

**Small Ship Adventure Co.**

Specialising in Small Ship Cruising Worldwide



# VOYAGE TO MADAGASCAR

**with Mauritius, Réunion, Comoros & Zanzibar**

*Aboard the Clipper Odyssey*  
February 19 – March 8, 2012

## ITINERARY

*Sunday, February 19, 2012*

### **Depart**

Depart on your independent overnight flight.

*Monday, February 20*

### **Enroute**

*Tuesday, February 21*

### **Arrive Mauritius**

Arrive in Mauritius and transfer to our hotel for an afternoon at leisure. Gather this evening for a welcome dinner and briefing.

***Wednesday, February 22***

**Mauritius / Embark *Clipper Odyssey***

After breakfast embark on a tour of the island's scenic highlights. A drive inland takes us up to, and around, the rim of an extinct volcanic crater for magnificent views over the entire island. We continue through lush landscapes to the Black River Gorges National Park where thick indigenous forest provides habitat for the endemic pink pigeon, echo parakeet, and Mauritius cuckoo-shrike. After lunch at a nearby restaurant, offering breathtaking views, discover the magnificent Chamarel waterfall which cascades over the "seven-colored earths of Chamarel." On our return, take in the spectacular scenery of the west coast as we pass quaint fishing villages.

Or, choose a hike through Ferney Valley, a natural reserve inside one of the last indigenous forests in Mauritius. This forest shelters a variety of endemic and native species, such as the Mauritius kestrel, one of the world's rarest birds, and a number of critically endangered trees. Enjoy a typical Creole lunch before we proceed to the coastal village of Mahebourg. Here we have free time to stroll the historic waterfront and peruse the colorful shops.

This afternoon board the *Clipper Odyssey* and settle into your cabin as we set sail for Réunion.

***Thursday, February 23***

**St. Denis, Réunion**

Lush, volcanic Réunion is an overseas territory of France. We explore St. Denis, a small colonial town whose pervasive French and Creole ambiance is reflected in picturesque town squares. A breathtaking drive into the island's dramatic mountains brings us to a volcanic crater with solidified lava.

Enjoy a traditional Creole lunch, then continue on to a vanilla plantation where we discover the history and the culture of this precious orchid.

***Friday, February 24***

**At Sea**

Our lecturers introduce the extraordinary natural history of Madagascar. Be on deck to watch for the dolphins often seen cruising these waters.

***Saturday, February 25***

**Nosy St. Marie (Nosy Boraha), Madagascar**

Two tour options are available today. Those with an interest in natural history begin with a drive aboard 4x4 vehicles through lush vegetation. Then board traditional dugout canoes for a leisurely cruise through a maze of mangroves, and enjoy a refreshing swim in a calm lagoon or relax on the lovely beach. A delicious lunch of local cuisine rounds out the day. Or, choose a cultural tour that visits the Pirate Cemetery, the residence of the French colonial governor, the oldest Catholic church in Madagascar, built in 1837, and the main town Ambodifotatra. Continue on to a beautiful coconut plantation with giant granite boulders looming over the sea for lunch and a swim from the white-sand beach.

***Sunday, February 26***

**Masoala National Park**

Located in Madagascar's most biodiverse region, Masoala is the largest national park on the island. On hikes through pristine forest we hope to encounter such mammal species as the red-ruffed lemur, the red-fronted brown lemur, the greater hedgehog tenrec, the fossa, and the ring-tailed mongoose. The park is also home to various species of brightly colored mantella frogs, a variety of extraordinary chameleons of all sizes, and many endemic bird species including the endangered Madagascar red-owl and Madagascar serpent eagle.

***Monday, February 27***

**Maroantsetra / Nosy Mangabe**

This morning disembark in Maroantsetra and explore the bustling market, filled with vanilla pods, cloves, and other exotic spices as well as finely woven raffia hats and bags.

After lunch on board we explore Nosy Mangabe, a natural reserve and sanctuary of the world's rarest lemur, the nocturnal aye-aye. Bring your camera for some exciting opportunities to photograph black and white ruffed and brown mouse lemurs, leaf-tailed geckos, tree frogs, or maybe even a Madagascar ground boa. We also hunt for the world's smallest vertebrate, the thumbnail-sized dwarf chameleon.

***Tuesday, February 28***

**At Sea**

Our lecture series continues, recapping our experiences and preparing us for the wonders that lie ahead.

***Wednesday, February 29***

**Diego Suarez**

Diego Suarez is the largest city in northern Madagascar. Located on an impressive bay, it served as capital of the French colony in the late 1800s, and is graced with wide streets and colonial architecture. Board 4x4 vehicles for a scenic drive to Montagne d'Ambre National Park. Often shrouded in ethereal mist, this mountain paradise boasts forests with huge, green tree ferns, crystal-clear crater lakes, waterfalls, and a wealth of wildlife. Enjoy close encounters and unsurpassed photographic opportunities with rare, localized crowned lemurs, as well as Sanford's brown lemurs, northern sportive lemurs, striped mongoose, and a wealth of birds, including the Madagascar crested ibis, Amber Mountain rock-thrush, cuckoo-roller, and other endemics.

### ***Thursday, March 1***

#### **Nosy Hara**

An archipelago of 12 limestone islands with white-sand beaches, karst rock cliffs, and pristine coral reefs, Nosy Hara is recognized by locals as Madagascar's best snorkeling site. The offshore waters are particularly known for their variety of coral; plate, brain, and staghorn. Nosy Hara is one of only eleven World Wildlife Fund coral marine ecoregions in the world, and the sandy islands are nesting sites for green and hawksbill turtles. Board Zodiacs to explore the fascinating geology of this region and step ashore on secluded beaches for nature walks. Discover the amazing diversity below the waves during snorkel, dive, and glass-bottom boat excursions.

### ***Friday, March 2***

#### **Nosy Komba / Nosy Be**

We go ashore at Nosy Komba, a peaceful fishing village that is close to a small reserve for dimorphic black lemurs. Here we can observe the engaging, semi-tame black lemurs up-close for excellent photographic opportunities. A short hike inland reveals a variety of birdlife, including bee-eaters, Malagasy kingfishers, and Madagascar foddies. With luck, we may spot a Parson's chameleon, one of the world's largest.

During lunch on board, the ship repositions to nearby Nosy Be where we visit a ylang-ylang plantation to learn how these waxy yellow flowers are distilled into highly perfumed essential oil. In Hellville peruse colorful displays of fresh produce and exotic spices at the market. We then snorkel or dive at nearby Nosy Tanikely a marine island reserve whose healthy reefs are frequented by turtles, reef sharks, and large schools of colorful fish.

### ***Saturday, March 3***

#### **Mayotte, Union of the Comoros**

Mayotte is an overseas territory of France, yet geographically it remains part of the Comoros group. Mamoudzou is the largest town on Mayotte, and exhibits a mixture of cultures. French-colonial architecture and First World technology and infrastructure contrast with African and Muslim dress and customs such as face painting. This afternoon, take a tour of this charming capital and the nearby botanical gardens. Or take a drive to the Dziani Crater at the heart of the island for nature walks to observe the rich bird life and beautiful views.

### ***Sunday, March 4***

#### **Moroni, Grande Comore**

Ruggedly beautiful, Grande Comore's landscape is dominated by the world's largest active volcano, Mount Karthala. Disembark in Iconi, one of the oldest settlements on the island, and take a short drive to view the ruins of an 18th-century palace. Continue through scenic countryside to a plantation where we learn about the cultivation of ylang-ylang and exotic spices. Our tour ends in Moroni where we visit the small museum, the medina, and colorful market with a wide array of fruit, spices, and handicrafts. This afternoon we snorkel or dive off the coast amid a variety of colorful corals and fish.

***Monday, March 5***

**At Sea**

Relax on deck and attend lectures that enlighten our intriguing final port of call—Zanzibar.

***Tuesday, March 6***

**Zanzibar, Tanzania**

This morning we explore the nature trails of Jozani Natural Forest Reserve to spot the photogenic red colobus monkey—an extremely rare species endemic to the island. We also keep a lookout for Skye’s monkey, duikers, and more than 40 species of birds, including the African paradise flycatcher, mangrove kingfisher, and the endemic Fischer’s turaco. In the afternoon we tour one of the many spice plantations, famous for their production of nutmeg, vanilla, cinnamon, pepper, and cloves.

***Wednesday, March 7***

**Zanzibar / Disembark**

We disembark this morning to explore the labyrinthine alleyways of old Stone Town, with fascinating fort, souks, cathedrals, mosques, and sultans’ palaces. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant then head to the airport for your independent flight to the USA.

***Thursday, March 8***

Onward flight home.

Connect with your homeward flight