

# MADAGASCAR WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

**Madagascar wildlife** is one of the best things that this island has to offer to the world along with the awesome natural surroundings of this island nation. Fauna and flora in Madagascar is extremely popular as the island houses some of the most unique and rare species of the world. Madagascar is regarded as a country of mega diversity; over 200000 species make it a biodiversity hotspot, Madagascar is often referred to as the 08<sup>th</sup> continent so high is the level of endemism of its flora and fauna species.

Since splitting from Gondwanaland in the great continental shift, Madagascar has been allowed to develop at its own pace and to its own requirements providing for the unique wildlife that propagates all corners of this vast island.



While some several countries can compete with the endemic biodiversity levels of Madagascar fauna, the same cannot be said for its flora when Madagascar's over 12,000 species make it the most important biological hotspot in the world. So far, nearly 1,000 species of orchid have been found and that number continues to grow.

Madagascar is most famous for its baobab-tree and holds seven of the world's eight species. These magnificent trees can be found in the dry forest and scrub areas of the island.

The endemic ferns and palms are just as unique and there are 03 times as many species of palm in Madagascar than on the whole of continental Africa. The cactus like *Didierea* family found in the arid southwest is a botanist's delight and a family unique to Madagascar.

Some of the unique flora of Madagascar is mentioned below:

- The *Alluaudia Procera*
- The Rosy Periwinkle
- The Aloe Vaombe
- The *Euphorbia Viguieri*
- The Moist Cucurbitaceae
- The *Adansonia Grandidieri*

A visit to any garden centre in Europe or North America will reveal a wide range of Madagascar plants and flowers, and Royal Botanical Garden of Kew –London, has a dedicated programme appeal fund to research and protect the island many endemic species.



## Madagascar Fauna

The fauna is an equally important part of the Island of Madagascar. 97% of mammals and 98% of amphibians are found nowhere else in the world making its level of endemism astonishing. The island has numerous varieties of mammals and amphibians and it is quite easy to spot them. A wildlife safari is your best bet to encounter these friendly wild creatures of the island. The parks and reserves of Madagascar house numerous varieties of lemurs the most striking among other wild life species. Most famous for its 50 species of lemurs, these bright eyed mammals are easily seen on any tour of the island .With over 300 endemic reptiles species Madagascar is known for its geckoes and chameleons (of which it has over half of the world's species) It is also home to iguanids, which are usually found in South America and do not live anywhere on the mainland of Africa, thus providing unique biological evidence of the great continental shift.

For the Ornithologist, Madagascar presents a relatively small number of species, only around 270. However, nearly half are endemic and 5 entire families are unique only to Madagascar, making the country an absolute must see for the serious birder.