



TROPICAL BIOLOGY ASSOCIATION

## Course Guide Madagascar

### Key information

Course site:	Kirindy Forest, Madagascar
Course dates:	31 October to 30 November (Travel to Kirindy on 31 <sup>st</sup> October)
Meeting place:	Maison du Pyla, Antananarivo - 30 <sup>th</sup> October, 18:30
Visa fee:	\$65 US dollars (in 2011) - Tourist visa (see below)
Contact person:	Dr Elisabeth Rabakonandrianina (Madame Bako), Tel: +256 20 22 58 556

### Kirindy Forest

The dry deciduous forests of Madagascar are distinctive ecosystems, with high local animal and plant endemism. Experiencing a seasonal wet-dry tropical climate, the flora and fauna show adaptations to hot, dry conditions and the majority of the trees lose their leaves in the prolonged dry season.

The TBA course will be held in Kirindy Forest during the early part of the wet season. The forest has been the focus of research for many years and supports at least 7 species of lemur, and various other endemic mammals such as Madagascar's largest predator, the fossa. The ecology of much of the fascinating flora and invertebrate fauna has yet to be studied. Kirindy has an impressive research history and its trail system is maintained by the German Primate Centre (DPZ). The area also provides a good case study of the effect of human impacts on indigenous biodiversity that includes fragmentation, burning and other forms of degradation.

### Climate

Mean annual rainfall of the Menabe region is around 1,000 mm. The climate is hot with maximum daily shade temperatures between 35-40°C, and minimum daily temperatures between 18-21°C.

**Participants on the course must be tolerant to high temperatures.**

### What you can expect to find at the field station

The field camp is situated in the forest. Accommodation will be basic and participants will share huts, with two to four people per room. You will share common toilet (pit latrine) and washing facilities (bucket showers; **water is an extremely scarce and valuable commodity in this part of Madagascar and you should be prepared to limit your water usage to 2 buckets per day**). Although treated or filtered drinking water is unlimited, you may wish to buy bottled water which is available at the field station. The field site has a communal eating area and a separate classroom. Small petrol generators provide a limited amount of electricity, which is used to light the dining area and classroom and is also used to power a projector for teaching. Laundry will be done for us twice a week. Living conditions and the daily schedule will be dictated largely by the climate: dry forests are renowned for being hot and in November daily maximums of over 35°C are likely.

## Resources

The TBA will have a limited set of field equipment available. We will have a classroom with overhead and slide projectors. There will also be a collection of books and research papers on tropical ecology, as well as copies of past participant projects.

## Communications

Mobile phone coverage does not extend to this part of Madagascar although the TBA does have access to a satellite telephone for emergencies. People should expect to have negligible communication during the courses; there are no fax or e-mail facilities. **To avoid your own disappointment and worrying your relatives/friends, we suggest you don't promise to contact anyone while you are in Kirindy.** You can tell people that lack of fast communication in rural Madagascar is normal and that 3 weeks is not such a long time!

## Arriving in Madagascar

### Passports, visas, entry cards, health and vaccination certificates in Madagascar

Make sure you have a VALID passport before you travel; it should be valid for at least six months after you arrive in Madagascar. If you do not have one then please get one AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. **Keep a photocopy of your passport with you at all times.**

### Visa requirements

Unless you have a Malagasy representation in your home country that can issue a visa, you will need to buy a visa on arrival; these cost \$65 US dollars in 2011.

**We strongly recommend that you check with the Malagasy Embassy/Consulate in your own country or the Malagasy Ministry of Tourism to find out whether you need a visa or not and how much it will cost.**

**The web site below gives useful information for all nationalities (follow the links 'Useful Information' and then 'Coming to Madagascar'):** -

**<http://www.madagascar-tourisme.com/home.php?lang=us>**

**All participants: If you have difficulties obtaining a VISA please contact the TBA Cambridge office AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

**At your port of entry (almost certainly the international airport at Ivato, near Antananarivo), ensure you verbally inform the immigration officer of the length of time required in the country to cover your entire stay (i.e. including any days immediately before and after the course). The time spent in the host country **WILL EXCEED 30 DAYS** so please ensure that the officer does not write '1 month' above your visa. Ensure that your visa is stamped on entry.**

**Whether you need a visa or not, when you enter Madagascar, you will be given a standard entry card to fill out.** When filling in visa forms and entry cards, you **MUST** state that you are a TOURIST on the card. You will also need to give your address in Madagascar, which will be:

**CNFEREF Field Station**

**Reserve Forestière de Kirindy**

**Morondava**

**Our contact in Madagascar is:**

**Dr Elisabeth RABAKONANDRIANINA**

**Département de Biologie et Ecologie Végétale**

**Faculté des Sciences**

**BP 906**

**Antananarivo 101, Madagascar**

**Tel. +261 20 22 58 556**

**Health & Yellow Fever Vaccination certificate**

**To avoid potential health problems do not drink tap water at any point during the course.**

If you have previously visited a country where yellow fever is prevalent, you will need to produce a certificate of vaccination against yellow fever on entry. If you cannot produce a certificate, you will be required to visit the Institut Pasteur in Antananarivo to be vaccinated.

**Arriving in Madagascar by air**

The TBA will circulate everyone's flight details so that you can try to meet up with people on your flight. The TBA will endeavour to meet all flights depending on our schedule (this does not cover any participants who may arrive well in advance of the course to do independent travelling). If we have told you we will meet your flight look out for the TBA sign.

**European participants: Please send us your flight details as soon as possible.**

The international airport in Madagascar is called Ivato airport and is situated 14 km north of the city. Chartering a taxi between the airport and the city centre costs around Ar 60,000\* (\$25 US dollars) during the day and around Ar 80,000 (\$30 US dollars) in the evening and at night. Chartering a taxi to hotels in the nearby district of Ivato should cost around Ar 10,000 (\$5 US dollars).

\*The ariary (Ar) is the local currency and you should try to buy some on arrival.

**Arriving at night**

If you are arriving late at night, we recommend that you stay in a hotel in Ivato rather than travelling into Antananarivo city centre; contact your course co-ordinator for advice.

**Getting around Antananarivo – See map 2**

In Madagascar there are two official languages: French and Malagasy. Madagascar time is +3 hrs GMT. Antananarivo is often called Tana for short. Most of the shops and offices you will want to visit are concentrated around l'Avenue d'Independence. We recommend that you do not travel around Tana at night and that you use private taxis if you are not sure where you are going. Taxis should cost no more than Ar 8,000 for journeys in the city centre.

## Places to stay in Antananarivo

We will provide accommodation in Tana, at a guest house (Maison du Pyla; see map on page 5), for the night before and the night after the course. We leave Tana the day before the course starts so you will need to be in Tana by 30<sup>th</sup> October at the very latest. If you arrive earlier, let us know if you want us to book accommodation at the rendezvous hotel. If you intend to arrive early to do independent travelling before the course and need advice on places to stay in Antananarivo, contact the Course Co-ordinator at the Cambridge office (courses@tropical-biology.org).

## Meeting up with the TBA

**The rendezvous or meeting place for ALL TBA course participants is:**

**Maison du Pyla**

**Route de l'Université d'Antananarive**

**Lot VA 14 ia Tsiadana, 101 Antananarivo**

**At 18:30, 30<sup>th</sup> October**

**Further information will be sent to you before your course starts.**

We begin our journey to Kirindy early on the morning of 31<sup>st</sup> October. You should be aware that the road and transport infrastructure in Madagascar, whilst improving, is of a very different standard to anything that you are likely to have previously experienced! Breakdowns are a part of everyday life and the projected journey time by bus to Kirindy (16 hours spread over 2 days with an overnight stay in Miandrivazo – see map below) should not be relied upon. It is best to expect delays (please be patient!) and treat the journey as part of the adventure and an excellent opportunity to get to know fellow participants.

Map 1: Madagascar showing Kirindy Forest, Miandrivazo & Morondava.





## General references

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### General literature on Madagascar

Travel guides are a good way to gain an overview of Madagascar, its geography and places of interest. Hilary **Bradt** and **Lonely Planet** both produce travel guides to Madagascar.

For a general guide to the wildlife of Madagascar:

*Madagascar Wildlife: A Visitors Guide* by Hilary Bradt. Bradt Publications (ISBN 1898323402).

Garbutt, N. (1990) *Mammals of Madagascar*. Yale University Press. **An excellent field guide covering a large number of Malagasy mammals.**

Goodman, S. & Benstead, J. (2004) *The Natural History of Madagascar*. The University of Chicago Press. **A great overview of all areas of natural history in Madagascar.**

Hawkins, A.F. (2005) *Field Guide to the Birds of the Malagasy Region*. Academic Press.

Henkel, F-W. *et al.*,(2000) *Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar, the Mascarene, the Seychelles, and the Comoro Islands*. Krieger Publishing Company. **A photographic guide very recently published & a valuable resource.**

Glaw, F. & Vences, M. (1992) *Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Madagascar*. M. Vences, Cologne.

Langrand, O., Philip, H. R. H. & Daniels, W. (1990) *Guide to the Birds of Madagascar*. Yale University Press. **The first comprehensive scientific field guide to Malagasy birds.**

### Academic references

Please contact the Course Co-ordinator at the Cambridge office (courses@tropical-biology.org) for a list of books and published papers that will provide useful background reading on dry deciduous forests, and research in both Kirindy and Madagascar in general.

### Useful websites

German Primate Centre: - <http://www.sozio.bio.uni-goettingen.de/Mada/madagaskar-menu-en.html>

Wild Madagascar: - <http://www.wildmadagascar.org/conservation/parks/Kirindy.html>

Kew Royal Botanical Gardens site on Madagascar  
<http://www.kew.org/science/directory/teams/Madagascar/index.html>

<http://www.tropical-biology.org/training/courses/where%20are%20the%20tba%20courses/madagascar.htm>

### Past Projects

Examples of past student projects and published work undertaken during TBA courses at Kirindy can be found at: -

<http://www.tropical-biology.org/resources/courseabstracts.htm>

**If you have any further queries, please contact us at:**

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