



The Islands of the Moon

COMOROS



11 days

11 - 21 July 2023

English speaking tour leader

The 'unforgettable' of the trip:

- The **Moheli Island Marine Park**, an unspoilt paradise
- See turtle egg-laying and hatching on the beaches of **Itsamia**
- **Fishing villages** and **ylang-ylang plantations**
- The natural wonders and deserted beaches of **Grande Comore**
- Trekking up to the **Karthala volcano**, more than 2,300 metres high
- The medinas and mosques of **Moroni** and **Icni**, vestiges of the Islamic sultanate



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Discovering the 'islands of the moon

Lost between the coasts of Tanzania and those of northern Madagascar, the three islands of the Comoros (four with Mayotte remaining French) make up one of the wildest archipelagos less frequented by international tourism, nestling in the paradisiacal waters of the Indian Ocean.

Grande Comore, Anjouan and Moheli are volcanic islands. They have all the ingredients to become a tourist destination of excellence, but they still present themselves as a small, unexplored natural Eden of crystal-clear sea and lush land, inhabited by a friendly population, very attached to their traditions and strongly Islamicised, whose origins are a meticulous kaleidoscope of African (Bantu, Swahili, Malagasy) and Arab, but also Indo-Eastern cultural influences.

The 'Islands of the Moon', as they are called by the locals according to Arab tradition, each have their own special characteristics that make them unique in the world. Amidst the paradisiacal beaches and vast tropical plantations, the echoes of epic pirates and ancient sultanates resonate, while the French colonial presence is felt in the language spoken, although the local Shikomor, Malagasy and Arabic are more widespread. The daily life of Comorians can be encountered in the markets of the capital Moroni in Grande Comore and of Fomboni in Moheli, or on the traditional djahazi boats of fishermen, among the women who traffic with fillets on the beaches or in the fields of the hinterland, while the most heartfelt traditions of this people can be observed among the mosques, within the four walls of the home that accommodate the family hierarchy and, above all, during the 'Arabian Nights' of the Grands Mariés, wedding feasts that give access to the highest social ranks, for which years of preparation and savings are required.

If the heart of Grande Comore is dominated by the 2,360 metres of the mysterious active volcano of Karthala, with its caldera of dark stratified lava that attracts scholars from all over the world, the rest of the island is characterised by explosive vegetation and beaches of incredible wild beauty. An archipelago of primary forests, coffee and essence plantations (including ylang-ylang, a prized inflorescence from which the essential oil that forms the basis of Chanel No. 5 perfume is extracted), white beaches fringed with coconut palms and volcanic creeks, where ancient salt lake calderas are embedded, the Comoros open onto a turquoise sea, inhabited by sea turtles, whales and explosive underwater life, especially in the wild and virgin Moheli, whose fauna of lemurs and endemic bats has attracted the interest of UNESCO, and which was the seat of a last, all-female sultanate.

It's a paradise that preserves intact its primordial charm, primeval nature and deserted beaches that would make the most famous international tourist destinations pale in comparison, yet still undiscovered.



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Day 1: Thursday 11 July

Outward flight/Moroni (HAH)

Flight to Moroni.

Day 2: Friday 12 July

Grande Comore (Moroni)

Arrival in Moroni, clearance of the formalities and meeting with the Kanaga Africa Tours staff. We are on the nation's largest island, GRANDE COMORE (Ngazidja), in a volcanic archipelago off the east coast of Africa, in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean and Mozambique Channel, surrounded by beaches and lava flows with its still active volcano. Around the port and medina of the capital, Moroni, there are carved gates and a historic columned mosque, reminding us of the islands' Arab heritage. Transfer to Al Camar Lodge or similar, time to relax. Dinner and overnight stay in the hotel, in double rooms with services.

Day 3: Saturday 13 July

Grande Comore/Flight/Moheli

Breakfast at the hotel and transfer to the airport* in time to catch your flight to MOHELI, the UNESCO World Heritage Island, to discover coral reefs, spot lemurs, whales, manta rays and turtles. Arrival at Mohéli airport and transfer by scenic route to Laka Lodge. Lunch in Moroni or Fomboni depending on flight time. Depending on the time of arrival, a stop** can be made at the village of Miringoni and its waterfall, which is only a 15-minute walk from the road, where a large natural pool of clear water awaits us, and where we can relax on the rocks and watch the endless stream of water emerge from the forest and cascade sparkling downwards. Accommodation at Laka Lodge or similar, dinner and overnight in a double bungalow with en-suite facilities.

*Depending on the schedule of the domestic flight, visits to Grand Comoros in the morning may be organised.

** Otherwise the visit will take place before departing from Moheli Island on 31/08/23.



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Day 4-5-6: Sunday 14 July to Tuesday 16 July

Moheli (Laka Lodge)

The first two days will be dedicated to discovering the marine park and the other small deserted islands around Moheli (two boat trips are planned), with the possibility of snorkelling and enjoying fantastic views. Afternoons are dedicated to discovering the village, where you can meet the friendly villagers and watch them prepare local food, and to visiting the ylang-ylang plantations, where the oil that forms the basis of the essence of the famous Chanel n°5 is produced. On the third day there is room for relaxation or additional excursions to be organised locally. Breakfasts, lunches, dinners and overnight stays at Laka Lodge.

Day 7: Wednesday 17 July

Moheli (Itsamia)

Breakfast and morning dedicated to relax at Laka Lodge. After lunch we set off for ITSAMIA, the nesting capital of the world's sea turtles, located along the southern coast of Moheli. The isolated beaches of Itsamia are the perfect place to observe the life cycle of sea turtles. Every year, more than 20,000 green turtles nest on these beaches, returning year after year to the same beach where they were born to lay about 100 eggs and thus begin the cycle again. One of the highest nesting density sites in the world, Itsamia is unique in that there are turtles nesting almost every single night of the year. Watching the mothers dig to lay their precious eggs, seeing the eggs hatch and the hatchlings run from their nest to the sea, is truly a unique and moving experience. Usually the excursion takes place after dinner*, going to the beach to wait for the turtles to arrive. This is a slow and natural process, requiring patience and silence, as you hear the gentle waves crashing on the beach and millions of stars shining in the sky. Overnight stay in a spartan community bungalow, equipped with mosquito net, fan and private bathroom (there may, however, be intermittent electricity and bucket showers).

**The exact time of nesting depends on the tides, with turtles instinctively waiting for the high tide to come up the beaches to lay, thus reducing the distance needed to move their heavy bodies across the sand. The local guide will inform you of the time for observation, which can be anytime from 20h00 to 2h00.*



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Day 8: Thursday 18 July

Moheli/Flight/Grande Comore (North of the island)

Departure from Itsamia to the Mohéli airport in time for the flight to Moroni. Lunch in a restaurant or at the airport. Upon arrival, we will go on a discovery tour of the northern part of the island of GRANDE COMORE, where we will visit the *Dos du Dragon sites, Lac Salé, the Miraculous Mosque and the Trou du Prophet*. Along the way, we will admire some spectacular panoramic views and enjoy the scents of ylang-ylang and vanilla flowers. Accommodation at the Golden Tulip resort or similar, dinner and overnight in double rooms with services.

Day 9: Friday 19 July

Grande Comore (Karthala Volcano)

Early in the morning, after breakfast, departure for an excursion to KARTHALA MOUNT, an active volcano whose last eruption was in 2006, with steam vents still present in the crater. In our 4x4s, we will drive up to an altitude of 1,600 metres above sea level, and then continue on foot* along a path to the roof of Grande Comore, at an altitude of 2,361 metres above sea level, where we can descend into the enormous caldera and look at the crater's exceptional interior. Lunch box. Descent from the mountain and transfer to the hotel, dinner and overnight stay.

* On request, possibility of avoiding the trek and arriving by 4x4 to the top, where there will be an easy 1 km walk to the crater.

Day 10: Saturday 20 July

Grande Comore (Iconi and Moroni)

Breakfast at the hotel and morning dedicated to visiting ICONI, one of the oldest cities in the Comoros, with a rich history that saw it as the capital of the sultanate for many years. We will stroll through the medina, visit the ruins of the sultan's palace and admire the fortifications on the hill. In MORONI we will take a walking tour of the old town in the medina district, full of alleys where majestic houses hide behind richly carved doors. Time for shopping in the local market of Shindo sha Mboini or Volovolo, full of spices and exotic fabrics. Lunch in a restaurant and transfer to the airport in time for your return flight. End of services.

Day 11: Sunday 21 July

Moroni (HAH)/Return flight

Arrival at the destination airport.



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11 days

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English speaking tour leader

Individual participation fee in double room (min. 3/max. 12 pax)

2,790 €/pax

**in promotion at € 2,690
for booking before 11/04/2024**

Supplements:

- Enrollment fee: **free!**
- Single room: **390 €**
- Sea extension to Grand Comoros: **on request**
- Anjouan extension: **on request**
- Day use in Moroni: **on request**

The fee includes:

- English speaking tour leader (6 to 10 pax);
- Local guides speaking French or English;
- Visits and excursions as scheduled;
- All transfers including drivers, fuel and tolls (minibus or 4x4 depending on the state of the tracks);
- Grande Comore/Moheli/Grande Comore internal flights;
- Full board meals as mentioned in the itinerary;
- 8 overnight stays in hotels as mentioned in the itinerary.

The fee does not include:

- The visa for the Comoros (30 Euro on arrival);
- Cancellation/health/baggage insurance;
- International air flights;
- Meals not included in the itinerary;
- Drinks and mineral water;
- Airport transfers with companies other than the recommended one;
- Tips for photos and videos;
- Tips and expenses of a personal nature;
- Everything mentioned in 'supplements';
- Anything not expressly mentioned in 'the fee includes'.