



Madagascar

POP 19.6 MILLION

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Best Places to Eat

- La Varangue (p799)
- Le Bateau Ivre (p811)
- Surprise Betsileo (p803)
- Le Melville (p810)
- Le Pousse-Pousse (p801)

Best Places to Stay

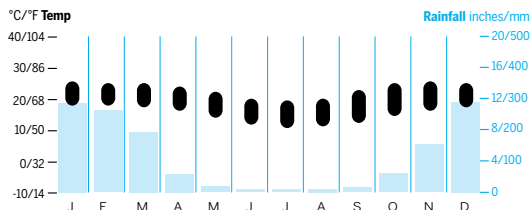
- Bakuba (p806)
- Chez Sika (p815)
- Relais de la Reine (p804)
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- Hôtel Sakamanga (p797)

Why Go?

Lemurs, baobabs, rain forest, beaches, desert, trekking and diving: Madagascar is a dream destination for lovers of nature and the outdoors. The world's fourth-largest island is also a relatively easy destination: hassle-free, with good tourism infrastructure (but poor roads), sensational national parks, a plethora of activities and divine food. The drawback for many travellers is the country's incredible natural diversity – you can go from rain forest to desert or high altitude in just 300kms – and unique wildlife: 5% of all known animal and plant species are endemic to Madagascar. Less well known but just as fascinating is Malagasy culture, in which ancestors and their spirits play a central role, and death is only the beginning of the (permanent) afterlife. The hardest thing will be to choose what to do: Madagascar is vast and unless you have unlimited time and/or money, you'll have to spend them wisely.

When to Go

Antananarivo



Jan–Mar Cyclone season on the east coast, rainy season everywhere.

Jul–Sep High season for tourism; book ahead. Balmy temperatures by day but cool at night.

Oct–Nov The best time to visit, with warm temperatures and the beauty of spring.



Madagascar Highlights

- 1** Scale Madagascar's second-highest mountain, Pic Boby, in spectacular **Parc National d'Andringitra** (p805).
- 2** Snorkel, dive and paddle at **Anakao** (p807) on Madagascar's Great Reef.
- 3** Take a dip in the natural swimming pools after a day's trek in **Parc National de l'Isalo** (p804).
- 4** Snorkel and dive to your heart's content around the island of **Nosy Be** (p807).
- 5** Go whale-watching off **Île Sainte Marie** (p813).
- 6** Trek along **Les Trois Baies** (p810), Madagascar's starkly beautiful northern edge.
- 7** Spend an afternoon in the spiritual home of Malagasy identity, the royal hill of **Ambohimanga** (p797).
- 8** Listen to the wail of the indri, one of Madagascar's most endangered lemurs, at **Parc National d'Andasibe** (p810).