Cycle Madagascar - Highlands to the Coast

Trip Code: HCMB

Version:

CYCLE	GUIDED GROUP	6 MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Cycle from Antananarivo in the centre of the island, southwards to Ifaty
- See several famous national parks; Ranomafana, Andringitra, Isalo
- History, culture, landscape and wildlife, including lemurs

- Two days of R&R at a beach-front hotel beside the Indian Ocean

AT A GLANCE

- 9 days biking
- 520 kilometres
- 25% off-road - 95% vehicle supported
- Join at Antananarivo

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

Madagascar is the fourth biggest island in the world; it's as big as France! It's also incredibly diverse and unspoiled, with an incredible cultural mix, fantastically varied landscape and some of the most unusual plant and animal species. The island is famous for its lemurs (found nowhere else on Earth) and for stately baobab trees, but there are also hundreds of types of colourful birds, chameleons and even turtles.

All of this rich variety will be presented to us as we cycle southwards from the capital, Antananarivo (locally known as 'Tana') to the south-east corner of the island, where we spend 2 days at leisure at a laid-back beach resort beside the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. Our journey takes us to some of Madagascar's best-known national parks; Ranomafana, Andringitra and Isalo and we make the most of each of these by getting off our bikes and doing some hiking. At Ranomafana, we will be on the look-out for lemurs, whilst at Andringitra it is the towering granite cliffs which will perhaps make the biggest impression. At Isalo, we will explore amongst forest and bizarre rock formations and take a dip in a beautiful river pool known as the 'Piscine (swimming pool) Naturelle'. We have split this classic journey into a mix of vehicle transfers and manageable cycling stages, mostly riding on tarmac roads, poorly maintained in places, and with some long sections of dirt road, too. As a fitting conclusion to this unforgettable cycling holiday, we have 2 full days at Ifaty on the Indian Ocean where you can choose to do as little as you wish from your beach-front accommodation. This just might be... biking in paradise!

Is this holiday for you?

ADVENTURE CYCLING. This cycling holiday will suit regular weekend cyclists with good general fitness and a sense of adventure. The ride covers approximately 520 kilometres in 9 days of cycling, with around 400 kilometres on tarmac roads - mostly on the Route Nationale 7 which often has a narrow 'shoulder' of gravel or broken tarmac and some of your riding will be on this. The road is not well maintained and potholes are to be expected. The approximately 120 kilometres of dirt road riding can vary from quite smooth to narrow, rutted and loose. There is very little cycling that could be described as technical but as always you should take care if the terrain ahead of you looks other than straightforward. This is not a very hilly ride but there are a couple of days with aggregate ascents of around 800 metres - there is generally more downhill than uphill. After all, we start out from Ansirabe at 1500 metres and end up at the coast. You will be accompanied by one or more cycling guides, one or more support vehicles (which can follow the group for almost all of the route) and a mechanic/assistant. Our accommodation is in a

mix of simple hotels, offering twin sharing accommodation with en-suite facilities. Some of this accommodation is bungalow-style. GOOD QUALITY BIKE HIRE AVAILABLE LOCALLY

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A locally based English-speaking bike guide
- Antananarivo Airport transfers as described
- Single transfer to Tulear Airport on Day 16
- The internal flight from Tulear to Antananarivo
- All land transport involved in the itinerary
- One or more support vehicles and drivers
- A mechanic/assistant with groups of 6 or more cyclists
- Specialist national park guides
- National park entrance fees
- Mineral water during the ride
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as per the Meal Plan

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Visas (if required)
- Tips for local guide and crew
- Airport departure taxes (if applicable)
- Optional activities
- Some meals as per the Meal Plan
- Miscellaneous personal expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc
- Bike carriage on international flights - check with your airline
- Bike overland transfer or carriage on internal flight - see note in the itinerary - Day 13
- Bike hire

Important Notice

Travelling back from Tulear to Antananarivo by road

If your internal flight from Tulear to Antananarivo on Day 16 is cancelled (which has affected KE clients once since we first offered this holiday in 2017) the only way to be sure of getting to Antananarivo Airport in time for your homeward flight on the following day is to travel by road. We will provide this transfer in place of the internal flight. Scenic and interesting at times, this is also an arduous 24-hour journey.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at the hotel in Antananarivo.

Airport transfers are provided for all clients.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Food & Water

Drinking Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a Water-To-Go bottle) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Traditional Malagasy cooking is based on a large serving of rice with a dressing of sauces, meat, vegetables and seasoning. The Malagasy palette leans towards hot and spicy and dishes often include chillies. In Antananarivo you will find a wide variety of restaurants including Chinese and Vietnamese, and hotels and restaurants in the majority of towns in Madagascar will usually offer a variety of dishes, including more international cuisine. Dinner is a 3-course meal and there is usually a choice. Breakfast are continental in style and usually include bread, pancakes, eggs and fruit salad. Lunches combine pasta with dried meats and cheeses and a variety of vegetables and fruit.

Accommodation

The accommodation on this trip is in a mix of simple hotels, with twin-share accommodation and en-suite facilities. In some places, the accommodation is provided in individual bungalows in the hotel grounds or at a campground facility. For the 2 nights we spend at the campground at Tsaranoro we can be in either bungalow-style or tented accommodation (the tents here are set up under A-Frame shelters and they have camp beds, bedding, pillow, mosquito net and skylight). The hotels in Antananarivo and Ambositra and Ifaty have swimming pools. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex. Single room occupancy can be pre-booked - please refer to the Dates and Prices page for this holiday on our website.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The trip will be led by an experienced local cycling guide who may ride an e-bike to facilitate better management of the trip. For groups of 6 or more cyclists there will also be a second local team member who will assist with the leading and mechanic duties. In addition, there will be one or more support vehicles and drivers. The local team will leave the group after dinner on Day 13.

Altitude

This holiday does not involve any significant ascent to altitude and we would not expect any altitude issues with this trip.

Spending Money

Approximately 250 euros should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including the meals you purchase directly and approximately 50 euros for local staff tips. It is not necessary to obtain local currency (Malagasy Ariary) prior to departure. The easiest way to access your spending money is to use ATMs which can be found in Antananarivo and most of the larger towns visited on the trip. If you prefer to bring your spending money with you, euros are most widely accepted for exchange in Madagascar. If you intend to bring your travel money with you, we recommend that bring this in the form of cash.

If you are travelling with your own bike, the local crew will usually take your bike overland back to Antanarivo at the end of the tour. There is a charge for this of €50 per bike payable directly to the guide. If this is not possible for some reason, or you wish to use your bike during your time in Ifaty, you will need to take your bike with you on the internal flight back to Antanarivo on Day 16. There is an additional baggage fee of €140 for this (subject to change) which is payable directly at the airport.

Guidance on Tipping

Tips are the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to your local guides and other staff. They do not form part of their wages and we advise local teams that tips are a bonus and entirely dependent on the service that is given. We recommend that you tip your guide and driver, if they have done a good job. As a rough guide, we suggest you allow a total of 50 euros for tipping your crew.

Your Bike

If you are taking your own bike, we suggest that a 'hardtail' mountain bike with front suspension is appropriate for this holiday. It should have a good range of gears and we recommend you fit fast-rolling all-rounder or semi-slick tyres which work well on the surfaced roads and non-technical trails typically found on our **Adventure Cycling** holidays.

Since you are depending on your bike to transport you throughout your holiday, it's important to ensure it is in good working order. If you are not mechanically minded, get your local bicycle dealer to service it for you.

Please contact us if you are unsure about the suitability of your bike.

Bike Hire

Our agent in Madagascar has a fleet of aluminium-framed hardtail mountain bikes. They are made by Stevens (models: Applebee or Mira) and Rock Machine and have Shimano components, triple chainsets, disk brakes, either 27.5 or 29 inch wheels and 100 millimetres of front suspension. The bikes are fitted with 'all-rounder' tyres such as Schwalbe Smart Sam - and have flat pedals a single bottle cage. Please let us know if you wish to hire a bike. You can either choose a particular model and we will try to reserve one in your size ahead of your holiday. Or, you can try out several bikes when you arrive in Madagascar and pick the one that suits you best.

There is also the option to hire an e-Bike. Our agent has Axess Sharp 29 e-Bikes which have Shimano components, 10-speed Deore gearing, hydraulic disk brakes and RockShox 100mm forks. They have a Bosch motor and a 500Wh (Watt/hour) battery that will be charged each night. If you choose this option please let us have your height so we can reserve a bike of the correct size.

Bike rental is subject to availability and costs €200 for the standard bikes or €520 for the e-Bike. You will pay for your bike hire on arrival in Antananarivo on Day 1. Please note that this must be paid in cash, either in GBP, US$ or in €Euros. You are not required to pay a security deposit for these bikes. We must stress that your hire contract is with the local rental company and KE cannot be held responsible for any issues arising from bike rental. If you normally ride clipped in to your pedals, you will need to take your pedals and you might also choose to take your own saddle, which will be fitted for you. You must also take your helmet, which must be worn at all times when riding.

Travelling With Your Bike

Airlines require that you pack your bike properly for travel and for this holiday we recommend that you use a purpose-made soft bike bag. These can be relatively inexpensive. They are also light in weight, easy to handle and, most importantly, can be packed into a small space to allow easy transportation in the support vehicle. You will need to partially dismantle your bike to pack it in your bag.

PLEASE DO NOT USE a purpose-made rigid bike box for this holiday. We do not have the space in the support vehicle to transport these bulky items.

Please contact us if you have any questions regarding travelling with your bike.

Vehicle Support

Throughout this trip we have the back up of one or more support vehicles which will follow the group for most of each day's ride. The group's baggage will be transported in the support vehicle and the whole group and bikes can also be transported, as there are a number of transfers within our itinerary. The local biking leader and the support vehicle driver will watch over the group and there will be regular water stops, every 10 kilometres or so, to allow the group to reassemble. We want everyone to enjoy their cycling experience on this trip and we recognise the importance of group members being allowed to cycle at their own pace. The support vehicle will pick up any group members who wish to take a break from cycling at any time. Water, fruit, nuts and other snacks are provided from the support vehicle. If there are particular energy bars or gels that you rely on at home, consider taking a small supply.

Baggage Allowance

Apart from your bike in its bag (if you are taking your own bike), you should travel with one main item of luggage, such as a KE Trek Bag or similar holdall, as well as a small day pack or mountain bike-specific hydration pack. The day pack can be used to carry valuable items such as cameras and GPS devices whilst travelling and will also carry your day-ride essentials during the rides.

The normal baggage allowance on the internal flight from Tulear to Antananarivo is 20kg plus 5kg hand luggage. Excess baggage will be charged. If you take your bike on this flight there is an additional charge of 50 euros payable at check-in. Your baggage allowance on your international flights will depend on your airline. When choosing your flights, whether booking them directly or through KE, you will need to consider the cost of carrying your bike. These costs are your responsibility.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the ‘Dates and Prices’ table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required**,** and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa Madagascar

A visa is required to visit Madagascar. The visa fee is €35 for 30 days there is also a €10 tourist tax fee which is payable on arrival.

You can apply for your visa online prior to travel via the Madagascar Government e-visa portal, or you can obtain a visa on arrival.

You should carry your passport with you at all times and ensure that you have a photocopy of your passport somewhere safe.

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips.

Currency

The unit of currency in Madagascar is the Ariary.

Preparing for your Holiday

The better conditioned you are the more you will enjoy your trip. We suggest that you adopt a sensible weekly exercise regime and fit in a number of long cycle rides in hilly country (preferably to include gravel road/forest track rides) to ensure you are physically capable of taking part in this trip - this will also provide you with an opportunity to make sure all your riding kit is tried and tested before you travel. Cycling is obviously the best activity to prepare for this trip, however, running and swimming are also good for developing aerobic fitness and stamina.

Climate

Madagascar has a tropical climate modified by altitude and by its Indian Ocean location. There are two seasons, a relatively hot ‘green’ season from November to March when the island’s eastern coastal areas can receive significant rainfall. Our route, inland, takes us through the cooler and drier central highlands and avoids the worst of the rain although some rain can be expected. Outside of this period it is cooler and drier and Antananarivo and the west coast generally have a pleasant, temperate climate with a temperature range of 18°C to 22°C. At night in the highlands in August, it can be quite cold with temperatures dropping down to 10 or even 5°C overnight.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's **'Travel Aware'** campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- Madagascar: Hilary Bradt (Bradt Guides) Madagascar & Comoros.
- Lonely Planet Birds of Madagascar: Peter Morris
- Madagascar Wildlife : Nick Garbutt & Hilary Bradt (Bradt Wildlife Guides)
- The BBC Earth Wildlife DVD Madagascar (David Attenborough) is essential viewing (available though Amazon)

Maps

Reise Know-How Verlag. 1: 1,200,000

Double-sided map with topographic and tourist information. Topography is indicated by relief shading and spot heights. The map shows mountain passes, names of mountain ranges and plateaux, seasonal rivers and lakes, mangroves and coral reefs. Road information includes seasonal tracks and indicates intermediate driving distances on main and secondary roads. National parks and protected areas are marked and symbols highlight various places of interest: The map legend includes English.

Private Groups Information

Make this KE cycling holiday your own!

- Do our normal group departure dates not fit?
- Are you wanting to travel with just your friends or family?
- Are you looking to organise a trip for your local cycling club?

We are experts in creating holidays for groups of friends, families, charities, and cycling clubs. Our personal service means you'll be fully involved as we make the arrangements for your perfect adventure holiday.

Independence with Security

Travelling as a KE Private Group allows you more flexibility and choice, but still with the peace of mind that everything is pre-planned and arranged for your group by a reputable adventure travel company.

To take your first step to an amazing adventure with your friends and family complete the private group enquiry form, or call our **Sales Experts on: 017687 73966**

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our Travel Insurance page for further information and to get a quote.

Explore International

This holiday is part of our Explore International range. Participants on these trips can book through KE or through our international partner. This helps us to gather together sufficient numbers of like-minded adventurers to get your holiday up and running quickly. Led by an English-speaking guide, the cosmopolitan nature of these groups can be an important part of the experience!

Equipment Information

Equipment List

For this holiday you will need your usual cycling clothing, including shoes, cycling gloves and helmet (which must be worn at all times when cycling).

Whether you are hiring a bike or taking your own, we recommend that you take the usual day-ride essentials of: mobile phone, multi-tool, mini-pump, tyre levers, spare tubes and puncture repair kit.

Bike Wear

- Cycling helmet
- Cycling shoes
- Daypack or mountain bike-specific hydration pack (e.g. Camelbak)
- Water bladder - min. 2 litres water capacity (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Padded (baggy) cycling shorts
- Long leg cycling trousers or leg warmers
- Base-layer – short sleeve cycling tops
- Mid-layer - long sleeved cycling tops
- Fleece jacket or jumper
- Lightweight windproof top
- Lightweight waterproof jacket
- Regular biking gloves
- Long-fingered biking gloved
- Warm hat that fits under your helmet
- Buff
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream (inc. total bloc for lips/nose)
- Camera

Other Stuff

- Travel and off-the-bike clothing
- Approach shoes or lightweight boots for the several days of walking
- Wash bag, towel, toiletries, including anti-bacterial handwash
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Swimwear
- Basic First Aid kit and personal medication
- Chamois cream (e.g. Assos/Ozone)
- Insect repellant
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Spares

If you are hiring a bike you do not need to bring any spares. The hire bikes are provided in good condition and a supply of spares is carried. You may be asked to pay directly for any spares used, especially in the case of crash damage or damage by mis-use. If you are taking your own bike, you should consider taking a minimum of spares, including a couple of spare spokes (for each wheel if they are different), spare brake blocks (or brake disc pads), chain links/chain connector, rear derailleur hanger and any non-standard parts specific to your bike.

Repairs

Whilst not essential, it is a good idea that you familiarise yourself with how to carry out at least some basic repairs to your bike e.g. changing an inner tube and fixing a puncture. Your bike guide will be happy to help with repairs and general maintenance, but being able to carry out a simple repair yourself could save the inconvenience of having to wait for assistance.

Hydration and Energy Snacks

You should take suitable water bottle(s) or a hydration pack and you should also consider taking a small supply of the gels, power bars or sports drink mix that you would normally use on a ride at home.

Please contact us if you have any questions about your equipment.

Land Only Information

Please refer to the 'Joining Arrangements & Transfers' within Holiday Information for further details.

Flights and other transport to your destination should not be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the departure is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary joining at the hotel in Antananarivo. Transfers from/to Antananarivo Airport are provided both on Day 1 and on the final day of the Land Only itinerary.

Flight Inclusive Information

Limited seats are available at the advertised flight price, please book as early as you can. If we are unable to secure seats at the price shown, or you have requested regional departures and/or upgrades, we will provide you with an alternative quote. It is likely that flight payment will be in advance of your final holiday balance. Booking a flight inclusive package means you will benefit from full financial protection, eases your holiday planning, and leaves us to deal with airlines and schedule changes. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will offset the carbon of your flight.

Regional departures and/or alternative carriers are available on request.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Antananarivo. Outbound flights will usually depart the UK in the evening, arriving in the afternoon the following day (Day 1 of the Land Only itinerary). Return flights will usually depart Antananarivo Airport in the afternoon of the final day of the Land Only itinerary, arriving in the UK in the morning of the following day.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

The Best of MadagascarWe have devised a holiday that shows off the best of Madagascar. As well as a short introductory ride and 8 cycling stages, we include hiking in the most unmissable of the national parks - Ranomafana, Andringitra, Isola - a visit to a lemur reserve and 2 days of relaxation at Ifaty beside the Indian Ocean.We invited journalist Matt Westby to join a recent KE group. You can read about his adventures in Active Traveller Magazine.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 05/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change