



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Madagascar

### Budget Birding

*9<sup>th</sup> October to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (11 days)*

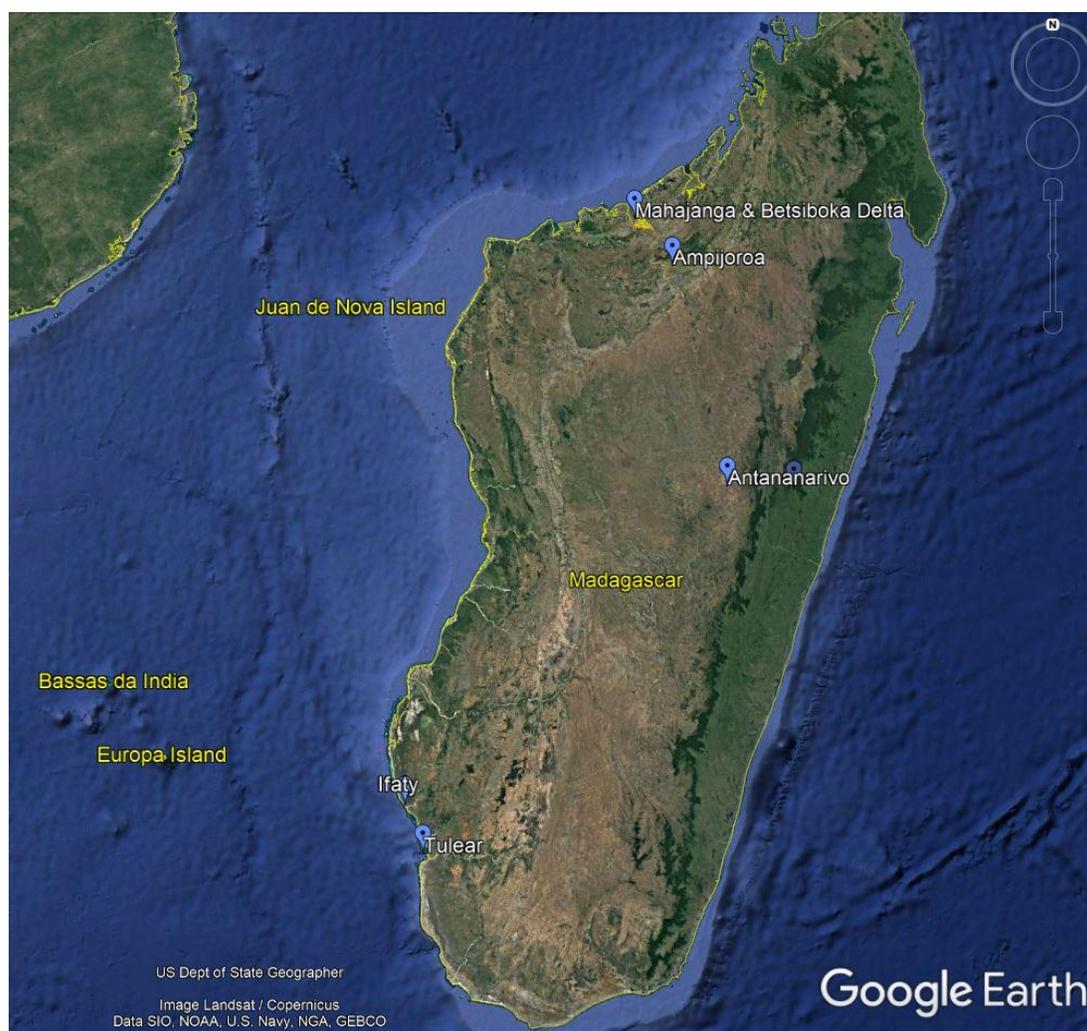


**Pitta-like Ground Roller by Markus Lilje**

*Our Budget Madagascar Birding tour provides the budget conscious birder with a fantastic opportunity for observing the highlights of this magical island's incredible birds and wildlife. On this tour we will visit three of Madagascar's core critical habitats; namely the deciduous woodlands of Ankarafantsika, the dry spiny forest around Ifaty and the moist eastern rainforests of Analamazaotra and Mantadia (Perinet), all of which hold an exceptional diversity of endemic birds and lemurs. We stand excellent chances of finding all 5 of the island's endemic bird families, as well as up to 10 different lemur species, including the awesome Indri! Some of the expected highlights of this tour include Long-tailed and Pitta-like Ground Rollers, stunning Schlegel's and Velvet Asities, Blue Coua, Subdesert and White-breasted Mesites, Sickle-billed and Van Dam's Vangas, and the ubiquitous Cuckoo Roller.*

**THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...****THE ITINERARY**

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Antananarivo and drive to Perinet</b>
<b>Days 2 &amp; 3</b>	<b>Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park</b>
<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Perinet drive to Antananarivo</b>
<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Antananarivo to Mahajanga and transfer to Ampijoroa Forest Station</b>
<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Ampijoroa Forest Station</b>
<b>Day 7</b>	<b>Ampijoroa to Mahajanga and flight to Antananarivo</b>
<b>Day 8</b>	<b>Antananarivo to Ifaty via Tulear</b>
<b>Day 9</b>	<b>Ifaty</b>
<b>Day 10</b>	<b>Ifaty to Tulear</b>
<b>Day 11</b>	<b>Tulear to Antananarivo and depart</b>

**TOUR ROUTE MAP...**

**THE TOUR IN DETAIL...****Malagasy Kingfisher by Rich Lindie****Day 1: Antananarivo and drive to Perinet.**

This morning, we depart on a drive of 3 to 4 hours eastwards across the Highland Plateau to the famous reserve of Analamazaotra (otherwise known as Perinet). Hamerkop, Yellow-billed Kite, Brown-throated Martin and Madagascar Cisticola are regularly encountered *en route*. We will also keep a look out for the delightful Madagascar Pratincole but will be lucky to find this sought-after beauty.

Our accommodation for the next three nights is a comfortable hotel, 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 be serenaded by the beautiful songs of the world's largest extant species of lemur, the handsome Indri. The moist rainforest cloaking Madagascar's eastern escarpment protects the richest assemblage of birds on the island, including many that are rare or poorly known. Over 100 of these have been recorded from within the small reserve of Perinet and we can look forward to seeing such specials as Madagascar Flufftail, the elusive Madagascar Wood Rail, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Greater Vasa Parrot, Madagascar Cuckoo, Madagascar Spinetail, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, Madagascar Cuckooshrike, Ward's Flycatcher, Tylas Vanga, Madagascar Starling, Long-billed Bernieria, Spectacled Tetraka, White-throated Oxylabes, Nelicourvi Weaver and Souimanga Sunbird among many others! This afternoon we will make our first excursion into this exciting area.

**Days 2 & 3: Perinet Special Reserve and Mantadia National Park.** We will spend a full two days exploring these fantastic reserves. Our main targets here are amongst the most sought-after of Madagascar's birds, namely four of the five families endemic to the Malagasy region: the exquisite ground rollers, Cuckoo Roller, Malagasy warblers and the vangas. Some of these, such as the unique Cuckoo Roller, Pitta-like Ground Roller and a number of the vangas and Malagasy warblers are reasonably common and fairly regularly encountered, whilst most of the others remain rare, local or elusive. We will make a special effort to locate as many representatives of these charismatic families as possible, as well as those of the endemic subfamily, the couas.

**Blue Vanga by Dubi Shapiro**

In the forested hills around Perinet, we hope to find the localised Red-fronted and Blue Couas,





Schlegel's Asity by Rich Lindie

the electric Velvet Asity and flocks of vangas that may include White-headed, Chabert's, Blue, Red-tailed, Hook-billed and the bizarre Nuthatch Vanga.

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 the Indri. A journey in search of these magnificent creatures is an incredible experience and if we are fortunate, we will be treated to a close encounter with a family group, their eerie, whale-like howling echoing through the forest. Other lemurs we hope to see include Common Brown and Eastern Grey Bamboo Lemur and we will also search known roosting sites for the nocturnal but inquisitive Weasel Sportive Lemur and Eastern Avahi (Woolly Lemur).

In the evenings, we will embark on night walks along the forest edge. Nocturnal outings are a thrilling and indeed, an essential part of any trip to Madagascar and Perinet is one of the best sites to search for the island's night birds and lemurs. Specialities here include Madagascar 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 Avahi (Woolly Lemur), Furry-eared Dwarf Lemur and Goodman's Mouse Lemur.

The island's reptile and amphibian ('herps') 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 three species of eccentric leaf-tailed geckos: the huge *Uroplatus fimbriatus*, *Uroplatus sikorae* and the aptly named *Uroplatus phantasticus*.

Mantadia National Park lies a short distance from Perinet, protecting a large expanse of primary forest at a somewhat higher altitude. 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 concentrate on finding these specials,



Coquerel's Sifaka by Rich Lindie





**Long-tailed Ground Roller**  
by Dubi Shapiro

also watching for more widespread yet no less desirable forest birds such as Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Rufous-headed and Short-legged Ground Rollers, Crossley's Babbler (now considered a ground-dwelling vanga!), Common and Dark Newtonias, Wedge-tailed, Green, Stripe-throated and Common Jery, the recently described Cryptic Warbler and Forest Fody.

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 Baron's 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 take to the fairly steep and at times slippery trails into the rainforest.

**Day 4: Perinet drive to Antananarivo.** This morning we shall embark on the drive back to Antananarivo. Upon arrival in the bustling capital, we'll transfer to our hotel on the edge of the city for an overnight stay. Depending on available time we may

visit the Tsimbazaza Zoo, which showcases a range of Malagasy lemurs and herps. The artificial waterbodies on the property provide a home to a number of waterfowl, and we may see the Madagascar Grebe and Dimorphic Egret. Tall trees on the property sometimes provide a roost for Madagascar Owl; however, we would be most fortunate to see this species here!

**Day 5: Antananarivo to Mahajanga and transfer to Ampijoroa Forest Station.** This morning we shall board our flight (1 hour) to Mahajanga on the north-west coast of Madagascar. After arriving in this sleepy town, we will drive to Ampijoroa (3 hours), a forest station situated in the extensive deciduous forests of the Ankarafantsika Reserve. Ampijoroa is famous as the home of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust's Plough-share Tortoise captive breeding program and serves as an ideal base from which to search for the numerous endemic birds of the region.

En route to the reserve, we may encounter wetland species such as Purple, Striated, Squacco and Malagasy Pond Herons as well as flocks of Black Heron, which we will watch as they perform their bizarre "umbrella-feeding" routine.

On arrival at the forestry station, we should encounter numerous "campsite residents" in the late afternoon, such as Broad-billed Roller, screeching Lesser Vasa Parrot, Crested Drongo, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Sakalava Weaver, Madagascar Hoopoe, Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher, Madagascar Green Pigeon and Malagasy Turtle Dove. As the sun sets we will



**Subdesert Mesite** by Markus Lilje



embark on a night walk, searching for the large range of chameleons and mammals that call these woodlands home.



Common Sunbird-Asity by David Erterius

**Day 6: Ampijoroa Forest Station.** We have a full day to explore the network of trails through the dry forest around Ampijoroa, in search of the many fabulous avian gems 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 Ibis, Madagascar Buttonquail, France's Sparrowhawk, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher and Rufous, Hook-billed, White-headed,

Chabert's, Blue, Red-tailed and outrageous Sickle-billed Vangas.

No less than eight species of lemur occur in the near vicinity of the camp and we will be on the lookout for the comical Coquerel's Sifaka, Common Brown Lemur and the rare Mongoose Lemur during the day, while Western Avahi (Woolly Lemur), Milne-Edward's Sportive Lemur, Fat-tailed Dwarf Lemur and Grey and Golden-brown Mouse Lemurs may well entertain us after dark. 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 and are always a pleasure to admire.

In the late afternoon, we will enjoy a boat trip on Lac Ravelobe, where we hope to find the critically endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle, a pair of which is resident here. White-throated Rail favour the waterside vegetation and Malagasy Kingfishers perch in the open on dead snags at the water's edge waiting for a catch. Humblot's Heron is usually present and stands out among the smaller waterbirds. We might also see Madagascar Jacan here as well as Malagasy Pond Heron and Malagasy Coucal.

**Day 7: Ampijoroa to Mahajanga and flight to Antananarivo.** This morning, we have a final opportunity to do some birding, lemur watching and photography around Ampijoroa before returning by bus to Mahajanga. We then



Blue Coua by Dubi Shapiro



depart on an internal flight to Antananarivo for an overnight stay.



Scaly Ground Roller by Dubi Shapiro

**Day 8: Antananarivo Ifaty via Tulear.** This morning, we will take an internal flight to the south-western city of Tulear. Upon arrival, we will transfer into 4 x 4 vehicles and begin the short drive up the coastline to our hotel in the small resort town of Ifaty for a two-night stay. We will stop *en route* to look for the uncommon Madagascar Plover, while wetlands and salt pans may hold numbers of Greater Flamingo, Black-winged Stilt, Kittlitz's Plover, assorted migratory waders and Malagasy Harrier if we are very fortunate.

**Day 9: Ifaty.** Much has been written about the strange *Didierea* woodland, or “Spiny Forest”, around Ifaty but this in no way lessens the

feeling of awe that overcomes one as we set foot in this botanical wonderland. Venturing out at dawn, before the day's heat, we will stroll amongst the myriad multi-stemmed succulents, squat baobab trees and thorny scrub in search of such spectacular endemics as Banded Kestrel, Running and Red-capped Coua, Archbold's Newtonia, Thamnornis, Subdesert Brush Warbler and Lafresnaye's Vanga. Two very special birds here are the near mythical Subdesert Mesite, which we may find adopting its strange, cryptic posture on a thorny branch, and Long-tailed Ground Roller, an elusive ground dweller best located by its low, hooting call. Flocks of noisy Sickle-billed Vanga are another feature of this bizarre, Tolkienesque landscape. As the day warms up, so too does the reptile activity increase. 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 of colours of a coral reef or relax in the warm shallows in front of our hotel. An optional afternoon excursion will be taken to bird some wetlands to the south of Ifaty where previous Rockjumper tours have found Greater Painted-Snipe, Little Bittern, White-throated Rail and Baillon's Crake.

**Day 10: Ifaty to Tulear.** After some final birding in the Ifaty area, we will make our way southwards to Tulear, for a one-night stay. In the afternoon, we will make our first excursion to a flat-topped mountain aptly known as La Tabla. The habitat of this desolate area is known as coral rag scrub and consists of dense thorny scrubs, *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*



Velvet Asity by Dubi Shapiro



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plated lizards and if we are very lucky the stunning Dumeril's Boa and endangered Radiated Tortoise.

**Day 11: Tulear to Antananarivo and depart.** This morning we will board our final internal flight back to Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo! If time permits, we shall try to connect with any species we may have missed in the capital before driving to the airport where we will connect with our international flights home.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**

**Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.**

This includes:

- All breakfasts from day 2 to day 11;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- Reserve entrance fees; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- **ANY** flights (see above);
- Lunches and dinners throughout the tour;
- Visa fees;
- Any drinks or bottled water;
- Telephone calls;
- Special gratuities; and
- Laundry and other items of a personal nature.

**Single Supplement:** The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**

**a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.**

**b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.**

**c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**

**d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**



**Tipping:** As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

### **Special Notes:**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (+-44lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18lb) for hand luggage.
- **Fitness:** This Budget Madagascar Birding tour requires a reasonable level of fitness and participants should be in good general health as most of the birding will be done on foot, and may require walking for several hours at a time. Some trails in the rainforest can be quite steep and slippery, especially after rain, and a few longer walks will be made in an attempt to locate some of the more localised species.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally good standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are clean and comfortable. Some of the accommodations, are basic and less comfortable from what you have come to expect in the developed world; we will, however, make efforts to make this tour as comfortable as possible. There is no camping on this trip.
- If you have any medical conditions or physical limitations relating to balance and mobility please do let the Rockjumper office know.
- In some areas, it can be hot to very hot, especially at midday. We will thus make a number of early starts to maximise the most pleasurable time in the field. Some days are long and fairly demanding.
- If you are a more relaxed birder preferring an even-tempered tour, then our Highlights tour has been designed as a suitable alternative to this tour.

### **ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE DETAILS:**

This tour **does not** include ANY airfares. The tour starts early on Day 1, departing Antananarivo for Perinet. Participants should arrive in Antananarivo the day before the tour begins. The tour will conclude in the mid to late afternoon of day 11 in Antananarivo.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

### **FLIGHTS:**

All internal flights will be taken with Air Madagascar. Internal flight delays and last-minute flight schedule alterations are an inherent risk on any tour to Madagascar and we may have to re-arrange the tour itinerary due to changes of the internal flight schedule. We will take all reasonable action to ensure the tour follows the advertised itinerary as closely as possible. Where flights get cancelled or rescheduled, we may need to embark on long road journeys, or use charter flights if available (these are very expensive). Chartered flights present possible extra costs to the tour, so it is imperative that you consult with your travel insurance company to ascertain what amount they may cover should the situation arise.

For international flights the main port of entry is Ivato International Airport, Antananarivo (IATA: TNR) and is serviced with regular flights from Johannesburg operated by Air Madagascar and from Paris operated by Air France. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

