

# Antananarivo



Antananarivo is a bustling place with activity on every corner. Here people flood the streets, walking down the middle lanes between traffic, knocking on taxi windows, selling everything you can imagine – fruit, sunglasses, flowers, cell phones, calculators, bamboo, even live animals. Pollution from all the automobiles is nearly unbearable, and you're bound to have an itch in your throat before too long. Motorcycles whizz by, slicing through the seemingly endless sea of cars and bodies, moving in every direction. Stalls selling every kind of goods imaginable line the thoroughfares, their wares squeezed into the tiniest nooks and crannies and sometimes spilling out into traffic. You can find everything: fresh produce, raw meat, embroidered linen, electronics, tin matchbox-style replicas of taxis and rickshaws, leather goods and handicrafts.

At first glance Madagascar's capital city resembles a Mediterranean hill town, with its highest point 2643m above sea level. But most of Antananarivo, also known as 'Tana', sits at around 1400m. Regardless of the altitude, walking here can be a leg-burner. Exploring the rich cultural, historical and architectural sites by foot is easy, providing you're willing to climb hundreds of ancient stone steps and mingle into the city's fray. Most people only spend a couple of days in Tana, getting over jetlag before they travel on to other regions. But before you decide on where to go next, give at least three days to experience this crumbling hillside capital city like none other. You won't be disappointed.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Sampling real Malagasy life, hill views and a dose of history around the **Rova** (p77)
- Tackling the country's best range of international and gourmet cuisine in the many fine **restaurants** (p83)
- Soaking up the ambience as you soak in the baths at **Balnéoforme Colbert** (p79)
- Shopping for hard-fought bargains at one of Tana's hectic, eclectic **markets** (p79)
- Saying 'so much for the city' and striking out into the surrounding **highlands** (p89)



■ POPULATION: 1.2 million

■ HIGHEST POINT: 2643m

■ PRINCIPAL TRIBE: Merina

## HISTORY

The area that is now Antananarivo was originally known as Analamanga (Blue Forest), and is believed to have been populated by the Vazimba, mysterious ancestors of today's Malagasy. In 1610 a Merina king named Andrianjaka conquered the region, stationed a garrison of 1000 men to defend his new settlement, and renamed it Antananarivo, 'Place of 1000 Warriors'.

In the late 18th century, Andrianampoinimerina, the warrior king, moved his capital from Ambohimanga to Antananarivo, which became the most powerful of all the Merina kingdoms. For the next century, Antananarivo was the capital of the Merina monarchs and the base from which they carried out their conquest of the rest of Madagascar.

Tana remained the seat of government during the colonial era, and it was the French who gave the city centre its present form, building two great staircases and draining swamps and paddy fields to create present-day Analakely. In May 1929, the city was the site of the first major demonstration against the colonialists.

Today Antananarivo province is Madagascar's political and economic centre, and has a total population of about four million. Madagascar's president, Marc Ravalomanana, hails from Tana and served as the city's mayor before his presidency.

## ORIENTATION

Ivato airport lies 12km from Antananarivo, and the journey there or back can take up to 45 minutes during rush hour.

Central Antananarivo can be roughly divided into two sections: the Haute-Ville (upper town) and Basse-Ville (lower town). The centre of Basse-Ville and the commercial district is the multi-laned Ave de l'Indépendance, which runs southeast from the train station through the crowded main market area of Analakely, with a steep staircase leading to Place de l'Indépendance in the rather quieter Haute-Ville. Another staircase, directly opposite, leads to the busy district of Ambondrona, where several hotels are located. Narrow streets lead further uphill to the Rova (royal palace). Down the other side of the hill from Haute-Ville is the heart-shaped Lac Anosy (Lake Anosy). Tana's outer districts go on for miles, so allow yourself plenty of time if you're visiting somewhere in the suburbs.

Finding your way around central Tana isn't always easy either – street signs are rare and contradictory, and most streets have interchangeable French and Malagasy names, neither of which are generally known to locals.

## Maps

Both Edicom and FTM publish detailed plans of the city centre and suburbs, sold at bookshops or the Ortana tourist office (p75),

## ANTANANARIVO IN...

### Two Days

Start your day the French way with coffee and croissants at any of the city's cafés before visiting the **Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie** (p78) and exploring the Haute-Ville. After high tea in **Pâtisserie Colbert** (p85), take a taxi up to the **Rova** (p77) and the **Musée Andafivaratra** (p78). Sunset is perfect for drinks and traditional Malagasy music at the **Grill du Rova** (p83), followed by dinner at **La Varangue** (p84).

The next morning, walk round **Lac Anosy** (p76), stopping to admire the flower market and barbers' stalls, then squeeze your way in to the market of **Analakely** (p79) for some hectic browsing and bargaining. After lunch at a local *hotely*, visit an exhibition at the **Centre Culturel Albert Camus** (p74), then have a traditional Malagasy banquet at **Chez Mariette** (p84).

### Four Days

Follow the two-day itinerary, then head out to **Ilafy** (p90) and the **royal palace** (p90) at Ambohimanga for a taste of Merina history. Back in town, sample one of Tana's more exotic restaurants to put you in the mood for drinking and dancing at **Pandora Station** or **Le Bus** (p86).

The next day, spend the morning shopping at the **Marché Artisanale la Digue** (p87) in La Digue, then relax those muscles with a spa treatment at the fabulous **Balnéoforme Colbert** (p79).



which also offers its own free, but rather less useful, map.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

Street vendors all over town, especially on Place de l'Indépendance and near Hôtel Colbert, sell the major French periodicals and the occasional English-language magazine (usually *Newsweek*).

**Espace Loisirs** (Map p76; ☎ 032 07 034 84; Rue Ratsimilaho) The best selection of books in town, including French guidebooks, children's books and novels.

**Librairie de Madagascar** (Map p76; ☎ 22 224 54; 38 Ave de l'Indépendance) A good selection of newspapers and magazines (mostly French), plus books on Madagascar and the Indian Ocean region.

## Cultural Centres

**Alliance Française d'Antananarivo** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 211 07; www.alliancefr.mg; Rue Seimad, Andavambamba; 📺) Offers French and Malagasy language courses and sponsors various cultural events.

**American Cultural Center** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 200 89; ramananth@state.gov; 7 Rue Rainizanabololona; 🕒 2-5pm Tue & Wed, 8.30am-12.30pm Thu) Occasional lectures, concerts and exhibitions.

**Centre Culturel Albert Camus** (CCAC/CCF; Map p76; ☎ 22 213 75; www.cac.mg; 14 Ave de l'Indépendance; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sat) The centre has a multimedia library and an exhibition hall, offers French courses and also sponsors an extensive programme of concerts, dance, film and other events. Closed Thursday morning.

**Cercle Germano-Malagasy** (Goethe-Zentrum; Map p76; ☎ 22 214 42; biblio@cgm-mada.de; Escalier Ranavalona; 🕒 8am-5.30pm Mon-Sat; 📺) Offers a library with German magazines and newspapers, as well as a café, German language classes, internet access, concerts and German films.

**Le Studio** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 033 11 968 33; Ivandry; 🕒 10.30am-8pm Mon, Wed & Sat, to 10pm Thu-Fri, 2.30-6pm Sun) Private cultural centre near the Russian Embassy specialising in photography (Pierrot Men etc) and applied arts, plus documentary and film screenings and themed events. There's also a craft shop and restaurant onsite.

## Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 22 357 53)

**Espace Médical 24-hour clinic** (☎ 22 625 66)

**Fire** (☎ 18)

**Police** (☎ 17)

## Internet Access

**Cyberpaositra** Analakely (Map p76; Ave 26 Juin 1960); Haute-Ville (Map p76; ☎ 22 296 76; www.paositra.mg;

Rue Ratsimilaho) Both Tana's main post offices have cheap internet centres charging Ar30 per minute.

**Outcool Web Bar** (Map p76; ☎ 22 553 77; Rue Andrianary Ratanarivo; per min Ar38; 🕒 9am-11pm Mon-Sat, 3.30-9pm Sun) Also functions as a sociable bar.

**Teknet** (Map p76; ☎ 22 313 59; www.teknetgroup.com; Ave Ramanantsoa; per min Ar40; 🕒 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 3-8pm Sun) Prepaid internet, fax and printing services, English keyboards. Also operates a Cyberspace outlet at Ivato airport.

## Media

Look out for the English publication *Madagascar News* on sale at bookshops. It has bar and restaurant listings for Tana, as well as general articles. If you can read French, pick up a free copy of the magazine *Sortir à Tana*, which has details of clubs, bars, restaurants and events.

## Medical Services

The daily newspapers list out-of-hours doctors, as well as the location and telephone numbers of dentists, duty chemists and other hospitals.

**Centre Hospitalier de Soavinandriana** (Hôpital Militaire d'Antananarivo; Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 403 41; Rue Moss, Soavinandriana; 🕒 24hr) Has X-ray equipment and stocks most basic drugs and medicines. The hospital employs several French doctors. Requires payment in advance of treatment.

**Clinique des Sœurs Franciscaines** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 235 54; Rue Dokotera Rajaonah, Ankadifotsy) Has X-ray equipment and is well run and relatively clean. Requires payment in advance.

**Espace Médical** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 794 38; esmed@wanadoo.mg; 65 Bis Rue Pasteur Rabary) A private clinic just east of the city, with laboratory and X-ray capabilities and several French-trained doctors.

**Institut Pasteur** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 412 72; www.pasteur.mg; Ambatofotsikely, Avaradoha; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) The best place for lab tests.

**Pharmacie Metropole** (Map p76; ☎ 22 200 25; Rue Ratsimilaho; 🕒 8am-noon Mon-Sat) One of Tana's best and most convenient pharmacies, near the Hôtel Colbert.

## Money

The bureaux de change at Ivato airport often offer better rates and quicker service than many of the banks in Tana, so there's no need to wait until you get into the city. An ATM is also available in the arrivals hall.

Banks are generally open from 8am to noon and 3pm to 6pm Monday to Friday, with a lunch break, and are closed on the afternoon before a public holiday as well as on the holiday itself. Virtually all now have

reliable ATMs (Visa only), though some may not operate outside banking hours.

Some more upmarket hotels change cash and travellers cheques for their guests. The Madagascar Hilton has a 24-hour ATM.

**Bank of Africa** (BOA) Basse-Ville (Map p76; Ave de l'Indépendance); Haute-Ville (Map p76; ☎ 22 202 51; Place de l'Indépendance) Changes travellers cheques and gives cash advances on MasterCard as well as Visa.

**BFV-SG** Basse-Ville (Map p76; Ave de l'Indépendance); Haute-Ville (Map p76; ☎ 22 206 91; Ave Ramanantsoa) Travellers cheques, Visa advances and Western Union transfers.

**BMOI** (Map p76; ☎ 22 346 09; Place de l'Indépendance) Changes travellers cheques.

**BNI-CL** (Map p76; ☎ 22 228 00; 74 Ave 26 Juin 1960) Travellers cheques and Visa advances. There's also an ATM on Place 19 Mai 1946.

**Socimed Bureau de Change** (Map p76; ☎ 22 643 20; Rue Radama I; 🕒 8am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8-11.15am Sat) Changes travellers cheques, and does advances on Visa cards. Also has a 24-hour office at the airport.

**UCB** (Map p76; ☎ 22 272 62; Rue des 77 Parlementaires Français) Changes travellers cheques and gives fairly rapid cash advances on both Visa and MasterCard.

## Post & Telephone

There are public telephones for domestic and international calls at both post offices as well as plenty dotted around town. You can buy phonecards from any shop or kiosk.

**Post Office (Paositra)** Basse-Ville (Map p76; Ave 26 Juin 1960; 🕒 Mon-Fri); Haute-Ville (main post office; Map p76; ☎ 22 296 76; www.paositra.mg; Rue Ratsimilaho; 🕒 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8-11am Sat) Tana's two main post offices.

## Tourist Information

**Maison de Sainte Marie** (Map p76; ☎ 24 265 02; Rue Ramandriamampandry) Information, transport and reservations for Île Sainte Marie, on the east coast (see p206). The office is shared with MadaBus (p87).

**Office National de Tourisme** (ONTM; Map p76; ☎ 22 660 85; www.madagascar-tourisme.com; 3 Rue Elysée Ravelomanantsoa) Limited amounts of countrywide information.

**Ortana** (Map p76; ☎ 24 304 84; ortana2006@yahoo.fr; Escalier Ranavalona) New, helpful regional tourist office with keen staff and plenty of brochures on local and national destinations.

## Travel Agencies

For Tana-based tour operators offering trips within Madagascar, see the full listings on

p285. For international and general travel services such as air tickets and package holidays, try the following agencies:

**Dodo Travel & Tours** (Map p76; ☎ 22 690 36; www.dodotraveltour.com; Rue Elysée Ravelomanantsoa)

**Islanders** (Map p76; ☎ 22 640 23; 44 Rue Ratsimilaho)

**Transcontinents** (Map p76; ☎ 22 223 98; transco@dt5.mg; 10 Ave de l'Indépendance)

**Voyages Bourdon** (Map p76; ☎ 22 296 96; voyagesbourdon@simicro.mg; 15 Rue Patrice Lumumba, cnr Rue Radama I)

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Antananarivo is safer than many developing-world capitals, and if you take standard precautions, you shouldn't have any difficulties. Public transport isn't safe at night, especially between the town and the airport. Even in the centre it's a good idea to take taxis; if you do walk, go in a group, and remember that much of the city has no streetlights. During the day, keep an eye out for pickpockets in markets, on public transport and in other crowded areas.

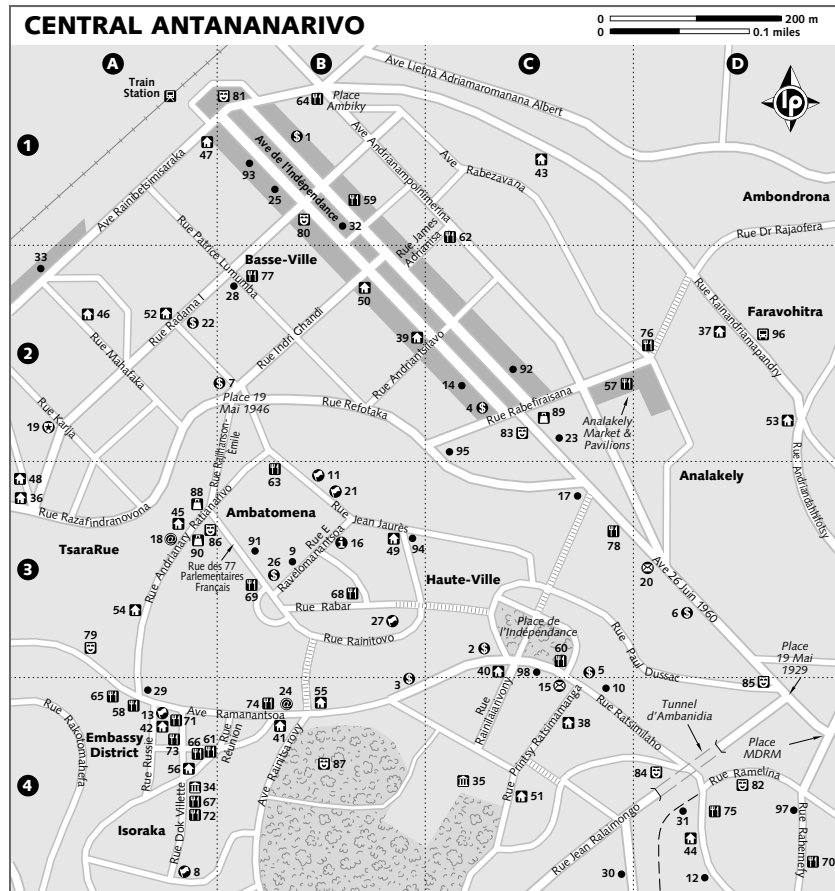
Persistent street vendors selling postcards, newspapers, cigarettes, vanilla or other souvenirs can also be a pain, especially around Place de l'Indépendance and the best-known hotels – ignore them or give a single firm 'no' and they should give up more quickly.

Police checks on foreigners, whether on foot or in taxis, are not uncommon in Tana at night. Bear in mind that you are required to carry ID with you at all times; if you don't have it chances are you'll be asked for a *cadeau* ('present', ie bribe) rather than being marched down to the police station, but either way it's better to keep your passport on you, suitably concealed of course.

As an added environmental hazard, you may experience headaches or throat irritation for the first few days in Tana, particularly if you are prone to respiratory allergies or asthma. This is due in part to the altitude and in part to the city's polluted air.

## Scams

On arrival at Ivato airport you're very likely to be approached by one or more freelance guides, who promise to arrange transport or tours to other parts of the country, particularly the popular Tsiribihina River trip. Some travellers have found this a convenient way of departing quickly without lengthy shopping around; however, even with a signed



contact you have few guarantees, and some readers have reported incidents of 'guides' simply taking the money and disappearing. The only sure way to avoid this is to book in advance with official tour operators, which is often more expensive. See p285 for tips on how to organise your trip.

See also p271 for scams to do with the new currency.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

If your knees can withstand the long flights of stairs and steep, sloping streets, central Tana is a good place to explore on foot. Walking around the Haute-Ville or the streets around Ave de l'Indépendance, you'll come across plenty of little cameos of Malagasy life, such

as women selling embroidered tablecloths spread out on the sidewalks, men hawking rubber stamps from improvised stalls on the steps, or taxi drivers sharing a hunk of peanut cake bought from a roadside kiosk. Most of the attractive old buildings are in Haute-Ville, which is quieter and easier to stroll around than the hectic, exhaust-fume-ridden Basse-Ville.

## Lac Anosy

Antananarivo's lake (Map pp72–3) lies in the southern part of town, an easy downhill walk from Haute-Ville. In the early morning you may see flocks of white cattle egrets roosting in the nearby trees. The lake is at its most beautiful in October, when the jacaranda trees

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are covered in purple blossom. On an island, connected to the shore by a causeway, stands a large white angel on a plinth, the Monument aux Morts (Monument to the Dead), a WWI memorial erected by the French. There's a daily flower market just opposite the end of the causeway and a neat little row of barbers' stalls on the southern shore. On sunny week-end afternoons, the paths around the lake fill up with strolling couples and families; however, they can also attract hawkers, loiterers and less savoury types, so avoid wandering here on your own at quiet times and definitely at night.

## The Rova, Avaradrova & Andohalo

The **Rova** (Palais de la Reine; Map pp72-3; Rue Ramboatiana), or royal palace, is the imposing structure that crowns the highest hill overlooking Lac

Anosy. Gutted in a fire in 1995, it is still under restoration and was not open to the public at time of research. If it has reopened when you visit, remember that it is *fady* (taboo) to point your finger directly at the royal tombs or the palace itself.

Even with the palace closed, the adjacent districts of Avaradrova and Andohalo are fine places to stroll around for an hour or two, with stunning views on all sides, plaques detailing the significance of some interesting historical buildings and a sense of real life around you. See our Walking Tour (p79) for more details.

Freelance guides often hang around the Rova entrance and offer their services for walks around the area, including commentary on the exhibits in the nearby Musée Andafivaratra. They usually speak good English and

are full of trivia about the palace, local buildings and the history of the city. Make sure you negotiate a price in advance, otherwise they will spin the tour out for over two hours, then emotionally blackmail you into paying an extortionate fee of €30 or more once it's finished! Around Ar5000 per person is a perfectly generous price.

To get to the Rova from the centre of Antananarivo, it's a stiff 4km walk or an easy taxi ride (around Ar3000). Minibuses 103, 134 and 190 will also take you there, if you can work out the routes!

### Musée Andafivaratra

Housed in a magnificent pink baroque palace, a few hundred metres downhill from the Rova, the **Andafivaratra museum** (Map pp72-3; admission Ar3000; ☎ 10am-5pm Sat-Thu) is filled with furniture, portraits and memorabilia from the age of the Merina kings and queens. The building was the former home of Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony, the power behind the throne of the three queens he married in succession. Even with the Rova closed, the museum provides ample reason to visit the old royal quarter, particularly by illuminating some of the colourful characters that drove Madagascan history: mad Queen Ranavalona

I, dumpy in a coral silk crinoline, scowls out from her oil painting like a psychotic Queen Victoria, while Jean Laborde, the French adventurer presumed to be her lover, glowers from beneath his beard in the black-and-white photograph next to it. There's also a huge gilt throne, the Merina crown jewels, coats of chain mail and, surprisingly, tiny military uniforms belonging to former monarchs. Explanations of the exhibits are in English as well as French.

In the museum's rear courtyard, you'll find a collection of wooden huts in the traditional styles of each of Madagascar's five regions, constructed for a visit from former French president Jacques Chirac.

### Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie

Smaller than the Musée Andafivaratra, but still worth popping into, the **Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie** (Map p76; ☎ 22 210 47; Rue Dok Villette; admission by donation; ☎ noon-5pm Tue-Fri) in the Haute-Ville gives an overview of archaeological digs around the island, including displays of grave decorations from the south (known as *aloalo* – see the boxed text, p130), an extensive exhibition of musical instruments and a few talismans and objects used for sorcery.

## THE ROVA

When the Rova (pronounced 'roova') does finally reopen, a visit here is thoroughly recommended, as there are few other places in Madagascar that better represent the turbulent and often bloody history of the Merina royal dynasty.

The palace gate is protected by a carved eagle, the symbol of military force, and a phallus, the symbol of circumcision and thus nobility. Inside the gate are royal tombs in the form of wooden huts. The French moved the remains of Merina kings and queens from the Rova when they took over the city in 1845, an act that is still considered to be profane by the Malagasy. Today the remains are back, and the townspeople still visit them to ask for blessings.

The palace itself, known as Manjakamiadana (A Fine Place to Rule), was designed for Queen Ranavalona I by a Scottish missionary named James Cameron. The outer structure, built in 1867 for Ranavalona II, was made of stone, with a wooden roof and interior. Crows still wheel around the satellite aeriels that flank the towers of the palace – the birds were considered sacred by the Merina royal family, having apparently warned one king of an impending attack.

Beside the imposing stone structure is a replica of a Malagasy palace in the old style. This was built to resemble the palace of King Andrianampoinimerina, who founded the Merina kingdom. It looks like a black wood hut, with a tiny, raised doorway. The royal bed is situated in the sacred northwest corner of the hut. The simple furniture inside is aligned according to astrological rules. The king supposedly hid in the rafters when visitors arrived, signalling whether the guest was welcome by dropping pebbles onto his wife's head.

Whether the palace is open or not, the best time to visit the area is towards the end of the afternoon, so you can wander the streets then enjoy the spectacular colours of the sunset with the city spread out below.

## Markets

For Shakespeare, all the world was a stage; for Antananarivo it seems that all the world's a market, which must make at least half the population hawkers. Everywhere you look vendors tout their wares from stalls, carts and inverted cardboard boxes, or simply wander the streets looking hopeful.

The main official market is found in the 'pavilions' at **Analakely** (Map p76). It's a packed, teeming place, selling clothes, household items, dodgy VCDs and every food product you could imagine, plus a few things you probably couldn't – look out for the shop(s) selling '100% organic bat guano'. The smaller **Marché Communal de Petit Vitesse** (Map p76), west of the train station, sells more or less the same goods.

Another highlight is the colourful **flower market** (Map pp72-3), held daily on the south-eastern edge of Lac Anosy. For souvenirs, the **Marché Artisanale de La Digue** (see p87) is Tana's best-known craft market. There's another, smaller market at **Andravoahangy** (Map pp72-3), about 1.5km northeast of the northern end of Ave de l'Indépendance.

## Spas, Salons & Pools

For a truly indulgent experience, try **Balnéo-forme Colbert** (Map p76; ☎ 22 625 71; Hôtel Colbert, 29 Rue Printsy Ratsimamanga; ☎ 1-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun), a fantastic spa with a mosaic swimming pool and Turkish bath. A variety of stunningly decorated treatment rooms offer body wraps, bubble baths and every kind of massage imaginable – relaxing, slimming, water, ying-yang... It's not cheap, but it is worth it, especially if you've just arrived back in Tana after some hard trekking.

As well as selling local oils and bath, spa and spice products, **BioAroma** (Map p76; ☎ 22 326 30; bioaroma@simicro.mg; 54 Ave Ramanantsoa; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun), surely Tana's most aromatic shop, hands out full-body massages from Ar28,000, plus a comprehensive range of facials, body masks, reiki and other esoteric treatments, including the 'gravity sheet' (hanging by the feet to stretch the spine). A handy leaflet explains (in English) each treatment and which ones may be painful!

The state-approved natural health chain **Homeopharma** (Map p76; ☎ 22 269 34; www.madagascar-homeopharma.com; Rue Ranavalona III; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) has outlets all over Tana and throughout the country; many, such as the

Haute-Ville branch, offer massages and other treatments. You can even arrange themed tours, with emphasis on health and wellbeing amid the tourist spots.

The **spa** at Le Royal Palissandre (p83) is another good spot, and the Madagascar Hilton (p83) has a 25m **pool** (admission Ar10,000; ☎ Mon-Fri summer only) as well as spa and exercise facilities.

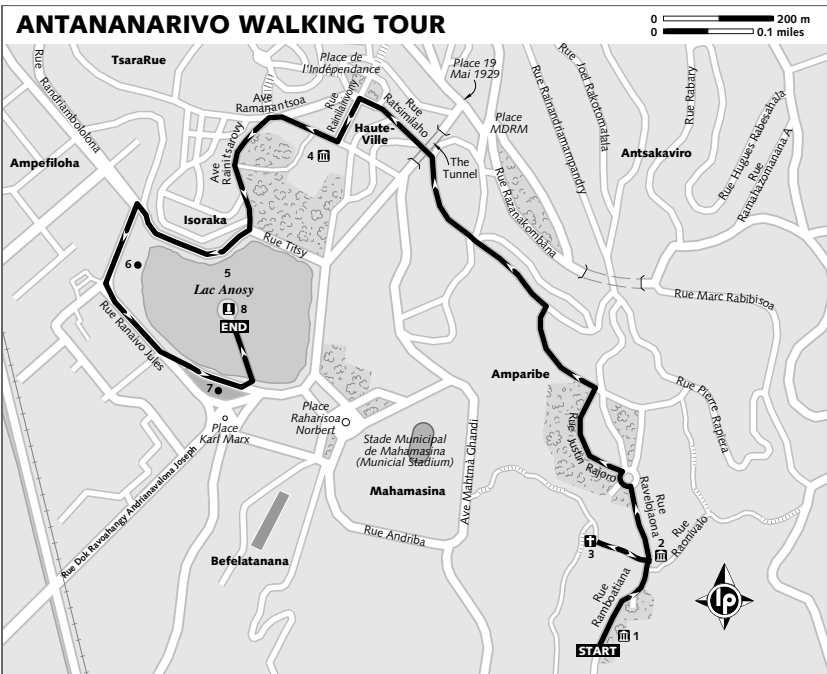
## WALKING TOUR

Tana offers numerous opportunities for interesting walks, but this one takes in many of the city's major sights (see Map p80). For details of longer walks in and around Tana, look for the useful booklet *Cheminements Touristiques et Culturels D'Antananarivo*, published by the Mission de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle, in local bookshops.

To begin your tour, hail a taxi to the starting point – the magnificent **Rova (1)** (p77). The palace is not currently open to the public, but you can take the path around the outside, with or without a guide, to explore the surrounding area.

A few hundred metres downhill from the palace, past the remaining classical pillars of the former Palais de Justice (law courts), is the **Musée Andafivaratra (2)** (opposite), housed in the magnificent palace of the former prime minister. From here, wend your way down to the twin-towered **Andohalo Cathedral (3)**, which was built on the spot where Queen Ranavalona liked to throw Christian martyrs from the cliffs. Nearby you'll find the reconstruction of Jean Laborde's house, which served as Madagascar's first French consulate.

Stroll at leisure through the lanes to reach Rue Ratsimilaho, the main artery of the lively Haute-Ville. After the pretty garden on Place de l'Indépendance, head down Rue Rainilaiarivony to have a look at the **President's Palace (4)**, with its sentry boxes painted red and green to match the Malagasy flag. Continuing down Ave Ramanantsoa and then Ave Rainitsarovy (watch out for white cattle egrets in the trees on the left), you'll reach **Lac Anosy (5)**. Turn right and circumambulate the lake, passing rows of **barbers' shops (6)** on the southern side, then end your tour with a look at the **flower market (7)** and a stroll over the causeway to the **Monument aux Morts (8)** in the centre. From here, you can once again see the Rova, perched on the hilltop in its scaffolding cage, a world away from the bustle around you.



## COURSES

As well as French and Malagasy language courses, dance lessons are a popular pastime for locals and visitors alike. Besides classes at the main cultural centres (see p74), you could try traditional and ballroom dancing at the Ministry of Culture & Tourism centre **CEMDLAC** (Map p76; 6 Ave de l'Indépendance).

## TOURS

Many tour operators here can offer city tours and day trips around Antananarivo, but **Tany Mena Tours** (Map p76; ☎ 22 326 27; tanymentours@simicro.mg; Ave de l'Indépendance) is the only company that really specialises in them. The catalogue has a whole range of fascinating themed walks and excursions with a cultural emphasis, led by genuine experts such as historians or anthropologists (some English-speaking). A half-day guided tour of Tana, taking in the palace of Ambohimanga (see p90), costs €23 per person in a group of three to five; other possibilities include craft workshops, visiting animist sacred sites and a two-day trip into the highlands (€100 per person).

For a full list of companies offering tours around Madagascar, see p285.

## SLEEPING

Antananarivo has an excellent selection of accommodation, but the best places tend to be booked solid during peak season (Christmas, summer and French school holidays), so it's a good idea to make bookings in advance. Only the top-range hotels have lifts, and many of the lower-priced places have very steep stairs. Not many establishments could be viewed as child-friendly – things such as childcare and highchairs are only available in the very upmarket hotels.

Prices for midrange and top-end hotels are often quoted in euros, but you can always pay in ariary, and sometimes in US dollars. Many smarter hotels will also take Visa credit cards. A *vignette* (tourist tax) of Ar600 to Ar4000 per night is added to all prices here.

## Budget

**Hôtel Moonlight** (Map p76; ☎ 22 268 70; hasinaherizo@yahoo.fr; Rue Rainandriampandry; r Ar13,000-30,000) Far and away the cheapest decent option

in town; the creaky wood floors and flock wallpaper simply add character to this budget stalwart. The 2nd-floor rooms are the priciest and biggest, with unimpressive private bathrooms, and there's a communal terrace. There aren't many restaurants in the surrounding area, so you'll probably want to take a taxi across town in the evenings if you stay here.

**our pick** **Hôtel Isoraka** (Map p76; ☎ 22 335 81; saka@malagasy.com; 11 Ave Ramanantsoa; r Ar18,000-40,000) Recently acquired and revamped by the owners of the Sakamanga (p82), the Isoraka remains a popular, friendly budget choice and the best value in town. The pricier rooms are arguably even nicer than the Saka's, with TV, phone, private bathroom and linen bathrobes! The only downside is its small size and lack of extra facilities such as a restaurant, hardly a hardship given its central location.

**Hôtel Le Jean Laborde** (Map p76; ☎ 22 330 45; labordehotel@hotmail.com; 3 Rue de Russie; r Ar25,000-55,000) This dim and cosy bar-restaurant is favoured by French expats for its convincing taste of home, and it does a good impersonation of a country pension, decking out its rooms in wooden floors and furniture (not to mention green walls and pink corridors). The cheaper rooms share a toilet, while the most expensive has TV, phone and even its own salon, complete with three-piece suite.

**Chez Francis** (Map p76; ☎ 22 613 65; francisvacheresse@yahoo.fr; Rue Rainandriampandry; r Ar29,000-43,000) Not far from the Moonlight, Chez Francis is split over two buildings – it's worth stretching the pennies to go for the newer pastel-painted annexe, which has tiled floors, TVs and shared balconies. Most rooms have their own shower cubicle, but toilets are shared. Meals are available by arrangement.

## Midrange

**Hôtel Shalimar** (Map p76; ☎ 22 640 03; yascom@wanadoo.mg; Rue Mahafaka; r Ar30,000-60,000; ☎) Having started life as a reputable Indian restaurant, the Shalimar has branched out (or rather, up) to offer accommodation over four floors of mostly spacious rooms with TV, Disney mirrors and the occasional nod to its Asian heritage. There's a travel agency on site and an open upstairs terrace, as well as a second, more basic branch of the restaurant near Hotel Sakamanga.

**Merina Lodge** (Map p76; ☎ 24 522 33; merinalodge@wanadoo.mg; Impasse OSTIE, off Rue Andrianary Ratanarivo; r Ar30,000-63,000) Quite transparently in-

tended to rival the Sakamanga, this endearing new establishment makes a pretty good fist of its attempt at competition, tricking out its rooms almost entirely in wood – including the bathrooms! It's quiet, friendly and a good choice, though it lacks the Saka's extra facilities. You may also get the chance to play football with local kids in the small alley that leads to it.

**Hôtel-Restaurant Shanghai** (Map p76; ☎ 22 314 72; shanghai@malagasy.com; 4 Rue Rainitovo; r Ar35,000-36,000) Uninspiring yet thoroughly acceptable for the price, this hotel in the embassy quarter is a little musty but has a nice front courtyard. The Chinese owners seem a little stressed at times, perhaps from the strains of coordinating the very reasonable restaurant (mains Ar3800 to Ar8000), where the menu features that Oriental classic, frogs' legs.

**Hôtel Île Bourbon** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 279 42; 12 Rue Benyowski; r Ar37,000) Tucked away round a corner, this eccentrically laid-out old house is run by a former resident of Réunion, giving a slightly different Indian Ocean flavour to the carpeted white rooms with their big local paintings. There's live music in the restaurant in the evenings, and creole cuisine to go with it (mains Ar8400 to Ar28,000), plus plenty of exotic rums – try the 'aphrodisiac' mixture if you're feeling frisky!

**Hôtel White Palace** (Map p76; ☎ 22 664 59; 101 Rue de Liège; r Ar37,000-59,000, apt Ar76,000; ☎) A good-value business option not far from the Anjary, with rooms divided into three categories, plus studio 'apartments' for up to three people. Book in advance to arrange airport transfers (Ar30,000). Breakfast is included.

**Anjary Hôtel** (Map p76; ☎ 22 244 09; www.anjary-hotel.com; 89 Rue de Liège; r Ar39,000; ☎) Seven storeys of smallish but comfortable Western business-style rooms, with good facilities including a travel agency, gym, sauna and massage centre, *salon de thé* and the 'exotic terrace' Indian restaurant (no alcohol). A new annexe across the road offers even more rooms and a snack bar. The slightly dubious Basse-Ville location may be off-putting for solo travellers.

**Le Karthala Guest House** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 248 95; le\_karthala@yahoo.fr; 48 Rue Andriandahifotsy; r incl breakfast Ar41,000) A very friendly, family-run B&B with a pretty garden courtyard and colourful terrace. The spacious rooms are packed with wood for maximum character, and even have funky

swing doors into the skylit bathrooms. The top-floor rooms, right under the roof, share a bathroom, though the price is the same.

**Le Cactus Vert** (Map p76; ☎ 22 624 41; leacactusvert@wanadoo.mg; 15 Rue Radama I; r Ar60,000-74,000) This rather attractive building stands out immediately from its busy Basse-Ville surroundings, and the effect is no less appealing inside, flaunting a wide palette of greens, plenty of wood and a distinctly Wild West feel (the saloon doors to the bathrooms are a great touch). There's also a handy bar and restaurant on site.

**Our pick** **Hôtel Sakamanga** (Map p76; ☎ 22 358 09; www.sakamanga.com; Rue Andrianary Ratanarivo; r Ar65,000-235,000; ☎ ☑) A perennial favourite with those in the know, the Sakamanga attracts travellers at all points on the budget scale, setting store by a friendly atmosphere, varied rooms, characterful décor and beyond-comprehensive services. The intriguingly mazy layout leads to a garden and café-bar-library, with enough cased artefacts in the corridors to open a mini museum, and the upstairs restaurant (opposite) is an institution in its own right. Some tours are on offer, although reports of these vary, or you can seek out your own group on the on-line message board, <http://sakamanga.boardin-globe.com>. Reserve well in advance, as the Saka is almost always full – as a result, it's the only vaguely cheap hotel to have a permanent gaggle of street vendors outside!

**Radama Hôtel** (Map p76; ☎ 22 319 27; radama@simicro.mg; 22 Ave Ramanantsoa; r Ar80,000; ☎ ☑) According to its brochure the Radama goes for 'charm and authenticity', and you do indeed get a sense of the Malagasy personal touch in the friendly service and polished dark-wood environment. The larger doubles, with balconies and bathtubs, are particularly good value. On the ground floor, the red-hued restaurant does a good line in local cuisine (mains Ar6000 to Ar9000), and traditional music can be arranged.

**Hôtel Raphia** (Map p76; ☎ 22 253 13; hotelraphia@wanadoo.mg; Rue Ranavalona III; s/d/tr €16/18/20, with shared bathroom €13/15/17) This family-run Haute-Ville option comprises an eccentric but appealing selection of wood-clad rooms with a traditional feel to them. Half- and full-board rates are also available, catered for in the hotel's semi-open terrace pizza restaurant to take full advantage of the hillside location.

**Karibotel** (Map p76; ☎ 22 665 54; karibotel@wanadoo.mg; 26 Ave de l'Indépendance; r €25-29) Very central

and perfectly comfortable, but not particularly exciting. The cheapest rooms share toilets, the priciest have balconies. If you're planning a wedding or other big event, ask about the Domaine Manerinerina permanent marquee, 12km from town.

**Résidence Lapasoa** (Map p76; ☎ 22 611 40; www.lapasoa.com; 15 Rue de la Réunion; s/d/ste €35/38/50) Beautifully decorated enough to have a top-end air, the spacious rooms here boast wooden floors, TV, minibar and four-poster beds. There's a very friendly, family atmosphere, and it's in a nice quiet location just next to the Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie. The Lapasoa is also a good place to get information on quality arts and crafts, which may explain why itinerant souvenir sellers tend to hang around outside. A 'family' room sleeping up to five people costs €58. The same owners run the superb Kudéta restaurant (p84) next door.

## Top End

**Our pick** **La Varangue** (Map p76; ☎ 22 273 97; varangue@simicro.mg; 17 Rue Printsy Ratsimamanga; r Ar145,000-168,000, ste Ar190,000; ☎ ☑) Tana's only genuine luxury boutique hotel, the Swiss-run Varangue is discreetly set down a steep lane next to the President's Palace. The seven spacious rooms come in two categories – the cheaper ones have modern décor, the more expensive ones are beautifully furnished in dark wood with rustic-style furniture, rich fabrics and balconies overlooking the city. Vintage cars and wooden pirogues help set the tone outside as well. Book in advance to get a room; even if you don't manage a room, the world-renowned restaurant (p84) is well worth a visit.

**Hôtel du Louvre** (Map p76; ☎ 22 390 00; www.hotel-du-louvre.com; 4 Place de l'Indépendance; r €71-105; ☎ ☑) A new and very convenient hotel next to the Shoprite supermarket in the Haute-Ville, with traditional wooden floors and Malagasy art giving way to a more modern laminate style in the rooms. Rates include breakfast, served in a pleasant open courtyard space. Jetsetters may like to note that the hotel also houses the Consulate of Monaco.

**Hôtel de France** (Map p76; ☎ 22 213 04; www.sicéh-hotels.com; 34 Ave de l'Indépendance; r incl breakfast €75-85; ☎ ☑) One of two three-star places along Ave de l'Indépendance run by the Sicéh agency, it's kitted out in uniform sub-Ikea painted fittings and pastel shades, with a good French restaurant, ground-floor café and a truly big terrace.

**Hôtel Tana Plaza** (Map p76; ☎ 22 218 65; www.sicéh-hotels.com; 2 Ave de l'Indépendance; r incl breakfast €75-100; ☎ ☑) The second Sicéh hotel is broadly similar to its sibling, with marginally nicer but smaller rooms. Both hotels are popular with package tours.

**Hôtel Colbert** (Map p76; ☎ 22 202 02; resa.colbert@wanadoo.mg; Rue Printsy Ratsimamanga; r €115-330; ☎ ☑ ☑) The bizarre maroon tower at the heart of this luxury hillside hotel belies the distinguished history of Tana's most prestigious address, originally founded as a handful of rooms above a café in 1928. A touch of colonial grandeur remains, particularly in the marble-clad lobby and the extravagant spa (p79), but the rooms don't always live up to these benchmarks – opt for the new Carayon wing, impeccably styled despite being more modern. Luckily the hotel facilities are uniformly excellent, encompassing three restaurants, two bars, a pâtisserie, business centre, travel agency, hair salon, perfume shop and a small slot-machine casino. The reception staff speak impeccable English and are a mine of information on anything and everything in Tana.

**Le Royal Palissandre** (Map p76; ☎ 22 605 60; www.hotel-palissandre.com; 13 Rue Andrianahifotsy; r incl breakfast €117-156; ☎ ☑ ☑) Another good top-end choice, up the steps behind the Analakely market, the Royal Palissandre offers a well-balanced blend of smart facilities, modern comforts and traditional style, fully kitted out with handmade rosewood furniture and balcony views. Internet access and use of the gym, spa and terrace pool are free for guests, though treatments such as massages are extra (from Ar50,000).

**Madagascar Hilton** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 260 60; madagascar.hilton.com; Rue Pierre Stibbe, Anosy; r €150-275; ☎ ☑ ☑) In a massive skyscraper just south of Lac Anosy, the Hilton offers exactly what you'd expect – smallish but comfortable rooms, business centre, travel agency, casino, spa, pâtisserie, shops, three restaurants, several bars and a nightclub. There's also a pool, gym and tennis court for the energetic, and it's one of the only hotels in the country with no-smoking rooms and full disabled access.

## EATING & DRINKING

In addition to the hotel restaurants mentioned above, Tana is well served by eateries, from cheap-and-cheerful local *hotelys* to sumptuous *salons de thé* and sublime French

temples of *gastronomie*. For a comprehensive list of restaurants, including some detailed reviews and maps, look for the *Guide des Tables Antananarivo* (Ar20,000), a handy annual mini-directory available in Tana bookshops.

## Restaurants

### MALAGASY & INDIAN OCEAN

**Impala** (Map p76; ☎ 032 04 092 67; Ave Ramanantsoa; mains Ar5000-16,000; ☎ lunch & dinner) Taking its cue from the other side of the Mozambique Channel, this brand-new 1st-floor restaurant has a distinctly African flavour in both dishes and décor. The main courses are a bit more French-tinted, though if you're inspired by the safari trappings and animal-print ceilings you could demand the 'lion's portion', a massive 500g steak!

**Le Caf'Art** (Map p76; ☎ 033 11 435 03; Rue Ranavalona III; mains Ar7000-14,000; ☎ lunch & dinner) A friendly little brick-terrace bistro in the Haute-Ville, serving pizza and Malagasy food; the best seats are in the garden courtyard overlooking the city's steep bits. Incidentally, the name is a sly French pun: it's pronounced the same as *cafard*, which means cockroach!

**Restaurant Sakamanga** (Map p76; ☎ 22 358 09; Rue Andrianary Ratanarivo; mains Ar7200-14,500; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tana's favourite hotel is also home to one of Tana's favourite restaurants, striking the perfect balance between gastro French and straightforward local cooking, with personable service to boot. Set menus may come in even cheaper than the dishes, and a lunchtime buffet is also available in the luscious garden. It may be worth reserving if you're in a group, though you can always sit in the cosy bar sampling rums until a table's free.

**Grill du Rova** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 627 24; Rue Rambaotiana, Avaradrova; mains Ar8000-15,000; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) A well-established and stylish restaurant/cabaret on the hillside just below the Rova (the clue's in the name). The menu features French and Malagasy dishes, while the cabaret showcases local jazz and traditional music (see above).

**Villa Vanille** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 205 15; Place Antanimena; mains Ar10,000-30,000; ☎ lunch & dinner) Another classy establishment outside the centre, in an old colonial villa, with nightly music performed by bands from all across the Indian Ocean islands. The cooking is similarly eclectic, though as you'd expect from the name, the

region's most famous and flavoursome orchid features heavily.

**Chez Mariette** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 216 02; 11 Rue Joel Rakotomalala; meals Ar44,000; 🍷 dinner only, by reservation) A truly unique gastronomic opportunity: superchef Mariette Andrianjaka has cooked for notables as diverse as Paloma Picasso and Prince Albert of Monaco during her long career, and has even had a collection of her recipes published by Unesco. These days she entertains guests in her magnificent 19th-century villa, preparing elaborate six-course set meals based on *haïfi* cuisine, the traditional banquets once served to Merina royalty. These might include anything from carp to eel or goose, accompanied by myriad vegetable and rice dishes. At the end of the meal, the boss herself emerges to do the rounds and explain her techniques. Advance reservation is required, preferably in groups of four or more.

## FRENCH

**Chez Sucett's** (Map p76; ☎ 22 261 00; 23 Rue Raveloary; mains from Ar5000; 🍷 lunch & dinner) From the outside, the red glow and 'Private' sign give Sucett's the air of a slightly seedy cabaret, but there's little of ill repute here: venture through the door and you'll find plenty of budget-conscious travellers and keen eaters tucking into the French and creole cuisine amid the inevitable male expats and their 'companions'. In short, it's exactly what local journalists have in mind when they call Isoraka 'Tana's Montmartre'.

**Le Petit Verdot** (Map p76; ☎ 22 392 34; 27 Rue Rahamefy; mains Ar7000-9000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat & Sun) Capturing just a little of the culinary essence of Bordeaux, this tiny red-brick bistro goes for a homely atmosphere and hearty rustic food, plus a very good selection of imported wines and cheeses.

**La Boussolle** (Map p76; ☎ 22 358 10; 21 Rue Dr Villette; mains Ar8000-11,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat & Sun) The 'Compass', an attractive, lively bar-restaurant, has funky décor and live bands on Thursdays. The restaurant serves mainly French brasserie-style dishes, while the bar whips out more prosaic snacks such as burgers and the like. Once you've finished browsing the menu, have a look round the varying art for sale on the walls.

**Le Rossini** (Map p76; ☎ 22 342 44; Ave Ramanantsoa; mains Ar8000-15,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner) You might not expect a visit to Madagascar to widen your

knowledge of France, but this rarefied dining room should at least educate your palate: it specialises in cuisine from the southwest Perigourdin region, a distinctive variant of the better-known traditions, using lots of duck and foie gras. Despite the Italian name, it's widely regarded as one of the best French restaurants in the city.

**Le Lounge'Art** (Map p76; ☎ 22 612 42; Rue des 77 Parlementaires Français; mains Ar10,000-17,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Perfect for indecisive diners, the menu here only features a handful of options, changing daily according to seasonal produce and whim. The local chefs have been well-schooled in European techniques by the French owners, and can cater for individual demands (if you ask nicely, of course). On a hot day, wander down the long leafy 'tunnel' for a drink on the agreeable front terrace.

**Kudéta** (Map p76; ☎ 22 281 54; 15 Rue de la Réunion; Ar11,800-20,000; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Playing on the region's reputation for political instability may not be very PC, but it really would take a *coup d'état* to unseat this superbly stylish bar-restaurant from its position at the pinnacle of the Tana eating scene. The menu makes imaginative use of local ingredients, creating a sophisticated fusion cuisine that suits the chic ethnic décor perfectly and tastes sensational too. The sleek dining room is almost always packed with fashionable folk, so book ahead at weekends.

**our pick La Varangue** (Map p76; ☎ 22 273 97; varangue@simicro.mg; 17 Rue Printsy Ratsimamanga; mains Ar17,000-26,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Currently the best address in the city for real gourmet cuisine, La Varangue has achieved a fantastic reputation thanks to kitchen maestro (and chocolate specialist) Lalaina Ravelomanana, who was recently voted among the world's top five chefs. The menu is concise but painstakingly constructed, and features a great-value three-course set meal at Ar25,000, not to mention a Ar66,000 gastronomic taster menu that we're reliably informed would cost you five times as much anywhere in Europe. Light music is played in the elegant dining room, or you can venture out onto the terrace, which overlooks the hotel's charming garden. La Varangue is a near-mandatory Tana dining experience.

## MEDITERRANEAN & INTERNATIONAL

**Le Chalet des Roses** (Map p76; ☎ 22 642 33; 13 Rue Rabary; grills Ar6000-12,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun)

Down by the embassy district, this is a sunny, pretty balcony bistro serving unambitious but tasty pizza, pasta and salads.

**Nerone** (Map p76; ☎ 22 231 18; Rue Ranavalona III; mains Ar8500-15,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) A very high-quality restaurant in the Haute-Ville, with authentic specials, exquisite pasta, good wine and mock-Roman décor. It's probably the best Italian experience you'll have in Madagascar, even if your tastes are more De Niro than Nero.

**L'Indigo** (Map p76; ☎ 22 220 52; Rue Raveloary; mains Ar9000-15,500; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The theme's Tex-Mex, the music's Latin, the owner's Algerian and the menu hits everything from tacos to teriyaki, but this colourful restaurant seems none the worse for its ethnic identity crisis, attracting a multinational clientele. In fact the selection of world cuisine is among its high points: where else could you find souvlaki, meze, Jamaican curry and tequila prawns all on the same table?

**Le Sud** (Map p76; ☎ 22 310 22; 23 Rue Dr Villette; mains Ar10,000-15,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner) 'The South' here refers not to the Med, which does influence the menu, but to the southern region of Madagascar itself, which provides much of the model for the interior design. If eating modern international cuisine in a replica spiny desert seems just too weird, this orangey-red restaurant-grill-café-concert has live music most evenings to distract you.

## ASIAN

**Dun Huang** (Map p76; ☎ 22 669 65; 1 Rue James Adrianisa; mains Ar4000-10,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner) An unremarkable but handy Chinese eatery just off Ave de l'Indépendance, good for the usual soups and standards.

**Grand Orient** (Map p76; ☎ 22 202 88; 4 Place Ambiky; mains Ar4000-12,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The oldest Chinese restaurant in town, near the station, combines Chinese and Malagasy cooking in relatively upmarket surroundings, rising above the bustle outside with true zen poise.

**Arirang** (Map p76; ☎ 24 271 33; Ave Ramanantsoa; mains Ar5000-10,000; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Korean cuisine makes its Malagasy debut, apparently with some success given the numbers of Seoul brothers who frequent this bright dining room. The menu looks thoroughly authentic, a perfect excuse to experiment with lesser-known dishes such as *sensun gas*, *dongas* or a two-person *kimchi*.

## Cafés & Salons de Thé

Tana's many French-style patisseries, cafés and *salons de thé* serve pastries, cream cakes, hot drinks, breakfasts and, in many cases, wonderful ice cream.

**Cookie Shop** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 032 07 142 99; Ave Rainizanabolone; snacks from Ar100; 🍷 breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Strategically sited near the American cultural centre, this bright, sparky café does its bit for the international community by furnishing bagels and sweet treats to a loyal following of cookie-crunchier US expats, aid workers and Peace Corps volunteers.

**Blanche Neige** (Map p76; ☎ 22 206 59; 15 Ave de l'Indépendance; cakes from Ar400; 🍷 breakfast Tue-Sun) 'Snow White' is one of central Tana's most popular cafés, whether you want a hearty set breakfast (Ar2700 to Ar4800), cake, ice cream or a Belgian waffle.

**Honey Salon de Thé** (Map p76; ☎ 22 621 67; 13 Ave de l'Indépendance; cakes from Ar500; 🍷 breakfast Wed-Mon) Just next door to Blanche Neige, sweet sweet Honey puts more emphasis on its patisserie selection, presenting its treats almost as beautifully as a jewellery store.

**Pâtisserie Colbert** (Map p76; Hôtel Colbert, Rue Printsy Ratsimamanga; cakes from Ar2000; 🍷 breakfast & lunch) The Colbert's lavish patisserie is the last word in sumptuous confectionery – listen hard and you'll hear the forlorn cries of abandoned diets.

## Quick Eats

The cheapest meals in town are provided by various food stalls around town, which serve rice with chicken or zebu, samosas, *soipe chinoise* (Chinese noodle soup), *mi sao* (stir-fried noodles) and other local dishes from around Ar300 per portion; try the western end of Ave Ramanantsoa or around the market at Analakely. Get there early – many places stop serving by about 8pm.

**Tropique Snack** (Map p76; Ave 26 Juin 1960; dishes from Ar1500; 🍷 breakfast & lunch) Opposite the Analakely market, this little canteen serves up all the usuals, with plenty of mirrors for those who like to watch themselves eat.

**Saka Express** (Map p76; ☎ 24 334 39; Rue Andrianary Ratanarivo; mains Ar2700-10,000; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch & dinner Sun) The Hôtel Sakamanga's snack cafeteria and takeaway outlet specialises in pizza and sandwiches.

**Resto-Snack Zédéa** (Map p76; ☎ 032 02 084 73; Ave Rabezavana; mains Ar3500-5000; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) An unusually intimate café in the busy market



area, wooing foreigners as much as locals with a comprehensive menu of Malagasy, Western and 'exotic' dishes such as Thai pork.

**Mad'Delices** (Map p76; ☎ 22 226 41; 28 Ave Grandidier; dishes Ar3600-5000; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Right opposite the Hotel Isoraka, this is a convenient spot for a fresh-baked breakfast, and also turns out pizza, steak and a variety of local and European dishes the rest of the day.

**Buffet du Jardin** (Map p76; ☎ 22 338 87; Place de l'Indépendance) Now under new management, this long-standing snack stop and bar has undergone substantial renovation, but will have to work to stay the city's favourite (ie only) 24-hour eatery.

### Self-Catering

Antananarivo has several well-stacked supermarkets and plenty of smaller food shops and kiosks. There are also a handful of hypermarkets in the outer suburbs, such as the vast Score Digue (off Map pp72-3) to the north of town. You can pick up cheaper vegetables, meat and fish at the Analakely market (Map p76); look out for the little white 'Sahamadio' jeeps selling homemade condiments, preserves and other local produce.

**Shoprite** Analakely (Map p76; ☎ 22 360 89; Ave Andrianampoinimerina); Haute-Ville (Map p76; ☎ 22 357 09; Rue Ratsimilaho; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Reliable central supermarket outlets stocking mainly imported goods.

**TAF le Gourmet** (Map p76; ☎ 22 215 42; Rue Patrice Lumumba) Established in 1945, this is a smart shop for locally produced coffee and tea and other fancy goods such as chocolate.

**Epicierie Hediard** (Map p76; ☎ 22 283 70; 14 Rue Jean Jaurès) This prestige Parisian deli sells the finest luxury imported goods, from tea to wine and cheese, and holds regular free tastings in its small café section.

### ENTERTAINMENT

To find out what is going on and where, buy any of the three national daily newspapers, *Midi Madagasikara*, *Madagascar Tribune* and *L'Express de Madagascar*, all of which have advertisements for upcoming events, particularly in the Friday issue. Posters around town also give plenty of notice of forthcoming concerts.

### Hira Gasy

The traditional Malagasy performance of acrobatics, music and speeches, *hira gasy* (p36) events are held most Sunday afternoons in the

villages around Antananarivo. Check newspapers for details.

### Music & Theatre

**Centre Culturel Albert Camus** (CCAC; Map p76; ☎ 22 213 75; 14 Ave de l'Indépendance) Antananarivo's foremost cultural venue holds regular concerts, theatre events, dance performances, art exhibitions and film screenings.

**Théâtre Municipal** (Teatro Munisipaly; Map pp72-3; 4 Rue Hector Berlioz) This old theatre, in the Isotry district southwest of the train station, holds Malagasy theatre and dance performances, as well as some concerts.

**Théâtre de Verdure Antsahamanitra** (Map p76; Ave Rainitsarovy) On the northeastern edge of the lake, the amphitheatre here has occasional pop concerts, known as *spectacles*, featuring artists from the Malagasy charts. Tickets are generally very cheap.

**Grill du Roava** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 627 24; Rue Ramboantiana, Avaradrova) This popular restaurant has regular music recitals, including a piano bar on Friday, traditional performances from noon to sunset every Sunday, and improvised musical soirées on the first and third Wednesday of each month.

**Hôtel Le Glacier** (Map p76; ☎ 22 202 60; Ave 26 Juin 1960) The slightly disreputable bar here has cabaret, bands and traditional music performances at weekends, just don't mind the prostitutes that frequent the establishment.

A number of old cinemas also sometimes serve as gig venues; the **Ritz** (Map p76; Rue Paul Dussac & Ave 26 Juin 1960) is the largest.

### Nightclubs

Tana has a reasonable selection of nightclubs, most of which start late and stay open as long as there's a crowd; admission may be charged at weekends. Music policy is a familiar mix of commercial dance, US hip-hop and R&B, Malagasy chart hits and French soft-rock anthems. Many places are packed with prostitutes, so unaccompanied guys in particular can expect a bit of unsolicited attention.

**Pandora Station** (Map p76; ☎ 22 377 48; Rue Rabobalahy; 🍴 Tue-Sun) Enter through the giant mouth to access this surreal UV-saturated underworld of quasi-Aztec décor, trouser-wearing stools and strange-brand spirits. Snacks and pizzas are also served.

**Le Bus** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 691 00; Ave Rainizanabolone; admission Ar5000; 🍴 from 10.30pm Thu-Sat) Tana's biggest, flashiest club space, designed in a

modern style with the DJ spinning recent tunes from his lofty winged booth above the dance floor.

**Cohiba Club** (Map pp72-3; Madagascar Hilton, Rue Pierre Stibbe, Anosy; admission Ar10,000; 🍴 from 10pm Thu-Sat) The Hilton's house nightclub has an eclectic music policy, including Indian and other theme nights, though high prices make it a bit of a posing palace.

**Guru Club** (Map p76; ☎ 24 301 61; Rue Ramelina; 🍴 from 6pm) More of a lounge feel than the bigger clubs, with dance music and occasional fashion nights.

**Bar Mojo** (Map p76; ☎ 22 254 59; Rue Rakotomahefa; 🍴 from 6pm) A finger-snappingly cool music space with regular poetry-slam and reggae-dancehall nights amid the DJs and bands.

### SHOPPING

**Marché Artisanale de La Digue** (off Map pp72-3; La Digue; 🍴 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) The most popular place to pick up art and crafts is the Marché Artisanale in the suburb of La Digue, about 3km out of town on a bend in the Ivato airport road. Artisans and middlemen from all over the country sell their products here; popular souvenirs include embroidered tablecloths, brightly coloured raffia baskets, recycled metal models, wooden carvings and of course big bundles of vanilla. Bargaining is essential – bring your hardest nose! A taxi (around Ar14,000) is the easiest way to get here and back with your purchases.

**Gemstone Market** (Marché des Pierres; Map p76; Gare de Soarano; 🍴 Sat & Sun twice monthly) If you're looking to buy precious stones, this regular outdoor market in the train-station parking lot brings together suppliers from around the island in a secure environment, with verifiable stones and export licensing available on site.

For trekking, camping gear and the like, try **CS Events** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 413 82; www.csevents-madagascar.com; Rte du Mausolée, Andrainarivo), near the eastern taxi-brousse station, which has a wide selection of international branded products.

You will find plenty of arts, crafts, T-shirts, coffee and spices in the souvenir shops in central Tana. Good outlets include the following:

**Baobab Company** (Map p76; ☎ 22 691 08; Rue Ranavalona III) Universally popular T-shirts and clothes; there's another branch on Rue Andrianary Ratianarivo.

**Le Flamant Rose** (Map p76; ☎ 22 557 76; 45 Ave de l'Indépendance; 🍴 9am-6pm) Craft souvenirs, raffia items and embroidery.

**Les Jocondes** (Map p76; ☎ 22 384 68; Rue Andrianary Ratianarivo; 🍴 9am-5pm) Elegant wooden sculptures by resident French artist Jean-Jacques Teiten.

**Roses & Baobab** (Map p76; ☎ 24 104 25; Rue des 77 Parlementaires Français; 🍴 9am-6pm) Local paintings and wood carvings, plus *salon de thé*.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Air

For details of flights from Ivato airport, see p276 for international routes and p280 for domestic services. The following airlines have offices in Tana:

**Air Austral/Air Mauritius** (ARIO; Map p76; ☎ 22 359 90; www.airaustral.com; Rue des 77 Parlementaires Français)

**Air France** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 23 230 01; www.airfrance.com; Tour Zital, Rte des Hydrocarbures, Ankorondrano)

**Air Madagascar** (Map p76; ☎ 22 222 22; www.airmadagascar.com; 31 Ave de l'Indépendance)

**Corsair** (Map p76; ☎ 22 633 36; www.corsair.fr; 1 Rue Rainitovo Antsahavola)

**Interair** (Map pp72-3; ☎ 22 224 06; www.interair.co.za; Madagascar Hilton, Rue Pierre Stibbe, Anosy)

#### Bus

**MadaBus** (Map p76; ☎ 24 222 72; www.madabus.com; Rue Ramandriamapandry) is an innovative new concern that runs comfortable hop-on hop-off services along Madagascar's principal tourist routes, the RN7 (Route du Sud) to Toliara (Ar135,000) and the eastern road to Tamatave (Ar68,000), with optional activities, connections to destinations such as Île Sainte Marie, and complete tour packages also available. Buses run three times weekly on each route from April to January; tickets are valid for two months. The Tana staff speak good English and are incredibly helpful for all kinds of queries.

### Car & Motorcycle

Car-rental agencies in Tana all handle rentals for use throughout the country, and drivers are generally obligatory. Rates shown are for short hires with unlimited mileage, not including petrol.

**Budget** (Map p76; ☎ 22 611 11; budget.rent\_a\_car@simicro.mg; 4 Ave de l'Indépendance; per day from Ar106,000)

**Hertz** (Map p76; ☎ 22 229 61; somada@sicam.mg; 17 Rue Rabefiraisana; per day from Ar107,380)

**Sixt** (Map p76; ☎ 22 621 50; sixtintermad@simicro.mg; 2 bis Rue Rahamefy; per day from Ar102,190) Self-drive only.

**Transpost** (Map p76; ☎ 22 302 27; Rue Ratsimilaho; 4WD per day from Ar115,000) Good-value agency run by the post office.

You can also hire cars through the larger hotels in Tana, and through most of the tour operators listed on p285. See p282 for general information on car rentals and rates.

### Taxi-Brousse

Taxis-brousses leave from Tana to almost everywhere in Madagascar; for most regional destinations you can just turn up and be on a bus within an hour or so. Check times if you plan to take one of the daily connections to Mahajanga or Toliara, or any other long-distance national route. For more details, see the specific destination chapters.

There are four main taxi-brousse stations (*gares routières*), all crammed chaotically with minibuses, cars and coaches. A taxi to any of them should cost around Ar6000.

**Eastern taxi-brousse station** (Gare Routière de l'Est; off Map pp72-3; Ampasampito) About 3.5km to the north-east of the town centre. Taxis-brousses and *taxis-be* (big taxis) to Lac Mantasoa (Ar4000) and Moramanga (Ar6000).

**Northern taxi-brousse station** (Gare Routière du Nord; Map pp72-3; Ambodivona) About 2km northeast of the city centre, this station has transport to Toamasina (Ar20,000), Mahajanga (Ar32,000) and Diego Suarez (Ar73,000).

**Southern taxi-brousse station** (Gare Routière du Sud; Map pp72-3; Anosibe) About 1.5km southwest of Lac Anosy. Provides transport to all points south, as well

as some points on the east and west coasts. There are regular departures to Antsirabe (Ar10000), Fianarantsoa (Ar21,000), Morondava (Ar32,000), Manakara (Ar36,000), Toliara (Ar38,000) and Fort Dauphin (Ar78,000).

**Western taxi-brousse station** (Gare Routière de l'Ouest; Map pp72-3; Antanimena) About 300m north of Soarano train station. Has taxis-brousses to Ivato (Ar15,000) and the airport.

### Train

There are no passenger trains presently operating from Antananarivo's Gare de Soarano. However, plans to reopen the line to Toamasina via Andasibe appear to be progressing gradually, so enquire when you arrive.

### GETTING AROUND

Most restaurants and hotels are within a short distance of each other, so it's usually no problem to walk, except at night, when it's a good idea to take a taxi if you're going any distance. For places in the suburbs, a taxi is almost invariably the easiest option.

### To/From the Airport

Ivato airport is 12km from the city centre. Taxis to or from the city centre should cost around Ar20,000, although this depends on the time of day and your bargaining skills – ignore the 'official' price lists brandished by drivers at arrivals! A taxi-brousse from Ivato village, just outside the airport, costs Ar3000 to town, but don't do this at night – it's not safe. The taxi-brousse station is about 2km

from the airport, and the taxis-brousses come into the western taxi-brousse station (see opposite).

### Bus

A few large buses and dozens of minibuses meander around Antananarivo and the outlying suburbs; the standard fare is Ar400. Most begin and end around Ave de l'Indépendance in the centre of town; they'll only stop at official bus stops, though it's not always obvious where these are. Try to avoid the peak periods, from around 7am to 8.30am and 5pm to 6.30pm. As in any crowded setting, beware of pickpockets in the crush. Given the traffic and narrow, steep roads, it is often quicker to walk to places nearby. It's generally much easier to take a taxi if you don't know the area in which your destination is located.

### Car & Motorcycle

Hiring a car to drive yourself around Antananarivo's traffic chaos is very nerve-wracking, and it's unlikely to be worth the hassle because of the relatively high risk of damage to the vehicle through minor accidents or vandalism.

For a listing of some rental agencies in the capital, see p87.

### Taxi

At times there appear to be more taxis than people on the streets of Antananarivo, so you will never have much difficulty finding one, even late at night. The ubiquitous Citroën 2CVs and Renault 4s tend to be cheaper than normal sedans. Taxis caught outside upmarket hotels are the most expensive. Fares are negotiable, so ask at your hotel for the going rate, and always agree on the price before getting in the car; trips around town should cost Ar3000 to Ar6000, often depending on whether the journey is downhill or uphill! Night prices are more expensive.

## AROUND ANTANANARIVO

The highlands around Antananarivo are often ignored by travellers pushing on to other regions, but the whole area is perfect day-trip country if you have a bit of time to spare. Keen cyclists could easily tour all of the 12 sacred hills surrounding the city, and even a brief

excursion offers plenty of spectacular views and an insight into the history and culture of the Merina people.

### IVATO

About 13km from Antananarivo is the village-suburb of Ivato, where the international airport is located. If you're staying here or killing time between flights, pay a visit to the newly revamped **Croq Farm** (☎ 22 030 71; www.reptel.mg; admission Ar6000; ☎ 9am-5pm), a commercial breeding and trading enterprise that offers the chance to see various species of lemur, chameleons and even the rare fossa, Madagascar's biggest predator, alongside the enormous resident crocodiles. If you're feeling guilty about dining on croc in the park restaurant or eyeing that scaly handbag in the shop, you can buy a nice lump of meat and help feed the hand that bites you... The park's about 3km from the airport; a taxi costs around Ar8000 return.

### Sleeping & Eating

If you want to avoid paying taxi fares to and from the city, there are some modest hotels in and around Ivato, most offering free airport transfers for guests.

**Le Manoir Rouge** (☎ 24 576 96; www.manoirrouge.com; dm Ar10,000, r Ar21,000-30,000) It's almost worth packing up early just to stay a night or two at this amiable backpacker-friendly guest-house, a scant 700m from the airport. The varied rooms (most with shared bathroom) sleep up to six people, or 16 in the dorm, and there's a grassy garden where you can camp for Ar5000. Excellent meals and bike hire are available, and the brisk owner can help with all sorts of inquiries, particularly regarding local excursions.

**Auberge du Cheval Blanc** (☎ 22 446 46; www.cheval-blanc-madagascar.com; r Ar32,000; ☎) The white rooms here are quite plain, but it's a clean, smart establishment perfectly placed for the airport. There's a restaurant and a pretty garden, and it takes credit cards (5% fee).

### Getting There & Away

A taxi from the airport to Ivato will cost Ar10,000 and from Ivato village to Antananarivo should be around Ar15,000. Taxis-brousses into Antananarivo leave every 20 minutes from the Ivato taxi-brousse station and cost Ar4000, or you may be able to grab a minibus along the main road for Ar500.

### THE MERINA

The region surrounding Antananarivo is known as Imerina (Land of the Merina Tribe). Today the Merina tend to be among the most well-educated and Westernised of the Malagasy tribes. They are also among the most Christianised, though great importance is still placed on *Famadihana*: traditional reburial ceremonies (see p37).

Merina hierarchy is based on a three-tier caste system, largely dependent on skin colour. The *andriana*, or nobles (generally fairer-skinned and with pronounced Asiatic rather than African features, reflecting their Indonesian ancestry), comprise the upper echelon, while the *hova*, or commoners, make up the middle class. The remainder – descendants of former slaves – are the *andevo* (workers), although this term is now generally avoided for tact's sake.

The first Merina kingdoms were established around the 16th century, and by the late 19th century the Merina were the dominant tribe in Madagascar. Ordinary Merina citizens customarily worked as administrators, shopkeepers, teachers and traders. Their position was enhanced by the choice of Antananarivo as the seat of the French colonial government, and by the establishment of an education system there.

Today, the Merina still fill many of the same jobs, and remain at the forefront of public life: on his election in 2002, President Marc Ravalomanana became the first Merina national leader since the abolition of the monarchy.

## ILAFY

Originally called Ambohitrahanga, Ilafy was founded around the turn of the 17th century on a sacred hilltop, and was used as a country residence by the Merina royal family. The wooden residence was redesigned in the 1830s by Ranavalona I and was used as a hunting lodge by Radama II, who is buried in a modest tomb in the small grounds. It is now an **ethnographic museum** (admission Ar3000; ☎: 9am–noon & 2–5pm Tue–Sun) illustrating tribal life around Madagascar, with exhibits including model tombs, hunting and fishing tools, modern wooden carvings and information about magic and religious rituals.

Ilafy lies 12km from Antananarivo just east of the road leading to Ambohimanga. To get there from Antananarivo, either take a taxi or find a taxi-brousse headed for Ambohimanga from the eastern taxi-brousse station. Some taxis aren't able to make it up the steep dirt road to the museum, so you may need to walk the last stretch. Minibus No 192 from Tana (Ar400) stops 1km from the residence.

## AMBOHIMANGA

Ambohimanga ('blue hill' or 'beautiful hill') was the original capital of the Merina royal family. Even after the seat of government was shifted to Antananarivo for political reasons, Ambohimanga remained a sacred site, and was off-limits to foreigners for many years. The entire hill was Unesco-listed in 2001 as 'the most significant symbol of the cultural identity of the people of Madagascar'.

The entrance to Ambohimanga village is marked by a large traditional gateway, one of the seven gateways to the eyrie-like hilltop. To one side is a large, flat, round stone. At the first sign of threat to the village, the stone would be rolled by up to 40 slaves, sealing off the gate.

## Sights

A few hundred metres uphill from Ambohimanga village is the **Rova**, the fortress-palace of the all-powerful Merina king Andrianampoinimerina. These days it's still under renovation and closed to visitors but walks in the surrounding forest are possible, as is imagining the former grandeur of the palace.

Slaves were once sacrificed on the rock inside the palace's entrance, and the many pilgrims who come to ask the blessings of

the royal ancestors sometimes still slaughter animals in the same spot. The fortress was constructed using cement made from egg whites – 16 million eggs were required to build the outer wall alone. Inside the wall stands the wooden summer palace of the queens of Madagascar, constructed by the French engineer Jean Laborde in 1870. It's been beautifully restored and painted in blue and red, and has original European-style furniture inside. The dining room is lined with mirrors, which allowed the queen to check that no-one was sneakily poisoning her food.

Next door, in a striking contrast to the elegance of its neighbour, is the blackened wood hut that was the pre-colonial king's palace, dating from 1788. The central pole is made from a single trunk of sacred *pali-sandre* (rosewood), which was reportedly carried from the east coast by 2000 slaves, 100 of whom died in the process. The top of the pole is carved to show a pair of women's breasts, a symbol of the king's polygamy and thus power. Behind it are the open-air baths where the king performed his royal ablutions once a year, in the company of his 12 wives and diverse honoured guests. Afterwards his bathwater was considered sacred and was delivered to waiting supplicants.

Follow the steps round past the palace compound for amazing views back towards Tana. On your way back out, look out for the *piere griffée* (scratched stone), once used for legal proceedings, oaths of allegiance and a form of trial by ordeal involving bull's blood.

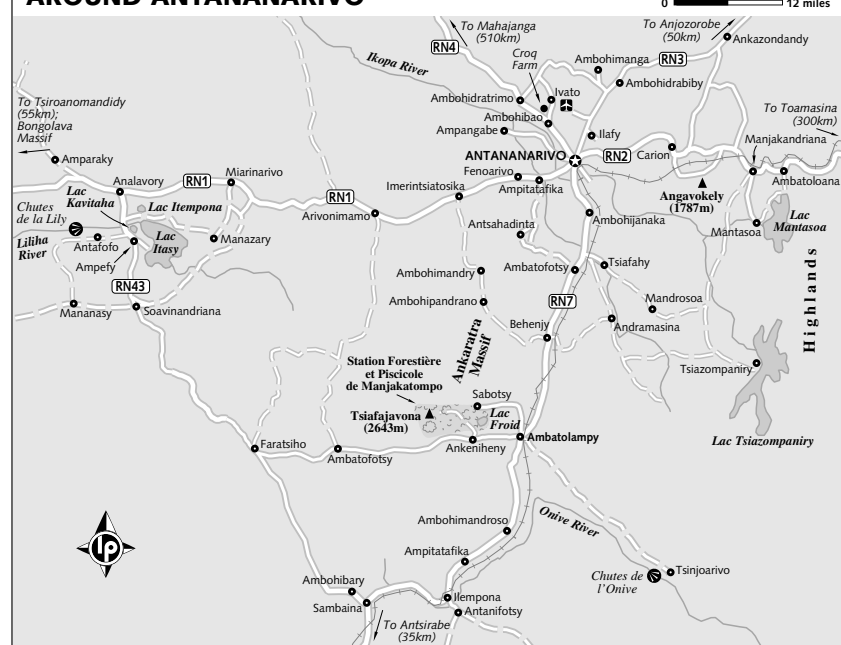
## Getting There & Away

Ambohimanga is 21km north of Antananarivo, and easily visited as a day trip. Taxi-brousses leave throughout the day from the eastern taxi-brousse station (Ar600, one hour). From the village, you'll need to walk 1km up the hill to the Rova. Charter taxis from Antananarivo cost around Ar50,000 for the return trip, including a visit to Ilafy and waiting time.

## ANJOZOROBE

Few tourists venture into this northeastern corner of the highlands, 90km from Tana, but now there's at least one good reason to explore it: **Soa Camp** (☎ in Antananarivo 22 530 70; www.boogie-pilgrim.net; packages from Ar25,500 per person), a simple but comfortable tented eco-camp set in a small private reserve in the middle of the

## AROUND ANTANANARIVO



66,500-hectare Anjozorobe forest corridor. The area is a major biodiversity hotspot, and one of the biggest surviving swathes of rainforest in the plateau region. As well as forest walks and mountain biking, the camp works with **Mad'Arbres** (☎ in Antananarivo 22 417 54; www.madarbres.com) to offer tree-climbing activities, designed to awaken your inner lemur... Bookings are through Boogie Pilgrim in Antananarivo (see p285).

## LAC MANTASOA

This 2000-hectare artificial lake, which was built in 1837, is a good place for fishing, sailing and picnicking, and has become a popular weekend retreat for Antananarivo residents.

In 1833, three years before the surrounding land was flooded, the Frenchman Jean Laborde built a country palace for Queen Ranavalona I, as well as carpentry and gunsmith shops, a munitions factory, an iron forge and a foundry. The primary aim was to supply the monarch with swords, arms and ammunition. Most of this now lies underwater, but Laborde's **home** and his **grave** in the

local cemetery can still be seen, along with the closed **munitions factory**.

Mantasoa village lies about 60km east of Antananarivo, about an hour south of the RN2. The lake lies around 3km southeast of Mantasoa village; follow the main path through the village.

Direct taxi-brousses go from Antananarivo's eastern station to Mantasoa village (about Ar4000). Start early from Antananarivo for a day trip, and leave the lake by about 2pm.

## ANTSAHADINTA

Antsahadinta (Forest of Leeches), founded by King Andriamangarira in 1725, is one of the most remote and best preserved hilltop villages around Antananarivo. The **Rova**, or royal precincts, contain several terraced tombs and a well-maintained garden. As you enter the settlement, the large tomb on your right belongs to Queen Rabodozafimanjaka, one of King Andrianampoinimerina's 12 wives. Accused of disloyalty, she had to undergo an ordeal with tanguin, a strong poison, and no one today is certain whether she survived it.

There is a small **museum** near the tomb that explains the whole story (in French).

Antsahadinta is 14km southwest of Antananarivo. As the road is in bad condition and public transport is scarce, the best options are to walk or hire a vehicle.

### AMBATOLAMPY & AROUND

A charming and very typical plateau town, Ambatolampy lies on both the RN7 and the railway line, 68km south of Antananarivo. The surrounding area, including the forestry station at **Manjakatampo** (admission Ar5000), is a good place to do some walking and bird-watching among the picturesque forests and hills of the Ankaratra Massif.

About 2km south of the town centre and 1km east of the main road, the **Musée de la Nature** (☎ 42 492 64; admission Ar5000; 🕒 8am-5pm) has an extensive collection of butterflies and insects.

**Manja Ranch** (☎ 033 11 993 70; bijouxline@yahoo.fr; r Ar10,000, bungalows Ar25,000) has pretty rooms and a peaceful setting just south of town near the museum. You can camp here for free, but you must eat at the restaurant. The ranch is about 1km east of the main road and is signposted. There are sometimes horses for hire to explore the surrounding area.

Camping is possible at Manjakatampo with your own tent and supplies.

To get to Manjakatampo, taxis-brousses from Ambatolampy to Ankeniheny, 1km from the station entrance, make the trip Monday, Wednesday and Thursday only (Ar8000).

It's possible to hire a local driver to take you here for around Ar15,000 and a day's notice in advance.

### LAC ITASY & AROUND

Lac Itasy (45 sq km) was formed when the valley surrounding it was blocked by lava flow about 8000 years ago. Although the area has been completely deforested and none of the original vegetation remains, the volcanic domes that rise above the landscape have a certain beauty of their own. Itasy has been declared a site of interest by the WWF, and a large area of land has been allocated for research into bird species.

There are good possibilities for hiking around the lakeshore (except in the boggy south), but crocodiles and bilharzia make swimming a bad idea. The crater lake of **Lac Andranotoraha**, about 5km south of Ampefy, is also alleged to contain a Loch Ness-style monster!

About 5km west of Ampefy, in the village of **Antafofo**, the Liliha River plunges more than 20m. In French, the falls are known as the **Chutes de la Lily**.

Lac Itasy lies near the village of Ampefy, 120km west of Antananarivo and south of Analavory (which lies along the RN1). To get here, take a taxi-brousse headed for Tsiroanomandidy from Antananarivo and get off in Analavory. From there, wait for another taxi-brousse heading south, or hitch or walk south along the RN43 for about 7km to Ampefy.