

**Madagascar Discovery with Denver Botanic Gardens
(October 19 - November 2, 2012)**



Since the separation of the tectonic plate from Africa 165 million years ago and from India at the end of the Cretaceous period about 70 million years ago, Madagascar has been evolving in isolation leading to the emergence of numerous and distinct forms of plants, animals, and geological features. Madagascar is home to over 10,000 vascular plant species with about 90% endemism. Faunal diversity includes 71 distinct taxa of lemurs (all endemic), 199 species of amphibians (99% endemic), 346 species of reptiles (90% endemic), and 283 species of birds.

Join Dr. Sarada Krishnan, Director of Horticulture at Denver Botanic Gardens, on this unforgettable journey to Madagascar. Dr. Krishnan conducted her doctoral research in Madagascar working on conservation genetics of wild coffee (*Coffea* spp.). Her research was conducted in the eastern rainforest and the southeastern littoral forest habitats of Madagascar. Her fascination with the biological diversity of Madagascar and interest in coffee species led her to conduct her research work in Madagascar. During her field work in Madagascar in 2008 and 2009, she developed a love for the place, its culture and people. Through this trip, she hopes to share her passion and enthusiasm for Madagascar with trip participants.

'May I announce to you that Madagascar is the naturalist's promised land? Nature seems to have retreated there into a private sanctuary, where she could work on different models from any she has used elsewhere. There you meet bizarre and marvelous forms at every step...'
-Philibert de Commerson (1771)

Itinerary

Day 1 (Wed, Oct 19): Arrival in Tana

Upon arrival in Tana, you'll be met for the transfer to your hotel. Overnight at Royal Palissandre. (D)
(<http://www.hotel-palissandre.com/>)

Day 2 (Thurs, Oct 20): Tana – Morondava : Menabe/Antimena

Transfer back to Tana airport for your flight to Morondava. Today you'll get to visit the protected area Menabe Antimena, a protected area under the management of Fanamby, an organization working to promote in community-based tourism linked to conservation. Located 40 km north of Morondava* near Baobab Alley, Menabe Antimena is characterized by dense, dry forest, alternating with mangroves and wetlands. Covering an area of 195,000 ha, Menabe Antimena contains an abundance of natural resources and teems with wildlife, including 8 species of lemurs,. Have a traditional lunch in the middle of the forest at Camp Amoureux ("Camp Love") before heading back to Morondava for the night. Overnight at Baobab Cafe.

*The drive to Menabe Antimena from Morondava takes ~1.5 hrs in a 4WD vehicle over rough road. (B,L,D)



Day 3 (Fri, Oct 21): Morondava – Bekopaka

After breakfast, the group will set out for an all-day drive to Bekopaka* near Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park crossing Tsiribihina and Manabolo Rivers in the way. Once you arrive, you'll see that the effort to get here was worth it. Overnight at Olympe du Bemaraha. (www.olympedubemaraha-madagascar.com)

*The drive to Bekopaka takes ~9 hrs in a 4WD vehicle over rough road. (B,L,D)



Days 4 & Day 5 (Sat and Sun, Oct 22 and 23): Tsingy de Bemaraha National Park

Tsingy de Bemaraha Strict Nature Reserve, a 600--square-mile protected area is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Featured in the November 2009 issue of National Geographic Magazine, the park is described "as an island unto itself, a kind of biofortress, rugged, largely unexplored, and made nearly impenetrable by the massive limestone

formation—the *tsingy*—running through it. The great block of Jurassic stone has dissolved into a labyrinth of knife-edged towers, slot canyons, and wet caves that ward off humans while harboring other animals and plants". You'll spend two days in the park with a variety of options available to explore the area. Lodging at Olympe du Bemaraha. (B,L,D)

Day 6 (Monday, Oct 24): Bekopaka - Morondava

Today, you'll drive back to Morondava, with a stop at Avenue of Baobabs in time for sunset. Along the avenue are trees about 30m in height, of the species *Adansonia grandidieri*, endemic to Madagascar. These baobab trees, estimated to be 800 years old, are a legacy of the dense tropical forests that once thrived on Madagascar. The trees did not originally tower in isolation over the sere landscape of scrub but stood in dense forest. Over the years, as the country's population grew, the forests were cleared for agriculture, leaving only the baobab trees, which the locals preserved as much in respect as for their value as a food source and building material. Lodging at Baobab Cafe. (B,L,D)

Day 7 (Tues, Oct 25): Morondava - Tana

In the morning, visit of Morondava town, with its colorful market and its naval carpentry workshop. In the afternoon, fly back to Tana. Overnight at Royal Palissandre. (B,L,D)

Day 8 (Wed, Oct 26): Tana - Maroantsetra - Tampolo

Fly to Maroantsetra, then boat transfer across the Baie d'Antongil to Tampolo, situated on the Masoala Peninsula. Jutting from the country's northeast corner into the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean, this area is only accessible only by boat or foot. Here, lush rainforest meets beautiful undeveloped coastline. The journey of 40 km takes between 1-3 hrs, with thickly forested mountains of the peninsula serving as a dramatic backdrop along the way. Dolphin sightings en route are a distinct possibility. Overnight at Masoala Forest Lodge. (B,L,D)
(<http://www.masoalaforestlodge.com/english.html>)



Day 9 & Day 10 (Thurs and Fri, Oct 27 and 28): Masoala National Park

You have two full days to discover Masoala National Park, the largest of Madagascar's protected areas. The park protects 2,300 km² of rainforest and 100 km² of marine environs. The Masoala Peninsula is exceptionally diverse due to its huge size and variety of habitats. Two percent of the earth's plant and animal species can be found here. The aye-aye, red-ruffed lemur, Madagascar red owl and the rare serpent eagle are all endemic to the peninsula. The region also supports one of the most diverse groups of palm species in the world. Altogether, the park protects rainforest, coastal forest, flooded forest, marsh and mangrove. Three marine parks protect coral reefs and a dazzling array of marine life. During your visit, you will be able to choose from a variety activities including sea kayaking, snorkeling, hiking, visiting a local village, and river exploration by dugout canoe. Lodging at Masoala Forest Lodge. (B,L,D)

Day 11 (Sat, Oct 29): Tampolo - Maroantsetra - Sainte Marie

Today, you'll transfer by boat back to Maroantsetra airport for your flight to the island of Sainte Marie. Once known for being a haven for pirates and vagabonds, it is now a treasure island for those seeking palm-lined beaches, coral reefs and relaxation. Situated off Madagascar's eastern coast, Sainte Marie provides a peaceful

setting towards the end of your adventure. Lodging at Princesse Bora Lodge. (<http://www.princesse-bora.com/>) (B,D)



Day 12 & Day 13 (Sun and Mon, Oct 30 and 31): Sainte Marie

The insular character of the island and the particularities of the coralline soil encouraged various adaptations, as much on animal as on plant structure, leading to unique flora and fauna. The island is home to several species of lemurs, as well as a multitude of orchids, including the magnificent Queen of Madagascar (*Eulophiella roempleriana*). Spend two days exploring Sainte Marie. A variety of activities including bicycling, kayaking, and snorkeling, can be organized by the hotel. Lodging at Princesse Bora Lodge. (B,D)

Day 14 (Tues, Nov 1): Sainte Marie – Tana

After a final morning at the lodge, head to the airport for your return flight to Tana. Overnight at Royal Palissandre. (B,D)



Day 15 (Wed, Nov 2): Departure from Tana

Today, you'll get to explore Tana, including a visit to the botanical gardens and local handicrafts market. Transfer to the airport in time for your flight home. (B,L)

Meals: B-Breakfast; L-Lunch; D-Dinner

Price per person (double occupancy*): \$6695 DBG member rate*; \$6795 non-member rate*

A \$1000 deposit is required to reserve your space.

*Pricing is subject to change until internal flights are booked. A 3% surcharge is assessed for credit card payments. Solo travelers may be able to book a private room upon request.

Pricing is based on double occupancy and **includes** private transportation, local expert guides, entrance fees, all meals as listed with non-alcoholic drinks, lodging, activities listed in the itinerary, in-country airport transfers, basic travel insurance, and a donation to Denver Botanic Gardens and local conservation efforts in Madagascar.

Pricing **does not include** international airfare, alcoholic beverages, optional activities, passport/visa fees, "Cancel for any reason" option and/or pre-departure cancellation coverage on travel insurance policy, items of a personal nature, or gratuities for the local guides.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Sheridan Samano at Sheridan@reefstorockies.com or 303.860.6045.