JOURNEY TO MADAGASCAR

See the beauty of Madagascar.
Travel with a purpose.
Welcome

The Journey to Madagascar allows donors to see Health In Harmony in action as we conserve vital ecosystems, improve access to quality healthcare, and generate sustainable livelihoods. We are passionate about the work we do and excited to share it with you!

The highlight of the trip will be visiting our project site in Farafangana in Southeast Madagascar. You will shadow mobile clinics, plant trees, harvest vegetables alongside farmers, and enjoy dinner in HIH staff members' homes - making genuine connections in this unforgettable place. You will also get to explore Manombo Special Reserve, presenting several chances to see Madagascar's amazing biodiversity. After our time at HIH, you will spend a few days in Ranomafana, visiting the national park, spotting some lemurs, and relaxing and taking in the incredible environment of this special country.

*We are excited that you are interested in this life-changing, meaningful adventure to see the beauty of Madagascar, while experiencing hope for the future of our planet.*
Itinerary

Please note that the following itinerary is subject to change, dependent on need (weather, closures, security) or travelers’ interests. We appreciate your flexibility during the trip!

September 17

All guests will arrive at Ivato International Airport (TNR) in Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar, and will be greeted by Health In Harmony staff. We will stay at Sakamanga Hotel which is located 30 minutes from the airport. Here guests can get some rest and explore the city.

September 18 - 19

The group will travel from Tana to Farafangana by car. This trip takes approximately 20 hours across two days with an overnight stop in Ranomafana. Health In Harmony will arrange the transportation and lodging with trusted carriers.
September 20 - 23

These will be dynamic and engaging days where you will gain a holistic understanding of HIH Madagascar's planetary health programs.

- Explore Manombo Special Reserve, home to nine species of lemurs, which are all endangered, including one that only exists in this rainforest.

- Shadow medical staff and see them provide compassionate, high-quality care in a resource-limited setting during the mobile clinics

- Plant seedlings along with community members to restore the lemur habitat

- Feast on a farm-to-table meal grown by sustainable agriculture program participants

- Learn more about Health In Harmony’s unique Radical Listening approach

- Enjoy time for relaxation and reflection during a picnic at the local beach and explore the town of Farafangana by foot

- Sail down the rivers Takoandra and Manatsimba to the beautiful Rianambo waterfall and relax by the natural pool

On the 23rd, we will drive from Farafangana to Manakara to spend the night in beach bungalows before departing the next day for Ranomafana.
**September 24 - 25**

We will drive from Manakara to Ranomafana on the morning of the 24th, about a four hour drive.

While in Ranomafana, you will have the opportunity to relax and witness Madagascar's incredible biodiversity:

- Swimming in natural hot springs
- Hike through Ranomafana National Park with a local guide, home to over 20 species of lemur, 115 species of birds, and 60 reptiles
- Visit Centre ValBio, one of Health In Harmony's partner organizations, to learn about the environment and amazing wildlife found nowhere else in the world

**September 26**

We will drive from Ranomafana to Tana, where the trip officially concludes. Visitors have the option to depart that evening or spend another day in Tana to shop at the local market, relax, and explore Madagascar's capital city.
The cost of My Journey to Madagascar is $9,500 per person, with a minimum of 4 travelers required in order to run the trip. We require a $500 deposit to reserve your spot and the full cost is due in full no later than one month before the trip begins.

$500 of the program cost is tax deductible per person.

Payment and registration can be completed on the Health In Harmony website.

These fees cover travel costs, accommodation, lodging, domestic flights, emergency medical and evacuation insurance, administrative costs, highly experienced and personalized guides, and a donation that goes directly to the work happening in Madagascar.

**Cancellation Policy**

The final registration date is August 1, 2022. Please see Event Policies on the Journey to Madagascar portal for refund and cancellation policies.
BENEFITS

Included

- Personal highly experienced travel guide that will accompany the group during the trip and support with trip logistics
- Online visitor portal where you can find travel documents and checklists
- Urgent and emergent medical expenses
- Evacuation and repatriation insurance with international SOS
- Hotel accommodations
- Domestic travel within Madagascar (land and boat)
- All park entrance and activity fees
- All meals and snacks
- Purified water
- Gratuities
- Partner and staff costs, including two guides who will provide comprehensive logistical support throughout the trip
- Custom trip planner, which includes packing tips, weather insights, health and safety briefings, and reading materials to prepare you for your experience
- Donation to HIH Madagascar programs

Not Included

- Visa costs ($45)
- International airfare
- All baggage costs
- Alcoholic beverages
- Personal expenses
- Souvenirs
Arrival and Departure

As mentioned above, participants will be responsible for making round-trip flight arrangements to Ivato International Airport (TNR) in Antananarivo. Arrival and departure details will be finalized after we have all participants' flight information.

If you have questions about flight arrangements or want to confirm a flight before purchasing, please reach out to us. Once you have purchased your flight, please send us your itinerary so we have your information on file. Also make sure to send a copy of your passport.

Additional Travel (optional)-- some travelers may desire to extend their travel time to visit elsewhere in Madagascar or Africa. The Health In Harmony staff is available to help you should you need guidance in making these arrangements.

Passport and Visa

It is required that your passport be valid for at least six months after the dates of our trip. If your passport will expire in less than six months from your intended arrival, you will need to apply for a new one prior to the trip.

A visa is required for US citizens. You can either arrange your visa ahead of time through the Madagascar Embassy in the US or purchase a visa on arrival. More information about this process is available on the Journey to Madagascar Visitor Portal.
Climate

Madagascar’s climate is considered subtropical, with a hot and rainy season between November and the end of March (summer), and a cooler dry season from May to October (winter). We intentionally schedule these trips in the “drier” season, but downpours can happen any day of the year.

Because rain and inclement weather are always possible, the chance that routes and/or activities in this itinerary need to be changed accordingly is inherent. Your guides will ensure that you are kept abreast of any changes or alternate plans, and that your experience is still the best possible.
You will have to submit our online confidential health form, where we will ask you to detail your current health concerns, allergies, medications, and dietary restrictions. This information will only be accessible by our medical staff. We ask that you be as thorough as possible, as this helps our team plan and prepare for any special accommodations.

Please bring any medicines that you normally take, including your prescriptions as well as any over-the-counter medications and vitamins you know you will want to have.

**Immunizations**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a great resource for country-specific health and safety recommendations. Please check out their Madagascar information. You should plan to get a travel medicine consultation at least 4-6 weeks ahead of your departure to receive guidance about your trip and the vaccinations and medications you may need. Although we are happy to provide suggestions, please defer to the advice of your healthcare provider. You can likely expect the following:

- Updates on routine vaccinations (MMR, Tdap, Varicella (chickenpox), Polio, Influenza)
- Typhoid vaccine
- Hepatitis A vaccine
- Some travelers may consider Hepatitis B
- Some travelers may consider Rabies

Health In Harmony requires that all visitors be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
Mosquito-Borne Illnesses

Chikungunya, Dengue, Filariasis, and Malaria are all present in Madagascar. You should be prepared to prevent mosquito bites at all times of day. We recommend:

- Wearing light-colored clothing, long-sleeve shirts, long pants, and a hat – especially during trips into the rain forests and mangroves

- Using insect repellant containing up to 35% DEET

- Pre-treating clothing with permethrin (an insecticide)

- Using a mosquito net while you sleep (while staying in HIH housing, you will be provided with one)

Schistosomiasis

Schistosomiasis is prevalent in Madagascar. It is acquired by contact with fluke-like parasites, which live on fresh-water snail hosts and can penetrate the skin of people and animals, causing serious illness. There is at present no chemoprophylaxis or immunization for this, but it can be avoided by not swimming in fresh water. If you suspect that you are infected, contact a doctor or hospital immediately and obtain urine and stool tests. Currently, the main forms of treatment used for schistosomiasis are praziquantel (PZQ) and oxamniquine (OXA). PZQ is the drug of choice because it presents as a high-spectrum anthelmintic, used in the treatment of all known species of schistosomiasis and some species of cestodes and trematodes.

Other

Traveler’s Diarrhea is the most common cause of illness during travel. Fortunately, it is rarely life threatening and it is preventable by hand washing, drinking purified water, eating thoroughly cooked food, and eating produce you have peeled or washed yourself. We will do our best to help prevent this by carefully choosing what we eat/drink, but in the event of illness, your healthcare provider will likely prescribe an antibiotic and give specific instructions about when you should use it.
COVID-19

Like the rest of the world, Madagascar is battling the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As of February 2022, only about 4% of the population has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. As such, the Malagasy government has the following regulations in place for foreign visitors:

You must get a PCR test upon arrival in Tana at the airport. This test costs 25 euros and the cost is likely included in your airfare.
- Bring backup cash (USD or EUR) to pay for the test

You must have proof of payment for at least two nights at a government-approved quarantine hotel to board your flight to Madagascar.
- We recommend the Sakamanga Hotel
- You will quarantine for 1-2 days while you await your test results

When your results are ready, the government will text you and alert your hotel.
- If the test is negative, you will be released and are free to move around the city/country
- If the test is positive, you will be quarantined for another 14 days at a location assigned to you by the government

Health In Harmony will send out a COVID update one month and one week prior to travel.
The majority of visitors to Madagascar do not experience any issues with safety and security, but risks are an inherent part of traveling. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, having a limited understanding of the language and culture, and being perceived as wealthy or “other” are some of the factors that increase risk while traveling.

Please review the U.S. State Department website for the most up-to-date travel warnings, advisories, and other precautions. We recommend enrolling in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), a free service to allow U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to make the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate aware of your trip. Be sure to keep a copy of your passport and other travel documents both at home and with your belongings. We will carry one copy for each group member as well.

Petty crimes - such as pick pocketing and theft - occur throughout the country. Travelers should take this into consideration and be especially cautious with cash, as well as electronics such as computers and cameras. Do not leave valuables out and unattended. We highly recommend a luggage lock to keep your baggage secure, and we recommend that you keep all valuables in your carry-on luggage during transit.
Drinking plenty of water is one of the easiest ways to stay healthy during the trip. Group leaders will ensure that potable bottled water is readily available, so there is no need to bring filters or water purification tabs. Because most of the water is from five-gallon dispensers, we suggest that you bring your own water bottle, so that you can refill it throughout the day.

We require that you be of legal drinking age in the United States (21 years old) to consume alcohol when traveling with Health In Harmony. You are not allowed to consume alcohol at the HIH office or when in Manombo Special Reserve. If you choose to consume alcohol, please do it in moderation. Under no circumstances should you be visibly intoxicated, as this could severely damage our reputation in this region.

Malagasy cuisine is predominantly rice-based, with meats and vegetables often cooked in a rich, flavorful sauce. Proteins include seafood and chicken and on occasion zebu (a subspecies of domesticated cattle) and pork. Please be aware that vegetarian and vegan diets are uncommon in Madagascar and it may be more difficult to find options, but we will do our best to support any dietary restrictions.

Food & Drink

There will be seasonal fruits available, though fresh salads and other raw vegetables are not common. Please be sure to inform HIH of allergies or restrictions well in advance of the trip.

It is important to note that during your time in Farafangana, you will be an honored guest at meetings and in people’s homes. It is polite to always accept food and drinks when they are given to you, even if you do not eat/drink the whole portion.
We will stay at some of the nicest accommodations available, although they will be quite modest compared to Western standards. Most will have western showers, however things like wifi are not guaranteed.

In Tana, you will stay at the Sakamanga Hotel. You can look at their website for photos and information about the rooms: https://sakamanga.com/en/home/

In Farafangana, you will stay at Concombe Masque. This hotel does not have air conditioning, however they do provide fans. There is hot water in the showers as well, and the food is great.

In Ranomafana, you will stay at Hotel Thermal. This is a beautiful spot, with rooms equipped with air conditioning, satellite TV, and hot water. Originally designed as a health retreat, they also have lovely spa and fitness facilities available.

In Manakara, you will stay in the beach bungalows at Chez Zizou. This is a lovely hotel on the beach with private rooms and great food.
The electricity in Madagascar is 220V. Laptop computers and most modern electronics do not need converters, but other electrical appliances (shavers, hair-dyers, etc.) are usually voltage-specific and would need a converter; the plugs of all devices will clearly state the range they can handle. For adapters, Madagascar uses type C and E (European style) plugs. You can either bring adapters from home, or they are available in local stores.

Wifi will be available at the Health In Harmony office and some hotels; however, service can be slow and/or temperamental. Basic services like email should work fine but you should not count on any activities that require downloading or significant data transfer.

There will be times when phone and Internet service is completely unavailable in Farafangana. For phones and wifi, Health In Harmony staff usually 1) bring an unlocked smart phone and purchase a sim card and data package; or, 2) purchase a phone, sim card and data package in Madagascar. Health In Harmony staff can assist you with this, or we can do this beforehand, on your behalf.

Due to humidity and rain that can come without warning, we recommend electronics be stored in waterproof bags or containers (Ziploc bags are fine!). The rule of thumb we follow: if you care about it - protect it!
The currency is called Malagasy Ariary (MGA), and it is the only accepted currency in most of the country. The exchange rate hovers around 4,000 Malagasy Ariary to $1 U.S. Dollar. We recommend that you obtain about 600,000 MGA ($150 USD) before traveling to Farafangana.

If you already have USD or another currency, it is relatively easy to exchange at the Tana airport. Foreign bank notes are often refused if they are too old, crumpled, folded, or stained. Most banks will only accept large notes (for example, $50 or $100 USD).

Although most expenses (including gratuities) are covered in the trip fee, most travelers appreciate having cash on hand for souvenirs, extra snacks, or other personal expenses. Ariary are most easily obtained by ATM withdrawal, and one of the most convenient places to obtain cash is at the Tana airport. ATMs are also available in other cities we will visit, such as Ranomafana.

Most ATMs charge by the transaction, not the amount withdrawn, so it is best to get the maximum cash permitted for each transaction. You can usually withdraw the maximum amount multiple times. Check how much your bank charges for international withdrawals. Definitely notify your bank and credit card company that you will be traveling, where and when.
Several HIH staff speak conversational French and only a very few number of staff speak English; the majority of staff and community members do not. Knowing French or Malagasy is not a requirement to visit, but knowing at least some key words and phrases will make you a much more effective and welcomed addition to the team. We have a simple guide for your reference and are happy to provide additional resources upon request.
We are sure that you will have many wonderful interactions with staff and community members during your visit. It is important that visitors abide by local customs, both to help interactions go smoothly, as well as to help preserve the positive reputation of HIH in the region.

**Some tips and insights include:**

All elders/kings must be respected unconditionally. Do not start the conversation, but allow your interlocutor to initiate all conversations to avoid any misunderstandings. Best to follow than to lead when engaging talks.

Ask your guide / interlocutor if you should do something before doing it.
Presentation of gifts is common, as well as celebrations at your arrival. When offered something, ALWAYS take it with both hands. If it’s a drink or something to eat, you do have to take a sip/bite as a sign of respect.

- Note: you do not have to finish what is offered but you MUST take a sip/bite and your action must be witnessed by the one who gave the offering.

Avoid pointing with your index finger extended, especially when pointing at a tomb or grave. You can instead gesture if your whole hand open or bend your fingers when you point.

Do not dress provocatively (i.e:. mini skirts, tank tops etc.)

Gender inequality is still very common. It’s a patriarchal society but presented as a matriarchal society.

Banter is common in Malagasy society.

Respect the “Fady” (Taboos/Forbidden aspects).

- Example: The consumption of pork meat is forbidden in some areas of the country.

Photographs are generally okay but you should ask first.

Be mindful of flashing around valuables - theft is not the issue so much as privilege.

Golden Rule: Follow your guide and ask before taking actions!
Culturally Appropriate and Functional Clothing

Although the weather is hot and humid, respect for communities is an important principle at HIH. Accordingly, we ask all visitors to observe local norms and to also wear conservative attire. In general, culturally respectful clothing means items that are loose-fitting and provide full coverage. This means not wearing any of the following: tank tops, short shorts/skirts, low-cut tops, crop tops, tight yoga pants/leggings, or see-through clothing.

For women, pants or skirts that fall over the knee, paired with a shirt that covers the shoulders, is appropriate dress. For men, we suggest button-ups with long pants. We ask that all volunteers wear sleeves that cover the shoulder to keep our standards equal between men and women.

For footwear, bringing a pair of flip-flops or sandals is recommended. All staff members go barefoot in the office and inside homes, so you will appreciate something that is easy to slip on and off. We also recommend a lightweight, closed-toe hiking shoe or athletic shoe with traction for exploring the Reserve.

We suggest you refrain from wearing jewelry around town and in villages. In general, the best way to be sure valuables (jewelry, expensive clothing, favorite shoes, etc.) will not be lost or damaged is to leave them at home.

The temperatures can fluctuate substantially through the day so we suggest bringing some light layers. To prevent leeches during walks in the forest, you will want to wear two pairs of long, thin, small-weave socks — one pair under your pants and the second pair over your pants.

Footwear

Flip-flops and sandals are the footwear of choice at HIH Madagascar. The Malagasy go barefoot in buildings and inside homes, so you’ll appreciate something that is easy to slip on and off. You will also want a pair of athletic shoes or lightweight hiking shoes.

It is likely that we will encounter areas with leeches on this trip. You can minimize your contact with them by wearing two pairs of thin, tightly woven socks and then tucking your pants into them when hiking in the forest. Trip guides will let you know when it might be appropriate to do so.
Packing List

Clothing and Gear

Modest and comfortable attire
Dresses/t-shirts/long shorts
Light robe/sleeping clothes
Sandals or flip-flops
Comfortable walking shoes
Rain jacket or poncho
Sun or baseball hat
Handkerchief or bandana
Sunglasses
Small backpack for excursions
Waterproof bags/Ziploc bags

Travel Items

Passport and 1-2 printed photocopies
Cash for incidentals
Sunscreen and insect repellent
Toiletries
Personal first aid kit and prescription medications
Hand sanitizer and small bar of soap
Headlamp or flash light and extra batteries
Water bottle
Ear plugs and eye mask
Individual tissue packs and wet wipes
Sarong or light towel
Small gifts for HIH Madagascar staff

Technology

Camera and unlocked smart phone
Adapter for plug-ins and backup battery pack
FAQ

What is the goal of trip?

We want you to see first-hand how we design solutions that save lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems. We aspire to be global influencers and educators, and we are thrilled to be able to share our model - and this incredible place - with you.

Why should I join this trip?

Whether you are an existing, longtime supporter or have never heard of us before, there are many reasons to join this trip! Our planet is facing many pressing challenges, and the trip exposes you to an approach that prioritizes community needs and demonstrates impact. You will see - and engage with - our programs, have conversations and form genuine connections with our patients and participants, experience the incredible beauty of the rainforest, and see lemurs and other creatures in the wild. This Journey is also an adventure with a purpose - it's an investment in Health In Harmony's programs and the future of planetary health.

Is this trip right for me?

The Health In Harmony teams make every effort to ensure the group’s comfort throughout the Journey, but we recognize this trip is not right for everyone. Past participants have described some elements of this trip as “camping plus.” For example, you will be exposed to hot sun, high humidity, rain, and mosquitoes. You should have reasonable physical ability and be comfortable occasionally using squat latrines and taking bucket showers. Those who have a spirit of adventure, and are not intimidated by long car rides, new foods, and changes in plans will get the most out of this trip.

Contact Us

If you have additional questions feel free to contact us at travel@healthinharmony.org
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