



A beach on Nosy Sakatia, Madagascar, which is known for its beautiful dive sites.

# A boat ride to Hellville and back

In part two of his Madagascar trip, **Adrian Rorvik** goes to the perfumed island

**M**Y EXPLORATION of the Nosy Be islands off the north-western coast of Madagascar had begun with a wonderful stay at 293 On Komba (Nosy Komba being one of a handful of inhabited islands). 293 is a place I would love to revisit and owner Marcine Cooper one of the many folk who impressed me during my week-long jaunt.

Claudio Harrys, my Be Welcome guide, is another. A gentle soul, he first took me paddling in a pirogue (dugout) alongside a stretch of the main island from Ambatozavavy to Ampasipohy Community Reserve (Lokobe National Park).

Here Anwar Alle guided us through the humid forest. On game viewing excursions I've always been amazed at guides' spotting abilities, but Alle takes the cake.

The giant leaf-tailed gecko may be huge but is well camouflaged, the large spiders and boa constrictors not so much (happily, none venomous). But the mostly nocturnal lemurs, some the size of mice and endemic to Nosy Be can be hard to spot.

Panther chameleons, with males reaching 44cm in length, are a doddle, but Madagascar also has the world's smallest, which take some finding.

A delightful lunch in yet another beautiful setting and back we went – getting a tow from a passing motorboat. We parted ways on Chanty Beach where I made the brief boat transfer across to Nosy Sakatia and Sakatia Lodge.

"It's just a lodge," said Harrys, so I was expecting a version of 293 On Komba, with dive facilities tacked on. He clearly hadn't visited.



Low tide at Nosy Be.



The traveler palm is Madagascar's national emblem.

Sakatia Lodge has 33 rooms, gardens, two spacious beachfront villas and airy dining and lounging areas. I was there for the diving, but could as easily have sat in a deck chair, admired the view and enjoyed the friendly atmosphere.

Jacques Vieira and dad Jose are passionate about diving and conservation, plus Jacques is great with people and inspires confidence in newbies (the lodge offers every sort of dive course). Fantastic reefs are within a few hundred metres of the beachfront lodge, hardly

affected by bleaching that has ruined reefs worldwide. If you are a diver you should put the islands on your bucket list. It's bang up to date, with a decompression chamber and helivac available if needed.

Too soon, it was back across the water to the luxurious Palm Beach Resort & Spa – a different experience with aircon and 24-hour electricity, something you get used to not having. I was reunited with Harrys on a full day's trip to Tanikely Marine Reserve – on and around a small island off Nosy Be.



The view of the beach from Sakatia Lodge.



The beach at Lokobe National

The snorkelling at Tanikely was superb, swimming with turtles in the clear, warm water a real treat.

Lunch – made offshore (no fires allowed) – was what you find everywhere: rice, veggies, seafood and Zebu (the local cattle), while seated on a log rectangle at a table of piled up and flattened sand, bedecked with a colourful cloth, under the shade of trees fringing the forest.

Entering the forest takes you up to the now-defunct lighthouse which affords great views and is an

ideal way to get your bearings.

Harrys also showed me colourful Hellville, a humungous sacred banyan tree, and the mainly Muslim Marodoka, a 9th century village of Swahili origin, which attracted Indians and Arabs, and was the first in Nosy Be.

"Nosy Manitra" (the perfumed island) is one of its nicknames, and ylang ylang, coffee, cacao, vanilla and sugar cane plantations distil a balmy fragrance. People are laid-back. Shouting and gesticulating is not their way – even taboo (fady). Fads vary from community to community, so ask (quietly).

Harrys and I parted as I moved on to Andilana Beach Resort, where clocks are set an hour forward...

## WIN WIN WIN

### MADAGASCAR MAGIC

We are giving away a seven-night stay for two at 293 On Komba including dinner, bed and breakfast, worth R8 715. Airlink will sponsor return flights from Pietermaritzburg worth R35 906.68 and Emperors Palace will provide stayovers worth R8 600 at D'Oreale Grande.

Enter with SMMadagascar as the subject. Provide your name, subscriber number or delivery address and telephone number. Tell us what award MadagasCaT won recently. Competition closes at 2pm on August 16.

### HOW TO ENTER

The competition SMS number is 33258 (SMSes charged at R1.50). Prizes are for subscribers and not transferable. T&Cs apply. Call 031 308 2584 office hours. For subscriptions, call 0800 204711.

### OUR WINNERS

Lynne Hulett won a stay at Gwahumbe Game and Spa.

INDEPENDENT  
**TRAVELLER**

appears in the following newspapers:

**DURBAN**  
Sunday Tribune  
**GAUTENG**  
Saturday Star  
Pretoria News Weekend  
**CAPE**  
Weekend Argus  
(Saturday & Sunday)



To advertise, contact  
**SHARMAINE GOVENDER**  
Tel 031 308 2534  
Cell 082 666 0304  
sharmaine.govender@inl.co.za

MadagasCaT Charters and Travel arranged Adrian Rorvik's seamless itinerary. MadagasCaT is a member of Nosy Be Tourism Board, the private partner behind Airlink's direct flight to Nosy Be and was voted Yacht Charter Company of the Year for Madagascar in the 2016 Luxury Travel Guide Awards. Call 079 149 6438 or visit [www.madagascat.co.za](http://www.madagascat.co.za)

Airlink connects you to your special African island getaway, Nosy Be, Madagascar on Sundays.

For fully inclusive fly-in packages, contact MadagasCaT Charters and Travel about winter specials, or book your flight direct at [www.flyairlink.com](http://www.flyairlink.com) or SAA Central Reservations on 011 978 1111. Airlink, now connecting you to 36 destinations in nine African countries.

