

# Madagascar Prelude

## Entrance Requirements

### Passports

- A valid passport is required for entry into Madagascar.
- The passport must be valid for **6 months** from your scheduled date of arrival.
- You will need two blank pages per country for entry and exit stamps in the visa section of your passport. "Two blank pages" is defined as the front and back of a page.
- If you **need a new passport** to be issued **act now**: It can take up to 6 weeks to receive your new passport. It is no longer possible to purchase additional pages for an existing passport. If you travel frequently, please consider purchasing a 52-page passport. For more information contact the National Passport Information Center toll free at 877-487-2778 or visit <http://www.travel.state.gov>.

***Advisory:** When you travel, we recommend that you make two copies of your first passport page; keep one copy at home in the unlikely event that your passport is lost, and take one copy along to use as an ID, should you leave your passport behind in the hotel safe deposit box.*

### Visa

A visa is required to enter Madagascar. Tourists may secure a visa on arrival for visits up to 30-days. Currently the cost for a visa on arrival is US\$28.70 payable in cash only by U.S. dollars or the equivalent in Malagasy Ariary. You may also obtain your visa ahead of time through the Malagasy Embassy in Washington D.C. The web address of the embassy is: <http://www.madagascar-embassy.org/en/entry-requirements/>

## Health & Wellness

You will be visiting a country with a rich and diverse cultural history, but is on a different continent than we are accustomed to. As a result, you may be exposed to some pathogens that you would not ordinarily encounter in the U.S. There are some preventative steps that you can take to help ensure that you do not bring back to your home more than your luggage.

### Inoculations

There are no compulsory vaccinations required for entry into Madagascar for those traveling from the United States. However, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) suggest that you be up to date on routine vaccines such as:

- MMR (measles, mumps, rubella)
- DTP (diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis)
- Varicella (chicken pox)
- Polio
- Influenza

The CDC recommends these vaccines for MOST travelers. They are NOT mandatory:

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid

## **Malaria**

Malaria is present in Madagascar. Consult your doctor for a prescription for a malaria suppressant at least two weeks prior to departure as some tablets must be taken a week before you depart, as well as during and after trip. The best prevention is to avoid mosquito bites. Wear long slacks and long sleeved shirts, use mosquito nets, and a repellent with 30% DEET, Skin So Soft, or oil of citronella. Malaria symptoms can appear as few as 8 days after exposure or a year later. Do not be misled by flu like symptoms of chills and fever. Since some U.S. doctors are unfamiliar with malaria, insist upon a blood test. Delays in treatment can have serious consequences.

## **Additional Information**

The CDC issues regular travel health notices on their website:

- [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/madagascar](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/madagascar)

## **Yellow Fever**

There is no risk of Yellow Fever in Madagascar.

**Note:** if you are traveling from a country with risk of yellow fever, the governments of Madagascar and South Africa both require proof of vaccination.

Please consult your physician, local health authority or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at **877-FYI-TRIP (877-394-8747)** or via their web site at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) for any additional health precautions. For outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's web site at <http://www.who.int/en/>. Further health information for travelers is available at <http://www.who.int/topics/en/>.

## **Water & Food**

Generally, water throughout Madagascar is NOT safe to drink directly from the tap. Fortunately, bottled water is readily available, so please do not allow yourself to become dehydrated. In remote areas water is usually boiled or bottled and is safe to drink but not from the tap. It is very important that you drink plenty of water especially during the warmer months. It is generally recommended that guests drink at least 2 to 3 liters (4 to 6 pints) of water per day to limit the effects of dehydration. This excludes tea, coffee and alcoholic beverages, which act as diuretics and contributes to dehydration. Classic Escapes provides bottled water for passengers in the vehicles and at each meal.

Any food that has been rinsed with tap water is a source of potential exposure to infection. Make sure that meals are thoroughly cooked and avoid eating raw vegetables and fruits unless you have rinsed them off yourself with bottled water and peeled the skin from them. Avoid ice, as it has most likely been made from tap water.

Wash your hands with clean water and/or use hand sanitizers regularly to avoid inadvertently ingesting a pathogen that could give you diarrhea.

## **Physical Conditioning**

To enjoy your trip to the fullest, you should be in good physical and mental health. Your trip will include some strenuous activity when trekking the forests and reserves in Madagascar. Roads can be bumpy so be prepared to be jostled about while underway to your various destinations. Treks through the parks are given at a decent pace in order to closely examine the flora and fauna of the area but the ground is uneven, there are many trees and roots to navigate around as you look up to see the lemurs.

## **Travel Insurance & Medical Evacuation**

We recommend that you consider a Trip Cancellation policy that also includes medical coverage and evacuation against unforeseen circumstances.

## **Climatic Conditions**

The climate of Madagascar is affected to a great extent by the southeastern trade winds that originate in the Indian Ocean. There are two seasons here a wet and a dry, however, its dynamic geography creates a surprising variation in climate. The sub-equatorial east coast where you will find the island's rain forests experiences the highest rates of annual rainfall which averages at around 137 inches.

As the weather systems move west, the central highlands extract the moisture from the clouds. This rain shadow effect is experienced most severely in the southwest corner of the island, which is largely arid semi desert. To the northwest, the rain shadow effect is less severe, but the region still exhibits a drier climate than the rain drenched east coast. As you head south down the west coast, the rain average decreases with 47 inches as the average rainfall to the extreme north and a mere 16 inches to the extreme south. The exception is the island of Nosy Be, which has an average rainfall of 78 inches.

## **Altitude**

At certain heights, the phenomenon known as altitude sickness can occur. There are no specific factors such as age, gender, or physical condition that correlates with susceptibility to altitude sickness. Some people get it and some people don't and some people may experience it one visit and not the next time. Symptoms include headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, lack of concentration, nausea, swelling of ankles, and in extreme cases, hallucination. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, heavy food and strenuous physical activity. Citrus fruits and bananas may diminish the effects. If you do not feel well, take it easy; drink plenty of clean (boiled or bottled) water, and rest.

### **Altitude Chart: (Feet)**

Antananarivo (Tana)	4,185
Andasibe National Park	2,624 – 4,068
Andohahela National Park	330 – 6,417
Berenty Reserve	75
Fort Dauphin	30
Isalo National Park	1,686 – 4,160
Antananarivo (Tana)	4,185
Andasibe National Park	2,624 – 4,068
Andohahela National Park	330 – 6,417

## **Temperature**

The coastal areas of Madagascar exhibit an equatorial climate with the east coast averaging a high 86° of low of 77°. The west coast experiences similar temperatures but a drier climate. The central highlands, where the capital of Antananarivo is located, are temperate, with cool mornings and evenings, and frost at higher elevations. Here the average high temperature during the subequatorial summer is 82°F (January) and a cool 50°F during the winter (July). Follow the tips in the "What To Pack" section and be prepared for every exciting contingency!

Average Temperature (°F)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Antananarivo	64/78	64/77	63/77	61/75	57/72	53/68	51/67	52/68	54/73	58/77	61/78	63/77
Andasibe National Park	773/94	74/95	74/94	73/94	73/92	70/89	68/87	68/83	69/80	72/82	75/85	73/93
Berenty Reserve	78/98	77/97	79/97	76/96	74/97	73/94	71/93	73/89	74/87	78/89	79/90	79/98
Fort Dauphin	75/93	74/91	72/88	69/84	67/84	64/80	63/79	64/77	67/78	70/83	71/81	74/92
Isalo National Park	55/77	56/76	55/74	51/70	47/67	44/65	44/65	49/67	51/73	55/75	57/74	58/78
Average Rainfall (inches):	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Antananarivo	11.3	10.3	7.6	2.3	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.6	2.4	6.0	11.4
Andasibe National Park	5.5	7.1	14.6	2.5	2.6	3.1	2.4	3.3	0.4	1.3	1.6	3.0
Berenty Reserve	12.7	12.9	11.3	7.0	1.3	1.2	0.3	1.3	0.7	4.3	3.0	9.5
Fort Dauphin	7.4	7.3	7.9	4.6	4.6	5.0	4.3	3.8	2.3	3.0	3.0	5.0
Isalo National Park	4.6	11.7	5.4	2.4	0.3	0.4	2.6	1.4	1.1	2.0	12.0	6.7

## **Recommended Packing List**

### **Clothing**

- Long-sleeved shirts, slacks and socks to protect you from insect bites and sunburn
- Shorts/skirts
- Long trousers/slacks
- Good quality sunglasses (preferably polarized).
- Sun hat with a brim
- Good walking shoes (running/tennis shoes or hiking boots)
- Sandals or rubber flip/flops for poolside
- Swimsuit with light cover-up garment
- Lightweight jersey for cooler mornings
- Light raingear for summer months (late November to April)
- A set of smart casual evening wear

### **Toiletries**

- Personal toiletries (basic amenities supplied by many establishments)
- Moisturizing cream & suntan lotion
- Insect repellent e.g. Tabard, Rid, Jungle Juice, OFF, etc.
- Basic medical kit (aspirins, plasters, Imodium, antiseptic cream, and Anti-histamine cream, etc.)
- Packaged wet tissues ("Wash & Dry" "Wet Ones")
- If you wear contact lenses, we recommend that you bring along a pair of glasses in case you get irritation
- Small sewing kit

### **Other Things To Pack**

- Visas, tickets, passports, money, etc.
- Backpack to use during the day as you tour
- A small flashlight with extra batteries
- Adapter plugs & converters for electrical appliances
- A tiny calculator for estimating cost while shopping
- Binoculars
- Journal with pen

### **Camera Equipment**

- Camera, memory cards and chargers
- Lenses, cleaning fluid, lens tissue
- Waterproof/dustproof bags/cover for your camera

### **Tips on Clothing**

Three changes of clothes at the minimum is recommended and should be lightweight, breathable, and versatile. Pack items that will layer well together as the mornings will be cooler and you will want to be able to shed them as the day heats up. Supplex pants and chinos travel better than jeans, which take forever to dry. Avoid bright colors, blues and reds which can be distracting to wildlife and also dark colors which absorb heat. Your best bet is to stick to light muted colors. Pale earth colors such as tan or olive are best for viewing wildlife and birds, but camouflage clothes are illegal in many African countries.

Your primary footwear should be closed toe and comfortable. Open toes can "open" you up to insect bites, stubbed toes, thorns, et cetera. Flip flops should be limited to poolside, the beach or a shower stall. Take care of your feet and they will take care of you, and that includes having socks which can prevent blisters and insect bites.

### **Power & Connectivity**

You will want to bring along an adaptor for all of your gadgets and a step down transformer for those products for which the higher voltage leads to damage. Many electronic devices chargers have a dual setting which will be indicated by a rating of "100-240V" indicated on the back of the charger. You will need to look to be sure. If the rating is "100-240" you will need only the socket adaptor.

## At a Glance

Voltage for Madagascar	127-200 volts / 50 hertz
Voltage for South Africa:	220 volts / 50 hertz
Adapter Type C	
Adapter Type E	

## Cell Phones

Many travelers bring along their cell phones, not only for connecting to the internet and making phone calls, but for the easy to use camera functions. If you plan on using it as a phone keep in mind North American phones may not in Madagascar, particularly in remote areas. Check with your service provider to determine if you can purchase a plan, or if your phone can be “unlocked”. If it can, you should be able to purchase inexpensive prepaid SIM cards.

*Advisory: As most people travel to “get away from it all,” some limitations on the use of these phones when on tour need to be set. We suggest the following guidelines on the use of cell phones:*

1. Keep the ring tone at a low volume to avoid disturbing other guests.
2. Use your phone in the privacy of your room and not any of the common areas: dining room, bar/lounge area, or on any of the vehicles.
3. Use your phone for outgoing calls and to check messages only. Incoming calls, and the loud ringing that ensues, should be curtailed.

## Time

Madagascar is on Eastern Africa Time (EAT) and seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. When it is noon in Ethiopia, it will be 5:00am in New York.

## EQUIPMENT

### Cameras

From smartphones to SLR cameras, digital photography has now made it simpler than ever to preserve the memories experienced during once-in-a-lifetime adventures. Most digital cameras use either an SD (secure digital) card or a CF (compact flash) card that comes in a variety of storage capacities ranging from 2-128 GB (gigabytes). Depending on the megapixel size of your particular camera and the format in which you choose to shoot your images, an 8GB card can hold as few as 200 images shot in RAW format (normally shot by pros and serious amateurs) to just over 2000 images shot as JPEGs (most common format shot by enthusiasts). For those cameras with megapixels higher than 12, it is recommended that at least 4-8GB cards are used and that you should always bring more than one card in case of card failure or corruption (rare but possible). If you are bringing a laptop, external USB hard drives of 1-2 TB (terabytes) are compact, relatively inexpensive, and an excellent way to store tens of thousands of images. In addition to ensuring that you bring the charger and adaptor/convertor for the location to where you are traveling, it is highly recommended that you bring at least one spare, fully charged battery

for your camera. There may be locations where dependable power is not available for charging and spare batteries may prove to be invaluable and help ensure that you don't miss any photo opportunities.

### **Video**

Charging facilities for video AND digital cameras should be available in every camp or lodge on the safari, as long as you have a standard charger that will plug into 220 volts. Please bring along enough batteries to last you at least three days of filming.

### **Binoculars**

There will be an opportunity to observe some of the natural treasures of Namibia. Binoculars will add immeasurably to your viewing enjoyment. Preferably, binoculars should be at least 8 power (8x) and have a wide field of view to allow you to quickly find whatever it is you want to see. Some binoculars have the added advantage of "gathering light," making objects brighter in dim morning and evening conditions. This light-gathering capability is determined by a measurement called the "exit pupil", which is calculated by dividing the diameter of the front (objective) lens in millimeters by the power (8x, for example). These two measurements are commonly designated on binoculars as a measurement such as 8x42, which translates to 8 power with a 42 mm objective lens. The exit pupil in this instance is  $42/8$ , or 5.25. Since the human eye can process light delivered by an exit pupil of about 4.0, these binoculars will appear bright even in dim light.

Some very small binoculars are relatively inexpensive, such as 8x21. With a very narrow field of view (usually about 400 feet at 1,000 yards) and an exit pupil of only  $21/8 = 2.6$ , these binoculars are designed for viewing stationary objects in bright light, such as at the opera, and are poorly designed for looking at wildlife. You will be far happier with binoculars designated in the range of 8x40 to 10x50.

### **Flashlights**

As the grounds of many lodges and camps are unfenced, it is essential that you bring a small flashlight as you may encounter wild animals at night. You should also bring a spare globe as well as batteries as they may be unobtainable en route.

## **MONEY MATTERS**

### **Currency**

The official currency of Madagascar is the Malagasy ariary (MGA). The ariary is divided into 5 units known as iraimbilanja which is equal to one French franc, making each ariary equal to 5 francs. The ariary was introduced in 1961 to replace the franc, but it was not until 2005 that it became the official currency of Madagascar. Ariary are circulated in the form of coins, up to 50 MGA, and bank notes, up to a value of 10,000 MGA.

Madagascar's local economies are largely cash driven. The ability to purchase goods with a credit or ATM cards will be virtually nonexistent outside the major metropolitan areas of the island. You will want cash to make purchases from the smaller independent vendors that you will encounter on your trip. It is advisable to carry some cash in local and U.S. Dollars (minted on or after 2006) for purchases outside urban areas.

### **Credit Cards/ATMs**

Many places in Madagascar are not equipped to process credit cards so their use is generally limited to major hotels and resorts. Where equipped to do so, Visa seems to be the card most accepted.

ATMs are beginning to find their way in to everyday life in Madagascar but they are still not as prevalent as in the U.S. You may be able to exchange money via ATM at the airport using your Visa linked card (ATM or credit) as many do not yet accept Master Card. If you choose this option, keep in mind that you will be charged a fee each time.

Be sure to notify your bank and credit card company when and where you will be traveling and ask what fees, if any will apply.

*Note:* As there is a potential for fraud anywhere in the world, we highly recommend that you do not use your debit cards overseas and exercise caution when using your credit cards. Do not let the card out of your sight and if a vendor tries to take the card into a back room, ask for your card back immediately and refrain from using it. Keep your valuables on you, including passports and credit cards, or locked in the safety deposit boxes when provided.

### **Shopping:**

As mentioned above, you will want to rely on cash for most exchanges in Madagascar, so plan on having cash on hand for purchases, particularly in smaller towns. Bargaining is built into the culture of Madagascar so be prepared to negotiate. This applies to the unique one of a kind items you spot in the market place as well as taxi fares. The latter should not be issues because you will be shuttled about in pre-arranged transports, but if you find yourself needing a taxi, agree to the price **before** you leave for the destination.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Etiquette**

Madagascar is regulated by numerous fady (taboos) which vary from region to region. They can affect how the locals feel about food, clothes, where one bathes and more. It is more prevalent in the rural areas of the country than in the cities. One should try to become aware of the prevailing fady in the area they visit. When addressing anyone older than you or in a position of authority use the word "tompoko" (toom-pook) meaning sir or madam. Always ask permission before taking photos, especially if you want to take a picture of a tomb. The respect for ancestors runs far and deep into the daily practices and beliefs of the Malagasy people, and understanding this will help prevent you from committing any cultural foibles.

### **Respecting Wildlife**

- The wild animals are not like those found in theme parks – they are **not** tame.
- Many safari camps are unfenced and dangerous animals can (and do!) wander through the camps. Many of the animals and reptiles you will see are potentially dangerous. Attacks by wild animals are rare. However, there are no guarantees that such incidents will not occur.
- Please listen to the lodge and camp staff and guides. The safety precautions need to be taken seriously, and strictly adhered to.
- Don't go wandering off on your own without a guide – even to your rooms. After retiring to your rooms at night, don't leave them.
- Observe animals silently and with a minimum of disturbance to their natural activities. Loud talking on game drives can frighten the animals away.
- Never attempt to attract an animal's attention. Don't imitate animal sounds, clap your hands, pound the vehicle or throw objects.

- Please respect your driver-guide's judgment about proximity to lions, cheetahs and leopards. Don't insist that he take the vehicle closer so you can get a better photograph. A vehicle driven too close can hinder a hunt or cause animals to abandon a hard-earned meal.
- At Classic Escapes, we respect wildlife and are committed to the preservation of the national parks. Off-road driving is strictly prohibited. Please do not encourage your driver to drive off-road where it is not allowed simply to get a good photo, as the damage to the environment might be irreparable.
- Litter tossed on the ground can choke or poison animals and birds and is unsightly.
- Never attempt to feed or approach any wild animal on foot. This is especially important near lodges or in campsites where animals may have become accustomed to human visitors.
- Refrain from smoking on game drives. The dry African bush ignites very easily, and a flash fire can kill animals.