

MADagascar 2013 has changed my life. One of the biggest things you can't help but notice out there is how everywhere you look, no matter how poor the people may be, you will always see them with a smile on their faces, and I think in the UK, we should also be like that. Be thankful for what we do have, not feel sorry for what we don't have.



Vikina ho an'ny
Fihavanana
LEAPING FOR UNITY



The Malagasy Scouts from the Capital, Antananarivo

On the 100 Mile walk, we experienced some very different ways of living: no electricity, no cars, no Tesco only 2 streets away. It was such a difference to what our lives are like - most people couldn't live without things like that, that we take for granted. But over there, their lives are so much simpler and they don't mind that they don't have any luxuries like we do.



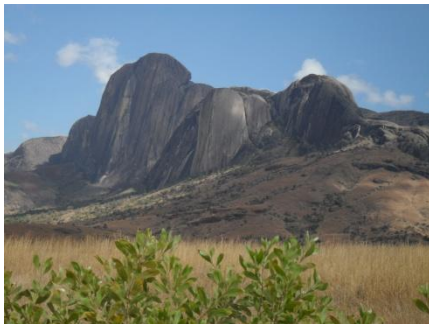
The participants and leaders of MAD13

During the walking phase of the trip, we had to complete at least 10 challenges, but my group managed to complete 12. These challenges included helping a farmer with their crops, making a mud brick, asking an elderly resident how the village has changed, teaching Malagasy children an English song and English dance as well as learning a local Malagasy dance, taking part in a religious service, taking a photo with the local Mayor/Chief as well as several others. My favourite challenges were the ones including the children, such as when teaching them a game (Duck, Duck, Goose!), a song (the Hokey-Cokey) and a dance (The Macarena) because we were making the children happy and you could see it was the highlight of their week, and I could really feel that we were making a difference to the spirit of the community which was brilliant!

Myself teaching the children of one village how to play Duck, Duck Goose!



After the walking, we then started the exploration part of the trip. This meant that there was a lot of travelling involved and it showed me just how lucky we were to have roads that are as good as the ones we do have! They may have a few potholes, but not potholes that are about half a foot deep and cover half of the road!



Andringtra National Park

The first place we went to on our exploration of the unique island was Andringtra National Park. It was where I first saw a lemur in the wild - a Ring-Tailed, and there were so many there, they weren't hard to find. As well as lemurs though, there were loads of chameleons and butterflies and insects, and locusts due to the current locust plague. But it was amazing to see so much wildlife in one small part of a mountain range because it is extremely unlikely to find that much fauna in one part of Britain.



A Chameleon

← One of many Ring-Tailed Lemurs

Whilst at Andringtra National Park, we also took part in two days conservation work. Most of this was to preserve the trees from a fungal disease and planting some orange trees, but we also all had a go at pulling a machine to cut the grass that is normally pulled by zebu.



We then travelled on the Michelin train and then by bus to Manakara which is on the Eastern coast of Madagascar, though the tide is extremely strong and there are sharks in the water so you couldn't swim in the sea. Whilst there we went on a boat trip and went round to a few fishermen villages on the side of the canal where we saw completely different ways of life, as well as different ways of catching fish! We also were shown how different plants are used to create natural remedies such as to toothache which is a really different life to what we lead here in Britain. The boat trip also showed me how much further we are in boat technology - ours don't leak.



After a couple of nights in Manakara, we then went to Ranomafana which stands for Hot Water because they have hot springs there. We did go in the hot springs which as nice as they were, you were constantly thinking something bad would happen soon, as in Madagascar, health and safety doesn't exist so there were no lifeguards or even any hazard signs and the water was fairly deep!



The Hot Springs at Ranomafana



The Michelin train - 1 of only 3 in the world



Malagasy fishing

Ranomafana also is famous for its rainforest where the Golden Bamboo Lemur was first discovered. There was so much beautiful scenery and wildlife there, you really felt like you were the luckiest person ever to see it all, and there was so much of Madagascar we didn't have time to see all of!



←From Left to Right: Golden Bamboo Lemur, Lesser Bamboo Lemur, Milne Edwards' Sifaka Lemur

