



Fetraomby Treks

FETRAOMBY

Fetraomby is the name of both a rural community and its main village. The community is located north-west of Brickaville, about a 100 kilometres inland from Toamasina. The area is hardly opened up. Fetraomby can be reached by boat only, from Brickaville or Anivorano via the Rianila River. But then, the real rural life of Madagascar will unfold before the eyes of the interested visitor.

Here, the forest is a protected area, part of the Corridor Ankeniheny-Zahamena, the habitat of the Indri-indri. Madagascar's largest lemur doesn't survive in captivity because of its complicated diet; hectares of well-preserved forest are needed to feed one family group. Unsurprisingly, the Indri-indri is endangered due to loss of habitat.

THE TREKS

You can choose from six different treks, ranking from easy to difficult, with the emphasis on nature or culture. An **easy** trek means short walks on passable tracks, and comfortable but not luxurious guesthouses. **Average** means longer walks on passable tracks, sometimes rather basic travel and sleeping facilities. And **difficult** means tough walks through the jungle, home stays with locals, or in tents, so basic facilities. Some trekking experience is recommended for the difficult treks. Good shoes and being in reasonable shape are necessary for all treks.

Whatever you choose, the treks are very varied. You will pass by wide white sandy river banks, plantations, rice fields, virgin rainforest with small creeks and cascades of different heights, waterfalls and little villages where nothing seems to have changed since time immemorial.

It is important to make your reservation well in advance so as to make sure the villagers are prepared for your arrival. Maximum number of participants is six, except for the Babakoto trek, which has a maximum of three participants.



COFFEE



If the hospitable population offers you a cup of coffee, they don't just hit a button and a machine will do the work. No, they plant, tend, and harvest the coffee themselves. They wash and dry the beans, roast them on a charcoal fire, and grind them manually with a pestle and mortar. The water for your coffee comes from a reservoir in the hills, via a pipeline to the communal taps in the village. The water needs to be carried home in a jerry can and heated on a charcoal fire. And if you take your coffee with sugar they'll squeeze the juice from a sugarcane with a specially designed instrument (the pigs' beak). But then, you do have a very special cup of coffee!



THE ROAD TO FETRAOMBY

All the treks in Fetraomby start early in the morning when a pousse-velo will take you to the coach station where the taxi-brousse to Brickaville will be waiting for you. A pousse-velo is a tricycle, a taxi-brousse is a minibus for about 15 people, luggage will be stored on the roof. During the drive you can enjoy the views. After about 20 kilometres the oil palm plantation of the Palmeraie of the Savonnerie Tropicale will appear. Here, oil to manufacture soap is extracted from the oil palms. About one hour later you will arrive in Brickaville. Time for breakfast and some last minute shopping before the boat leaves to take you up the Rianila river. After a three-hour boat trip you will arrive in Anivorano, where your lunch will be waiting. It is a beautifully situated village with large, white sandy beaches. From the bank you can enjoy a broad view across two joining rivers. After lunch the boat will take you to Gismay or all the way up to Fetraomby, depending on which trek you have chosen.



PAKAMBO

If you take the boat to Fetraomby you will arrive at Pakambo about an hour after leaving Anivorano. Only experienced boatmen can steer their boat through the Pakambo rapids. For safety reasons, all passengers will get off the boat and walk a few hundred metres along the river and get back in the boat on the other side of the rapids. Chickens also have to leave the boat as it is fady (taboo) to have them aboard when you pass the rapids.



ECOTOURISM

A group of people in Fetraomby have organised themselves in the **Association Rianala** with the sole purpose to develop ecotourism in their region, as a new source of income and a way to preserve their sacred forest. They co-operate with the **Federation Tsarafaniry** and with **Centre Lambahoany** in Toamasina. Tsarafaniry is a cooperative body of local committees, so-called VOI's, charged with the management of the forest surrounding their village.

Together, treks have been developed, and simple infrastructure has been realised. If you really want to experience rural life, or really want to be submerged in the rainforest of Madagascar, here is your chance. It does mean living in a basic and remote setting for a few days. But then, unbelievable views, varied landscapes and beautiful rainforest, combined with the easy-going relaxed population will give you a once-in-a-lifetime experience no-one will ever be able to take away from you.