BIRDING AFRICA
THE AFRICA SPECIALISTS

Madagascar
Endemic Birds and Lemurs
Tour Leaflet 2027



Sickle-billed Vanga © Tertius Gous

14 – 19 November 2027 (Masoala Extension)
19 November – 6 December 2027 (Main Tour)

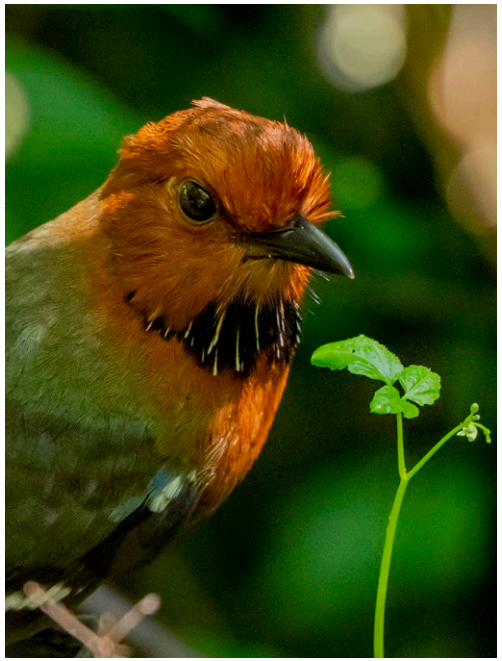
Madagascar 2027

BIRDING AFRICA
THE AFRICA SPECIALISTS

120 ENDEMICS IN 18 DAYS

- target over 120 bird endemics and near-endemics in 18 days
- see all seven endemic bird families and sub-families
- Helmet Vanga at Masoala
- enjoy at least 25 lemur species
- night walks for lemurs and chameleons

Rufous-headed Ground Roller © Michael Mills



TOUR LEADER: TERTIUS GOUS



Tertius is one of Birding Africa's most experienced leaders, and has led numerous trips to Madagascar over the past ten years. His sharp eyes and ears, and calm demenour, make him one of our most popular tour leaders.

2027 DATES

Masoala Extension	14 – 19 Nov
Main Tour	19 Nov – 6 Dec

EARLY BOOKING PRICE + SINGLE

Masoala Extension	$2850 + $340
Main Tour	$7750 + $960

Excludes internal flights estimated at $2500 (Masoala) and $950 (Main Tour)

BOOK ONLINE

Visit www.birdingafrica.com
Deposit ($220) by credit card
Email info@birdingafrica.com

Birding Africa Tour Summary



Short-legged Ground Roller © Tertius Gous

Our 18-day Main Tour and optional 6-day Masoala Extension run back-to-back and are designed for you to experience the greatest number of Madagascar's birds and lemurs as possible, depending on your available time.

On the Main Tour, we travel overland to visit the mega-diverse eastern rainforests of Andasibe-Mantadia and Ranomafana National Parks, home to most of the endemics, grasslands at the scenic Isalo National Park, dry deciduous forests of Zombitse National Park, baobab-filled spiny desert of the south-west, wetlands of the Betsiboka Delta and Lake Ravelobe and dry deciduous forest of Ankarafantsika National Park.

The exact sequence of sites visited is subject to Air Madagascar's flight schedule.

TOUR FOCUS

Our itinerary has been fine-tuned to target as many of Madagascar's endemic birds and lemurs possible, as time-efficiently as possible.

Our tour plans for multiple opportunities to find some of the hardest-to-see birds, especially ground-rollers, couas, asities and vangas, giving us the best chance of success. However, as we will be visiting Madagascar's best birding spots we will make sure to search for all the available species (within reason) and will see a great diversity.

Enjoying Madagascar's diverse lemurs will also be a focus of our tour and we will search for these during day and night walks. Madagascar also has a fantastic diversity of amphibians and reptiles and we are likely to have some great chameleon sightings, from the tiny *Brookesia* to the giant Parson's Chameleon.

Let us know if you have target species or want to know more about the species we might encounter. A species list will be handed out to you as part of your tour booklet at the start of the tour and is available beforehand upon request.

The tour is timed to coincide with the start of the bird breeding season. The days will be cool to warm in the highlands and hot in the dry forest. This is a dedicated birds and lemurs tour with early starts and lots of field time.

We will drive short distances by minibus or four-wheel-drive vehicles and elsewhere by coaster bus, which regularly allows for approximately one and a half seats per person. More details about what to expect, how to prepare and what to pack are provided in our Tour Information.



Red-breasted Coua © Michael Mills

Accommodation and meals

Accommodation and meals are good by African standards. We make a special effort to stay in comfortable, hand-picked accommodation, upmarket where possible, as close as possible to the best birding areas. Rooms have private bathrooms and although the supply can be intermittent, there is hot water most of the time.

Meals are Western-style, with French and Malagasy influences. Zebu, the local beef, features predominantly on the menu. Seafood is popular at the coast. Please advise if you are vegetarian and what foods you enjoy, so that we can cater for you.

Water is not safe to drink so we supply complimentary bottled water in the vehicle, that you can also take to your rooms for drinking and tooth brushing.

Group size

Maximum 9 participants.

Walking

This tour requires a moderate degree of fitness. Most walks will start during the coolest part of the day and take place at a slow to fair pace. The terrain is largely relatively flat, with small ups and downs on many trails. At Ranomafana and sometimes Andasibe the trails can be fairly steep and slippery. If you are concerned about this, these walks can either be skipped out or taken slowly with a private trail guide, subject to availability.

International flights

Please do not book and pay for your international flights without first consulting our office. Internal flights in Madagascar, such as to Masoala and back, are often changed by a day or two. This can sometimes require us to move the whole tour by a day or two, and so it is necessary to have a spare arrivals and departure day.

INTRODUCTION

Our Main Tour commences in the north-west by exploring the Betsiboka Delta for Bernier's Teal and Madagascar Sacred Ibis and dry deciduous forests at Ankarafantsika (Ampijoroa), where Madagascar Fish-Eagle, White-breasted Mesite, Schlegel's Asity and Van Dam's Vanga can be found.

Andasibe-Mantadia (also called Perinet), our next location, is where the largest living lemur, Indri, is regularly seen. Few experiences can match the mornings here where the haunting wails of Indri resonate across the misty valleys. We'll make a special effort to track down a family group. Birding highlights here include four species of ground-roller (Rufous-headed, Short-legged, Pitta-like and Scaly)!

The primary forest of Ranomafana in the eastern highlands is famous for its recently-discovered, Endangered Golden Bamboo Lemur. The birding is spectacular: amongst other many endemics we'll search for Brown Mesite and Pollen's Vanga.

Moving further south, we'll explore Isalo and Zombitse forest in the central highlands. Appert's Tetraka is restricted to one forest here!

Ifaty in the south-east, haunt of the fabulous Sickle-billed Vanga, offers spiny forest specials like Subdesert Mesite, Long-tailed Ground-Roller, Running Coua and Green-capped Coua. Nearby, Toliara holds a small breeding population of the very localised Madagascar Plover while La Table could treat us with some excellent coastal birding and the recently discovered Red-shouldered Vanga. Weather and Air Madagascar permitting, we'll visit the Red-tailed Tropicbird breeding colony on the island of Nosy Ve in the south west, before taking a flight back to Tana, where our journey ends.

Our Masoala Extension is entirely focussed on visiting the largest remaining patch of forest on the island, on the Masoala Peninsula. Here we will search for the incomparable Helmet Vanga.

Indri © Michael Mills



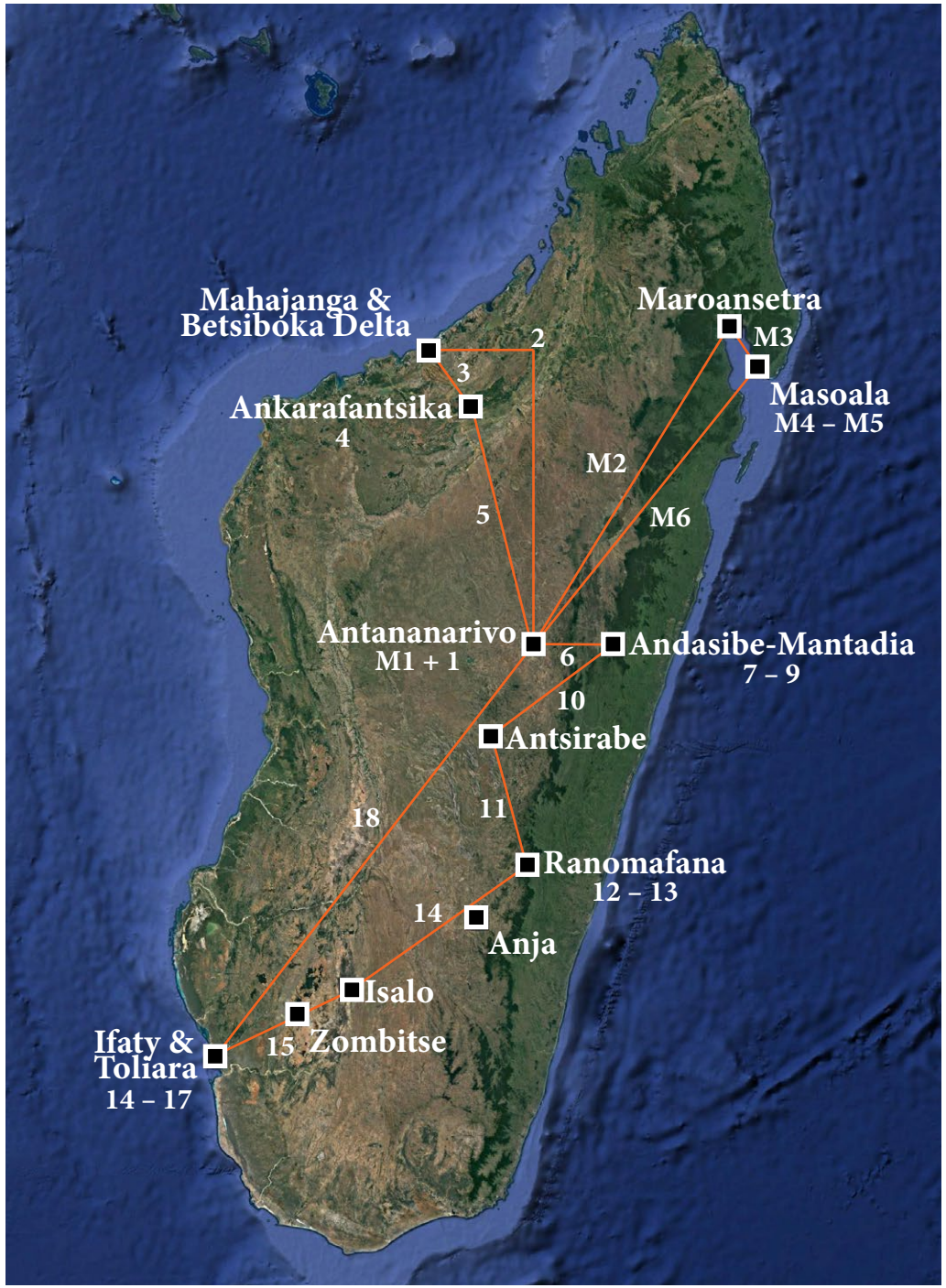
ITINERARY AND MAP

Masoala Extension Itinerary

Day M1	Arrive. Overnight in Antananarivo.
Day M2	Fly to Maroansetra. Overnight Maroansetra.
Day M3	Maroansetra to Masoala. Overnight Masoala.
Day M4	Full day at Masoala. Overnight Masoala.
Day M5	Full day at Masoala. Overnight Masoala.
Day M6	Masoala to Maroansetra to Antananarivo. Tour ends.

Main Tour Itinerary

Day 1	Arrive. Overnight in Antananarivo.
Day 2	Antananarivo to Mahajanga. Overnight in Mahajanga.
Day 3	Betsiboka Delta. Drive to Ankarafantsika. Overnight at Ankarafantsika.
Day 4	Full day at Ankarafantsika National Park. Overnight at Ankarafantsika.
Day 5	Drive Ankarafantsika to Antananarivo. Overnight in Antananarivo.
Day 6	Antananarivo to Andasibe. Overnight at Andasibe.
Day 7	Full day in Andasibe area. Overnight at Andasibe.
Day 8	Full day in Andasibe area. Overnight at Andasibe.
Day 9	Full day in Andasibe area. Overnight at Andasibe.
Day 10	Andasibe to Antsirabe. Overnight in or near Antsirabe.
Day 11	Antsirabe to Ranomafana. Overnight near Ranomafana.
Day 12	Full day in Ranomafana National Park. Overnight near Ranomafana.
Day 13	Full day in Ranomafana National Park. Overnight near Ranomafana.
Day 14	Ranomafana to Anja Lemur Reserve to Isalo. Overnight at Isalo.
Day 15	Isalo to Zombitse to Ifaty. Overnight at Ifaty.
Day 16	Ifaty Spiny Forest to Toliara. Overnight in Toliara.
Day 17	Full day in Toliara area. Overnight in Toliara.
Day 18	Fly to Antananarivo. Tour ends.



Birding Africa Tour Leaflet

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Please note that this tour schedule is synced with the current internal flight schedule of Air Madagascar and which is subject to change, and we will adapt it as necessary.

----- MASOALA EXTENSION ------

Day 1: Arrive Antananarivo

Welcome to Madagascar! Once you pass through customs and have picked up your luggage, enter Antananarivo airport's arrival hall. Look out for a board showing your name; the hotel's driver will be awaiting you for a short drive to the hotel. Here your guide will meet you and let you know the next morning's breakfast and departure times. Please meet your guide at 18h00 at the hotel's reception for a briefing, if you have not met him before then.

Day 2: Fly to Maroansetra

Today we fly to Madagascar's north-east, where the Masoala peninsula shelters the Bay of Antongil. We'll land at the small airport of Maroansetra and stay the night in this sea-side town. Coastal birding here should include various waders.

Days 3–5: Masoala peninsula

We leave Maroansetra early in the morning, taking a spectacular boat journey across the waters of the Bay of Antongil that typically lasts 1–2 hours. The voyage passes nearby the island of Nosy Mangabe and the peninsula's thickly forested mountains form a dramatic backdrop. Madagascar Pratincole may be seen along the island's rocky shores. Once on the peninsula we'll waste little time in starting our exploration, commencing in the idyllic surrounds of our camp. The wooden bungalows close to the beach are elegant but quite rustic. We will stay overnight to the sound of the sea and the forest, which both border to our camp.

Scaly Ground Roller © Callan Cohen





Helmet Vanga © Michael Mills

We have almost three full days to explore the wonders of the Masoala Peninsula. The peninsula holds some of the rarest birds in Madagascar, including Helmet and Bernier's Vanga. There is also a tiny chance of Madagascar Serpent Eagle, but we'll need to be extremely lucky to find one!

We'll explore the forest trails looking for bird parties which may hold the vangas. The area holds the largest primary rainforest tract in Madagascar and we'll acquaint ourselves with many of the eastern rainforest specials that we expect to see later on in the trip. We'll all be hoping to lift our binoculars and be dazzled by the gigantic electric blue bill of the Helmet Vanga, the focus of our searches. We stand a good chance of encountering one of the most spectacular lemurs, the noisy Red Ruffed Lemur with its fluffy orange and black fur. The area also offers fair chances to see the localised and handsome White-fronted Brown Lemur.

Day 6: To Antananarivo

After an early breakfast we'll board the boat for the return voyage to Maroansetra, before transferring to the airport and flying back to Antananarivo. The cool of Madagascar's highland capital will offer a refreshing change from Masoala.

---------- MAIN TOUR ----------

Day 1: Arrive in Antananarivo

Welcome to Madagascar! From the airport you will transfer to your nearby hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 2: Travel to Mahajanga

Our first day is essentially a travel day, to Mahajanga. We hope to be able to fly to the north-west, but as a backup we'll drive if the flights are not operating to schedule. Depending on our time of arrival we'll do some local introductory birding at Mahajanga.

Day 3: Betsiboka Delta; to Ankarafantsika

Today we start off with a boat visit to mangroves and mudflats of the Betsiboka Delta, departing according to the tides. Top birds we'll be looking for include Bernier's Teal and Madagascar Sacred Ibis, both very rare and localised and not always seen.

After our boat trip we'll drive straight to Ankarafantsika National Park, where we hope to do some introductory birding in the afternoon.

Day 4: Ankarafantsika National Park

Ankarafantsika National Park protects some of the best remaining examples of Madagascar's western dry deciduous woodlands. Here too we'll search for the Critically Endangered Madagascar Fish Eagle at Lac Ravelobe, far less common than its African counterpart (the total population estimate is 240 birds!). Other species around the lake include White-throated Rail and Madagascar Jacana.

We will spend most of our time stalking through the woodlands, where top target birds will be the gaudy Schlegel's Asity, White-breasted Mesite and Van Dam's Vanga. We also hope to find Madagascar Crested Ibis, Madagascar Green Pigeon, Grey-headed Lovebird, Greater Vasa Parrot, Red-capped Coua, Coquerel's Coua, Madagascar Scops Owl, Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher, White-headed Vanga, Sickle-billed Vanga, Rufous Vanga and Madagascar Cuckooshrike.

Night walks with local guides in search for nocturnal lemurs, owls and chameleons will be an exciting evening activity. We've seen a staggering eight species of lemurs on the night walks here, including the recently-described Golden-brown Mouse Lemur and the localised Mongoose Lemur. Some of the largest specimens of Oustalet's Chameleon can also be seen here.

Schlegel's Asity © Tertius Gous





Pitta-like Ground Roller © Michael Mills

Day 5: Drive to Antananarivo

Today is essentially a travel day as we make the long journey back to Antananarivo by road, with regular stops to stretch legs. Our first planned stop is at some wetlands, and then at a large river for Madagascar Pratincole. During a picnic lunch in some open grasslands we hope to find Madagascar Buttonquail and possibly Madagascar Partridge. And in the afternoon we'll scan open habitats for the very rare Madagascar Harrier, one of most rapidly declining endemics. We expect to arrive in Antananarivo after dark.

Day 6: To Andasibe

This morning we will start with a short stop at the productive city wetlands of Lake Alarobia with its busy heronry, before heading eastwards to the famous Andasibe-Mantadia National Park where we will be based for three nights. The journey takes three hours. We will have two full days to explore this spectacular hotspot, with some introductory birding this afternoon.

Days 7–9: Andasibe and Mantadia

The protected area consists of the Anamalazoatra Special Reserve (also named Andasibe, sometimes known by the French name Perinet) and the larger Mantadia National Park. Together, these protect one of Madagascar's most important primary rainforest areas. We have time to explore the forests on various trails, in the company of local guides.

The list of birds we can see here is impressive, but some highlights may include White-throated Rail, Madagascar Flufftail, Madagascar Blue Pigeon, Lesser Vasa Parrot, Red-breasted Coua, Blue Coua, Red-fronted Coua, Madagascar Long-eared Owl, Madagascar Spine-tailed Swift, Madagascar Malachite Kingfisher, Cuckoo Roller, Common Sunbird-Asity, Ward's Flycatcher, Rand's Warbler, Nuthatch Vanga, Madagascar Blue Vanga, Madagascar Starling, Forest Fody and Nelicourvi Weaver. We may also be fortunate enough to encounter Collared Nightjar roosting almost imperceptibly on the forest floor.

Mantadia is also the very best place in the world for Ground-Rollers. We'll need some luck and perseverance, but we've seen all four rainforest species in a single morning here: Pitta-like, Scaly, Rufous-headed and Short-legged.



Parson's Chameleon © Mick Dryden

Despite this long list of bird endemics, there are few natural history experiences that can compare to the Indri's morning calls echoing through the misty forests. More than anything else, these echoing calls from the world's largest lemur sound like whales! The park also forms the ideal habitat for the iconic Black-and-white Ruffed Lemur and Diademed Sifaka.

The eastern rainforest is also an excellent place to sample some of Madagascar's varied and colourful chameleons, frogs and geckos. We'll be searching for these while birding during the day and we'll have another opportunity to spot them on a night walk.

Day 10: Andasibe to Antsirabe

After some final birding around Andasibe we'll start our journey to Ranomafana, pausing overnight at Antsirabe. We have a long journey on winding roads through colourful rice paddies until we arrive at the picturesque town of Antsirabe where. Also known as the 'place of much salt', Antsirabe has warm springs and thermal baths, a cool climate (at about 1500m altitude) and hundreds of rickshaw taxis.

Day 11: Antsirabe to Ranomafana

This morning, we'll embark on the second half of our long journey to Ranomafana. We'll arrive just before dark, settle in to our accommodation and prepare for the next day's early start. En route we'll pause at a wetland to look for Madagascar Snipe.

Days 12–13: Ranomafana National Park

We'll have two full days in this very important rainforest area. Ranomafana was set aside to protect one of the largest remaining rainforest patches of eastern Madagascar. It is a superb area, holding almost 40 000 hectares of mid-altitude rainforest and higher-altitude mountain cloud forest. A new species of lemur, the Golden Bamboo Lemur, was discovered here as recently as 1986 and it is the best place to seek one of the world's rarest primate species, Greater Bamboo Lemur! We'll explore the excellent network of paths through the forests and dense stands of giant bamboo.

Birding here is excellent. We'll see a lot of new species while we explore this rich habitats, home to most of Madagascar's endemics. Sought-after species we may encounter include Pitta-like Ground Roller, White-throated Oxylabes, Crossley's Babbler, Green Jery, Wedge-tailed Jery and Tylas Vanga. We'll also search for the more retiring Madagascar Wood-Rail, Brown Mesite and Henst's Goshawk.

The main focus of our visit will be the high altitude, mossy cloud forests of the Vohiparara area of the park and a nearby wetland. This is the best site in the world to get to grips with Asities, a brightly-coloured family of Madagascar endemics related to the broadbills. We'll look out for fruit-eating Velvet Asity which has bright green head wattles, Common Sunbird-Asity, Rufous-headed Ground-Roller and Cryptic Warbler. Other excellent birds here include Pollen's Vanga, Grey-crowned Tetraka and Forest Rock-Thrush. We'll have to work hard for a good view of the highly secretive Madagascar Yellowbrow and Brown Emutail, both mega-skulkers. And we will search for marsh-restricted specials such as Grey Emutail and Madagascar Snipe.

A global hotspot for lemur diversity, Ranomafana sports at least 12 species, including the spectacular red-eyed Milne-Edwards's Sifaka and the Endangered Golden Bamboo Lemur and Greater Bamboo Lemur. If we haven't seen it yet, we'll also do an evening walk in search of Brown Mouse Lemur.

Day 14: To Isalo via Anja ring-tailed lemurs

Today we'll continue our journey southwards to the next key sites on our itinerary, Anja and Isalo. The community forest of Anja protects a population of Ring-tailed Lemurs. We'll have be able to track and watch these social and charismatic lemurs closely, often with splendid photographic opportunities.

In the afternoon we'll continue our way south towards Isalo on a spectacularly scenic drive. We'll search for the elegant and hard to find Madagascar Harrier in a beautiful grassland plateau where we might also spot a few species of ground

Ring-tailed Lemur © Tertius Gous









Cuckoo Roller, Madagascar Flufftail & Common Sunbird-Asity © C. Cohen, T.Gous, M. Mills

orchids. Tonight we stay a hotel surrounded by palm savanna among the spectacular sandstone mountains of the Isalo massif. Key target birds this evening and the following morning include Torotoroka Scops Owl, White-browed Owl and the local subspecies of Forest Rock Thrush called Benson's Rock Thrush (although noticeably different in plumage and structure, this species is now often considered to be conspecific with the Forest Rock-Thrush from further east).

Day 15: To Ifaty via Zombitse

In this very hot part of the country we'll depart early for Zombitse National Park, to bird here before it gets too hot. Cuckoo Rollers displaying over the dry forest canopy is one of the most memorable attractions here; males of this unusual (it is one of only two bird species worldwide placed in its own bird order) forest endemic engage in flapping displays and loops accompanied by their shrieking cries. This forest's main bird speciality, Appert's Tetraka, is Madagascar's most localised bird, being restricted to Zombitse and a small adjacent forest patch. Here we will also search for Giant Coua, Coquerel's Coua, Rufous Vanga and the western race of Stripe-throated Jery, which is split by BirdLife. The forest is a very special transition zone between the south's flora and the western deciduous forest (which we explore in Ankarafantsika National Park), being similar in appearance to the latter but containing baobab species of the former.

After lunch, we will continue to the otherworldly south to bird the spiny desert, mudflats and the coastal 'coral-rag' scrub of the Toliara area, first heading to Ifaty.

The beach resort town of Ifaty is a popular place for birders. Its famous dry, spiny forest is a landscape of interwoven baobabs, octopus trees and euphorbias so weird and wonderful that you might as well be on a different planet. This area is loaded with extravagant semi-desert endemics which we will explore the next morning before it heats up.

Day 16: Spiny Forest

This morning we'll explore the spiny forest, and also visit a nearby site in search for the localised Madagascar Plover. This ecologically diverse wonderland is dominated by three-meter-tall, cactus-like plants called octopus trees. We'll carefully wind our way among these Didierea, avoiding the long, sharp spines, in a quest to track down Green-capped Coua, Running Coua, Archbold's Newtonia, Thamnornis, Subdesert Brush Warbler, Sickle-billed Vanga, Lafresnaye's Vanga and Sakalava Weaver. The real stars of the show are the highly localised and spectacular Subdesert Mesite and Long-tailed Ground Roller, which we'll make a special effort to see. The elusive Banded Kestrel would be a good bonus, as would Madagascar Sparrowhawk!

The middle of the day will be very hot, so we'll retreat to our accommodation for a welcome break (and perhaps even a refreshing dip in the ocean!), before driving to the Toliara area in the afternoon to settle in at our lodgings.

Day 17: Toliara to Anakao and Nosy Ve

Arid, scrubby hillsides surround the Bay of Augustin and are home to Madagascar's most recently-described endemic, Red-shouldered Vanga, which we'll search for alongside Grey-headed Lovebird and Verreaux's Coua.

We'll also take a spead boat to Anakao village, where Littoral Rock Thrush occurs in the coastal sand dunes, and Nosy Ve island. At Nosy Ve we'll be able to enjoy splendidly close views of Red-tailed Tropicbird and will check for roosting seabirds (tide-dependent) that may include Lesser Crested Tern and Crab Plover. White-fronted Plover is resident along the sandy shorelines.

Day 18: Toliara to Antananarivo

Today we fly from Toliara back to Antananarivo. The tour ends on arrival in 'Tana.

Collared Nightjar © Tertius Gous



INCLUDED

- Guiding services of the Birding Africa tour leader
- Entry fees and activities as per itinerary
- Hotel accommodation throughout
- Airport transfers
- Bottled water in the vehicle
- One soft drink at each sit-down meal
- General tips

QUESTIONS?

Please email the office, info@birdingafrica.com, to reserve a place or ask questions (you can also cc callan@birdingafrica.com who are both involved in the planning of this tour).

BOOKLET AND CHECKLIST

Birding Africa provides:

1. this tour leaflet with detailed itinerary
2. the tour information pack, emailed to you
3. the tour booklet with checklists, on the tour

HOW TO BOOK

1. Complete our easy online booking form.
2. Secure your booking deposit by credit card on our 3D secure online payment site ($220).
3. Settle the balance by bank transfer 150 days before the tour. We will email you a reminder and the banking details.

