

The Berenty Reserve and the Forest: Suggestions for Students by Ivan Norscia and the Pisa Research Team, 2011

Berenty is a private reserve owned by the de Heaulme family, who protected and preserved different forest fragments from human exploitation, which negatively affects forests around Madagascar.

It is located in South Madagascar and you can have a closer look at it via **GOOGLE EARTH** (just digit “Berenty”); on Youtube you can also find many nice videos.

The forest is not a jungle and many large paths allow to walk through it quite easily. It can be said that it is a “user friendly” forest. Visibility for observations is also very good. Bring a compass if you plan getting through the degraded and bushy part but remember that you can always join a path very easily and find “natural” reference points to get back to the tourist area.

The reserve comprises two sections: Ankoba, a secondary forest mainly built by the exotic tree *Pithecellobium dulce* (the kilimbazaha, or foreign tamarind), and Malaza, which includes the tamarind gallery forest and a more degraded area and a spiny portion. For further details read the following book chapter:

Jolly, A., Koyama, N., Rasamimanana, H., Crowley, H., & Williams, G. (2006). Berenty Reserve: A research site in southern Madagascar. In A. Jolly, R. W. Sussman, N. Koyama, & H. Rasamimanana (Eds.), *Ringtailed lemur biology: Lemur catta in Madagascar* (p. 32–42). New York: Springer.

Getting to/away from Berenty

The hotel LeDauphin and the Berenty reception can help you book a car to/from Berenty. Car rent was 50,00-60,00 € in 2008 **but updated information is needed here**. In alternative, you can try to get a lift from tourists: in this case you’ll have to wait for available tourists with available space in available cars!

You’ll have to plan at least one day for a two ways trip to FD (normally two days must be considered). Cars do not normally move by night and night comes early: at about six.

The hotel LeDauphin can also arrange your transfer from FD airport to the hotel and viceversa. The hotel is close to the town center. Once you are in town you can easily catch a taxi to move around.

Staying at Berenty

In the reserve, students can stay at Naturaliste (Ankoba forest) where free-of-charge lodgments are provided thanks to the de Heaulme family. Of course, permission by the de-Heulme family is needed to conduct research at Berenty and rooms must be booked well in advance. Both permission and booking can be done by contacting Claire Foulon at ClaireFoulon@moov.mg

Emails and letters need to be written in French.

Further details on Naturaliste are reported in the Student Guide for Fieldwork at the Berenty Reserve.

Communications

At Berenty, since 2006, it is possible to use the cell phone. You’ll have to wander a bit and search for the signal around or go next to the cafeteria. You can buy a Malagasy SIM card (Orange, Celltel) at Fort Dauphin. Also, from 2010, internet can be used. You need a universal Internet Key

equipped with a local operator card (ZAIN). Based on what other researchers have reported, the key can be bought at Antananarivo and the cost should be around 100\$. **This information needs to be confirmed and verified, though.**

Food

Food can be bought in FD, Amboasary (a village about 1 hr away from Berenty – so you will need a lift by car), and at the Berenty market. However, some food items can be only found in FD. While you are staying at Berenty, you can top up your supply of fruits, vegetables, beans, rice, etc. by buying them at the local markets. Occasionally, you can kindly ask the people who work at the restaurant to buy something for you in Amboasary (where they normally go every other day to buy restaurant food supply). Remember to provide money in advance.

For further details see the Student Guide for Fieldwork at the Berenty Reserve.

Interacting with Malagasy people

It is very important being able to communicate with the people who live at Berenty and surroundings, including guides, personnel, village inhabitants. Cultural exchange will enrich your experience, since you will learn a lot from people who have always lived there. Useful suggestions, necessary pieces of information, and warnings will most probably come to you from them and will help you dealing with your everyday life.

Be respectful and kind, and remember that you are the host there. Express your appreciation for their work and respect verbal agreements, in case you undergo any.

Learn some everyday Malagasy sentences, numbers, greetings, payment expressions. Trying to say something in the local language makes integration much easier and people will appreciate your effort!

For any information on hiring guides, cook, etc. consult the Student Guide for Fieldwork at the Berenty Reserve.

Malaria risk

Malaria risk is high in Fort-Dauphin and the malaria carrier, the mosquito *Anopheles*, is present at Berenty, as well. As a personal experience I can say that LARIAM may be not effective in that area. Be aware that no prophylaxis provides a 100% cover against malaria. Thus, try to avoid mosquito bites as much as possible (via mosquito repellents and by dressing shirts that also cover your neck, especially from late afternoon on).

As an extra protection, if you can use permethrin to treat your clothes before leaving for Africa.

Of course these are just suggestions: on this and any other medical issues it is mandatory to consult your doctor and health office.

Drugs to bring and medical advising

At Fort-Dauphin you can find drugstores but they – from sometimes to often - run out of products and/or have expired drugs. So, bring all the necessary treatments with you, from your own Country. Remember, then, that the Berenty reserve is isolated and you'll have to plan at least one day for a two ways trip to FD.

To have a general idea, and depending on your medical prescription, you should consider bringing antibiotics, pain killers, fever reducers (but NOT aspirin, which covers malaria symptoms – ask your doctor), antidiarrheal and anti-inflammatory drugs, mosquito repellents and treatments for insect bites and stings.

This is not a comprehensive list, it is just to give an idea of what it may be needed. You must consult your doctor before leaving. Also, you can consult the WHO website for extra information: <http://www.who.int/countries/mdg/en/>

What to bring from Fort-Dauphin or from your Country

This is not a comprehensive list: it is just what experience has taught us.

- rain clothes and waterproof backpack to carry your notebooks for data collection - if you plan going anytime during the wet season (October-March/April);
- a waterproof sealing bag to protect electronic stuff: even in the dry season humidity is very high. You can buy it in a diving center.
- binocular;
- toilet paper, and paper in general (and some office material);
- scotch/adhesive tape, elastic bands, pegs: they can have many uses on the field, you'll find out!
- basic carpentry stuff and small screwdrivers to clean or disassemble equipment when needed;
- universal adapter plug and multiple plug;
- buckets and various containers (for food, etc.), cups;
- mosquito net (it is available at Naturaliste but you may find it damaged);
- camping cutlery set;
- some plastic bags for sealing stuff in the kitchen or in your room;
- a small swissknife
- silica gel to preserve electronic stuff from humidity damage;
- tin and bottle openers;
- scissors;
- AA and AAA rechargeable batteries and...the charger!
- a head-lamp and a hand-lamp
- intimate wash products (you may not find them in Fort Dauphin)
- breakfast food
- sunglasses
- even if it is hot, bring a hair dryer in case you suffer from neck-pain (cervical pain)!
- a new water filter can be welcome;
- antimalaria treatment, as prescribed by your doctor. Please remember that Lariam is NOT always effective.
- chocolate!
- two-three books

Due to luggage weight limitations, more students going to Berenty can share some of the stuff (for example bottle openers!). If you stop in Antananarivo for at least one day, you can buy some of the small equipment, for example the universal plug: they should have it in Fort Dauphin but if they don't you may not find it by the time you need it. Anyway, some equipment is more expensive to buy in Madagascar. If you are planning to go to Berenty it is important that you inform some Berenty researchers so that you can create a "cooperative network": they can tell you what you may need there, what they may need you to bring over, and what is already in place.

For any other information see the Student Guide for Fieldwork at Berenty Reserve