reserve of Anjozorobe.

NIGHT: Mananara Lodge, Anjozorobe

November 7, Day 8: AM Anjozorobe; late PM drive to Tana. This year we have added a morning at this small reserve because it affords us a good opportunity to see such increasingly difficult-to-find endemics such as Meller's Duck, Madagascar Snipe and Madagascar Rail. It is also a very good site for the usually very

obdurate Yellow-browed Oxylobes. In addition there is a remote chance of the very seriously endangered Slender-billed Flufftail. Later in the afternoon we will make our way back to Tana.

NIGHT: Palissandre Hotel, Tana

November 8, Day 9: Fly to Fort Dauphin and drive to Berenty Reserve. Early this morning we will fly to the far south of Madagascar and the small port-city of Fort Dauphin. From Fort Dauphin we will drive on what is undoubtedly the worst road in Madagascar to Berenty. Be assured we will drive very gently, looking for anything of interest along the way. If time permits we will commence our exploration of Berenty later this afternoon. The 2-1/2 hour drive takes us from the wind-blown but picturesque town of Fort Dauphin through well watered valleys packed with paddy fields and finally into the rain-shadow of the Andohahela Mountains where the octopus like *Didierea* trees are diagnostic of this region's spiny desert. As we near Berenty, this natural habitat is replaced by extensive tracts of sisal plantations stretching as far as the eye can see. However, the Berenty Reserve belongs to the De Haulme family who have set aside sections of gallery forest along the Mandrare River within this sea of sisal in order to conserve its population of lemurs and other wildlife.

During the evening we will search for several nocturnal species including Torotoroka Scops-Owl and the impressive White-browed Owl. With a bit of luck we may also encounter a host of other nocturnal creatures such as the strange Greater Hedgehog Tenrec and several species of attractive geckos (including the remarkable Big-headed Gecko and unique Fish-scaled Gecko).

NIGHT: Gite d'Etape, Berenty

November 9, Day 10: Berenty. Berenty 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 ease with which they may be seen and appreciated in the wild. Red-fronted Brown Lemurs occur in large numbers during the day and both White-footed Sportive, Grey-brown and Grey Mouse lemurs are regularly encountered on night walks through the reserve, though the undoubted favourites 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 (as well as any spare fruit they may have on their persons!), 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 Berenty is visiting the Madagascar Flying Fox roost, where about 300 of these impressive animals sporting 1.4 metre wingspans spend their day squabbling and presumably sleeping.

We will be on the look-out for the numerous Giant Couas that stroll along the well-cleared paths through the woodland, any many other woodland birds. Potential new species we may find here include Long-tailed Cormorant, Peregrine Falcon, Madagascar and France's sparrowhawks, the introduced Helmeted Guineafowl, Madagascar Sandgrouse, 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.

During the afternoon we will explore a different section of the reserve which supports some very attractive Spiny Forest. Here with a bit of luck we may find Olive-brown (Green) Crowned Coua as well as several roosting nocturnal lemurs, chameleons and a variety of other wildlife. Late in the afternoon we'll drive the tracks on the edge of the reserve to look for Madagascar Buttonquail and the increasingly elusive Madagascar Sandgrouse.

NIGHT: Gite d'Etape, Berenty

November 10, Day 11: Berenty Lemur Reserve to Fort Dauphin and fly to Tulear. We will have a final morning to enjoy and photograph the approachable wildlife in Berenty, and visit the well presented local museum, which displays one of the few complete Elephant-bird eggs in the world. We will then drive back to

Madagascar, Page 8

Fort Dauphin in time to make the connecting flight to Tulear. Upon arrival into Tulear we will board a fleet of four-wheel-drive vehicles for the one hour drive up the coast to our lovely accommodations near Ifaty.

NIGHT: Les Dunes d'Ifaty, Ifaty

November 11, Day 12: 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 becomes uncomfortably hot, 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 Olive-brown (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 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 Madagascar Plover in addition Madagascar Bush-lark, Kittlitz's Plover and Madagascar Harrier-Hawk. If time permits we will make late afternoon visit back to the Spiny Forest where we will enjoy another opportunity to explore this extraordinary habitat.

NIGHT: Les Dunes d'Ifaty, Ifaty

November 12, Day 13: Ifaty to Tulear. This morning we will slowly work our way southwards along the coast. Extensive wetlands and sand/mud flats host a good variety of birds including several species of terns and shorebirds including the highly sought after but very elusive Crab Plover. We will also explore a series of small lakes and marshes where we may find such species as: Greater Painted-Snipe, Little Bittern, White-throated Rail, Baillon's Crake, African Swamphen, Knob-billed Coot as well as several ducks, wading birds and possibly flamingos. After reaching Tulear and settling into our hotel we will venture out in the late afternoon to explore a small flat-topped mountain aptly known as La Tabla. This notably austere, very dry area is dominated by habitat known as Coral-Rag Scrub and consists of dense thorny scrub, *Euphorbias* and twisted Baobabs. Our target birds in this area include two species with highly restricted ranges: Verreaux's Coua and the recently discovered Red-shouldered Vanga. Reptile life here is particularly rich and we should find large, sleek *Zonosaurus* plated lizards and if very lucky the stunning Dumeril's Boa and endangered Radiated Tortoise.

NIGHT: Victory Hotel, Tulear

November 13, Day 14: Nosy Ve. This morning 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 visit the fascinating arboretum which in addition to hosting a fine collection of native plants is also a very good place to see several species of birds and even lemurs and chameleons.

NIGHT: Victory Hotel, Tulear

November 14, Day 15: 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 wend 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. We will also make a special effort to locate the very elusive Madagascar Partridge.

NIGHT: Le Relaise de la Reine, Isalo

November 15, Day 16: Drive from Isalo to Ranomafana. From Isalo we will wend our way across the Central Plateau before turning eastwards and 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 Lodge, Ranomafana

November 16-17, Days 17-18: 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 coloured and armoured 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 localised 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 kilometres 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.

NIGHTS: Domaine Nature Lodge, Ranomafana

November 18-19, Days 19-20: Ranomafana National Park 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 our farewell dinner. Afterwards, you will transfer to the Tana airport for a late international flight to your home destination, arriving the next day. For participants not departing, arrangements can be made for overnight accommodations and transfers at an additional charge.

DAY ROOM (Day 19): Hotel Palissandre, Antananarivo

PLEASE NOTE: This Madagascar tour itinerary depends closely on Air Madagascar internal flights which may change from the itinerary listed without notice. If this happens, the itinerary will be altered and we will take all reasonable precautions and actions to ensure the tour follows the advertised itinerary as closely as possible, with all of the special regions still being visited.

Notes:

- 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, and thus we cannot expect first-class facilities everywhere, some of the hotels are surprisingly excellent and in fact the infrastructure and accommodations continue to improve each year. Accommodations at Berenty, Ampijoroa and Ranomafana are a little rustic and fairly simple (however, they all have individual *en suite* bathrooms and toilets) while the hotel in Tulear is the best available but only 3 star. Conversely our hotels in Tana, Perinet/Mantadia, Ifaty, Isalo and Maroansetra are very comfortable; in fact they really are rather lovely. Similarly our tented camps at Masoala and Ajizorobe are also very comfortable.

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: All participants will be **required** to purchase a medical evacuation policy for this tour and will be asked to sign and return to the VENT office a waiver stating that this has been done. Such a policy should be available from any insurance company which provides trip cancellation coverage.

TOUR SIZE: Both the Madagascar main tour and the Northern Madagascar pre-trip will be limited to 10 tour participants.

EXTRA ARRANGEMENTS: Your tour fee includes hotel reservations beginning in Tana with the night of October 24 for those on the Northern Madagascar pre-trip; or the night of November 2 for those arriving for the main tour. We will 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.

TOUR LEADER: David Bishop plus a local leader throughout.

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, the Southwest Pacific, and most recently Central Asia, he has spent a considerable amount of time exploring parts of Africa and this will be his fourth 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 **\$9725** 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 19. The fee for the Northern Madagascar Pre-tour is **\$6495** per person based on double occupancy from Tana and includes all meals beginning with dinner on Day 3 and ending with dinner on Day 12. 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; visa fees; 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 **\$1385**; and the single supplement for the Northern Madagascar Pre-tour is **\$655**. 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.

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.

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.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for these tours, please contact the VENT office. The deposits for these tours are **\$500** per person for the main tour and an additional **\$500** per person for the Northern Madagascar pre-tour. If you prefer to pay your deposit(s) 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 for each tour 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, a cancellation fee of **\$250** per deposit will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per deposit. 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. ***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 \$250*
Fewer than 120 days before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person.

TRIP INSURANCE: A brochure and application form regarding 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.

Medical Insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation / repatriation during the trip is required for this tour. 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.

How tough is this trip? Quite simply, Madagascar is a truly fabulous place to visit with a remarkably high number of endemic and unusual birds (and some fabulous mammals and reptiles). But to make a comprehensive coverage and see as many species as is reasonably possible we have to cover a fair bit of ground. After careful review and some additions and a little tightening up here and there, we believe our itinerary, while very comprehensive, keeps the number of long road trips to a minimum and maximizes our time in the field. That being said, we intend to conduct the tour with a balanced, genteel pace in mind. Dawn is typically early in Madagascar and thus most days will involve early starts to reach some more distant birding sites or simply to get out early while it is relatively comfortable and the birds are most active. In particular, this will be the case in

the Tulear, Berenty, and Majanga areas where the temperatures climb rapidly on clear mornings. We'll see a great range of temperatures on Madagascar; the central highlands can be very pleasant with highs in the 80's, whereas coastal regions like Majanga (including Ankarafantsika), Zombitsy, Ifaty, Tulear, and Berenty are usually quite hot (high 90's to low 100's) at this season. Hiking on trails in most areas is easy to moderate, with good trails and few trail obstacles. Hikes at Ranomafana, and in some parts of Perinet/Mantadia and Masoala are more challenging with some short, steepish hills to climb (for some very special birds) and occasionally slippery or uneven trails. There will be plenty of people to assist you should you need assistance and participants will be advised prior to each morning and afternoon/evening session of the ground-conditions they are likely to encounter.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Accommodations at Berenty, Ampijoroa and Ranomafana are a little rustic and fairly simple (however, they all have individual *en suite* bathrooms and toilets) while the hotel in Tulear is the best available but only 3 star. **Conversely our hotels in Tana, Perinet/Mantadia, Ifaty, Isalo and Maroansetra are very comfortable; in fact they really are rather lovely and the food is delicious.** Similarly our tented camp at Masoala and Ajozorobe are also very comfortable.

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: Variable. 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 and we invariably take an extended siesta at this time. Although this is Madagascar's dry season, rain is often possible.

CLOTHING: Light-weight, neutral (dull)-coloured 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 any alcoholic drinks or some artefacts 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 your leader tried. 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. As of December 12, 2009 the cost of a visa is USD \$95.00 per person. 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 traveller'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.

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 Univ. 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.
- 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.

Madagascar, Page 16

- 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".

- 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 February 10, 2010 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.