

Trip Report – Madagascar, Sept 2010

We spent two weeks in Madagascar. Our expectations were modest, because timing meant we couldn't be there in the ideal month for mammals and budget meant we couldn't get ourselves to some of the key locations like Kirindy. We spent 2.5 days at Ampijoroa in the Ankarafantsika NP, 2.5 days at Andasibe/Mantadia NP and 2.5 days at Ranomafana NP. We didn't travel independently, our trip was organised by Indri Ultimate Mammal Tours who I would thoroughly recommend.

Ankarafantsika is dry deciduous forest in the NW of the island. We were guided by Jacqui, who was excellent. Our first mammals were **Coquerel's sifaka** there is a troop whose territory includes the camp and they showed up on our arrival. Also in camp our guide found us roosting **Mauritian tomb bat**. On day walks we got other good views of Coquerel's sifaka, and also excellent views of **Common brown lemurs**. Jacqui also found us two nocturnal species, **Western avahi (woolly lemur)** and **Milne-Edward's sportive lemur** roosting in the daytime. Night walks were productive here, with lots of views of the highly localised **Golden-brown mouse lemur**, also **Fat-tailed dwarf lemurs** and a great view of **Mongoose lemurs**. Only slightly frustratingly, we never saw the much more common Grey mouse lemur. Only non-lemur we saw the **Western tufted rat**. The area is great for birding and we saw the Madagascar fishing eagle along with many other endemic species.

Andasibe (aka Perinet) and Mantadia are eastern rainforest habitats, the former being a special reserve for the Indri and the latter a national park. Our guide was Luc, a great man for going “off piste” and crashing through undergrowth on trails that “haven't been used for a couple of years” in pursuit of lemur habitat. At Andasibe we heard and then saw close up a troop of **Indri** followed closely by great views of **Diademed sifaka** that have been relocated to the reserve. We also found the daytime roost of a pair of **Eastern avahi (woolly lemur)**. On night walks in nearby forest we saw plenty of **Goodman's mouse lemur** and a brief sighting of **Furry-eared dwarf lemur**. Mantadia was hard work, 6 hours of walking for only a couple of sightings, however the reward was an excellent view of the less commonly seen **Black-and-white ruffed lemur** down near the forest floor. We also got more good views of Diademed sifaka. We also visited “Ile des lemurs” and while it is great fun to have lemurs clamber all over you in search of banana, the reason for mentioning here is that we found a young **Lowland streaked tenrec** in broad daylight on the island.

Ranomafana NP is also eastern rainforest, but has a different assemblage of lemurs. It really is astounding how localised many of these species are. Our guide here was Emile, who was helping researchers 20 years ago building the case for creating the national park. The search for lemurs here involves mobile phones these days, as the guides and trackers call in sightings to one another – don't expect to view anything alone (and if you're very unlucky, you get to view the sifakas with a half-dozen Germans gabbling at each other in full voice). We had good views of **Golden bamboo lemurs**, **Greater bamboo lemurs**, **Red-bellied lemurs**, **Red-fronted brown lemurs** and **Milne-Edward's sifaka**. Lots of people refer to a feeding station where Fanaloka and Mongoose are seen nightly, but a couple of years ago night walks in all the national parks were banned so this is no longer possible. On our night walks we did get good views of **Brown mouse lemur**, one view of a **Greater dwarf lemur** and also an **Eastern red forest rat**.

We were perhaps a little unlucky to not see any endemic predators, but the total of 20 lemurs along with 4 other mammals seems pretty good for our two weeks in Madagascar. The other wildlife of the island also provided endless fascination, from cryptic leaf-tailed geckos and outlandish chameleons to a tiny snake-eating snake – the smallest snake in the world. Photos from this trip at www.otteradrift.com – the blog for our year-long round the world trip. The next trip report will be from 7 weeks in Nepal.

Complete list for the Madagascan leg of our year around the world

(24 mammals in 2 weeks, all endemic and thus all new to our life list)

Western tufted rat
Golden-brown mouse lemur
Mongoose lemur
Common brown lemur
Western avahi (woolly lemur)
Coquerel's sifaka
Fat-tailed dwarf lemur
Mauritian tomb bat
Milne-Edward's sportive lemur
Goodman's mouse lemur
Eastern avahi (woolly lemur)
Diademed sifaka
Indri
Furry-eared dwarf lemur
Black and white ruffed lemur
Lowland streaked tenrec
Eastern red forest rat
Brown mouse lemur
Greater dwarf lemur
Golden bamboo lemur
Greater bamboo lemur
Red-bellied lemur
Red-fronted brown lemur
Milne-Edward's sifaka