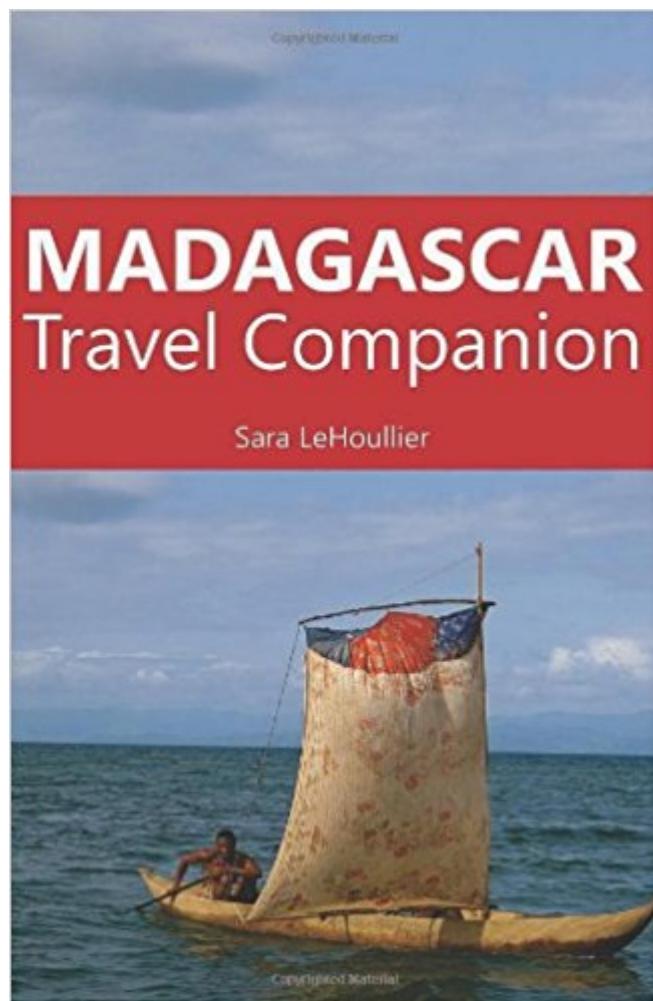


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# Madagascar (Travel Companion)



## **Synopsis**

Why should you visit Madagascar? Sara LeHoullier is itching to tell you. Armed with a love of rice with ambiguous meat chunks, a stomach of steel, a firm grasp on multiple dialects of the Malagasy language, and lots of mosquito repellent, Sara explores both on and off the beaten path revealing a truly unique side on the world's 4th largest island. Sara not only makes friends with the lemurs and chameleons, but treks through the national parks, tries to decide which beach is the prettiest (not an easy task), and most importantly, talks to as many people as possible, collecting proverbs, stories, and always friends. In this fantastic hybrid between a travel guide and a travelogue, follow Sara as she transverses the country where she lived for nearly three years and discover hidden places, intriguing characters, and insight into traveling through Madagascar.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

After graduating from Carleton College with a BA in English, Sara decided to take the plunge and join the Peace Corps. In early 2005, she left her job in North Carolina to teach English to high school students in Madagascar for two years. After completing her service, Sara found that she couldn't stay away - she returned in 2008 to work on an NGO project, and again in 2009 to complete research for her Masters thesis (and to write this book!). In 2010, Sara received her MA in Sustainable Development from the School for International Training Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont. Putting her brand new degree to good use, Sara is in Madagascar once again working with Human Network International as a Peace Corps Response Volunteer. She plans on doing more traveling over the next 6 months, and looks forward to many more adventures.

While I haven't yet traveled there, I bought the book to help plan a trip for my wife and me. Two questions I had up-front: (1) to what extent should I use tour services vs. do-it-myself, and (2) what are the places we **MUST** see (for our interests). Sara LeHoullier's book was excellent for the second point, so I think I have knowledge to determine which places we must visit and for how long and those we could bypass (which selection could easily differ for other people). I'm still undetermined on point 1. Ms. LeHoullier gives excellent insights on the people, the cultural background, the flora and the fauna. She also gives some useful Malagasy phrases. Her book is definitely not like the usual travel guides, such as Lonely Planet or Rough Guide, as she does not cover in as much depth the availability of lodging, transportation and food. However, I liked her strong opinions about those establishments she had personally tried, as well as local guides, when her experience was positive. I expect to make use of many of her suggestions. However, I suspect there are some other establishments and guides as good that are not mentioned. As I am no longer as young as when I traveled the world on a shoestring budget, as she largely did, I'll try some of her suggestions but also will look slightly upscale in other locations. I deducted one star, as the price per page of the book should have warranted at least some local maps, even hand-drawn. There were also numerous errors, mostly missing words or phrases. I hope the enthusiastic Ms. LeHoullier strengthens her book with the next edition.

This book is not a traditional travel guide. As the author says, Madagascar is "not a place that lends itself to a neat and organized plan." Nor is it for a person who "wants to spend days in a lush resort surrounded by high walls." Instead it is intended for the traveler who wants to see what Madagascar has to offer, whether it's a white beach, a leafy forest, eating local food or meeting Malagasy people. If you like to travel and want to get off the beaten path, this book is for you. It's a very beautiful book with extremely practical advice. It combines information on where to stay, how to get around, what to see, what to bring, plus some nice helpful Malagasy phrases. You can use it to choose your own adventure. The photos are excellent and the book has a detailed, engaging style, is up to date, fun and informative. Along with imparting travel details, the author has captured the feeling of Madagascar. It addresses the natural and cultural diversity of the island and the history behind it. The author's humor and curiosity make this book the best kind of travel companion.

Solid book, mostly accurate information, or accurate enough anyways (some prices and information about travel are off). If it is maps and hotel names you are after go for the Bradt guide, this "travel companion" is different, and I like it. What is really superb about this book is Sara's (and friend's)

personal notes about their experiences at particular places. there are also valuable detailed recommendations for alternatives to the standard parks and tourist destinations, great for an independent or adventurous traveler. You'll want another guide book to compliment this one, especially if you don't follow the itinerary within this travel companion, but bring this book along too so you can compare and have some personal experience shared with you rather than just a telephone number, a \$\$, and a sentence saying the hotel is clean. while I wouldn't recommend a tourist rely solely on this book, I would urge anyone going without a travel agency to bring this one along too as it's a great compliment to the standard guides.

I found 'Madagascar Travel Companion' by Sara LeHoullier to be a very easy-to-read, insightful book about a fascinating country. Being a nature and animal lover, I thoroughly enjoyed the descriptions of Sara's lemur encounters as well as the write-ups of several 'must explore' snorkeling sites (though I cringed at the sea urchin experience!). Sara's love for the Malagasy people and culture really comes through in her writing style and does elevate this book to something beyond a typical travel guidebook. I felt like I was on the journey throughout Madagascar with Sara. I found the practical information and her recommendations very helpful!

Because of an impending trip my partner and I have planned to Madagascar, I decided to purchase Madagascar Travel Companion. In the past I have used more popular series, such as Lonely Planet, but found them to be quite mundane and obvious. Upon opening this Madagascar book, I realized immediately this book was exactly what I was looking for. The fact that Ms. LeHoullier has spent years in Madagascar and is fluent in the language is obvious with each recommendation and story. We depart next week and have already used the book to plan many activities. Highly recommended!

Going to Madagascar for over two years. Love this book and all the small details

Don't buy this book. It's a small, self-indulgent book that is useless and uninteresting. The new Lonely Planet is also very bad. Use the Bradt.

For the overland VERY budget conscience traveller... detailed and personable (if a travel book can be that). ... maps were ok but could be more detailed .

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